The Development of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition

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**Introduction**

In India and Southeast Asia, no one ever reads the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* for the first time. The stories are there, “always ready”.   
 Ramanujan 1991: 46/Ramanujan 1999: 158

Ever since its first telling the story of Rāma has been changing and developing in response to the narrator’s wishes, the audience’s expectations and the whole surrounding setting, cultural, social, religious or political; it is undoubtedly one of the most widely spread and popular stories not only within India but throughout the rest of Asia. Indeed, of all the epics composed in various parts of the world, it is *Rāmāyaṇa* which has spread most widely and been current over the longest time-span. It is a living tradition cherished throughout India and the whole of Southeast Asia, at all levels of society and expressed in many languages and art forms.[[1]](#footnote-1) The general outlines of the story have remained largely unchanged since it was first told around the fifth century B.C. but its popularity has ensured that it was re-told with an ever-increasing number of narrative additions. We see several stages of such development within the *Rāmāyaṇa* traditionally ascribed to Vālmīki, which is in reality a text that is the product of centuries of oral transmission, during which its development both in scale and outlook was extensive, followed by many more centuries in which transmission was both oral and written and the rate of change was relatively reduced. The popularity of the story was clearly such that before long it was being incorporated into other texts; the first that survive are adaptations within the Buddhist *Jātaka* tradition in Pali (much modified at a later date) and the other Sanskrit epic,[[2]](#footnote-2) the *Mahābhārata* (mainly in the *Rāmopākhyāna* but also at various other points in its narrative), both produced within the timespan during which the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* itself was growing to its generally recognised form.

Other genres followed before long: the religiously-oriented Purāṇas*,* the many plays and poems of the more secular classical Sanskrit literature (in which novelty of treatment was so prized), the Jain adaptations (both in Sanskrit and in Prakrit), other Buddhist texts besides the *Jātakas* and later on – from about the 12th century – complete Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇas*,* religiously or philosophically oriented and regularly declaring Vālmīki to be their author as part of their claims to authority. Many of these were being produced over the same extended period of time and, although the influence from one to another is usually greatest within a particular genre (except in the case of the classical Sanskrit literature), the borrowing of ideas and innovations – as well as often even wording – between works of different genres and by authors of different religious persuasions is a marked feature of the whole pattern of development of the Rāma story.

In due course – and long before the last versions in Sanskrit were composed – the story was transmitted across more significant language boundaries than those between Sanskrit (whether the simple epic Sanskrit of the core of the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* or the polished diction of classical *kāvya* and *nāṭaka*) and Pali or Prakrit or the Apabhraṃśa of some later Jain versions. Within India the earliest known version in one of the regional languages, Kampaṉ’s *Irāmāvatāram,* belongs to somewhere between the 9th and 12th centuries, while the earliest known version in Southeast Asia is the Old Javanese *kakawin* adaptation which belongs most probably to the early 10th century. The spread beyond India into the rest of Asia involved not only language, but also cultural boundaries; the different cultural patterns of each group are then reflected in the way that the same basic story is narrated.

But the story was not only told, it was also depicted – in stone reliefs carved on Hindu temples and Buddhist monuments, in moulded terracottas or stucco, and in paintings (although both murals and miniatures survive only from more modern times than the more durable stone and terracotta). Such visual representations of the story are indeed particularly valuable in tracing the history of the story, since they are usually more precisely datable than the textual evidence, and are also of great interest because of the different techniques involved in showing either a complete story or a single episode in visual form, compared with its verbal narration.[[3]](#footnote-3) Within India, terracotta reliefs go back at least as far as the 5th century, while in Southeast Asia the earliest evidence, which combines carved relief panels with an inscription dedicated to Vālmīki, belongs to the middle of the 7th century and comes from the area of modern Vietnam. More recent, but still with a tradition stretching back several centuries, is that of shadow or puppet plays on *Rāmāyaṇa* themes, which is still very much alive both in India and Southeast Asia, while the Rāmlīlā performances by tradition stretch back to the time of Tulsīdās, the author of the best known Hindi version of the story.

This rapid overview does not come near to doing justice to the manifold ramifications of the Rāma story as it has spread, developed, been assimilated to different cultural milieux and enchanted audiences over the centuries. Two approaches are possible: either to attempt a chronological survey of successive narrations or to examine the material according to genre or category. The first would soon lead to excessive jumping from one type of narration to another and in any case faces the issue that the dating of much of the material is vague or even problematic (especially the verbal narratives but sometimes the visual narratives also), so that any order of treatment adopted would imply greater certainty about dating than is currently attainable. The second runs the risk of underplaying the constant movement of ideas and inspiration from one genre to another, from one religious group to another and from one cultural context to another. Yet it is precisely this interplay of ideas that is so fascinating.

We shall first present here a more extended survey of the many versions of the story from that ascribed to Vālmīki to around the 17th or 18th century, intended to provide the basic information about each in terms of language or visual medium, location (where appropriate) and cultural background, and then we shall proceed to a detailed analysis of the various elements of the story and how they have been adapted and modified to fit the changing requirements and preoccupations of the audience for each version in its particular cultural setting (this for the present will be found in other folders and documents). While this analysis is pursued for its own sake, it may also at times hold clues to the sequence of transmission of the story from one language or cultural area to another.

Our end point is, however, flexible. We have followed as a guiding principle the aim of including a narration from as many different languages and cultures as practicable, even if the first extant telling in any particular language is somewhat later than our usual cut-off point. On the other hand, for any language in which multiple narrations are available we have been more selective, aiming to include all the better known versions and so to be relatively comprehensive, without necessarily listing every known verbal text or visual representation. However, we have deliberately not attempted to trace all the modern versions and reworkings of the story (which have even included, for example, a television soap-opera version produced by Ramanand Sagar and broadcast in 1987-88 as well as numerous comic-book versions) nor have we sought to explore the political ramifications of the long-standing Babri Masjid/Rāmjanmabhūmi dispute, in which it was used so emotively by the Bharatiya Janata Party to whip up feeling against Muslims.

The extended survey of versions will start with an assessment of the development of the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* itself,[[4]](#footnote-4)  before moving on to the most closely related material in terms of genre, the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas. The Pali *Jātakas* will be examined later, since they lead naturally into the adaptations found in other Buddhist literature, including the transmission to Khotanese, Tibetan and Chinese versions. After the Purāṇas, the genres of *kāvya* and *nāṭaka* will be surveyed, then the Jain versions with their reductionist approach to the narrative (the versions in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa only; those in regional languages will be treated at the appropriate point), then the later Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇas* which have an instructional or devotional purpose*.* After that, the versions in the regional languages derived from Sanskrit through the Apabhraṃśas and located in North India (apart from Marāṭhī in the northwestern Deccan) and those in the Dravidian languages of South India will be taken up successively. Next, visual representations originating within India will be surveyed, unless they have already been examined in the context of the verbal narratives.

Although Buddhist versions of the story or episodes from it occur as early as the *Jātakas,* a considerable proportion of them form part of the expansion of Buddhism and the literature related to it that took place along the trade routes between Northwest India and Central Asia, to Tibet, China and perhaps ultimately Japan, so these versions will be examined as a group between those found in India and those occurring in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian versions will form the final and largest group geographically, since the regions involved stretch from Burma to the Philippines, although it must be stressed that what are being examined here are versions defined by cultures (which to a large extent means by language) and not by modern political frontiers, which in many, though not all, instances are irrelevant. Because many of them are so much earlier than the verbal tellings, visual representations or performance forms in Southeast Asia will be examined within the same chapter as the treatment of verbal narratives.

Santoshi Desai suggested a rather too simplistic scheme of three routes for the transmission of the Rāma story to East and Southeast Asia: firstly a northern route by land via the Panjab and Kashmir to Tibet, China and East Turkestan, secondly a southern route by sea from Gujarat and South India to Java (first called in Indian sources Suvarṇadvīpa), Sumatra and Malaya, and thirdly an eastern route by land from Bengal to Burma, Thailand and Laos, with Vietnam and Cambodia receiving it partly from Java and partly from India by the eastern route (Desai 1970: 5). The trade route by land through Central Asia, the so-called “Silk Road”, was undoubtedly the means for spreading both Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Rāma story to the Tarim Basin, Tibet and China. Similarly trade by sea was the main route for the spread of the Rāma story to Southeast Asia but the starting points for the trade (and so potentially at least for the spread of the Rāma story) were more varied — mainly from South India but also Gujarat, Sri Lanka and the whole eastern seaboard of India as far north as Bengal (from where a certain amount of coastal shipping traded with Myanmar and perhaps as far as the western seaboard of modern Thailand) — and the extensive trade carried on between the different regions of Southeast Asia cannot be ignored as an element in the transmission of cultural components. The land route from Bengal through Assam to upper Myanmar (and onwards through Yunnan to China) would have been so little used in the past, as in the present, as to be a largely negligible factor.

The growth of the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*

The long narrative poem in Sanskrit known as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and by tradition ascribed to Vālmīki belongs in reality to that diverse category of early literature collectively labelled ‘anonymous’. Indian tradition and most Western scholars believe that it was originally composed orally, and transmitted for several centuries by oral recitation, but opinion is divided about the date of composition: while Indian tradition would place it several millennia ago, modern scholars have proposed various dates in the 1st millenium BC for its origins. Based on the language, style and content of the work, a date of roughly the fifth century BC seems the most reasonable estimate. The *Mahābhārata*, the even longer Sanskrit narrative poem, probably originated at much the same time. From these early origins there gradually developed the more lengthy versions represented by their Critical Editions, so that the *Rāmāyaṇa* with almost 20,000 verses and the *Mahābhārata* with more than three times that number are now among the most extensive literary works in the world. The version now extant was undoubtedly composed over many centuries between perhaps 500 BC and 300 AD, during which period it was also committed to writing. Its core is contained in the second to sixth books, in which Rāma is presented primarily as a warrior hero of outstanding moral stature. As the story grew in popularity and Rāma's character became steadily more elevated, the natural desire to fill out the story, already seen within the five core books (*kāṇḍas*), resulted in adding both a precursor and a sequel around them (JLB 1985 and 1998: 345-397).[[5]](#footnote-5) In this chapter this process of the growth and development of the original narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* will be presented.

Various attempts have been made to date the origins of the story by reference to other data from outside, in particular other literatures. For example, one of the earliest European studies by Albrecht Weber began by assessing the relationship of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the newly available Jātaka literature, which led him to consider the *Dasaratha Jātaka* version to be older and therefore the later part of the narrative, from the abduction of Sītā onwards, to be a separate element perhaps borrowed from Homer (Weber 1870: 7, 14, 20-21); these views have largely been abandoned by serious scholarship subsequently, although it is possible to find some general similarities between the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. One tendency among Indian scholars of the epic has been to seek to find the beginnings of the story within the Vedic literature. Although a few names found as names of *Rāmāyaṇa* characters do occur there, there is no trace of any connected element of the plot; however, some Vedic myths are alluded to from time to time but sometimes at least introduced in later expansions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative. From a different angle, Hermann Jacobi long ago suggested that Rāma’s battle with Rāvaṇa is another form of Indra’s battle with Vṛtra, arguing that, since in the later Vedic literature of the *gṛhyasūtras* Sītā is the wife of Indra or Parjanya, Rāma must be a form of these gods (Jacobi 1893).[[6]](#footnote-6) Attempts have also been made by Daniel Dubuisson to identify a structural core reflecting the Indo-European tripartite ideology put forward by Georges Dumézil; Dubuisson argues — in my view unconvincingly and arbitrarily — that the three problematic actions of Rāma (the killing of Vālin, the killing of Rāvaṇa, the repudiation of Sītā) represent the “trois fautes” of the warrior-king put forward by Dumézil (Dubuisson 1986). Another tendency has been to look to archaeological evidence both for dating and for corroboration of the historicity of the events, but this has led to no more successful outcome.[[7]](#footnote-7) The narrative itself remains the best evidence for the context in which it originated.

Indeed, one of the most obvious reasons for the changes in the narrative that have taken place is the shift in cultural and religious values taking place in the surrounding society; this can be seen as being reflected in the confrontation between the urban culture supported by an agricultural economy and what has been argued to be the hunter-gatherer culture of the *rākṣasas* (Thapar 1971; Milanetti 2015). The original conception of the Rāma story as revealed in the earliest levels of the narrative reflects the interests and concerns of the warrior aristocracy (the *kṣatriya* class): Rāma is a martial hero whose actions are accepted without question as necessary and, for that reason, as justified; indeed his martial ability means that he is quite often compared to Indra, the leader of the Vedic gods in battle, and at the climax of the whole story, in his duel with Rāvaṇa, he receives the help of Indra's charioteer, Mātali. Later times and different milieux had different values, and new characteristics were attributed to Rāma through the centuries during which the text was expanded and reworked. First he becomes a moral hero, and, as part of the increasing emphasis on his moral elevation, various episodes are reworked or expanded to eliminate the possibility of moral lapses on his part (MB 2007); then he becomes a regal but still human figure; later he was viewed as the earthly manifestation (*avatāra,* literally ‘descent’) of the god Viṣṇu and finally (and subsequently to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* itself) as God in his own right, with the developed text acquiring the status of holy scripture. The Rāma story has thus been in a constant state of re-creation, and in the development of many of these later adaptations (though by no means all), the role played by the faith of believers has been crucial.

This view that the divinity of its hero is a gradual accretion to the basic story has a long history, being put forward comprehensively by Jacobi as early as 1893, with more tentative suggestions to this effect made by earlier scholars still. But it has also had its challengers over the years; Ruben suggested that any reference to the divine identity of Rāma in the second to sixth books, the *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddha kāṇḍas,* might have been suppressed for some reason (Ruben 1936: 63) – a view that seems somewhat implausible, as Goldman has remarked (Goldman 1984–2017: II, 43 n.82). Nevertheless Pollock has argued that Rāma is regarded as divine from the earliest phases of the epic, seeing the theme of the divine king as central to it and interpreting Rāma’s divinity in that light (Pollock 1984, cf. his introduction in Goldman 1984–2017: III: 15-54) but his views have been subjected to critical analysis (JLB 1998: 467-8 and more fully González-Reimann 2006).

The developed forms of the story are now so well-known that it is difficult for the modern reader to imagine the impact the earliest recitations must have had on an audience who were hearing the *Rāmāyaṇa* for the first time and had no idea of how the plot was going to unfold (see MB: 2012a, also 1999a). At that stage, while the story was still unfamiliar, we can assume that it would have been recited in its entirety, even if the performance was extended over several days or nights.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, the heroic tale that formed the core of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was expanded considerably by generations of reciters and redactors, both before and after it was written down (perhaps around the first century AD) by compilers who gathered together differing, sometimes contradictory treatments, passages or episodes into an increasingly unwieldy text.

Following the publication of the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata,* the suggestion was made of a critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* A first attempt was made by Raghu Vira and colleagues at Lahore, who in 1938 published a first fascicule containing the beginning of the *Bālakāṇḍa* with the text laid out on a rather impractical model*;* however, nothing further appeared and evidently the project foundered (Raghu Vira 1938). Subsequently the Oriental Institute at Vaḍodarā (the Westernised spelling ‘Baroda’ is still often employed) took up a proposal by the Gujarat Research Society and undertook the publication of the Critical Edition, published between 1960 and 1975, using essentially the same philological and text-critical methods as employed by the editors of the *Mahābhārata* Critical Edition.[[9]](#footnote-9) Evidence was collated from quite a wide variety of manuscripts, in the hope of identifying a version of the Rāma story as close as possible to the original, while distinguishing and printing a large amount of later material. Apart from the Devanāgarī manuscripts, the *Rāmāyaṇa* Critical Edition groups its manuscripts by the script employed, but the numbers of manuscripts in each version varies considerably; for example, only one Maithilī manuscript was used for the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* and no Orīya manuscripts for any book, although some do exist. This grouping by script has its limitations (cf. JLB 2000: 195-217, and 2010), although there is clearly a regional dimension to the way the text developed. The text of the Critical Edition was constituted on the basis of the Southern Recension, since this was considered to preserve the older form of the epic — a view which goes back to Jacobi, although it has been challenged from time to time (e.g. Agrawal and Krishnadasa 1962; van Daalen 1980). The Southern Recension is one of the two major strands of the textual tradition — the other being designated the Northern Recensions — that emerged gradually in the course of the work’s transmission. This process of differentiation (which is only in a broad sense based on the geographical location of the various recensions and sub-recensions) was very clearly a slow process with the degree of variation gradually increasing over time. Consequently, many of the early retellings of the story in other forms (which will be surveyed in subsequent chapters) derive from forms of the text intermediate between the current Northern and Southern Recensions, as recorded in the Critical Edition and elsewhere: forms that were closer to those narrated by the early reciters of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.*

The reason for the greater conservatism of the Southern Recension is perhaps to be found in the earlier religious significance of the text in the south, for which indirect evidence is provided by the commentators, whose motives were religious, and by the abundance of manuscripts, especially perhaps palm-leaf manuscripts, from South India (cf. Filliozat 2012: 359-61). From the many hundreds of manuscripts available a selection were collated and then a further selection made for inclusion in the Critical Apparatus, with the result that ultimately between29 and 41 manuscripts were used to constitute the text of the different *kāṇḍas.* The oldest manuscript used was one in Nevārī script dated to 1020 A.D.[[10]](#footnote-10) The text resulting, as with the *Mahābhārata* Critical Edition, is significantly shorter than the vulgate. It is possible to criticise this project as misguided in that the text it produced may never have existed in precisely that form, and it is legitimate to dispute individual readings, but the achievement of this group of scholars must never be underestimated in providing in readily accessible form the materials that have given a new impetus to *Rāmāyaṇa* scholarship. Most subsequent study, including this, takes the Baroda Critical Edition as its base text.

In earlier research (JLB 1985), the language and style of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have been analysed in detail, resulting in the recognition of five main stages in its development, the first three of which are found within the text of the Critical Edition, while the remaining two are located in its apparatus (the \* passages and Appendix I). These stages are by no means rigidly demarcated; a certain amount of overlapping must be expected. Composition was a continuous process taking place over several centuries and involving many tellers, so ‘earlier’, ‘later’, or simply ‘different’ styles can be discerned within each stage, as can narrative anomalies or contradictions symptomatic of multiple, continuous authorship. Trivial anomalies abound in the text, but can best be attributed to lapses of memory on the part of the poet, entirely characteristic of an oral work of this length and complexity. As such they have no bearing on the question of authorship. The coherence and careful planning apparent in the core story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* shows that it is the conception of a single creative intelligence — an author — although this conception has subsequently been much obscured by the amplifications and modifications of later generations of redactors.

The diction – vivid and enlivened by alliteration – is direct and uncomplicated when compared with later Sanskrit but also distinctive, exhibiting in its earliest phases, in the first stage of growth, a continuous narrative flow; its grammatical structure is essentially that appropriate to its storytelling purpose. Around the fourth century BC (at very roughly the same time as the *Rāmāyaṇa* was first being composed) the grammarian Pāṇini made a minute description of the language exemplified by the later Vedic texts and spoken by the learned individuals who studied them, a description that soon became prescriptive and is exemplified in classical Sanskrit literature, which reached its height from about the fourth century AD onwards. However the *Rāmāyaṇa* shows certain well-defined deviations from this norm, deviations (to a large extent shared with the *Mahābhārata*) that help to establish its language as genuinely a variant form, a dialect, distinct both from Vedic and from classical Sanskrit.

The style too — despite the esteem in which the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been held as the *ādikāvya* (‘the first <true> poetic work’) — is relatively simple by comparison with classical Sanskrit literature. The text contains few elaborate constructions or figures of speech. Similes are much the commonest figure and the overwhelming majority are simple comparisons offering only one point of likeness. Naturally, similes tend to be used most in dramatic or emotional situations such as speeches and in descriptions of fighting; in such situations they may be piled up almost regardless of their connection with each other, although this piling up is somewhat less marked than with the other less frequent figures of speech. A degree of hyperbole is another obvious characteristic but one which is natural to any epic tradition.

The form of the poem echoes the simplicity of the expression. The metre employed is the standard narrative metre, the *śloka*, a simple metre comprising non-rhyming verses of four *pādas* (quarters) of eight syllables each, grouped in pairs. Verses are grouped into units called *sargas*, which vary greatly in length (twenty-five to thirty being a rough average); this division probably dates back to the earlier stages of the text, if it is not indeed original, although it has been much obscured in transmission. The *sargas* are grouped into *kāṇḍas*,or Books, varying between about sixty and a hundred and twenty *sargas* long. In its fully-developed form, the poem comprises seven *kāṇḍas,* but the variations between the recensions in the placement of the divisions between them suggests that this may well not be original.[[11]](#footnote-11) Each *śloka* couplet is normally a complete unit and it is unusual for the sense or construction to be carried over into a subsequent verse. The greater emphasis often placed on the first and last words of the verse, coupled with a general tautness of expression, can in themselves convey subtleties of meaning best brought out by the intonation and similar interpretative skills of an oral performer.

In this earliest stage, the use of standard phrases (or ‘formulae’) conforms to the pattern common in oral, improvised poetry; they aid the reciter, allowing him to build his narrative without too much effort of memorisation or improvisation, and aid the audience by refreshing their memory of the main lines of the narrative since they cannot pause or turn back the pages to check something they may have forgotten or misheard. Such formulae commonly consist of a character’s name plus descriptive adjective (for example, *lakṣmaṇaḥ śubhalakṣaṇaḥ*, ‘fortune-favoured Lakṣmaṇa’), and their use adds vitality to the text, often directing the audience’s attention with subtle economy of expression to some factor the teller wishes to emphasize, or to the irony of the situation, in contrast to later stages of transmission when the formulae tend to be applied mechanically and inappositely, a feature which indicates that the technique is breaking down and suggests that the oral style is being imitated in a written work.

The work of the first author of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and his immediate successors, belonging as they did to an age and a culture which can be characterized as ‘highly literary, but illiterate’, is best judged in the context within which it was composed, that of multi-dimensional oral performance. Its drama inevitably loses much of its force in the restricted medium of the printed page; orally transmitted narratives lose greatly by being written down. The *Rāmāyaṇa* not only survived the transition but was transformed by subsequent generations of admirers into a vibrant, living, and still developing work of art in many different media, such was the skill and achievement of those first tellers of the tale of Rāma. The story that the first author of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and his immediate successors narrated is summarised next.

The story of Rāma ranges from accounts of intrigue at court to wanderings among ascetics in the forest and culminates in the great battle when the Rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa is defeated and punished for his abduction of Rāma’s wife, Sītā.[[12]](#footnote-12) The story no doubt originally began with some version of the court intrigues which open the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* now the second out of the seven books, into which the poem is divided (Ayodhyā is the kingdom's capital).[[13]](#footnote-13) Here the listener is introduced to the aging king of Ayodhyā, Daśaratha, his three wives and the four princes, Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. Daśaratha decides, amid general approval from the citizens, to install Rāma as *yuvarāja,* ‘young king’ or heir-apparent and co-ruler. However, Rāma's step-mother, Kaikeyī, is persuaded by her servant Mantharā to plot to have him supplanted by her son, Bharata, and banished to the forest for fourteen years. Daśaratha feels compelled to give in to her petulance because of two boons he has previously granted her, but so profound is his grief that he dies shortly after Rāma’s departure from Ayodhyā. His distress is shared by almost all the inhabitants of the town, but not by Rāma himself, who accepts the decree with absolute submission and with the calm self-control which regularly characterises him.

In order to fulfil his father’s commands as fully as possible, Rāma suggests sending messengers to recall Bharata, who is away from Ayodhyā on a visit (and so innocent and ignorant of his mother’s machinations). Rāma then makes preparations for his departure with no protest whatsoever, accompanied at their individual insistence by his wife Sītā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa. The trio soon evade the huge crowd of mourning citizens who flock after them and make their way, first by chariot, then on foot, to mount Citrakūṭa, where they construct a hermitage and live happily for some time, enjoying the beauties of nature. Following Daśaratha’s death, Bharata is urgently recalled to Ayodhyā, where he overturns his mother’s schemes by angrily rejecting the proffered kingdom and setting off, accompanied by the three queens and a huge retinue, to fetch Rāma back, meeting Guha and staying overnight with Bharadvāja.[[14]](#footnote-14) Rāma greets Bharata with none of the rancour displayed by the excitable Lakṣmaṇa but he insists on carrying out to the letter his father’s express wish, undeterred by Bharata’s impassioned pleas and his offers to change places with him. Eventually, Bharata and his entourage return to Ayodhyā, taking with them Rāma’s sandals as a symbol of his authority. Meanwhile, Rāma and his companions decide to leave Citrakūṭa for a more remote part of the forest, going by way of the hermitage of Atri and Anasūyā.

Despite Rāma’s resolve to live like an ascetic, his role as the perfect *kṣatriya* now becomes increasingly prominent: the sages living in the Daṇḍaka forest extract a pledge from Rāma to protect them against the ravages of the hostile Rākṣasas who plague them. For ten years Rāma and his party wander among the sages; they visit Sutīkṣṇa and then Agastya, who advises him to build a hermitage in nearby Pañcavaṭī. While they are living in the hut which they have built in Pañcavaṭī, the hideous but none the less amorous Rākṣasī Śūrpaṇakhā makes advances to the brothers; infuriated by their mockery and disdain, she attacks Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa mutilates her as a punishment. Her brother Khara attempts to avenge her, first by sending a band of fourteen Rākṣasas to kill the brothers and then, after they have all been killed, by leading an army of fourteen thousand to attack them; however, Rāma alone defeats them all. Śūrpaṇakhā then works out another way of taking revenge through another brother, Rāvaṇa, king of Laṅkā, whom she incites to abduct Sītā by exciting his lust. He compels the aid of the unwilling Mārīca, whose disguise as a golden deer and feigned call for help induce Sītā to send both brothers after it successively; Rāvaṇa, disguised as a mendicant, thus has no difficulty in seizing her. The friendly vulture Jaṭāyus is fatally wounded when he attempts to intervene, and Sītā is taken to Laṅkā, where, having vehemently rejected all Rāvaṇa’s blandishments, she is confined in a grove of *aśoka* trees. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meanwhile are in great distress, but the dying Jaṭāyus tells them what has happened, and the monster Kabandha (after attacking them and being fatally wounded) advises them to ally themselves with the Vānara leader Sugrīva, who will help them to recover Sītā. On their way to find him they meet a Śabarī ascetic-woman.

Near lake Pampā the two princes are accosted by Hanumān, the minister of the exiled Vānara king Sugrīva, who takes them to his master. Rāma and Sugrīva make a solemn pledge of alliance, and Rāma is encouraged by the sight of some of Sītā’s clothes and ornaments which, seeing a group of Vānaras, she had thrown down as Rāvaṇa abducted her. Sugrīva next enlists Rāma’s help in ousting his usurping brother Vālin, and recounts the history of their quarrel from his side. Encouraged by Rāma, Sugrīva challenges Vālin to single combat and finally, with Rāma’s covert assistance, Vālin is mortally wounded. He dies and is cremated with elaborate ceremonial. Sugrīva is now installed as king.

The onset of the rains prevents any further search for Sītā but, after they are over, Hanumān and then Lakṣmaṇa remind Sugrīva of his promise to help. A vast army of Vānaras is mustered and sent off with instructions to search for Sītā to each of the compass points. Rāma places most reliance on the party led by Hanumān and the heir apparent, Aṅgada, and entrusts his ring to Hanumān as a token for Sītā. Three of the parties are unsuccessful and return quite soon. Eventually, Aṅgada and Hanumān’s troop meet Saṃpāti, Jaṭāyus’ brother, from whom they learn that Sītā is on the island of Laṅkā, and Hanumān resolves to leap over the sea to find her.

Aided by his ability to increase his size at will, Hanumān makes his leap and wanders through Laṅkā. Entering Rāvaṇa’s magnificent palace, he searches in vain for Sītā, until eventually he discovers her in the *aśoka* grove, and overhears her rebuff to Rāvaṇa’s entreaties and threats. Hanumān gently reveals himself to the incredulous Sītā and establishes his identity by producing Rāma’s ring. Sītā refuses to escape with Hanumān, preferring to be freed by Rāma in person, but she gives him a jewel as a token for Rāma. Instead of hurrying back secretly, Hanumān then embarks on a course of wanton destruction in Laṅkā and finally, curious to see Rāvaṇa, allows himself to be captured by Indrajit, Rāvaṇa’s son. The angry Rāvaṇa is dissuaded from killing Hanumān outright by his virtuous brother Vibhīṣaṇa’s reminder of the inviolability of envoys, so he merely sets fire to the Vānara’s tail. This has the opposite of the desired effect, since Hanumān uses it as a brand to complete the destruction of Laṅkā. Once reassured about Sītā’s safety, Hanumān crosses back over the sea and reports to his eager companions, before returning to Kiṣkindhā with the news of the success of their mission.

While Rāma and the Vānaras march southwards, the Rākṣasas prepare for war, but Vibhīṣaṇa defects when his conciliatory advice is refused. After some debate, he is welcomed into Rāma’s camp and consecrated king of Laṅkā. The problem of how to cross the sea is solved by Nala’s construction of a causeway. Rāvaṇa receives information from his spies about the size of the besieging army and after trying in vain to frighten Sītā into submission by showing her the illusion of Rāma’s severed head, joins battle.

At first success favours Rāvaṇa, since his son Indrajit puts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa out of action, but eventually the brothers are restored by the intervention of Garuḍa, the celestial bird. A long series of duels ensues, resulting in the eventual deaths of all the most fearsome Rākṣasa champions at the hands of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the Vānara chiefs. During this time, Rāma overcomes Rāvaṇa but spares his life. As the tide of battle swings against the Rākṣasas, Kumbhakarṇa, another of Rāvaṇa’s brothers, is woken from his extended sleep but after causing initial havoc among the Vānaras even he is slain by Rāma. Indrajit repeatedly resorts to magic in order to strike terror into the Vānaras, culminating in preparations for a sacrifice to ensure victory, but he is prevented from completing it by Lakṣmaṇa, who eventually kills him. Only Rāvaṇa is left and at last he takes the field again amid evil omens. His duel with Rāma is a protracted one but finally, after Rāma receives divine help in the form of Indra’s chariot and charioteer,[[15]](#footnote-15) Rāvaṇa too is killed and, with some reluctance, cremated by Vibhīṣaṇa, who is immediately installed as king. Hanumān announces Rāma’s victory to Sītā and then Vibhīṣaṇa is sent to fetch her to him. The gods appear, praising Rāma, and Indra grants his request that all the dead Vānaras be restored to life. Everyone on the victorious side next climbs into Rāvaṇa’s aerial chariot and they fly back to Ayodhyā.

**The second stage of development**

This core narrative has clearly undergone significant alterations and additions over time. At first, when this taut, coherent romance was still relatively unknown, it could be presented fresh to audiences by means of a series of carefully contrived surprise developments of plot and characterisation. Once the plot became well known, however, and the surprises no longer surprised, the story might have been in danger of losing its appeal, the victim of its own popularity, so the later composers had to use different tactics. The period from roughly the third century BC to the first AD may be thought of as the second stage in a continuous process of development, although the boundaries should not be rigidly applied, for the text had clearly been evolving since soon after its initial composition.

The bards and the *kāvyopajīvins* or *kuśīlavas* who recited it from memory and who spread it around the country began to embellish and complete the original work by adding longer or shorter chapters, and inserting short stories, descriptive digressions, *māhātmyas* and geographical descriptions in response to the requirements of popular taste and the expectations of their audience; the majority of the interpolations in the second to sixth books are repetitions of events, insertions of pathetic passages and additions of marvellous and supernatural deeds. Consequently, while there are some changes in the relative frequency of formulaic personal epithets, there is no large-scale replacement of one set of formulæ by another, such as can be seen occurring between the second and third stages, and again in the fourth stage.

The alterations attributable to this second stage, expressed in discernible changes in diction, also reveal a significant shift in the prevalent ethical framework in which these poets were working. The crucial factor in the second stage of development is that, although the story of Rāma continued to be presented live, now that the plot was so well known, there was no longer any need to perform the work in its entirety. The context had been firmly fixed in the audience’s consciousness, so that extracts could be performed to a more relaxed schedule and elaborated in new and interesting ways; a more discursive style came to supplement the earlier taut narration. The text as found in *kāṇḍas* 2 to 6 of the Critical Edition cannot be the record of a single performance, not merely because of its length. It represents a compilation of the core story and the contributions of many later poets of varied interests and competence, and there is little evidence that these later poets knew each others’ work; alternative versions of particular episodes are found which would not both have been performed on the same occasion.[[16]](#footnote-16)

These contributions consist both of new material (relatively easy to identify) and the elaboration of existing passages, where it is now much more difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the older stratum. The general lines of the story remain clear, however: evidently it was now too well-known to allow its basic lines to be modified without raising objections from the audience, objections which could have been forcefully expressed in the context of oral presentation. There is a great variety of new material, narrative, lyrical and interpretive, but it seems that nothing found in the repertoire of the earlier tellers could be discarded. Most of these new narrative elements relate to the basic story of Rāma: the number of in-tales incorporated at this period, whether the product of the poets’ own creativity or repeated from other sources, was relatively small compared with those later to appear in the *Bāla* and *Uttara kāṇḍas*.

The second-stage poets employed a diction that was more elaborate than that of their predecessors, but had not yet developed the full complexities of Classical Sanskrit, and they exploited the more relaxed schedule available to them to expand the text with non-narrative elements of all kinds: extended ornamentation, lyrical passages of great beauty, formulaic descriptions or mere lists. Descriptions of nature often reinforce or contrast with the condition of the heroes or evoke their emotions. As one example, in Lakṣmaṇa’s rhapsody on the delights of winter (3,15, when the exiles’ thoughts turn to their family in Ayodhyā as the expected end of their exile draws near) the intrinsic beauty of his poem is enhanced by our knowledge that the illusion of calm is doomed to be shattered in the very next *sarga* by Śūrpaṇakha’s devastating irruption. Another example is found in Rāma’s impassioned ravings following Sītā’s abduction, in which he asks her whereabouts from the various trees of the forest (3,58 – an expansion on 3,55-57).

As part of the increasing emphasis on Rāma's moral elevation, various episodes are reworked or expanded to eliminate the possibility of moral lapses on his part (MB 2007); for example, his killing of the Vānara chief Vālin while the latter is fighting his brother Sugrīva, with whom Rāma has made a pact, is elaborately justified (4,17-18), as are his martial activities to protect the hermits while they go about their religious activities (basically in terms of his duty as a prince to uphold law and order), of which the prime example is Sītā’s homily to Rāma and his reply (3.8-9). But the most significant instance is where Sītā, appearing before the victorious Rāma, is repudiated by him and in desolation enters the fire, the incident usually but inaccurately called her “fire-ordeal” (6.102-4); his status by now is such that her honour must be above question. Finally the last few sargas of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (6.111-116), which would once have been the end of the whole epic, have clearly undergone considerable expansion at a period overlapping with the third stage, with the last two *sargas* becoming exceptionally long. The popularity of some of this material, which would have been one reason for its expansion, is well shown in the way that the concluding passage on Rāma’s righteous rule is reproduced extensively in the *Mahābhārata* tradition (JLB 1986/2000: 326-38).

Another motive for expansion is the poets’ desire to display their knowledge or satisfy the curiosity of their audience. A prime example of this is the account of the four search-parties sent out by Sugrīva to discover where Rāvaṇa has taken Sītā (4.39-42), which draws on geographical material found in other texts also to greatly expand the basic narration of the despatch of Hanumān and Aṅgada with their followers (4.43) and possibly also a brief allusion to searches in all directions (to follow the mustering of the *vānaras* in 4.38). Another example is the elaborate description of the construction of the road for Bharata to follow Rāma and persuade him to return (2.74), providing an occasion for the inclusion of lists of the various tradesmen involved. Related to this is the inclusion of proverbial or other stock material, for example the well-known description of the evils of a kingless state (2.61, largely identical with MBh 12.67-68) and the *kaccit sarga* (2.94, virtually identical to MBh 2.5), so-called by the opening word of this interrogation of a ruler about the performance of his duties.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**The third stage of development**

Around the first to third centuries A.D. brāhman rather than *kṣatriya* values came to exercise an increasing influence on the narrative. The details of the process are not entirely clear, but seem to have involved a change to a new set of redactors; probably also at this time the text was first committed to writing, although it also continued to be presented orally. The mechanisms by which the third stage came to be added are probably similar to those that saw the major expansion of the *Mahābhārata.* Thus the process of transformation seems for both epics to be linked with passing from the hands of their traditional reciters (*sūtas* and *kuśīlavas*) into those of the brāhmans as the guardians of all traditional learning. A new ending was added to the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* but most of the new material began by being added gradually at either end of the original story before the present division into *kāṇḍas* became firmly established (cf. above) before finally it was collected into two new framing books, the *Bāla* and *Uttara kāṇḍas*, where issues of sovereignty, purity and morality now come to the fore, ideas which introduced a harsh note into the romantic idyll (see MB 2023b and F. ‘New Beginnings’: 39-102). The process by which all this material was ultimately incorporated into the text as two more *kāṇḍas* has implications not only for them but also for the whole text, since they also mark the superimposition on to the biography of the basically human hero, Rāma, of the concept of Rāma as *avatāra,* significantly found at the beginning and the end of this enveloping of the earlier text: only in the gods’ appeal to become incarnate in order to save the world from Ravaṇa’s oppression (1.14-15, also subsequently referred to and reworked in Agastya’s narrative in 7.1-36) and in Rāma’s final return to heaven as Viṣṇu (7.93-100), all three of which are among the latest parts of this process of accretion. This process was largely completed by the fourth century A.D. and it is likely that the text was redacted into something close to that reconstructed in the Critical Edition as part of the Gupta cultural enterprise.[[18]](#footnote-18)

As its name indicates, the main purpose of the first book, the *Bālakāṇḍa* or ‘Childhood Book’, was to narrate Rāma’s birth and youthful exploits, to give fuller details of his marriage to Sītā (cf. MB, F. ‘New Beginnings’: 11-12), and generally to provide a framework for the narrative. The rest of its narrative accreted gradually around these and was further expanded with the many In-tales told by Viśvāmitra on the journey to Mithilā and Viśvāmitra’s back-story told by Śatānanda on their arrival. As finally developed, the *Bālakāṇḍa* opens with Vālmīki (the traditional author as participant in the narrative, seen again in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*) asking Nārada whether there exists in the world nowadays a truly exemplary individual and receiving the unequivocal answer that he is Rāma; this origin myth for the work also gives Brahmā a role, though preceded by Nārada answering Vālmīki's question about the ideal man (providing in effect a contents list for the *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddha kāṇḍas*), Vālmīki's witnessing the slaughter of the *krauñca* and as a result inventing the *śloka.* When these have given Vālmīki both the theme and the medium, Brahmā commissions him to tell the world the story of Rāma (1.2.29-36) and, once he has composed it (a second contents list in 1.3, now including limited parts of the *Bālakāṇḍa* and a bare mention of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*), he wonders who can transmit it and thinks of the *kuśīlavau*, then living in his *āśrama*. So he teaches it to them and they sing the poem (*kāvyam etad agāyatām* 1.4.8d), eventually before Rāma himself (1.4.21-27). This is dependent on and so later than the actual narrative in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of Vālmīki sending the *kuśīlavau* to recite the *Rāmāyaṇa* for the first time at Rāma's court (7.84-85). There we have the epic presented as if being narrated then and there, with reciters and audience actually within the text. In this self-conscious emphasis on the oral nature of its first delivery we may well be seeing the reflex of its transition from oral to written transmission suggested in the previous paragraph.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The birth of Rāma and his three brothers is next narrated in the *Bālakāṇḍa* in miraculous terms: Daśaratha is childless and in his anxiety for an heir performs first a horse sacrifice and then another sacrifice for sons. At the other gods’ request, Viṣṇu decides to become incarnate as Daśaratha’s four sons as the only means of destroying Rāvaṇa, the evil king of Laṅkā, and the other gods procreate the Vānara heroes. In due course, four sons are born: Rāma and Bharata play the chief roles, while the twins Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna (Sumitrā's sons) each attach themselves to one of their half-brothers as loyal but subservient companions. When Rāma is fifteen, the sage Viśvāmitra comes to court to ask for Rāma to protect his sacrifice against the attacks of the Rākṣasas Mārīca and Subāhu.[[20]](#footnote-20) This mission successfully accomplished, the sage takes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to attend King Janaka’s sacrifice at Mithilā. We learn of Sītā’s miraculous birth, which has Janaka find her in a furrow, and of Śiva’s bow, which no man has strength to string; Rāma not merely bends but breaks the bow, and with Daśaratha’s consent, Rāma is married to Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa to her sister, and Bharata and Śatrughna to her cousins. As the party return to Ayodhyā, Rāma’s status is further enhanced by an encounter with the belligerent Rāma Jāmadagnya.

The first two stages as they now appear include virtually nothing about Rāma’s life before the beginning of the story: he is the eldest of four brothers, the only one of them to be married, and he has come to the aid of Viśvāmitra in a youthful encounter with Mārīca. It was mostly the poets of the *Bālakāṇḍa* who filled in the details. Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna must now be no longer older and younger brother respectively but twins, for all four brothers are born more or less simultaneously, and no longer just as a result of the private devotions of their parents but following elaborate rituals conducted by the sage Ṛśyaśṛṅga. In a particularly late passage, Mārīca’s reference to an earlier encounter with Rāma is seized on and expanded into a detailed narrative with many additional tales of mythical heroes loosely integrated into the framework. On this occasion the authors must take care to ensure that the youthful prince does not kill Mārīca, only frighten him away, for the Rākṣasa must reappear later to help in the abduction of Sītā.

The *Bālakāṇḍa* has indeed generally been recognised as being, equally with the *Uttarakāṇḍa,* a later addition to the original epic, although there have been attempts to argue that it is essential to the narrative or that some part of it is as old as the rest (e.g. Agrawal 1975). Some of its incidents are clearly elaborated out of suggestions in the main narrative, while others are purely fanciful, and others again are entirely peripheral to the main story and are closer to purāṇic than epic narrative. Less attention has been drawn to the fact that parts of its narrative are totally unsupported elsewhere. For example, there is no evidence outside 1.15-17 that Rāma and his brothers were born more or less simultaneously or that Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna are twins, which contrasts with Kuśa and Lava being emphatically called *yamajāta,* “born as twins” in the *Uttarakāṇḍa (*7.58.7ab)and Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna themselves being explicitly called twins by Kālidāsa (*Raghuvaṃśa* 10.71). Nor is there any reference elsewhere in the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* to Daśaratha’s impotence and their miraculous birth, not even in Daśaratha’s dying look back over his past (2.57-58). The *Bālakāṇḍa* has clearly grown from a number of virtually independent episodes over a considerable period of time and the recognition that it and the *Uttarakāṇḍa* are later than the main narrative should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are many differences between them and within each.

Before the middle of the 19th century, the older Adolf Holtzmann noted the inferior style of the *Bālakāṇḍa* by comparison with the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, the duplication involved in the *aśvamedha* and the *putreṣṭi* and the respective roles of Vasiṣṭha and Ṛśyaśṛṅga, and the generally purāṇic character of its contents. Hermann Jacobi, who was the first to demonstrate in detail the overall lateness of the *Bālakāṇḍa,* nevertheless postulated an early date for a brief passage which he believed was prefixed to the present *Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* to remedy the perceived abruptness of the opening of the story there. The passage that he reconstructed comprises 1.5.1-9, 6.2-4, 17.10, 11c-12d, 14, 13 and 17, which clearly is an introduction, but to the *Bālakāṇḍa* alone. Its style is quite different from that of the early *Rāmāyaṇa* but similar to the more elaborate style of the second stage.

Lüders has demonstrated that the form of the Ṛśyaśṛṅga episode (1.8-10) was later than the versions in the *Mahābhārata* (3.110-3) and the *Padma Purāṇa.* Even earlier, Lassen had pointed out the awkwardness with which the *putreṣṭi* performed by Ṛśyaśṛṅga (1.14) follows the *asvamedha* (1.11-13) in the account of Daśaratha’s sacrifices and the abruptness of the insertion of the Paraśurāma episode (1.73-75). He notes that both episodes are intended to affirm Rāma’s status as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, which is not otherwise explicitly claimed in the *Bālakāṇḍa.* Vekerdi suggested that *sargas* 5-7, though subject to some expansion (especially in *sarga* 7), belong with the older books; he notes their more elaborate style and also the verse in longer metre concluding each, as is usual in the older books. The contrast with the immediately following Ṛśyaśṛṅga episode (1.8-10), to which Vekerdi draws attention, is indeed very marked, for this shows a very simple and flat style.

There is no evidence outside this passage that Rāma and his brothers were born more or less simultaneously or that Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna are twins, which contrasts with Kuśa and Lava being emphatically called *yamajāta* in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (58.7ab) and Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna themselves being explicitly called twins by Kālidāsa (*Raghuvaṃśa* 10.71). Bhargava, in a critical look at the growth of the Bālakāṇḍa starting from Jacobi’s views, rejects as late 1.14-16 on the *putreṣṭi,* regarding 11-13 on the *aśvamedha* as original: “The account of the *putreṣṭi* sacrifice having been proved spurious, the belief based on it that Rāma and his brothers were born within a few days of each other loses all validity.” (Bhargava 2003: 58)

Vekerdi also discusses the problems of how to link the presumed original beginning of the epic with the start of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* which presupposes certain events told in the last chapter of the *Bālakāṇḍa.* In our view textual repetition between the last *sarga* of the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the first *sarga* of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* probably points to the separation of what once formed a single passage, as is also suggested by the variation between the recensions over just where the division between the two books is made.Kirfel compared the story of Sagara’s sons (1.37-43) and the story of Diti and Indra (1.45) with the *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* (also Mbh. 3.106), argued that its author knew the *Vāyu Purāṇa* in something like its present form, and so assigned the *Bālakāṇḍa* as a whole (rather than the specific episodes) to the second half of the 4th century A.D.

The ending of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* was also remodelled during the transition from the second to third stages of growth. In the version now extant, later qualms about Sītā’s virtue cause Rāma to spurn her coldly, saying – for the first time – that he undertook the quest and combat simply to vindicate his own and his family’s honour, and not for her sake. In desperation, Sītā proceeds to immolate herself on a pyre prepared by Lakṣmaṇa. However, the gods appear to Rāma and reveal that he is in fact an incarnation of Viṣṇu and Agni hands Sītā back to her delighted husband, unharmed and exonerated. Daśaratha too appears, blesses his sons and tells Rāma to return to Ayodhyā and resume his reign (the fourteen years of exile having at this point expired). Everyone on the victorious side climbs into Rāvaṇa’s aerial chariot and they fly back to Ayodhyā. Bharata is delighted by the news of Rāma’s triumph and return, and restores the kingdom to him. This is followed by an elaborate ceremony of installation, and the narrative is rounded off with a eulogy of Rāma and his righteous ten-thousand-year reign.

The original core of the seventh book, the *Uttarakāṇḍa* or ‘Further Exploits’, is clearly what now forms its second part: the return to domesticity following Rāma’s victorious return to Ayodhyā and the problems of ruling his kingdom, which now forms the bulk of the second part of the *kāṇḍa* (7.37-100). However, it is preceded in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* as it was finally organised by Agastya’s narrative, delivered to Rāma before the other sages gathered to congratulate Rāma, about the previous exploits of Rāvaṇa and his ancestors (7.1-34) and those of Hanumān (7.35-36), amplifying the background of these two major figures in the narrative.[[21]](#footnote-21) Rāvaṇa’s deeds include gaining from Brahmā by his austerities a boon of invincibility by all except humans, his expelling Kubera from Laṅkā, and his rape of Rambhā (leading to the curse which prevents him raping Sītā).

The remainder of the book (7.37-100) reverts to the events subsequent to Rāma’s installation. The kings who had been guests at Rāma’s *abhiṣeka* now leave, thus linking the end of this passage with the end of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (the sages having already left at the conclusion of Agastya’s narrative at 7.36). Rāma lives happily with Sītā for some time and the country prospers under his rule, but slanderous gossip about Sītā’s virtue while a prisoner of Rāvaṇa compels Rāma reluctantly to order her exile to Vālmīki’s hermitage. The nation’s prosperity has come to be seen as entirely dependent on the king’s personal purity, a purity extending to the wife who must share his role; if that wife were not wholly and rigorously pure herself, the nation would not prosper (see further in MB in F. ‘New Beginnings’: 45-47). The redactors knew that Rāma had welcomed back to his side a wife who had been physically touched by another male, who had spent several months in his power even if not technically under his roof (even the earliest tellers had taken the precaution of keeping her out of doors, in the *aśoka* grove, during the monsoon), and their attempts to exonerate their hero from any possible taint make him seem harsh and uncaring, very different from the man who had been driven to distraction by her capture. First, he rejects her coldly when she appears before him after her liberation, and she is so distraught that she attempts to commit suicide in a fire, only to be safeguarded in the flames by Agni, god of fire and purity, and given back to Rāma with the assurance that he should accept her again. For a while Ayodhyā prospers under their happy and benevolent rule, but then the suspicions of the citizens oblige himto exile her once again, now pregnant (later versions of the tale introduce new devices to explain the unjust suspicions and divert blame from Rāma).

Subsequently, Śatrughna happens to stay the night at Vālmīki’s hermitage (while on his way to defeat the Asura Lavaṇa and found the city of Madhurā) and he learns of the birth of Rāma’s twin sons. At a later date still, Rāma prepares a horse sacrifice, at which two of Vālmīki’s pupils performing as bards, *kuśīlavau*, are recognised by their singing of the Rāma story as his sons. Sītā is recalled but this time she does not return to him. After giving birth to twin sons, she has brought his sons up to the verge of manhood and he has recognised them as his heirs. Now she publicly re-affirms her purity by calling on the Earth to swallow her in testimony; Earth embraces Sītā and so she disappears in a final demonstration of her purity in a poignant sacrifice of personal happiness to the wider national interest that echoes the opening of the romance. Rāma is left to mourn her loss, using a golden statue of her as a substitute at sacrifices. **As we have seen, Rāma had rejected Sītā coldly when she appeared before him after her liberation and Agni had vouched for her purity before Rāma would accept her again. For a while Ayodhyā had prospered under their happy and benevolent rule, but now the suspicions of the citizens have obliged him to exile her once again, now pregnant (later versions of the tale introduce new devices to explain the unjust suspicions and divert blame from Rāma).**

The three younger brothers each conquers territory of his own. Each of the four brothers has two sons, and each scrupulously divides his kingdom between them. The loving unity that has always characterized the four princes is carefully preserved in the latter part of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*; maybe its authors had seen too much of the consequences of royal family squabbles in real life. After a long and prosperous reign, Rāma receives a visit from Time and this first leads to Lakṣmaṇa immolating himself in the river Sarayū. Next, after settling the kingdom on Kuśa and Lava, Rāma publicly immolates himself in the river Sarayū and, along with Bharata and Śatrughna, is welcomed by the gods.

Rāma the moral warrior hero was still portrayed as a human, but a human who was being constantly aggrandized by his redactors. One way to do this was by associating him with various figures known from mythology, and a number of pre-existent tales were incorporated at this third stage, with only the most tenuous link to the plot or situation. Another way was to aggrandize his opponents and allies, the task of the first half of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, which recounts the earlier exploits first of Rāvaṇa and his family (though in a way that in reality demonstrates their limitations), then of Vālin and of Hanumān, again expanded out of stray remarks in the earlier stages (mainly in 3.30). If Rāma can defeat opponents of such awesome might, he must be a very great man indeed, both physically and morally. In the older portions of the text he had been associated in comparisons with the martial Indra; now that god was increasingly becoming portrayed as morally degenerate, these were still retained despite the inappropriateness, but in the newer layers Rāma became increasingly compared to the rising figure of Viṣṇu, and at the conclusion of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* a chorus of gods declared him to be divine. Finally, a further account clumsily grafted on to his birth-story identified Rāma and his brothers as partial incarnations of Viṣṇu. The belief that Rāma was an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, found clearly here and in the brothers’ final self-immolation, occurs from time to time elsewhere in this third stage of development and it is a development that sits uneasily alongside the many statements still retained in the earlier text stressing that Rāma is human, as well as the boon developed from hints in the first stage that Rāvaṇa cannot be killed by gods, only by a human: the taut logic that governed the creators of the Rāma story was of less concern to their successors than their desire to aggrandize Rāma. As a result the text undergoes a change in genre at this point: it is no longer a romance about the private antagonism between one man and his lustful enemy, or even of national importance, but it is a struggle of cosmic significance, with Rāvaṇa’s exploits threatening the stability of the universe and the existence of the gods themselves; so the gods themselves must take a hand to remedy the situation. In Western terms, the romance has been transformed into an epic, and the abduction of Sītā is merely an excuse, or even opportunity, for Viṣṇu to intervene.

The other creation of this stage is the figure of Vālmīki, although there is still no suggestion of several legends later attributed to him.[[22]](#footnote-22) He appears at the beginning of the *Bālakāṇḍa*, invents the *śloka* metre in his grief at seeing amating crane killed by a hunter (in fact the *śloka* is a development from an older, Vedic metre), and is commissioned by Brahmā to compose the story of Rāma in this metre. This he does mentally, then teaches it to the *kuśīlavau*, who sing, before Rāma, what purports to be the rest of the text, a scene which is not explained until the middle of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, when Vālmīki gives the exiled Sītā sanctuary at his hermitage, where she gives birth to her sons and brings them up; it is their singing of his story that leads Rāma to recognize and acknowledge them as his sons. It has become conventional to refer to the Sanskrit text of the Rāma story as the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* (and to attribute some later, independent versions to his authorship), but there is no textual warrant to confirm this identification.

The *Uttarakāṇḍa,* though by no means homogeneous, has a clearer structure than the *Bālakāṇḍa*. The most obvious stylistic difference is between Agastya’s narrative in *sargas* 1‑36 and the remaining *sargas* 37-100. The difference in total length is actually the reverse of that implied by the number of *sargas,* since the average length of *sargas* 1-36 is nearly double that of the other *sargas* and their total length slightly exceeds that of *sargas* 37-100. The style of 7.1-36 is relatively ornate, with a fairly high proportion of similes and long compounds; the general impression that it gives stylistically is not greatly dissimilar from the elaborated passages of the second stage. Another distinction is that 12 *sargas* within 7.1-36 have a tag verse or verses, whereas in 7.37-100 only 5 have a tag verse and there are no multiple verses. All except the last two *sargas* of the passage consist of Agastya’s narration of the previous exploits of Rāvaṇa and his ancestors and material corresponding to this is also found in the *Rāmopākhyāna.* The last two *sargas* of Agastya’s narrative comprise a separate story, that of Hanumān’s birth and childhood partly developed from material in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, and they show much the same degree of stylistic elaboration.

The *Uttarakāṇḍa* appears on the whole later than the *Bālakāṇḍa*; there is much less divergence between the recensions and its view at some points of Rāma as divine is more advanced than anywhere else in the epic. Superficial hints of Rama’s exceptional status now became the basic theme of the *Uttarakāṇḍa,* in which the final stage was reached in the progress of Rāma from a heroic figure to an ideal model of the perfect ruler and finally to the *avatāra* of the supreme deity. More generally, the **second but earlier** part of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* can be seen as an attempt to fill out some of the questions left unanswered at the end of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*; more specifically, it can be seen as the realisation of the prediction made there by Maheśvara that Rāma, after taking charge of the kingdom again, will establish the Ikṣvāku dynasty, celebrate an *aśvamedha* and, after gaining unparalleled fame, deservedly go to heaven (6.107.1-6). With one exception (7.41, where the description of Rāma and Sītā in the pleasure-garden positively demands some stylishness), the style is plain and unadorned,[[23]](#footnote-23) and there is no real difference between the narration of obviously purāṇic episodes, such as the stories of Śveta and Daṇḍa (7.68-72) or of Ila (7.78-81), and episodes that are central to its plot, such as the banishment of Sītā (7.42-47).

**Later elaborations in the fourth and fifth stages of development**

The text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* did not become relatively fixed until probably the Gupta period (4th-6th centuries A.D.), a period of consolidation of the high culture, nearly a thousand years after the composition of its core. Committing the tale to writing in manuscripts that had to be frequently recopied led to further stages of elaboration in the development of the separate but interlocking recensions that had already begun to emerge earlier. Passages in all seven books were elaborated and narrative insertions made by poets who adopted a process similar to that of the poets of the second stage, equally reflecting the diction, style and outlook of their own day; they filled out the story, but did not extend it to any great degree forward or backward. These poets were limited and constrained not only by their own talent, outlook and interests, but still more by the now well-known outline and even by details of the story they had inherited. Large-scale alteration ended perhaps about the twelfth century; by this time Rāma the originally human hero had become widely recognized as God and the first extant commentaries are being written (another factor in reducing the extent of alteration, at least in the Southern recension). After this time rare hints are introduced, sometimes in only a few manuscripts, of concepts such as *bhakti,* the saving grace of Rāma’s name, and — rarest of all — *rāmacandra* as the name of the hero.

The text certainly continued to absorb material from varied sources, forming the material relegated in the Critical Edition to its \* passages and Appendix I, which comprises the fourth and fifth stages of growth of the epic. The additions or substitutions common to many manuscripts can be grouped as the fourth stage, while those found in a few or even just one manuscript then comprise a fifth stage of growth (which probably dates mainly from the 12th century onwards). These illustrate particularly clearly the divergence into recensions which had long been an obvious feature of the history of the text, as well as showing the two opposing trends seen in material of the second stage of on the one hand elaboration on the more dramatic and lyrical aspects of the story and on the other hand narration in a plain and broadly purāṇic style of various extraneous episodes. The most significant differences of style, however, are those between the recensions. The Northern recension presents on the whole a more polished version than the Southern, with relatively little difference between the Northwestern and Northeastern recensions, into which it is further subdivided. Where differences can be ascertained, the Northern recension generally shows a verbal pattern more like that of classical Sanskrit literature: it contains higher proportions of various figures of speech and of long compounds, and it has fewer examples of naïve features such as playing on personal names and parallelism of structure. It is interesting, however, to note that similes often remain as the only similarity between the divergent readings of the two main recensions, which is linked to the stereotyped nature of many similes.

These two stages also reveal the same two opposing trends seen in the second stage (and to a more limited extent in the third) of elaborating on the more dramatic and lyrical aspects of the story and of narrating in a plain, unadorned style various extraneous episodes loosely inserted into the plot. There are also further additions motivated by moral or ethical factors, such as Daśaratha’s paternalistic moralising to Bharata as he leaves to visit his maternal grandfather and uncle (2 App.1, an addition by 5 manuscripts in all), Kaikeyī turning the equivalence of truth and *dharma* – a concept typical of later stages of growth of the text – to her own ends (at 2.234\* 1-3 from the fourth stage, where the second half of the first line reverses what is stated in the text at 2.18.33b), and Sugrīva’s regrets at Vālin’s death (lengthily expressed in 4 App.14), to cite just a few. There are further additions reflecting more popular elements, such as the belief that crows are one-eyed (because of the crow shot by Rāma when it molested Sītā, described at 2 App.I.26.76-115 and also mentioned at 5.851\*, a 5th-stage passage). Among the occasional amplifications of the narrative found in earlier stages we find, for example, the ascetic youth killed by Daśaratha being named as Yajñadatta (at 2.1456\*3, an addition of the Northern recension), *rākṣasas* impersonating Bharata and his troops at the start of the battle (found in a passage of the fourth stage, 6.131\*) and Vālmīki’s total vision of the Rāma story being attributed to Yoga (at 1.154\*7). Some of these additions are then taken over into other versions as part of their indebtedness to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa,* which can give an indication of the date before which they were included in the manuscripts which read them; for example 2 App.26.1-66 (expanding on more amorous aspects of Rāma and Sītā’s time at Citrakūṭa) is drawn on by Bhavabhūti in the 8th century, while the *Ādityahṛdaya,* Rāma’s invocation of the sun-god Sūrya before the battle (6 App.I.65) predates the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.*[[24]](#footnote-24)

**A bibliographical note**

All references, in this chapter and throughout, to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* are to the Critical Edition described above. The form of the text identified above as the first stage of its development is translated in JLB and MB (trans.) 2006. A translation of the entire Critical Edition text – the form it had reached by the end of the third stage – was made in the Princeton *Rāmāyaṇa* project under the general editorship of Robert P. Goldman (Goldman and others (trans.) 1984-2017); this edition is provided with extensive annotations which include discussion, and often translation, of many of the passages excluded from the text (the fourth and fifth stages of growth as defined above).

A review of previous scholarship on the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa,* along with that on the *Mahābhārata,* can be found at JLB 1998: 41-81. A very old bibliography is contained in Gore 1943. Useful overviews of the *Rāmāyaṇa* include Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 2004, Söhnen-Thieme 2003 (in German, with history of earlier research at 185-90) and Stasik 2000: 19-48. A number of edited volumes, either mainly on modern versions of the Rāma story or on both the Sanskrit epics (sometimes including more modern versions), have appeared in the 21st century; those that contain articles relating to the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* include: Bose 2004, Dodiya 2001, Goldman and Tokunaga 2009, Stasik and JLB 2002, JLB and MB 2016b.

**The *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas**

**The Mahābhārata**

The increasing veneration of its hero Rāma, which is evident by the end of the third stage of growth of the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa,* is obviously a factor in the popularity of the text and the spread of the Rāma story. Nevertheless, the first stages of the spread of the story into other literature seem to have preceded the deification of Rāma. In particular, the other even larger Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata,* contains passages alluding to or summarising the Rāma story which reveal both attitudes to Rāma, as human and as divine. It is clear that successive generations of *Mahābhārata* redactors turned to the Rāma story for illustrative material (MB 2006). The most extensive of these *Mahābhārata* passages is the *Rāmopākhyāna* (MBh. 3.257-76) but there are quite a number of shorter passages alluding to the Rāma story, as well as considerable evidence of acquaintance with the text in other ways. The overwhelming majority of these allusions depend ultimately or even directly on the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*, and two refer to its supposed author; the brief allusions make sense in theircontext only if the story was already known to the audience, making it all the more ludicrous that Yudhiṣṭhira should be portrayed as asking so many questions about Rāma and his life in the introduction to the *Rāmopākhyāna* (3.258.4-5). For example, the battle between Vālin and Sugrīva is repeatedly used without further explanation as a simile for a hard-fought fight of doubtful outcome. Also, Rāma’s military supremacy, unquestioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is neither taken for granted nor stressed in the *Mahābhārata*; ten of Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons, each ‘equal to Dāśarathi’ in prowess, are defeated by Bhīma (7,132.16d), and Arjuna and Karṇa fighting are compared to ‘two Dāśarathis’ (8,63.20b); even Hanumān explicitly claims that he could have killed Rāvaṇa himself (3,149.14-19).

The *Rāmopākhyāna* is a relatively full summary of the story, extending over a little more than 700 verses, divided into the typical *Mahābhārata* total of eighteen chapters (which therefore bear little relationship to either the seven *kāṇḍa* division of the developed *Rāmāyaṇa* or the five of its core). In most of its narration, the *Rāmopākhyāna* sees Rāma as an exemplary but basically human figure — the position reached by the middle of the second stage of the *Rāmāyaṇa’s* growth — but in one relatively brief section of 15 verses Brahmā declares that Viṣṇu has descended to earth and tells the other gods to become incarnate as monkeys and bears (MBh. 3.260). Indeed, the logic of the *Rāmopākhyāna’s* presence at that point in the *Mahābhārata* is that Rāma is human, since Mārkaṇḍeya narrates Rāma’s story, and then that of Satyavat and Sāvitrī (MBh. 3.277-83), in answer to Yudhiṣṭhira’s question about whether there was any man more unfortunate than he was in suffering exile to the forest and the abduction of his wife.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Mārkaṇḍeya first very briefly outlines the genealogies of Rama and Sītā and then of Rāvaṇa (MBh. 3.258, in just 16 *ślokas*) and then enlarges on Rāvaṇa’s background and his exploits, including his ousting of Kubera from Laṅkā and his terrorising of the gods (in the 40 *ślokas* of 3.259), before briefly describing the gods’ appeal to Brahmā and Viṣṇu’s descent (3.260). His narrative of the events of the *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddha kāṇḍas* then follows in 3.261 to 3.275, ending with a reference to Rāma performing ten *aśvamedhas* after his triumphant return in the very last verse (3.275.69). The next *adhyāya* (3.276) consists of his driving home the moral that Yudhiṣṭhira should not grieve so excessively.

The relationship of the *Rāmopākhyāna* to the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been frequently discussed for well over a century. The first significant study was by Jacobi, who held that the *Rāmopākhyāna* was based on the *Rāmāyaṇa,* of which it was a rather careless abridgement, and noted that certain passages in the *Rāmopākhyāna* are only fully intelligible through knowledge of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Jacobi 1893: 74-77). A careful textual study of both by Słuszkiewicz found twice as many correspondences between the *Rāmopākhyāna* and the Northern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* while indicating that the author of the *Rāmopākhyāna* could not have relied exclusively on that recension (Słuszkiewicz 1938: 13–32). A further advance was made in Sukthankar’s article demonstrating on additional textual grounds arising from his work on the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* that the *Rāmopākhyāna* is based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Sukthankar 1941); regrettably, although he knew of Słuszkiewicz’s study, Sukthankar failed to appreciate the significance of the correspondences with the Northern recension that it had demonstrated. Although this view has been challenged subsequently, in particular by Vaidya (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1960-75: VI, xxxi-xxxvi) and by van Buitenen (*Mahābhārata* 1973–: II, 207-14), no serious evidence has been adduced to support the challenge. Those occasions on which the *Rāmopākhyāna* can hardly be understood without prior knowledge of the story and others where its wording is more easily understood in the light of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* further confirm its dependence on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.*

All the evidence does in fact establish that the *Rāmopākhyāna* is drawn from a version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* something like that existing today: a substantial proportion of its wording is identical with that of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (approximately 15% – over 300 correspondences amounting to over 400 *pādas* in total). To the earlier studies of Słuszkiewicz and Sukthankar already mentioned can now be added the further evidence of correspondences collected by Raghavan (1973: 2-33), by van Nooten (1980-81) and most completely by JLB (1978), while Goldman has reviewed the weaknesses in Vaidya’s and van Buitenen’s arguments (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1984–2017: I, 34-39), which nevertheless have more recently been subscribed to by Hiltebeitel on the basis of the priority of an essentially unitary *Mahābhārata* to the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Hiltebeitel 2009, cf. Hiltebeitel 2015). It needs to be stressed that the distribution of the verbal correspondences in the *Rāmopākhyāna* is noticeably even and their order of occurrence significantly close to that in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Moreover, where readings differ between the recensions (roughly one sixth of the total), these demonstrate conclusively that the *Rāmopākhyāna* is in general closer to the Northern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in particular the Northeastern,which suggests that this recension was well on the way to being established in something approaching its present form before the *Rāmopākhyāna* was included in the text of the *Mahābhārata*. Despite a significant number of agreements with the Southern recension, the *Rāmopākhyāna* is clearly not based on it, even in an earlier form, although this recension is generally held to be the more conservative version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[[26]](#footnote-26)

There are admittedly certain divergences between the narrative in both texts and these have sometimes been thought to indicate that the *Rāmopākhyāna* is independent of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (see JLB 1978, 1985a: 227-29 and 1998: 474-77). Several of these divergences consist of the addition of detail which is almost certainly secondary. Other discrepancies, which often involve the names of minor characters, are frequent but of little significance. A bigger divergence lies in the *Rāmopākhyāna* treatment of the Yuddhakāṇḍa material: while some is abbreviated, other parts are treated more extensively, with the result that the author of the *Rāmopākhyāna* has devoted nearly half his space to under one third of his original and in the process appreciably shifted the emphasis of the story. A major question is whether the Bāla and the Uttara kāṇḍas were in existence at the time that the *Rāmopākhyāna* was composed. Only one section from each, the genealogies and background of Rāma and Rāvaṇa respectively, appears as a prologue to the *Rāmopākhyāna.* The cluster of correspondences found to *VR* 7.1-26 (particularly *sargas* 10-11), with nothing of significance in the rest of the Uttarakāṇḍa raises the possibility that the only part of the Uttarakāṇḍa available to the author of the *RU* was the first (and only the first) part of Agastya’s narrative. Whatever the precise relationship of its first *adhyāya* to the Bāla and Uttara kāṇḍas, the composition of the *Rāmopākhyāna* (and presumably but not necessarily its incorporation into the *Mahābhārata*) should most probably be assigned, in terms of the stages of growth of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, to the earlier part of the third stage, around the first century B.C.

It contains no reference to several of the more obvious additions of the second stage, for example Daśaratha’s account of his slaying of the ascetic youth (though mentioning Daśaratha’s death), Bharadvāja’s entertainment of Bharata’s army, Jābāli’s and Vasiṣṭha’s speeches to Rāma, Sītā’s meeting with Anasūyā, Vālin’s accusation of Rāma and his reply, Hanumān’s killing the sons of Rāvaṇa’s ministers and Rāma’s first encounter with Rāvaṇa, to name only the most prominent episodes and thus the most likely for inclusion. Interestingly, following Rāma’s repudiation of Sītā, various gods and Daśaratha appear and first Vāyu, then Agni, Varuṇa and Brahmā in succession testify to Sītā’s purity, so there is no “fire-ordeal” as such; whether this represents an earlier version than the undoubtedly late ending to the Yuddhakāṇḍa or is conditioned by the context (Mārkaṇḍeya’s narration of the story to Yudhiṣṭhira following Draupadī’s abduction) is open to question.

On the other hand, the *Rāmopākhyāna* does allude to episodes which it is reasonable to infer have been elaborated rather than inserted — such as Sītā’s spirited rejection of Rāvaṇa before he seizes her — but always in a way that is consistent with what may be expected to have lain behind the present expanded version. As its framing narrative clearly indicates, the *Rāmopākhyāna* is indeed one of a considerable number of expansions in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* but it is certainly not among the latest additions to the *Mahābhārata*. As we have noted, in general it still sees Rāma as an exemplary but basically human figure, unlike some of the other brief references to the Rāma story throughout the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, which see him as an *avatāra.*

Another brief account of the Rāma story is Hanumān’s account of the Rāma story to Bhīma, who meets Hanumān in the course of bringing the Saugandhika flower for Draupadī (MBh 3.147; JLB 2004; Lutgendorf 2007: 280-82; Sullivan 2016); here, by contrast with the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, Hanumān explicitly declaresthat Rāma is Viṣṇu in human form (MBh 3.147.28), as well as actually naming the *Rāmāyaṇa* (11c).[[27]](#footnote-27) Similarly, the account of Rāma’s encounter with his namesake Rāma son of Jamadagni inserted by some manuscripts into the *Tīrthayātrā* section of the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (MBh 3 App.14) is a completely separable reworking — indeed substantial remodelling — of the Bālakāṇḍa episode (Rm 1.73–75; cf. Sukthankar 1936–37: 20–21, Raghavan 1973: 10, and Gail 1977: 50), although there are a few verbal reminiscences.[[28]](#footnote-28)

It is noteworthy that both these passages are located in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, as is the *Rāmopākhyāna*. In fact, there are at least seven other passages definitely referring to characters or episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in that book, and in addition there is the *Nalopākhyāna* which undoubtedly borrows verbally from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (see below). There are also substantial numbers in the *Droṇa,* *Śānti* and *Anuśāsana* *parvans,* as well as a sizable total in passages which are rejected from the text of the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* (MB 2006, cf. Hopkins 1930). This pattern is of course entirely consistent with such passages having been incorporated into the *Mahābhārata* during its main phase of expansion, for it has long been held that the *Āraṇyaka* and *Śānti* parvans reached their present bulk as a result of it, but it is also clear that successive generations of *Mahābhārata* redactors turned to the Rāma story for illustrative material.

Rāma’s moral status in the *Mahābhārata* in general is high but not supreme, and not entirely respected. His wisdom and actions provide positive examples for the Pāṇḍavas to emulate, especially in their forest exile (e.g. 3.26.5-10 and 3.299.18), but again, subtle ways are found of reducing his supremacy, for example: Bhīṣma and Droṇa are said to be ‘not inferior’ to him in *dharma* and *satya* (1.197.6c); the unscrupulous Kṛṣṇa urges Yudhiṣṭhira to use craft to kill his enemy, just as Rāma and others did (9.30.10-12), without explaining what stratagem other than skill and courage he used to kill Rāvaṇa, for no such expedient is mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*; and Yudhiṣṭhira’s rash return for the second dicing session knowing that it will bring disaster is excused in a late *Mahābhārata* passage by the analogy of Rāma being deluded by the golden deer despite its manifest impossibility (2.583\* 1-2). Rāma’s wife is virtually ignored: only once, in the scene where Bhīma tenderly encourages Draupadī to endure her degradation at Virāṭa’s court (4,20.9-10), is attention focused on the similarity of their situation but even here, Sītā is not supreme in her devotion, but the third in a list of four wives who suffered hardship to accompany their husbands.

Within the *Mahābhārata* tradition, there is also a group of four passages which are obviously linked in being similar in subject-matter, and often wording, to the closing verses of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, 6.116.80–90 (see JLB 1986). These passages form two pairs, since two treat Rāma as one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu (*Harivaṃśa* 31.110–42 and MBh 2 App.21.492–582), whereas two include him among the sixteen kings of old (MBh 12.29.46–55 and 7 App.8.437–82).[[29]](#footnote-29) The relationships within each of the pairs seem clear enough; the *Sabhāparvan* passage (MBh 2 App.21) is based on the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Droṇaparvan* (MBh 7 App.8) form of the narrative of the sixteen kings is later than the *Śāntiparvan* account (MBh 12.29). The virtually complete lack of overlap between these four passages and the *Rāmopākhyāna* immediately excludes the possibility of their being derived from the *Rāmāyaṇa* through the *Rāmopākhyāna*. But the *avatāra* passages preface the common material from the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa with a summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, often drawn from the actual wording of the epic, while the *Droṇaparvan* passage has its own résumé which is quite separate and much briefer.

Besides their common dependence on the closing verses of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, the four passages are again most closely connected with the Northern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Śāntiparvan* passage draws most directly on the *Rāmāyaṇa* passage and appears to be the earliest. The *Harivaṃśa* passage, despite some evidence of contact with the *Śāntiparvan* version, draws separately on the *Rāmāyaṇa.* The *Sabhāparvan* version is expanded from the *Harivaṃśa* passage which, with occasional additions, it follows quite closely. The *Droṇaparvan* passage shares a common framework with the *Śāntiparvan* passage, treating Rāma therefore as a mortal hero but at the same time showing acquaintance with the *avatāra* passages of the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Sabhāparvan*. Not only does it share common innovations with the *Sabhā* versions, its indebtedness is clear, showing that this is the latest version.

It is clear that successive generations of *Mahābhārata* redactors also turned to the Rāma story for illustrative material. The overwhelming majority of allusions depend ultimately or even directly on the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*, and two refer to its supposed author: one is credited to Vālmīki by name (7.118.48ab + 975\*) and the other (12.57.40-41) to an unnamed Bhārgava, presumably Vālmīki.[[30]](#footnote-30)  An extreme example of this allusiveness is that, according to the *Nārāyaṇīya* (MBh. 12.326.79), the sages Ekata and Dvita were changed into monkeys because of the murder of Trita and, since this comes in the verse following the declaration of Nārāyaṇa’s incarnation as Rāma, by implication this is the origin of either Hanumān and Sugrīva or Vālin and Sugrīva. This dependence specifically on the version we know as Vālmīki’s is echoed by the authors of the *Harivaṃśa* where it is all the more remarkable that they should choose the *ādikāvya* rather than any of the summaries in the *Mahābhārata* as the source for Rāma-material in their supplement to the *Mahābhārata* (MB 2005). It also provides no evidence to support the assumption that any independent versions of the Rāma-story (ballads, *jātakas* or other forms) existed either before or as alternatives to the version handed down as Vālmīki’s work. Strangely, in view of his growing prominence in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and later in his own cult, Hanumān is little mentioned, and he is completely absent from the *Harivaṃśa* (JLB 2004; MB 2005).

More substantial common passages include much of the didactic element in both epics. For example, the *sarga* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the evils of a kingless state (*VR* 2.61) shows a large measure of agreement with a *Mahābhārata* passage which discusses the evils resulting if a king does not protect his people (Mbh. 12.67-68) and which probably derives from the *Rāmāyaṇa* version. Conversely, the story of Surabhi (2.68) is undoubtedly borrowed from the *Mahābhārata* (3.10). The *kaccit sarga*, however, though probably inserted later into the *Mahābhārata*, may well derive in both epics from an independent catechism. In addition, the *Mahābhārata* has borrowed certain other elements from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, of which one example has already been mentioned: the *Nalopākhyāna*, where Sudeva’s soliloquy (Mbh. 3.65) closely imitates Hanumān’s soliloquy (*VR* 5.13-14 and 17) (see Sukthankar 1939, Jhala 1968, MB 2012b). Other evidence for links between the two epics include their use of various formulaic phrases (cf. Hopkins 1898; JLB 1998: 482-83; 1986/2000: 328-29 and 1985b/2000) and Minoru Hara 1993-94). For example, a passage at the beginning of the Araṇyakāṇḍa parallels one in the middle of the Āraṇyakaparvan (*VR* 3.1.3-10 and MBh. 3.145.29-32) to such an extent that one must be copying the other; here the evidence of the stereotyped *pādas* occurring in each establishes the direction of borrowing as being from the *Rāmāyaṇa* into the *Mahābhārata* but by the middle of the period of growth of both the borrowing was in both directions.

**The Harivaṃśa**

Although the *Harivaṃśa,* the *khila* or supplement to the *Mahābhārata,* contains one of the group of four passages linked to the closing verses of the Yuddhakāṇḍa analysed above (at 31.110–42), it does not contain any other telling of the Rāma story. Even this telling is less full than it appears, since it omits any reference to Sītā (except a minimal one as his faithful companion), any mention of the court, banishment from Ayodhyā and return there, any homage by Rāma to ascetics, any of the events and most of the characters surrounding the abduction, any descendants of Rāma and his brothers. Indeed, it concentrates on the figure of Rāma himself, his defeat of an enemy of the gods, and his righteous rule (12 *ślokas* on *rāmarājya* out of a total of only 33), divorced from any personal, familial or dynastic concerns. Admittedly, we do find elsewhere a narrative (as part of a conversation between Viṣṇu and Nārada detailing several of Viṣṇu’s exploits) of Mathurā being founded by Śatrughna (44.21-53, based on *VR* 7.52-63), as well as a listing of Rāma as a member of the solar dynasty, the Sūryavaṃśa (10.74).

Nevertheless there is ample evidence in the *Harivaṃśa* of the growing influence exercised by the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a text with which it might be thought to have few points of contact, narrative, chronological or even sectarian (see MB 2005). The locations within that text selected for use by the *Harivaṃśa* authors are disproportionately the later parts (predominantly books 1 and 7, the Bāla and Uttara kāṇḍas), where Rāma’s character has developed from that of the mortal warrior, via that of the righteous prince, to that of supreme hero, culminating in his portrayal as a form of Viṣṇu, an outlook according well with that of the *Harivaṃśa* authors. A number of references scattered through the *Harivaṃśa* show that their redactors knew the *Rāmāyaṇa* text, had no objection to adapting it to a new context, and — crucially — expected their audience to be familiar with its story, if they were to make sense of the allusions. The *Harivaṃśa* poets, like the *Mahābhārata* poets, did not share the purpose of the *Rāmāyaṇa* authors — to glorify Rāma in all circumstances — but so high was Rāma’s status and so all-pervasive his influence by the time of the *Harivaṃśa*’*s* completion that he could not be ignored (MB2006). Nevertheless, in the whole of the *Harivaṃśa*, with so many references to characters, events and even phrases found in Vālmīki’s story, there is not a single reference to Rāma’s faithful servant, Hanumān, who is present in the *Mahābhārata* and whose status in popular tradition was frequently to eclipse his master. It is clear, however, that *Harivaṃśa* references to the *Rāmāyaṇa* rely on the audience having considerable, detailed knowledge of the Rāma-story — and it is the Rāma story ascribed to Vālmīki; specifically, it is the story represented by the latest layer of the Critical Edition text, not any of the summaries found in the *Mahābhārata*. Absences and unexpressed assumptions are equally important in demonstrating that the source of this material is some form of the text transmitted as the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*: if any variant traditions existed (whether early ballads or proto-*Dasarathajātaka*), they have left no trace on the *Harivaṃśa*.

Few of these *Rāmāyaṇa* references occur in the earlier parts of the *Harivaṃśa* text, but by the time of the Kṛṣṇacarita and its subsequent expansions the *Harivaṃśa* authors cannot ignore Rāma’s growing status as an independent figure with his own developing cult, so they divert attention from him by focusing on other characters in his story, and by identifying him merely as one of the many manifestations of Viṣṇu, a forerunner of their own hero and so to a certain extent the same person: in fact Viṣṇu in different epochs. Overt identification of Rāma with Viṣṇu is a feature not developed until the very latest layer of the Bāla and Uttara kāṇḍas of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, confirming the third century A.D. as the earliest likely date for that part of the *Harivaṃśa* (and also a date *after* which the Anuśāsanaparvan was accepted into the canon of the *Mahābhārata*).

Another much later work standing broadly in the *Mahābhārata* tradition,the *Jaiminīya Aśvamedha* or *Jaimini Bhārata,* composed most probably to the 12th century,[[31]](#footnote-31)also contains several episodes of the Rāma narrative: it begins with a mention of Rāma performing the *aśvamedha* three times (1.14); it refers indirectly to the Ahalyā story (a stone becoming sanctified by the touch of Rāma’s foot, 2.28); it inserts into the battle between Arjuna and his son Babhruvāhana a subsection, the *Kuśalavopākhyāna* (25-36), on the encounter between Śatrughna’s party and Rāma’s sons which parallels the *Padma Purāṇa* account (W.L. Smith 1999: 393); and it mentions the recitation of Rāma’s name, *rāmanāman* (27.60), as well as containing other echoes of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* (cf. Raghavan 1973: 65-68). A *Sītāvijaya* (also known as *Sahasramukharāvaṇacaritra*) claiming to belong to the *Āśramavāsaparvan* of the *Jaimini Bhārata,* and a *Mairāvaṇacaritra* or *Hanumadvijaya* have now been published along with a rather inadequate English translation (*Jaiminīya Bhārata* 2017; cf. Koskikallio and Vielle 2001: 78-81). Extant only in manuscript are a shorter *Sītāvijaya* or *Sahasramukharāvaṇacaritra* claiming to be an extract of a *Vāsiṣṭhottararāmāyaṇa* (Koskikallio and Vielle 2001: 75-78) and a *Setumāhātmya* (Koskikallio and Vielle 2001: 81).

**The Purāṇas**

The Purāṇas, which broadly continue the epic tradition as well as developing their own particular interests, also show considerable familiarity with both epics, though with marked variation from one text to another. Although they were composed and edited by brāhmans, the Purāṇas also retain appreciable elements deriving from the *kṣatriya* background of the epics, as well as incorporating major elements of more popular religion. Indeed, so much is this the case that the more popular form of Hinduism emerging from the Gupta period onward has often been called purāṇic Hinduism. As a result, the Purāṇas now usually have a sectarian affiliation, whether Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva or Śākta,[[32]](#footnote-32) but their sectarianism is by no means exclusive and they regularly show respect towards all the major deities.

Chronologically, the Purāṇas are clearly later than the main phases of composition of the epics, but there is also the possibility of influence by them on the latest parts of the epic tradition, with the *Harivaṃśa* in particular, as a supplement to or completion of the *Mahābhārata,* forming something of a transition between the two. They develop the religious implications of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* at the same general period as many works of classical Sanskrit literature were drawing on its literary aspects. Their basically religious nature makes it easier to plot the theological developments in the depiction of Rāma than in the contemporary works of classical Sanskrit literature, which will also be surveyed subsequently; they thus form a transition to the later Sanskrit and vernacular *Rāmāyaṇas*. In their aspect as popular literature, they also form part of the background to the extra-Indian versions of the story. However, since most are composite works, often compiled over several centuries, a purely chronological treatment of them is not feasible.

It is well known that the great majority of the Purāṇas contain at least some reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* or to Rāma himself; indeed, among the major Purāṇas only the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* one of the earliest and briefest, lacks any reference to either. The different types of reference range from bare mention of Rāma in lists (as one member of the solar dynasty, the Sūryavaṃśa, or in a list of Viṣṇu’s *avatāras*) through quite brief accounts (of around one *adhyāya* and even briefer references), to relatively extended narratives (those extending over several *adhyāyas*), although no Purāṇa concentrates on Rāma to the degree that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does on Kṛṣṇa. At times these categories overlap but they are broadly valid; indeed to some degree there seems to be a chronological progression from brief mention to full narration and this appears to be a more significant factor than any Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva or Śākta affiliation in the degree of attention paid to the Rāma story (JLB 2012), although it is modified more in the Śaiva Purāṇas (MB 2018). In addition, we find narration of certain episodes only (of which the most frequent probably is the story of Vedavatī), references to Vālmīki as the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and narration of the legend of him as the reformed brigand (see Leslie 2003).

Among the listings of Rāma as a member of the Sūryavaṃśa, that in the *Harivaṃśa* (10.74) mentioned already is no doubt the earliest in the series and gives him no special prominence, merely placing him between Daśaratha and Kuśa in the genealogy; this passage is then reproduced (with only minor changes) in the *Brahma Purāṇa,* which also therefore has just one verse on Rāma (8.87). While the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* makes no reference to Rāma, the other mainly early Purāṇas, the *Matsya, Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* (mainly from the 3rd-5th centuries), do mention Rāma, but only briefly: within their Sūryavaṃśa sections at *Matsya* *Purāṇa* 12.49-51 and *Vāyu* (2.26.183-95) ≈ *Brahmāṇḍa* (3.63.185 and 192-97),[[33]](#footnote-33) and within their *avatāra* lists at *Matsya Purāṇa* 47.245 = *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.36.91 = *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 2.73.91cd-92ab (copied by *Skanda Purāṇa* 7.19.75cd-76ab).[[34]](#footnote-34) In addition, the *Matsya Purāṇa,* though lacking any narration of the Rāma story, twice mentions Vālmīki telling it, while other evidence shows that its compiler was in fact well acquainted with the *Rāmāyaṇa*,though not interested in reproducing the story.[[35]](#footnote-35) The *Padma Purāṇa* version (1.8.164-6) differs from the *Matsya Purāṇa* (12.49-51) in naming Kuśa alone of Rāma’s two sons, which is more relevant to the genealogy, while the *Agni Purāṇa* (273.32-35) names both Kuśa and Lava, calling them Sītā’s sons, and adds that Vālmīki heard Rāma’s story from Nārada; elsewhere the *Padma Purāṇa* introduces several novel incidents (Raghavan 1973: 55-56 and JLB 2012).[[36]](#footnote-36)

Similarly brief mentions in Sūryavaṃśa lists are also found at *Brahma Purāṇa* 8.84-87 (a passage which is closely related to *Harivaṃśa* 10.74), *Garuḍa* *Purāṇa* 138.36-38,[[37]](#footnote-37) *Viṣṇu* *Purāṇa* 4.4.49-57 and *Liṅga* *Purāṇa* 1.66.34-38.[[38]](#footnote-38) Similarly brief mentions in *avatāra* lists are also found at *Brahma Purāṇa* 213.124-58 (again based on *Harivaṃśa* 31.110-42) and 180.32-33, *Viṣṇudharmottara* *Purāṇa* 3.85.62, *Liṅga* *Purāṇa* 2.5.146-8, *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 142.10-18, *Gautamīmāhātmya (Brahma* *Purāṇa* 122.69) and *Nīlamata Purāṇa* 500-502. The *Brahma Purāṇa* is so eclectic that little inference about dating can usually be drawn from occurrence in it but in the case of the two passages noted here their obvious derivation from the *Harivaṃśa* means that the basic material is in fact early. The remaining items just mentioned seem predominantly to come from the first half of the period of production of the *Purāṇas.*

Other brief references (comparable in length with those just listed) are spread throughout the period of Purāṇa composition; they are found in the *Matsya,* *Brahmāṇḍa, Padma, Viṣṇu, Vāmana* (*Saromāhātmya*), *Liṅga,* *Varāha, Skanda*, *Saura, Kālikā* and *Ekāmra* *Purāṇas.* It is significant that the *Matsya* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* do not contain any longer narratives and that the *Vāyu Purāṇa* only has brief references in Sūryavaṃśa lists. In other words, the four Purāṇas generally accepted as being the earliest (*Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa*) contain the least reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* or to Rāma, even though the *Matsya Purāṇa* seems well aware of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a literary work. This clearly suggests that their composers attached less importance to the religious significance of Rāma than is the case later.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (a basically Pāñcarātra-oriented Purāṇa considered to be slightly later in date than those just mentioned)[[39]](#footnote-39) concentrates mainly on Kṛṣṇa and so deals with Rāma only very briefly, in prose, in its presentation of the Sūryavaṃśa dynasty (4.4.49-58). Even so it includes material from the *Uttarakāṇḍa,* and elsewhere states that Lakṣmī becomes Sītā when Viṣṇu becomes Rāma (1.9.141, cf. *Harivaṃśa* 31.117cd, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* 2.14 and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.16). It begins its account by explicitly declaring that Viṣṇu was born fourfold as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna, before summarising the main story from Rāma’s youthful slaying of Tāḍakā and defeat of Mārīca to his taking back of Sītā after her entry into the fire; there is no significant divergence from the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Relatively brief accounts, quite often concentrating on one episode or one character, are found much more widely, in the *Viṣṇudharmottara, Śiva, Kūrma, Skanda, Garuḍa, Brahma, Vāmana* (*Saromāhātmya*), *Nāradīya, Saura, Brahmavaivarta, Devībhāgavata, Bṛhaddharma, Mudgala,* *Kalki* and so-called *Ādi Purāṇas.* The story of Vedavatī from the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (*VR* 7.17) is quite popular, being narrated in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (1.221.17–46) and in several otherPurāṇas – *Vāmana* (*Saromāhātmya*), *Brahmavaivarta, Skanda* and *Devībhāgavata* – across the whole range of supposedly Brāhma, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta oriented texts. Hanumān is frequently linked with Śiva, in Vaiṣṇava as much as in Śaiva texts: as an *avatāra* of Śiva (*Skanda Purāṇa* 3.84.6 and 5.2.79, also at *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* 3.4.13.31-36; cf. Bulcke 1959-60), as a partial incarnation of Śiva (*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* 4.62.63b, cf. *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa* 36-37, repeated at *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* 18) or as a Śaiva devotee reborn (*Nāradīya* *Purāṇa*); the relevant sections of all these Purāṇas were probably composed after 1000 A.D. With the much expanded *Śiva Purāṇa,* its *Śatarudrasaṃhitā* is devoted to praise of Hanumān and his exploits, presenting Hanumān as a manifestation of Śiva and his exploits as part of Śiva’s *līlās* (3.20.1); there is also a brief allusion to his killing of Mahīrāvaṇa and freeing of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa (3.20.34; cf. Zvelebil 1987: xl; Kapp 1988). In addition, the various Śaiva Purāṇas often contain brief accounts of the Rāma story subordinated to their main themes, most notably the *Skanda Purāṇa.*

An interesting feature of the vulgate *Skanda Purāṇa* (a much expanded text of which parts may be as late as the 14th century) is that it contains no less than four separate accounts of the legend of Vālmīki as the repentant robber or bandit, each giving him a different name (cf. Leslie 2003: 138-46). Despite a puzzling difference of name between the narratives, it seems clear that the common purpose of all four accounts is to stress the power of the name of Rāma for salvation, an obviously *bhakti* attitude that reflects the late date of all four passages, composed well after the 9th century and probably after the 12th (Leslie 2003: 138-40).

In the *Garuḍa* *Purāṇa* (datable to around the end of the first millennium) Brahmā introduces his narrative (1.143) specifically as the sin-destroying *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.143.1ab) and summarises it in 51 *ślokas,* before narrating Kṛṣṇa’s life much more briefly. The *Saura Purāṇa* (perhaps 12th century) begins its narrative with the *rākṣasa* genealogy (30.1-20) and a passage on the sages and gods, which leads into the Ikṣvāku genealogy (30.30-72), within which the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are narrated from the birth of the four brothers (30.49) to that of Kuśa and Lava (30.69) in a radically abbreviated form; nevertheless, due to its Śaiva emphasis it includes Rāma setting up the Rāmeśvaram liṅga, Rāma’s *aśvamedha* being to propitiate Śiva, and Kuśa and Lava being devotees of Mahādeva. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* (a Pāśupata reworking of an originally Vaiṣṇava text at an uncertain date) extends its listing of Rāma and his brothers in the Sūryavaṃśa genealogy with a brief summary of the story (1.20.17-56) but most notably in its treatment of sins and expiations (2.30-34) includes the theologically motivated development that Agni creates a counterfeit of Sītā for Rāvaṇa to carry off and then, following the conquest of Laṅkā, informs Rāma and restores the real Sītā to him (see Dumont 1950: 238).[[41]](#footnote-41) In the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (probably composed in Bengal in the 11th-12th century) we see the first stages by which the cult of Rāma was brought into connection with the worship of Devī, since it integrates the *Rāmāyaṇa* story with the worship of Devī during Śārada Navarātri. It also narrates the story of Vedavatī twice, the wording of the second passage (9.16.1-63) corresponding almost word for word with *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* 2.14.1-64. Linking of worship of Devī with the Rāma story is then seen in other *śākta* Purāṇas: the *Mahābhāgavata, Bṛhaddharma* and *Kālikā Purāṇas* (further detail below). The two minor Purāṇas particularly relating to worship of Gaṇeśa, the *Mudgala* and *Gaṇeśa Purāṇas,* similarly incorporate the Rāma story as a means of enhancing Gaṇeśa’s status, with the Mudgala Purāṇa making any setback the result of neglect of worship of Gaṇeśa.

More extended narrations of the story occur in the *Padma, Agni, Narasiṃha, Bhāgavata, Mahābhāgavata* and *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇas,* as well as in the second part of manuscripts of the unpublished *Āgneya* or *Vahni Purāṇa.*

The *Padma Purāṇa* contains three extensive narratives, as well as several briefer allusions. Its *Pātālakhaṇḍa* opens with a long account of Rāma’s *aśvamedha* (5.1–68), the *Rāmāśvamedhacarita* (studied in Koskikallio 1999), which begins with an explicit reference to the fact that there are many forms of the Rāma story. After Lava captures the sacrificial horse, the story of Sītā from her finding by Janaka is narrated (5.57) and the fight between Lava and Śatrughna’s party begins (5.60); Kuśa, returning from Ujjain, joins the skirmish, renders Śatrughna unconscious, and reveals his own identity. Although much of the material is based on the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*, there are a number of divergences (for example, the twins singing the story at Varuṇa’s abode, 5.66.20-28) and evidence of dependence also on Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. The last part of the *Pātālakhaṇḍa* (5.104-117) reverts to the Rāma story but primarily as a peg on which to hang its teaching and so the frame narrative is only tangentially related to the *Rāmāyaṇa* (for more detail see Raghavan 1973: 51-54); nevertheless, an interesting feature is that Jāmbavān alludes to alternative versions of the story at one point (5.116.11-12). The way in which the whole passage subordinates Rāma to Śiva and his worship may reflect Liṅgāyat views, while the use throughout of the name Rāmacandra is an index of its lateness (JLB 1997). The *Uttarakhaṇḍa* narrates Rāma’s story in three *adhyāyas* (6.242-44, entitled *Rāmacarita*) which form part of a longer section on the *avatāras* and tell the story of his birth, birth rites, naming ceremony, and so on; the narration here is broadly the same as in the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa,* although, like the *Rāmopākhyāna*, it places the narrative of Rāvaṇa’s past at the beginning of its treatment and it calls Sumitrā the Magadha king’s daughter (6.242.37) as in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa.*

The encyclopaedic *Agni Purāṇa,* which in its present form must therefore be relatively late, begins with an account of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, devoting most space to Rāma and summarising the *Rāmāyaṇa* in seven *adhyāyas* (5–11), each *kāṇḍa* being summarised in one *adhyāya*. The text indicates its close dependence on the *Rāmāyaṇa* by introducing its narration as being in the way in which Nārada formerly related it to Vālmīki; indeed, there is ample evidence that it follows most closely the Northern recension.

The *Bhāgavata* *Purāṇa* (9th or 10th century), though concentrating on Kṛṣṇa, includes a fairly full treatment of the Rāma story (9.10-11; the second *adhyāya* is devoted to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* narrative) in its account of the kings of the Sūryavaṃśa. Its author states that the *rāmacarita* has been sung by many *ṛṣis* (9.10.2), but seems nevertheless to follow basically the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*. The changing understanding of Rāma’s nature is shown by Rāma only simulating distress after Sītā’s abduction and anger at Ocean; also, Rāma himself after the fall of Laṅkā visits Sītā in the *aśokavana* and takes her straight back to Ayodhyā on the *vimāna* (with their close allies).

The *Narasiṃha* *Purāṇa* includes its extensive *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative within its account of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu in the form of Mārkaṇḍeya telling the Rāma story at 47-52, the six *adhyāyas* corresponding to the first six *kāṇḍas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though with some innovations: for example, the absence of the Śrāvaṇa episode, Rāma’s letter to Lakṣmaṇa telling him to mutilate Śūrpaṇakhā, and remodelling of the abduction. Its extreme lateness is shown by its eclectic use of epic, purāṇic and literary sources: it quotes more or less verbatim from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* from Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa* and from a 13th-century Rāma play, the *Dūtāṅgada* of Subhaṭa (Raghavan 1972: 239-40 and 1973: 60-63). But its lateness is even more clearly seen in its stress on the efficacy of reciting Rāma’s name and on Rāma being the Supreme Self, *parabrahman* (47.143-45), as similarly when the *Bhārgava Upapurāṇa* (12th century or later) adapts the story to its message by very briefly giving spiritual identities to the characters (Rāma as *paramātman,* Sītā as *jīva* and so on, 3.15-22).

The *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa* places its *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative firmly within the context of Śārada Navarātri – as is only natural in the light of its orientation towards worship of Devī – and devotes *adhy.* 36-48 to it.[[42]](#footnote-42) At the beginning Viṣṇu and the other gods seek the co-operation of Śiva and Pārvatī, since Rāvaṇa is a devotee of Śiva and Devī protects Laṅkā. When Viṣṇu is incarnated as Rāma and Kamalā (= Lakṣmī, regarded as part of Pārvatī) as Sītā, Śiva is born as Hanumān (36-37). Maṇḍodarī is alluded to as Sītā’s mother (42.64).

The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* in *adhyāyas* 18-21 reproduces the *Mahābhāgavata* *Purāṇa* narrative at times almost verbatim and at other times compressing or expanding its narrative, setting it similarly in the context of Śārada Navarātri and giving its mythological framework the appropriate slant. The background to its narration is that Rāvaṇa is a devotee of Pārvatī as well as Śiva but, when Rāvaṇa begins terrifying the three worlds, Pārvatī declares (18.31-32) that she will abandon Laṅkā and that Rāvaṇa will abduct “your human wife, the beloved goddess, a manifestation of me”. The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* also has another section which narrates Sarasvatī’s manifestation through Vālmīki and his utterance of the first *śloka* (25.45-69) before an encomium of the Rāmāyaṇa, making slight reference to the story (26).

The so-called *Āgneya* or *Vahni Purāṇa* appears to be another example, like the earlier *Skanda Purāṇa* being edited by the Groningen team, of an older Purāṇa superseded by a better known namesake (in this case the encyclopaedic *Agni Purāṇa*).[[43]](#footnote-43) It may well be a Vaiṣṇava recasting of an older Rudra-oriented work (so Hazra 1953-54 and 1955-56), part of that recasting being the inclusion of an extended summary of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Daśagrīvarākṣasavadhacarita*, constituting the second half of the text, at a date which it is not possible to determine (JLB 2012; *Vahnipurāṇa* 2012: cxxiv). This covers the whole Rāma narrative except the Bāla and Uttara kāṇḍas in 167 *adhyāyas* in a wide variety of metres, which may well indicate a later date for it than the dating of the fifth to sixth century which its editor suggests (*Vahni Purāṇa* 2023: xvi and xxiii). It starts with Rāvaṇa’s genealogy and takes the form of a dialogue between king Ambarīṣa and Vasiṣṭha, with Vasiṣṭha stating that Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī became incarnate as Rāma and Sītā as a result of separate curses (Bhowmik 2018; *Vahni Purāṇa* 2023).

It is significant to note that some of these passages are based, in part at least, on later retellings of the Rāma story, from the *Rāmopākhyāna* onwards. Besides the two *Brahma Purāṇa* passages taken from the *Harivaṃśa,* the *Mahābhārata* tradition, or more exactly the *Rāmopākhyāna,* was drawn on by the *Padma Purāṇa* for the episode of Brahmā asking the Gandharvī Dundubhī to be born as Mantharā (not to be found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and the *Setumāhātmya* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* (3.1.1-52) reveals close verbal coincidences with the *Rāmopākhyāna*, which was evidently its main source.

One Purāṇa also borrows from another. Instances already noted include: two incidents introduced by the *Padma Purāṇa* appearing in virtually the same wording in the *Skanda Purāṇa*; the motif of the shadow or illusory Sītā, first attested in the *Kūrma* *Purāṇa,* being taken up and developed in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (and in other texts in due course); the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* reproducing at times almost word for word the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative of the *Mahābhāgavata* *Purāṇa*, and the second Vedavatī narrative in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* corresponding almost word for word with the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (although it is unclear which was the direction of borrowing). There is also evidence of influence from classical Sanskrit literature, and the influence does seem always to be in that direction. On the other hand, episodes or details first found in Purāṇas are repeated in – and no doubt borrowed by – later vernacular *Rāmāyaṇas* within India and beyond.

In summary, we can see that in broad terms both the frequency and the extent of references in the Purāṇas increase over time. For example, the frequency of references in the *Gautamīmāhātmya* contrasts markedly with their rarity in the rest of the *Brahma Purāṇa* and this probably reflects a difference in the relative dating and so theological development of the two parts. Both the Rāma passages found in the *Nāradīya Purāṇa* should probably be placed later than 1000 A.D. (Hazra 1940: 127-32 and 1958: 309-45), while all four of the *Skanda Purāṇa* narratives of Vālmīki as the reformed robber were probably written after the 12th century. The extended narratives in the *Agni, Narasiṃha, Bhāgavata, Mahābhāgavata* and *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇas* were probably all composed around or after the 10th century and only those in the *Padma Purāṇa* and in the second part of manuscripts of the unpublished *Āgneya* or *Vahni Purāṇa* appear to be earlier. However, one of the three *Padma Purāṇa* accounts is later than Bhavabhūti and so cannot have been composed before the middle of the 8th century at the earliest, while another uses the name Rāmacandra which indicates a dating for it no earlier than the 10th century. Dates of around the beginning of the 2nd millennium and later for the fuller narratives (as well as the *bhakti* emphasis on *rāmnām* shown in the Vālmīki legend) would fit well with the likely pattern of development of Rāma worship (cf. Bakker 1986 and 1987).

**A bibliographical note**

All references in this chapter (and elsewhere) to the *Mahābhārata* are to the Critical Edition (*Mahābhārata* CE 1933-66), which is the text translated in the Chicago translation project begun by J.A.B. van Buitenen and now being continued by James L. Fitzgerald (*Mahābhārata* (trans.) 1973- ). There is also an independent-study reader of the *Rāmopākhyāna,* which reproduces this text and includes a fairly literal verse-by-verse translation, by Peter Scharf (Scharf 2003), who accepts the priority of the *Rāmāyaṇa* but does not discuss the matter any further. Two other worthwhile articles, besides those referred to above, which deal with the relationship between the *Rāmopākhyāna* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are Morgenroth 1993-94 and – in passing, in the context of a discussion of the differences between the two epics – Shulman 1991a, but nothing is added to the discussion by Singh 2006.

Although reference has already been made to it above, it is worth emphasising that one of V. Raghavan’s studies on the spread of the *Rāmāyaṇa* provides a very useful overview of the *Mahābhārata* material (Raghavan 1973: 2-33), while two of the articles by E.W. Hopkins still have value (Hopkins 1898 and 1930).

Scholarly work on the *Harivaṃśa* in general has been much more limited than on either the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata.* The major investigations have been by Horst Brinkhaus (1990, 2000, 2002, 2005), André Couture (1992, 1996, 2007), Freda Matchett (1996) and several articles in Koskikallio 2005, including the only detailed study of Rāma in the *Harivaṃśa* (MB 2005). There is also a translation of the CE text by Simon Brodbeck (2019).

A great deal has been written about the Rāma story in the Purāṇas but once again the most useful general overview is that by V. Raghavan (1973: 33-73); see also JLB 2012 and MB 2018. The standard work on the Purāṇas in general, though not examining their use of the Rāma story in any detail, is by L. Rocher (1986), which has useful cautionary remarks on the problems of dating them (pp. 100-103), as well as an annotated listing of all Purāṇas in part II. The editions of the Purāṇas being cited in this chapter and elsewhere are those listed in the bibliography; it should be noted that other editions often have substantially different numbering and even sequence of their constituent parts.

**Embellishing the story in Sanskrit classical *kāvya* and drama**

The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, like the *Mahābhārata*, has furnished the theme or plot of an enormous number of works of pure literature in Sanskrit or Prakrit, as well as being a formative influence on many more.[[44]](#footnote-44) The sheer number of *mahākāvyas,* long narrative poems, and dramas based on the Rāma narrative is enormous and would once have been greater still, since a significant number of works are known only from references to them in other works, especially in the treatises on poetics. It remains a definite possibility that more of these may yet be located in manuscript collections, just as the *Udāttarāghava* of Māyurāja (Mātrarāja) Anaṅgaharṣa was rediscovered in the middle of the 20th century after long being thought lost. The author’s own originality was clearly valued throughout the main period of production of such works, as is shown by the wide divergence from the basic story shown in most. However, works produced towards the end of the period, of which there are a considerable number from the 17th century or even later, tend to be motivated more by the religious aspect and so to show less novelty. In the survey that follows works are placed in what seems the most probable chronological order, in order to facilitate tracing of influence from one to another, but datings are all tentative and even the relative order is by no means certain.

The earliest example is in fact one attesting the influence of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* rather than drawing on it for its plot. This is Aśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita,* assignable to the 1st century A.D. on the usual dating assigned to its author, although the 2nd century is also quite possible and perhaps more likely;[[45]](#footnote-45) he is generally held to be a brāhman who converted to Buddhism. Certainly his long narrative poem on the life of the Buddha, the *Buddhacarita,* shows clear evidence of his familiarity with the Sanskrit narrative tradition, in particular both epics, not only making allusions to their plots but also containing echoes of their wording. He even declares that Vālmīki created the first poem in verse (*Buddhacarita* 1.43: *vālmīki ādau ca sasarja padyam*). It is an interesting thought that Aśvaghoṣa seems deliberately to be using these reminiscences of the Rāma story – by this date the story of a human figure coming to be seen as divine – to underscore the exceptional nature of Siddhārtha Gautama, the human being who has transcended this world, in particular through his comparisons of the Buddha leaving his home with Rāma leaving for the forest. Such use is not limited to his *Buddhacarita,* for in another probably earlier work, the *Saundarananda,* equally on a Buddhist theme, Aśvaghoṣa also alludes to Vālmīki and to Maithilī’s two sons.[[46]](#footnote-46)

The best known treatment of the Rāma story in classical Sanskrit literature is contained within Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa* but there are frequent echoes of the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* throughout that *mahākāvya,* not just in the section on Rāma, as well as sporadically elsewhere in Kālidāsa’s works (Raghavan 1940, Tieken 2018), and it also shows acquaintance with Aśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita*. It contains several verses which seem to allude to events in the reigns of Samudragupta and Candragupta II.[[47]](#footnote-47) In the fourth *sarga* Kālidāsa appears to hint at the handing over of the empire to Samudragupta by his father (4.1), the people’s rejoicing on his accession (4.3), the jealousy of the tributary kings (4.2) and their subjugation by Samudragupta, who easily established his control over his enemies and so confirmed his grip on the throne (4.4); one part (4.28-50) seems to refer to Samudragupta’s conquests and to show resemblances to the Allāhābād *praśasti* of Samudragupta, while the next (4.51-79) may allude to Candragupta II’s victories as detailed in the Mehrauli pillar inscription through the mention of Raghu conquering the Pārasīkas and the Hūṇas. Other works may suggest that Skandagupta was his patron, as well as reflecting the Vaiṣṇava leanings with an orientation towards Rāma of the Gupta court.[[48]](#footnote-48) These allusions all serve to reinforce the generally accepted dating of Kālidāsa to the 4th-5th century and his linking with the Gupta court.

As its name indicates, in the *Raghuvaṃśa* Kālidāsa sets the Rāma story within the whole history of the dynasty of Raghu, the Ikṣvāku or solar dynasty. For the earlier figures in the dynasty Kalidāsa follows a genealogy different from any occurring in the *Rāmāyaṇa* but close to that given in the *Viṣṇu* *Purāṇa*. Kālidāsa reaches Daśaratha in the ninth *sarga* and recounts the story from the *Rāmāyaṇa* up to the fifteenth *sarga.* The balance of his poem is at times very different but he does not include any episode unknown to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and he is fully acquainted with the Uttarakāṇḍa.[[49]](#footnote-49) There are also major discrepancies in the length of treatment, from five chapters on Rāma to one, fairly short chapter on the 21 kings following Atithi, which is little more than a string of names. The text seems to end abruptly at a critical point (at the end of *sarga* 19) with Agnivarṇa’s death without an heir, leading to views that the last two *sargas* sometimes included were not written by Kālidāsa, or were only a rough draft, or that the poem is incomplete. It might on the one hand be argued that the text lacks unity, since it consists of a number of episodes connected only by the fact that their heroes belong to the same dynasty. On the other hand, Tieken has argued more logically that “In a text which is styled a *vaṃśa* (genealogy) the presence of the theme of the continuation of the line is an almost necessary condition.” He points to the poem’s beginning with Dilīpa’s childlessness and suggests that this and Agnivarṇa’s lack of an heir thus frame the narrative, further pointing out that Agnivarṇa’s wife is pregnant and seeing this as a kind of prophecy for the continuation of the line (Tieken 1989). These points do not, however, affect any assessment of the narrative of the Rāma story which broadly follows the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* although the balance is rather different. Kālidāsa gives more space to the *Bāla* and *Uttarakāṇḍa* events (*sargas* 10-11 and 14-15), with just one *sarga* (12) on the events of the *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddhakāṇḍas,* although *sarga* 13 describes the aerial return to Ayodhyā and in the process mentions Rāma’s experiences during the search for Sītā (Bonisoli Alquati 2016).

Probably the earliest work entirely in Prakrit (specifically in Mahārāṣṭrī Prākrit), but following the same conventions as Sanskrit *kāvya,* is the *Setubandha* or *Dasamuhavaha* or *Rāvaṇavaha,* composed by king Pravarasena, in the fifth or sixth century; this king has been identified either as Pravarasena II of Kashmir in the second half of the 6th century (Słuszkiewicz 1953: 545) or more plausibly as the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II, ruling in western India around 410-440 (Warder 1972-92: III. 155).[[50]](#footnote-50) In fifteen sections (*āsāsao*) the poem narrates — as its names between them indicate — the story of Rāma from the building of the causeway up to the death of Rāvaṇa, which forms the main part of the Yuddhakāṇḍa.[[51]](#footnote-51) In drawing on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it seems to follow a text that is intermediate between the present NE and S recensions, which presumably therefore had not diverged so far at the time of its composition and that of the broadly contemporary *Bhaṭṭikāvya* and *Jānakīharaṇa* (cf. Słuszkiewicz 1953). Pravarasena is only the first of several kings whose names are linked with Rāma narratives, no doubt for reasons of prestige, but forming the first example of the continuing link between the Rāma story and the theme of kingship.

Bhaṭṭi’s *Rāvaṇavadha*, or *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, which is basically in Sanskrit, dates from the 6th or 7th century;[[52]](#footnote-52) as well as narrating the Rāma story with its focus on the slaying of Rāvaṇa (an illustration of how far by this date the purpose of Rāma’s life is seen as bringing about the death of Rāvaṇa), it exemplifies the rules of Pāṇini’s grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī.*  Indeed, Bhaṭṭi’s purpose in writing the poem was to provide an illustration of the rules of grammar and poetics, in which he was imitated in Bhaumaka’s *Rāvaṇārjunīya* (see below) and in a slightly different way by the Old Javanese *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* (treated in a later chapter).[[53]](#footnote-53)  The *Bhaṭṭikāvya* may seem to be a fairly full summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, on which it is clearly based, but in fact its treatment is decidedly uneven, with most attention paid to certain erotic scenes added to the Sundarakāṇḍa and especially to the battle scenes of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, which comprises over half the total length of the poem. Bhaṭṭi knew a text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* intermediate between the present Northeastern and Southern recensions (Wirtz 1894 and Słuszkiewicz 1938); one notable feature is that he includes nothing at all corresponding to the Uttarakāṇḍa and omits virtually all the mythological material from the Bālakāṇḍa (1.31-47 and 50-64), as well as the birth of the Vānaras (1.16). Bhaṭṭi also shows a definite Śaiva tendency and so at the beginning of his poem Daśaratha is declared to worship only Śiva and at its end Śiva, instead of Brahmā, reminds Rāma of his divinity.

Another major *kāvya* from just a little later is the *Jānakīharaṇa* of Kumāradāsa, which is probably datable to the 7th century and rather more probably was composed in Śrī Laṅka, although the tradition that Kumāradāsa was king Kumāradhātusena of Śrī Laṅkā ruling c. 517-26 A.D. is very doubtful. There is evidence that the author Kumāradāsa spent some time in the Śrīvijaya capital in Sumatra and that his poem was known and appreciated there (Chandra 1978; Raghavan 1985: 42). This is clearly one way in which the Rāma story may have spread to Southeast Asia. The *Jānakīharaṇa* is largely modelled on Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa*, as well as showing some indebtedness to his *Kumārasaṃbhava* (Raghavan 1985: 31-42).[[54]](#footnote-54) As its name suggests, the poem begins from Sītā’s abduction but, in contrast to Kālidāsa though like his near contemporary Bhaṭṭi, Kumāradāsa ends his treatment with Rāma’s installation after his triumphant return to Ayodhyā. Kumāradāsa shows an even more obvious tendency towards romantic and naturalistic description than Kālidāsa.

After these works of the fifth to seventh centuries, the narrative poem as a vehicle for the Rāma story seems to have become less popular until a limited revival in or around the seventeenth century, apart from the rather marginal *Rāvaṇārjunīya* by Bhaumaka (see below). Creativity seems to have begun to switch to dramas on the Rāma story or parts of it for the next period, starting with a couple of now lost plays which were perhaps composed in the 6th century: the *Rāghavābhyudaya* and the *Jānakīrāghava,* both frequently cited by the 13th-century poetician Sāgaranandin in his *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakośa.*  From Sāgaranandin’s comments it seems that the *Rāghavābhyudaya* follows the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* fairly closely (Warder 1972-92: III, 248-9) whereas the *Jānakīrāghava* (in seven acts) innovates rather more in its treatment, which covers the main story from Sītā’s abduction to Rāma’s installation after the killing of Rāvaṇa (Raghavan 1961: 60-73 and Warder 1972-92: III, 249-53).

Possibly also to be placed at this period are the *Pratimānāṭaka* and the *Abhiṣekanāṭaka*, although issues of both dating and authorship of these two plays are far from settled. They are two of the so-called Trivandrum plays, a group of anonymous plays preserved in a few manuscripts from Kerala; these are rather different in some features from the norms found in classical Sanskrit drama and one of them has the same name, *Svapnavāsavadatta,* as a play by the dramatist, Bhāsa, who is mentioned with respect by a series of later writers and critics and clearly is older than the 5th century, probably considerably older.[[55]](#footnote-55) But this is by no means sufficient to prove either that the extant play of this name is actually by Bhāsa or that the other plays in the group have the same author. An alternative explanation for the aberrant features that they all exhibit is that they are acting versions truncated in various ways for performance in the centuries-old Kerala theatre form called *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*.[[56]](#footnote-56) In common with six others of these plays, the *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* mentions a patron called Rājasiṃha, who may well be the Pallava ruler, Narasiṃhavarman II, ruling 690-720 A.D. (Tieken 1993: 24-29), and it is on this basis that we have placed these two plays here. The lack of evidence for the influence of the *Pratimānāṭaka* and the *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* on other Rāma dramas is not conclusive either way, any more than the lack of evidence for influence on themfrom any version other than the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The *Pratimānāṭaka,* a *nāṭaka* in seven acts, starts from Daśaratha ordering preparations for Rāma’s installation and ends with Rāma’s victorious return to Ayodhyā and the re-union with Bharata; basically, then, it is a free and selective treatment of the events of the Ayodhyā to Yuddha kāṇḍas but makes no reference to anything contained in the Bāla or Uttara kāṇḍas. The *Abhiṣekanāṭaka,* in six acts, concentrates more on the conflict with Rāvaṇa; it starts with Rāma killing Vālin as the outcome of the quarrel between him and Sugrīva and ends with Sītā entering the fire and, as its title indicates, with Rāma’s installation.[[57]](#footnote-57) Despite some freedom of treatment in both plays (Słuszkiewicz 1957), they basically follow the *Rāmāyaṇa.*[[58]](#footnote-58)

Early in the eighth century the major dramatist Bhavabhūti wrote two plays on the Rāma theme, the *Mahāvīracarita* and *Uttararāmacarita* (‘The Deeds of the Great Hero’ and ‘Rāma’s Later Deeds’).[[59]](#footnote-59) The *Mahāvīracarita* narrates the main events of the story up to the triumphant return to Ayodhyā; only the portion up to verse 46 of act 5 is by Bhavabhūti himself, with two different completions to the end of act 7 supplied by Vināyaka Bhaṭṭa and Subrahmanya and a third version for the later part of act 5 (Todar Mall 1928, De 1930).[[60]](#footnote-60) Bhavabhūti considerably develops the marriage of Rāma and Sītā and introduces a feature which then becomes common to most of the Rāma dramas in the meeting between Rāma and Sītā before the *svayaṃvāra.* He also gives an enhanced role to several characters, in particular Mālyavān, who becomes indeed the main instigator of plot developments, while Śūrpaṇakhā is presented sympathetically. The *Uttararāmacarita* treats the events of the Uttarakāṇḍa centring round Sītā’s banishment in an innovative way, starting from the first act which recapitulates the main story through the device of the picture gallery, where Lakṣmaṇa shows to Rāma and the now pregnant Sītā a depiction of their previous adventures, through to the use in the seventh act of the play-within-a play device where Rāma, watching a performance of Sītā’s hardships after her banishment, is carried away by the pathos and has to be reminded by Lakṣmaṇa that it is only a play. In part at least these variations reflect the different techniques and purposes of drama compared with epic (cf. Bansat-Boudon 2000). Bhavabhūti’s direct quotations from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (of 1.2.14, 1.1394\* 3-6 and 2 App.26.11-12 in the *Uttararāmacarita*) show that he too knew a version similar to the present N recension and specifically the NE recension (indicated both by his quoting at *Uttararāmacarita* 6.31-32 of 1.1394\* 3-6 and by the wording at *Mahāvīracarita* 5.24 of his quotation of 3.63.4).[[61]](#footnote-61) It has commonly been thought that Bhavabhūti wrote the *Mahavīracarita* before the *Uttararāmacarita* (e.g. Tubb 2014: 404-10) but the fact (shown in MB’s analyses) that references in the *Uttararāmacarita* to events earlier in the narrative follow the standard form of such episodes rather than reflecting the innovations of his *Mahāvīracarita* may suggest the opposite.

A play which was long thought to be lost but was rediscovered in the middle of the 20th century is the *Udāttarāghava* of Māyurāja (Mātrarāja) Anaṅgaharṣa in six acts.[[62]](#footnote-62) References in later literature suggest that it was written in the Kalacuri kingdom before the 9th century by a prince of the royal family (Upadhye 1967, Warder 1972-92: IV, 223-33; Māyurāja 2016: 5-6). It shows a considerable number of innovations in the storyline, particularly surrounding the abduction (Lakṣmaṇa, not Rāma, pursues the golden deer) and then the return to Ayodhyā, since the author evidently aimed to enhance the moral standing of the characters (an innovation objected to by Yaśovarman in the prologue of his *Rāmābhyudaya,* to judge by later citations of this now lost play). He also therefore minimised Rāma’s killing of Vālin by having it merely reported by a rākṣasa spy in the introduction, *praveśaka,* to act four.

Śaktibhadra’s *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi,* of the late 9th or early 10th century,[[63]](#footnote-63) shows indebtedness to Bhavabhūti, especially in seeking to provide dramatic unity through the theme of a long-standing feud between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. As noted above, in the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* tradition the *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* is linked with the *Pratimānāṭaka* and *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* to form a group called *Rāmāyaṇanāṭaka.[[64]](#footnote-64)* Its name alludes to the prominence of the incident of the jewelled diadem given by Sītā to Hanumān for Rāma, as well as to the sentiment of wonder or the marvellous (*adbhuta rasa*) developed in it. It deals in seven acts with events from Śūrpaṇakhā’s approach up to the fire-ordeal; its main novelty of plot, apart from the miraculous powers of both Sītā’s diadem and Rāma’s ring, is making Rāvaṇa disguise himself as Rāma in order to abduct Sītā. Śaktibhadra’s use of illusion is so extensive that he has no fewer than two Sītās, two Lakṣmaṇas and three Rāmas on stage together in the abduction scene (for the use of illusion in dramas based on the Rāma story see MB 2020).

The title of the *Kundamālā* also derives from the distinctive feature of its treatment: a jasmine garland used as a recognition token. This play in six acts, by Dhīranāga or Vīranāga, can only be dated somewhere between the 7th and 11th centuries, probably to the middle of that period or later, and possibly was written in Sri Lanka.[[65]](#footnote-65) Verses by a poet named Dhīranāga are quoted in two anthologies, Jalhaṇa’s *Sūktimuktāvalī* of *śaka* 1179 (= A.D.1257) and Vallabhadeva’s *Subhāṣitāvalī* (perhaps as early as the 11th century)*.* The plot of the *Kundamālā,* beginning with Lakṣmaṇa taking Sītā into banishment and ending with the reunion of Rāma with his sons, in this respect resembles that of Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmacarita* to which it seems to be indebted to an appreciable extent.[[66]](#footnote-66) Some episodes are expanded, with new material introduced to bring out the emotional implications.

From the same period comes the *Rāmacarita,* a *mahākāvya* of which 36 *sargas* are by Abhinanda with an extension of four *sargas* to complete the unfinished work added by Bhīmakavi (otherwise unknown). The poem’s colophon indicates that the author lived in Bengal, at the court of the Pāla rulers of Bengal; it mentions Dharmapāla and his son (the last quarter of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th) but other indications place Abhinanda in the second half of the 9th century. He may be the same as the author of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (to be treated in the chapter on instructional *Rāmāyaṇas*; Raghavan 1972, also Raghavan 1934-35); this is based on the older text, the *Mokṣopāya* (certainly the author of the *Rāmacarita* appears to have known the *Mokṣopāya*; Hanneder 2006: 50) rather than the later *Yogavāsiṣṭha.*[[67]](#footnote-67) The poem begins with events from the middle of the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa (more specifically as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are waiting at the end of the rains for Sugrīva to fulful his promise of help), though including some of the earlier action through flashbacks, and the 36th *sarga* ends with the killing of Kumbha and Nikumbha in the Yuddhakāṇḍa. It covers the narrative in a leisurely manner, including a considerable amount of theological or philosophical reflection, while the extension takes the story up to Rāma’s installation at the end of that book.

At the start of the 10th century, Rājaśekhara composed his massive *Bālarāmāyaṇa,* a drama in ten acts; like his other early plays it was staged at Kanauj under the patronage of the Gurjara Pratīhara ruler Mahendrapāla (r.903-907).[[68]](#footnote-68) Rājaśekhara has deliberately innovated very considerably in his plot, as well as introducing puppets or motifs related to puppet theatre, the staging of a play within a play (the *garbhāṅka* in the third act, on Sītā’s *svayaṃvara* staged before Rāvaṇa) and Rāvaṇa being diverted from his attempts to claim the real Sītā by being presented by his minister Mālyavān with a mechanical Sītā (*sītāpratikṛti*). In the introduction to the play he claims to be the reincarnation of Vālmīki, Bhartṛmeṇṭha and Bhavabhūti, evidently regarding them as his main precursors in handling the Rāma story.[[69]](#footnote-69) The play was clearly known to some rather later authors, being drawn on by Rāmabhadra Dīkṣita’s *Jānakīpariṇaya,* Jayadeva’s *Prasannarāghava,* and Subhaṭa’s *Dūtāṅgada* (all of which are noted below). Rāma himself appears in only three of its ten acts whereas Rāvaṇa appears on stage in five, in many ways dominates the action and is presented as a romantic figure; Rāvaṇa’s minister, Mālyavān, also figures prominently in the plot, for example conspiring with Śūrpaṇakhā to secure Rāma’s exile.

Murāri’s *Anargharāghava,* which can most probably be assigned to the first half of the 10th century and to Andhra or perhaps Orissa (Murāri 1997: 12-15; Steiner 1999a: 235; Murāri 2006: 16-17);[[70]](#footnote-70) the only known work of its author, it is often therefore called simply the *Murārināṭaka.* It was highly esteemed in traditional Sanskrit works on poetics and much quoted in anthologies, even though or perhaps because its language is deliberately difficult, full of obscure words and unusual grammatical forms; the number of commentaries on it — no less than 26 — from the 11th century onwards illustrates both the esteem and the difficulty (cf. Murāri 1997: 9-26), while correspondingly it was dismissed by earlier Western scholars. It introduces an elaborate political intrigue into its plot through the introductory scenes which preface most of its seven acts, which has resulted in quite substantial changes to the original narrative as well as the inclusion of touches of humour. Longer than most Sanskrit dramas, much of the action is presented through indirect narration, with violence or death only reported, and so Rāvaṇa and almost all the *rākṣasas* are absent from the stage. The work is indeed almost more of a poem than a drama and Murāri himself uses this term of it at one point (*kavitā,* 7. 146). It shows clear signs of indebtedness to Bhavabhūti,[[71]](#footnote-71) although Murāri also draws on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and claims to follow Vālmīki closely. The *Anargharāghava* continues the process of enhancing Rāma’s moral stance already seen in the *Udāttarāghava*; in its turn it is drawn on by several later works: the *Ullāgharāghava,* the *Hanumannāṭaka* and possibly also — depending on their relative dates — Rājaśekhara’s *Bālārāmāyaṇa.*[[72]](#footnote-72)

A rather different kind of work from the dramas and *mahākavyas* is the well-known collection of legends and tales called the *Kathāsaritsāgara,* “the ocean of streams of stories”, by Somadeva, which by tradition was compiled for the entertainment of queen Sūryamati, wife of king Anantadeva of Kashmir (1063-81) and probably was written in the eleventh century. This is supposed to derive from Guṇāḍhya’s lost (or perhaps mythical) *Bṛhatkathā,* “great story”, in Paiśācī Prakrit.[[73]](#footnote-73) It incorporates into its overall narrative of the adventures – largely amatory – of a prince, Naravāhanadatta, a *Rāmāyaṇa* telling with variant features (*Rāmāyaṇavṛttānta*, 107.12–26), a couple of summaries (one of which concentrates on the *Uttarakāṇḍa* narrative and especially on Kuśa and Lava, Teshima 2023) and new tales built around *Rāmāyaṇa* characters, as well as a number of brief allusions (for example, in similes), showing well how widely the influence of the Rāma story is found.

Another work of this general period is the *Rāvaṇārjunīya* (or, with the names reversed, *Arjunarāvaṇīya*) of the Kashmiri poet Bhaumaka (other forms of his name are Bhaṭṭa Bhīma, Bhūma and Bhauma), which reverts to the *mahākāvya* form; its date is unknown but it must be earlier than the 11th century, since it is mentioned by Kṣemendra (along with the *Bhaṭṭikāvya,* as examples of *kāvyaśāstra,* at *Suvṛttatilaka* 3.4) who can be securely dated to the first half of that century and a little beyond.[[74]](#footnote-74) The subject-matter of its 27 *sargas* is the episode from the Uttarakāṇḍa of Rāvaṇa’s fight with Kārtavīrya Arjuna, used as a vehicle for illustrating the rules of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (and quoted in the *Kāśikā* commentary on that work) in imitation of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya.*

Kṣemendra himself composed several works relating to the *Rāmāyaṇa.* The main one is his *Rāmāyaṇamañjarī,* possibly his first work, which is essentially a summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in 6,400 verses and follows the original quite closely, sometimes reproducing its actual wording, but he also naturally included a much shorter section on Rāma as the 7th *sarga* in his *Daśāvatāracarita,* which was probably his last work (completed in 1065/6 A.D.), and is known as the author of a now lost play, the *Kanakajānakī* (from which he quotes in another of his works, the *Kavikaṇṭhābharaṇa*); his *Bhāratamañjarī*  also contains a brief summary of the Rāma story (in just 48 verses, 3.1812-59) at the equivalent point to the *Rāmopākhyāna* but based rather on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Raghavan 1985: 100), while even his *Bṛhatkathāmañjari* has a very short account (at 15.32-51). Interestingly Kṣemendra does not include Śambūka’s final attainment of heaven in his *Rāmāyaṇamañjarī* but does in his more devotional *Daśāvatāracarita* (Sherraden 2019: 160-65).[[75]](#footnote-75) From its name the *Kanakajānakī* evidently centred on the Uttarakāṇḍa episode of Rāma using a golden statue of Sītā as a substitute for her at his horse sacrifice, while Kṣemendra quotes a couple of verses from it in another of his works (the *Kavikaṇthābharaṇa*) which indicate that it made use of the same device for recapitulating the plot of scenes painted in a picture gallery that Bhavabhūti had earlier employed (Warder 1972-92: VI, 428).

The *Campūrāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Bhoja may also date from the 11th century; its title indicates the genre of the work, a mixture of prose and verse (in many of the more elaborate metres, especially Vasantatilaka).[[76]](#footnote-76) Only the first five cantos are by the original author, who calls himself a Vidharbharāja (which may or may not mean Bhoja, the king of Malwa from around 1010 to 1055), but the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* is by Lakṣmaṇasūri of unknown date (who refers to the first author as being Bhoja, as do some other later writers). Besides this, some manuscripts include a substantially later continuation, an *Uttararāmacampū* (or *Uttararāmavṛttacampū*) by Vyaṅkaṭa Kavi or Veṅkaṭarāja, who is probably to be identified with Veṅkaṭādhvarin, writing in the middle of the 17th century (cf. Gode 1933-34: 175). The narrative of the main work follows the Southern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* quite closely, as well as being influenced by the *Raghuvaṃśa* (Słuszkiewicz 1925), but the style is plain, ornamented only by insistent alliteration, and differs considerably from the style of works more firmly assigned to Bhoja’s authorship (Warder 1972-92: VI, 175-76). Another work in *campū* form on the Rāma story is the *Amogharāghavacampū* ascribed to Divākara, composed in *śaka* 1221 = 1299 A.D. and narrating the Bālakāṇḍa in 7 *ucchvāsas.*

The *Hanumannāṭaka* or *Mahānāṭaka* is also associated with Bhoja, though less directly. The version usually called the *Hanumannāṭaka* claims in its final verses to be fragments of an enormous *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Hanumān himself but then thrown into the sea (by Vālmīki fearing that it would eclipse his version), recovered by king Bhoja and edited by his courtier Dāmodara Miśra (*HN* 14.96); this version is in 14 acts (579 verses) and is current in western India (Esteller 1937, Pandya 2001). The version usually called the *Mahānāṭaka* (in 9 acts and 613 verses or more) was arranged by Madhusūdana Miśra, so linked with Bengal. In addition, there is what S.K. De termed the Textus Simplicior, preserved in eight manuscripts in Dacca (De 1931). There is clear evidence that Dāmodara’s recension is the oldest and Madhusūdana’s is derived from it, aiming to improve the work by bringing it closer to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and to then current views of Rāma’s divinity, while De’s Textus Simplicior is in fact a secondary reworking of Madhusūdana’s version (Esteller 1937). Many verses are taken from Bhavabhūti, Rājaśekhara and Murāri, and some are shared with Jayadeva’s *Prasannarāghava* (the direction of borrowing is uncertain). It is in some respects more of an anthology of *Rāmāyaṇa-*themed verses from other plays than a drama and has many narrative, descriptive or lyrical passages without on-stage action. There are few material differences between the versions. The most notable innovation is that Aṅgada is throughout motivated by hostility to Rāma: after the return to Ayodhyā he challenges Rāma to fight to avenge his father Vālin but is restrained by a heavenly voice assuring him that Vālin will be reborn as the hunter who kills Kṛṣṇa (*HN* 5: 57; Wilson 1835: II, 366, 372).[[77]](#footnote-77) The core of the work may be dated to the 11th century but there are several indications, besides the existence of the two versions, that parts at least are later in date. In particular much of the eighth act of the *Hanumannāṭaka* version borrows from the *Dutāṅgada* of Subhaṭa (see below) and so cannot be dated before the middle of the 13th century.[[78]](#footnote-78) It in turn was a major influence on Giradhara’s Gujarātī *Rāmāyaṇa* of the 18th century and less markedly on Mukteśvara’s Marāṭhī version.

From the middle of the 12th century comes an early example of a genre that was to become relatively popular in the later period of Sanskrit literature: the *śleṣakāvya* in which the poet contrives by constant play on words (*śleṣa*) and by dividing up word-units in different ways to tell two stories simultaneously (hence the alternative names for the genre, *dvyarthakāvya* and *dvisandhānakāvya,*both terms being equivalent to “poem with two meanings”).[[79]](#footnote-79) This is the *Rāmacarita* of Sandhyākaranandin, which in 215 stanzas tells simultaneously the story of Rāma Dāśarathi and Rāmapāla of the Pāla dynasty (accession c. 1072);[[80]](#footnote-80) it is an important source for Rāmapāla’s reign, despite treating it in somewhat mythological fashion, and its purpose is clearly to enhance the ruler’s status by the implicit equation with Rāma. Other *śleṣakāvyas* on the *Rāmāyaṇa* include:*Rāghavapāṇḍavīyas* by Daṇḍin (lost apart from a single stanza), by Dhanaṃjaya (a Digambara Jain – his work is treated under Jain versions), by Śrutakīrti Traividya (11th-12th century), by Kavirāja (also known as Mādhavabhaṭṭa, composed around 1175), by Kṛṣṇapaṇḍita (mid 13th century) and by Veṅkaṭācārya (*NCC* 23: 207-10), a *Rāghavanaiṣadhīya* of Haradatta Sūri, son of Jayaśaṅkara of the Gārgya gotra (no earlier than the 17th century, the other story being that of Nala), the *Kośalabhosalīya* of Śeṣācalakavi (which deals with the stories of Rāma and Śāhjī, the 18th century Marāṭhā ruler, in 6 cantos), and two works by Cidambara Kavi (16th-17th century), the *Śabdārthacintāmaṇi,* narrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* from left to right and the Kṛṣṇa story when reversed, and the *Rāghavapāṇḍavayādavīya,* narrating the three stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* hence its alternative title *Kathātrayī* (*NCC* 23: 206-7). Among these works Mādhavabhaṭṭa Kavirāja’s *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya,* composed under the patronage of the Kadamba king Kāmadeva (ruling 1181-97),[[81]](#footnote-81) narrates the story of both epics in thirteen *sargas* (77O verses mainly in *upajāti* metre) from a clearly Brahmanical perspective, so perhaps deliberately in opposition to the Jain Dhanaṃjaya’s *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya,* although Kavirāja only cites Subandhu and Bāṇa as predecessors in such poetry (cf. Warder 1972-92: VII, 413-20 and Bronner 2010: 140-54); it was clearly known and appreciated to judge by the number of commentaries written on it (Brocquet 2013).

Similar are the palindromic *Rāmakṛṣṇavilomakāvya* in 36 verses by Daivajña Sūri or Sūryadāsa (mid to late 16th century; Minkowski 2004a), where the first half of each line narrates the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the reversed second half the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Yādavarāghavīya* in 32 verses by Veṅkaṭādhvarin (in the first half of the 17th century, on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*); there is also a *nāṭaka* of this type, the *Rāghavayādavīya* by Narahari (*NCC* 23: 212). While these are of interest in demonstrating the popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* for such literary activities (and no doubt more generally), they are not of any real significance in charting changes in the understanding or appreciation of the narrative because of the particular constraints involved in their production.

From around the beginning of the 13th century comes the *Prasannarāghava* by Jayadeva (one of several authors of that name),[[82]](#footnote-82) a play in seven acts, modelled in part on Kālidāsa’s *Vikramorvaśīya* and more closely on Murārī’s *Anargharāghava,* with which it shares the fact that much of the action takes place off stage and is simply reported. This Jayadeva also wrote a work on poetics, the *Candrāloka,* and the play shows clearly his greater interest in aesthetic effects than in plot construction. It covers the story from Rāma’s stay in Viśvāmitra’s *āśrama* up to his return to Ayodhyā. Its romantic treatment in the second act of a first meeting between Rāma and Sītā before the *svayaṃvara* (at which Bāṇa and Rāvaṇa appear as suitors for Sītā and are ridiculed) seems to have been the inspiration for the treatment of this episode in Tulsīdās’ *Rāmcaritmānas* (Vaudeville 1955: 104; Pauwels 2000: 60-70).

At much the same date Someśvara’s *Ullāgharāghava,* a drama (*nāṭaka*) in eight acts, was first acted, as its prologue tells us, in the temple at Dvārakā on *prabodhinī ekādaśī* (the day that marks the end of the rains and Viṣṇu’s awakening). Although no year is given, Someśvara definitely lived during the first half of the 13th century, since he was a protégé of Vastupāla, the minister of the Vāghelās of Gujarat and builder with his brother Tejaḥpāla of the Luṇavasati temple on Mt Ābu in 1231 A.D, and also head priest to the Caulukya ruler Bhīmadeva. Its title is reminiscent of that of Māyurāja’s *Udāttarāghava,* though with less attempt to enhance the moral status of the characters, but it has more in common with the *Pratimānāṭaka*, while another possible source of influence is the now lost *Jānakīrāghava* (mentioned above). The influence of *bhakti* devotionalism is also apparent. Someśvara also composed a hymn to Rāma in 100 *sragdharā* verses, the *Rāmaśataka,* which seems to have been quite popular.

Plays on other themes often include allusions to the Rāma story, usually just in the form of similes and the like but sometimes rather more extensively. A notable example is the *Pradyumnābhyudaya* composed in the 13th century by the Keralan poet and ruler of Kolambapura (modern Kollam), Ravivarman. This is based on an episode taken from the late *Harivaṃśa* (App. 29F.236–48, cf. above) and in Act III expands on the play within a play (*garbhāṅka*), the *Rambhābhisaraṇa,* which is little more than mentioned in the *Harivaṃśa* passage, and goes back to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* narrative (*VR* 7.26); the lead characters, Pradyumna and Prabhāvatī, play Nalakūbara and Rambhā in the episode of her rape by Rāvaṇa (Austin: 2016).

The earliest extant shadow play (*chāyānāṭaka*) – perhaps more exactly a puppet play – called *Dūtāṅgada* by Subhaṭa is more or less contemporaneous and also from Gujarat, since it was written for performance on a date corresponding to 7th March 1243 at a festival commemorating Kumārapāla, the Caulukya king ruling 1143-72 (Gray 1912: 58-59). As its title indicates, the focus of this “curious hybrid between a dramatic piece (with stage-directions) and a narrative poem” (Gray 1912: 59) is Aṅgada’s embassy to Rāvaṇa. It is a one-act play in 56 verses in the longer recension but is divided into three scenes in the shorter recension, much of which was incorporated into the *Hanumannāṭaka* (see above); its author incorporates a number of verses drawn from earlier plays based on the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Another precisely datable work (on the basis of the chronogram contained within it) is the *Amogharāghavacampū* of Divākara, dated to 1299 A.D. and the earliest *campū* work written in Kerala; it tells the Bālakāṇḍa narrative in seven *ucchvāsas.*

To the 14th century can be assigned two works from South India: Śākalyamalla’s *Udārarāghava* from Telangana and Bhāskarabhaṭṭa’s *Unmattarāghava* probably from Karnataka. Śākalyamalla (also called Mallamācārya or Kavimalla) was attached to the court of the Kākatīya Pratāparudra (1296-1323), the last ruler of that dynasty before its defeat by Malik Kafur. His *Udārarāghava,* of which only the first 9 *sargas* are extant, tells the story elaborately up to the events surrounding Śūrpaṇakhā’s arrival and mutilation.[[83]](#footnote-83) Bhāskarabhaṭṭa’s *Unmattarāghava* is a one-act play of the type called *prekṣaṇaka* and consists of a soliloquy by an enraged Rāma after Sītā’s sudden disappearance (hence its title), but with some novel features; its prologue states that it was staged before an assembly of paṇḍits to honour Vidyāraṇya, plausibly identified as the well-known 14th century scholar associated with the early Vijayanagara rulers. A slightly later play of the same name, also a one-act *prekṣaṇaka,* is ascribed to a ruler of Vijayanagara, Virupākṣadeva, ruling at the start of the 15th century (see below).

Just after the middle of the 14th century the Buddhist author Dharmagupta, also known as Bālavāgīśvarakavi, produced the Rāmāṅkanāṭikā, which is still in manuscript only; one of these is an autograph manuscript in Cambridge University Library dated Nepāla saṃvat 480 (= 1360 A.D.).[[84]](#footnote-84) This is a four-act play which begins with Kaikeyī and Mantharā plotting together. The noted poetician and author of the *Sāhityadarpaṇa,* Viśvanātha Kavirāja (late 14th century), also wrote a *mahākāvya* on the Rāma story called *Rāghavavilāsa,* from which he quotes in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*. The Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian Vedānta Deśika (traditional dates 1269-1369) among his voluminous output composed some minor works relating to the Rāma story, including the *Haṃsasaṃdeśa* (in this short poem in *mandākrāntā* metre, closely modelled on the *Meghadūta,* the *haṃsa* carries a message from Rāma to the captive Sītā),[[85]](#footnote-85) the *Pādukāsahasra* (a longer poem mainly on the sandals of the Raṅganātha image at Śrīraṅgam but identifying them as Rāma’s sandals) and the *Mahāvīravaibhava* or *Raghuvīragadya* (in prose, summarising the Rāma story); in addition, in one of his theological works, the *Abhayapradānasāra,* he argues for Vibhīṣaṇa’s coming to Rāma as both an example of *prapatti,* total surrender to the deity, and as the core of the poem.

A one-act play, the *Unmattarāghava* of Virūpākṣadeva, the ruler of Vijayanagara at the beginning of the 15th century, is known from a single manuscript (Virūpākṣadeva 1946: v); like Bhāskarabhaṭṭa’s play of the same name it concentrates on Rāma’s emotions in the wake of Sītā’s abduction but ends with Lakṣmaṇa returning with Sītā after he has killed Rāvaṇa; Rāvaṇa being killed by Lakṣmaṇa and not Rāma is a feature of the Jain tellings (cf. below). Also from early in the 15th century comes a *mahākāvya* in 17 *sargas* (totalling 1,461 verses),the *Raghuvīracarita* of Mallinātha, who is better known as a commentator on various works, including Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa*; this starts with Rāma’s entry into the Daṇḍaka forest and ends with his installation (Lalye 2002: 92-105). A *kāvya* entitled *Rāmābhyudaya,* which is ascribed to the later Vijayanagara ruler Sāḷuva Narasiṃha (1456-86 A.D.) but was actually written by Aruṇagirinātha, also known as Śoṇādrinātha and Diṇḍimakavisārvabhauma (*NCC* 24: 297-98), is both a *praśasti* of the Sāḷuva dynasty and a telling of the Rāma story. A prose retelling of the narrative that probably comes from the 15th century is Vāsudeva’s *Rāmakathā* (Pisharoti 1930). An abridgement in around 200 *ślokas,* the *Rāmodanta,* attributed to Parameśvara Kavi in the 15th century, has been particularly popular in Kerala for use with beginners in Sanskrit literature (*NCC* 25: 80-81).

From Andhra Pradesh (or possibly from Karnataka) and probably in the second half of the 16th century comes the *Janakajānanda* of Kalya Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha, which claims to have been staged at Ahobalam before king Abhirāma; although no king of that name is known, the editor of the play puts together available evidence to suggest that he is the later Vijayanagara ruler, Aḷiya Rāmarāya, and that the play was staged around 1560 A.D. (Moorty 1992: 7-13). Its plot is drawn from the Uttarakāṇḍa and the five acts extant (edited on the basis of three manuscripts in Mysore) treat episodes from Rāma’s sacrificial horse approaching Vālmīki’s hermitage to Kuśa and Lava fighting Śatrughna. It probably originally extended to seven acts, ending with a reconciliation between Rāma and Sītā (Moorty 1992: 26-27). Another drama from this time is the *Abhirāmamaṇi* of Sundaramiśra, apparently written in *śaka* 1521 = 1597 A.D. (Wilson 1835: II, 395); this is in seven acts and shows indebtedness to Bhavabhūti’s *Mahāvīracarita* (Tripathi 2015).

The *Adbhutadarpaṇa* of Mahādeva, written probably in the first half of the 17th century, is a drama in ten acts in which there is a general emphasis on the magical and indeed its title is derived from one of these magical elements: the device of a magic mirror through which Rāma sees what is happening in Laṅkā, where Sītā is imprisoned. Mistaken identities are also a feature of the play. The revival from the 17th century in *mahākāvyas* on *Rāmāyaṇa* themes that was suggested above has as another of its early examples the *Citrabandharāmāyaṇa* by Veṅkaṭeśvara, son of Yajñanārāyaṇa (composer of a commentary on his son’s work), who lived in the first half of the 17th century (G.C. Tripathi in *Citrabandharāmāyaṇa* 1992: 5). Each of its six *sargas* (one for each *kāṇḍa*, so no Uttarakāṇḍa as so often) is in the epic *anuṣṭubh* metre*,* with a change of metre at the end. A very high proportion of its verses show some form of word-play — alliteration(*anuprāsa*), repetition of sound-clusters (*yamaka*) or double meaning (*śleṣa*) — and a few the figurative arrangement of the syllables (*citrabandha*) that gives it its name.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Also from the beginning of the seventeenth century, but written from a rather different perspective (that of the Rāmānandī *rasik* devotional community), comes the *Rāmaliṅgāmṛta* or *Rāmaliṅgavarṇana* of Advaita kavi or Advaita Bhaṭṭa in *kāvya* form and containing 18 *sargas*, written at Varanasi in *śaka* 1677/1608 A.D. but available only in manuscript (Maity 1992: 147-50; Stasik 2009: 53; *NCC* 24: 215). A *Rāghavollāsakāvya* in 12 *sargas* was composed in *saṃvat* 1692/1625 A.D. by Advaitayati or Advaitārāma, who is distinguished from Advaita kavi in the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* (*NCC* 1: 123) but identified with him by Maity (Maity 1992: 150-51), which has been published (Advaitayati 2011).

Veṅkaṭarāja’s *Uttararāmacampū,* mentioned earlier as a continuation of the *Campūrāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Bhoja,is probably also datable to the 17th century, if the author is the same as Veṅkaṭādhvarin, author of the better known work in this genre, the *Viśvaguṇādarśacampū.* A further *campū,* narrating basically the events from Rāma’s marriage with Sītā to their return to Ayodhyā (but also including in *sarga* 2 both some description of Rāvaṇa’s deeds and the divine figure appearing at the end of the *putreṣṭi* to present the *pāyasa* to Daśaratha), is the *Jānakīpariṇaya* in eight *sargas* by Cakrakavi, the author of several *campūs,* who probably lived in the first half of the 17th century and was a contemporary of Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita. Nīlakaṇṭha’s student, Rāmabhadra Dīkṣita, wrote a drama also called *Jānakīpariṇaya*; his is a 7-act play in which two sets of characters, one genuine and the other disguised, are brought together, resulting in much comic confusion.[[87]](#footnote-87) Rāmabhadra Dīkṣita, who was both an Advaitin and a Rāma devotee, also composed *stotras* to Rāma and his weapons, such as the *Rāmakarṇarasāyana* and the *Rāmacāpastava,* *Rāmabāṇastava* and *Rāmatuṇīrastava.* Other writers of such *stotras* in the 16th and 17th centuries included Rāmabhadra’s teacher, Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, Appayya Dīkṣita and Rāghavendratīrtha.

The *Sītārāmavihārakāvya* of Orgaṇṭi Lakṣmaṇādhvarin or Lakṣmaṇa Somayājin (an Andhra poet who probably lived at the end of the 16th century or the beginning of the 17th) is divided into twelve *sargas,* contains 720 verses in various metres and portrays Rāma’s early life up to his planned installation. Also at some point between the 16th and 18th centuries comes another *mahākāvya* written most probably in Andhra, Padmanābha’s *Śrīharicarita,* which covers the whole story including the Uttarakāṇḍa in 16 *sargas,* each composed in *āryā* metre with a final verse in *pṛthvī* metre (Padmanābha 1972).

Two poems on the Rāma narrative were composed by the 17th-century poet Veṅkaṭeśa: a shorter one in ambiguous rhyme (*yamaka*), the *Rāmayamakārṇava* (also called just *Yamakārṇava,* in six *āśvāsas*), written in 1656,and a longer one in 30 cantos, the *Rāmacandrodaya,* written in 1635 (Ghosh 1963: 189-90). A female poet at the court of Raghunātha, Nāyaka of Tanjore (1600-34), called Madhuravāṇī – no doubt her pen name, “honeyed speech” – composed a *mahākāvya* in 14 cantos, the *Rāmāyaṇasāra,* which is however just a re-working of a Telugu *Rāmāyaṇa* adaptation by Raghunātha.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Nevertheless, dramas on the Rāma theme continued to be written in South India, such as the *Rāghavābhyudaya* of Bhagavantarāyamakhin, from the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century, since he praises Shahji II of Tañjāvur, 1684-1711, at the beginning of his play, which is a drama in seven acts surviving in a single manuscript. In the middle of the 18th century. Its re-ordering of events preserves Kaikeyī’s reputation by eliminating the two boons, while equally Rāma kills Vālin in open fight.

Rāma Pāṇivāda, who was associated with the court of Mārtāṇḍa Varma of Travancore, wrote both a drama and a *mahākāvya* on *Rāmāyaṇa* themes. His drama, the *Sītārāghava,* in seven acts was probably written for the Murajapam festival in the Padmanābhasvāmī temple in 1756. His earlier *Rāghavīya* in twenty *sargas* (in two sections of ten), narrates the story from Daśaratha’s marriages to Kausalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā, ending with Rāma ruling Ayodhyā in company with Sītā after his triumphant return from Laṅkā (so again omitting the Uttarakāṇḍa).[[89]](#footnote-89) From around the middle of the eighteenth century comes the *Rāmarahasya* or *Rāmacarita* of Mohanasvāmin (I.O.L. cat. no. 3917).[[90]](#footnote-90) Towards the end of the century Veṅkāmātya (an official under Hyder Ali of Mysore) wrote two short plays: the *Sītākalyāṇavīthi* and the *Vīrarāghavavyāyoga.* The *Sītākalyāṇavīthi* is a one-act play which starts with Sītā’s *svayaṃvara,* includes the encounter with Paraśurāma and ends with the return of the marriage party to Ayodhyā, while the *Vīrarāghavavyāyoga* is a type of *rūpaka,* a military spectacle, also in one act, where the main action is the fight between Rāma and Khara, aided by Dūṣaṇa and Triśiras. Veṅkāmātya was also the author of a Kannaḍa *Rāmāyaṇa.*

Large as the number of works mentioned in this survey may appear, it must also be remembered that a considerable number of works on all or part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative either exist only in manuscript form or else have been lost and the only record is mention of or quotations from them in other works. Nor should it be overlooked that many works with different plots contain references to the Rāma story, sometimes quite extensive, for example Māgha’s *Śiśupālavadha.*

Examples of further plays extant only in manuscript form are the *chāyānāṭaka* in two acts by Vyāsa Śrīrāmadeva called *Rāmābhyudaya* (Bendall 1902: 107 [item 272]), *Raghuvīracaritas* by Sukumāra and by Vedāntācārya (also known as Cakravarti and Vedāntasūri; *NCC* 22: 255-56), and the *Ānandarāghava* by Rājacūḍāmaṇi Dīkṣita (Aufrecht 1896-1903: 189). Besides those apparently lost plays mentioned incidentally above, the names of the following plays are also known: the *Kṛtyārāvaṇa* (a *nāṭaka* in 7 acts, probably of the ninth century, cited quite extensively; cf. Raghavan 1961: 26-49 and Warder 1972-92: III. 106-113),[[91]](#footnote-91) the *Chalitarāma* (quoted several times by Sāgaranandin and also by Dhanika in his commentary on the *Daśarūpa*; Raghavan 1961: 50-59; Warder 1972-92: III. 113-15), the *Rāmavikrama* (also cited by Sāgaranandin), the *Rāmānanda* (Raghavan 1961: 82-87; *NCC* 24: 266), the *Māyāpuṣpaka* (Raghavan 1961: 88-91; *NCC* 20: 149), the *Rāghavānanda* of Veṅkaṭeśvara (Raghavan 1961: 92-93; *NCC* 23: 217), the *Svapnadaśānana* by Bhīmaṭa (mentioned by Rājaśekhara and probably dating from the 9th century; Raghavan 1961: 93), the *Abhijātajānaki* (quoted by Kuntaka in his *Vakroktijīvita*;Raghavan 1961: 93-95), the *Abhinavarāghava* by Kṣīrasvāmin (quoted in the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*;Raghavan 1961: 95-96) and the *Mārīcavañcita* (mentioned by Śāradātanaya in his *Bhāvaprakāśa*; Raghavan 1961: 96, *NCC* 20:159). Sāgaranandin also cites several individual acts from such plays (which may not therefore all be from separate plays): *Ayodhyābhārata, Kekayībharata, Daśarathāṅka, Prāvṛḍaṅka, Vibhīṣaṇanirbhartsanāṅka, Śaktyaṅka* and *Saṃpātyaṅka* (cf. Sāgaranandin 1960: 71 and Raghavan 1961).

Finally, as a contrast to these often lengthy treatments of the Rāma narrative, here is the text of an unfortunately inadequately dated and anonymous one-verse summary of the story (in *śārdūlavikrīḍita* metre and sometimes implausibly ascribed to Tulsīdās), called therefore the *Ekaślokī* (or *Ekaśloka*) *Rāmāyaṇa*:[[92]](#footnote-92)

*ādau rāmatapovanādhigamanaṃ*

*hatvā mṛgaṃ kāñcanam* |

*vaidehīharaṇaṃ jaṭāyumaraṇaṃ*

*sugrīvasaṃbhāṣaṇam* |

*vālinigrahaṇaṃ samudrataraṇaṃ*

*laṅkāpurīnāśanam* |

*paścād rāvaṇakumbhakarṇamathanam*

*etad dhi rāmāyaṇam* ||

“First <there is> Rāma’s going to the ascetics’ forest, after killing the golden deer, the seizure of Sītā, the death of Jaṭāyu, the pact with Sugrīva, punishing Vālin, crossing the ocean, the destruction of the city of Laṅkā, afterwards the crushing of Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa — that’s the *Rāmāyaṇa.*” This is as interesting for what it omits as for what it includes, including the total absence of any religious element.

**See also** MB (2017): “Narrational techniques and consequences in Classical Sanskrit dramas” in “Lectures and papers (unpublished)” within “Ancillary material”.

**A bibliographical note**

Useful sources of information and occasional analysis are Warder 1972-92, Ghosh 1963 and Raghavan 1940, 1961b and 1985; Warder in particular generally provides plot summaries. Another treatment worth consulting is Sen, Nilmadhav 1962, which is fairly general and largely a catalogue but one that is sensibly handled and so forms a suitable introduction to this topic (and also to the vernacular literature).

**Correcting the story: Jain versions**

The *Rāmāyaṇa* story also passed into the popular culture of the Buddhist and Jain faiths at an early stage in its development. Chronologically, indeed, some of these developments precede many of the treatments within the Sanskrit-based tradition surveyed in previous chapters. By contrast with the tendency visible in some Buddhist versions to turn Rāma into a Bodhisattva, with an accompanying stress on his superhuman aspects, Jain versions of the story tend to adopt a reductionist approach. The focus of this chapter is the versions in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa;[[93]](#footnote-93) tellings in the modern regional languages may also be mentioned (but are then treated more fully in subsequent chapters, if significant). The Jain versions are found both incorporated into longer story collections and as complete works in themselves.

The *Paümacariya* of Vimalasūri and the *Vasudevahiṇḍi* of Saṅghadāsa were both written in Prakrit, whereas the *Uttarapurāṇa* of Guṇabhadra, the third of the major Jain versions though considerably later, was written in Sanskrit, as were many of the numerous adaptations after the early period. As well as several independent treatments, the story of Rāma was adopted by the Jains into their Universal History (or *Mahāpurāṇa*), the commonly used term for the collective life stories of the *śalākāpuruṣas,* the outstanding individuals — eventually reaching a total of sixtythree — who occur repeatedly in the successive cycles of the cosmos in a standard pattern which includes trios of Baladeva, Vāsudeva or Nārāyaṇa and Prativāsudeva. To accord with this pattern Rāma is the Baladeva, Lakṣmaṇa the Vāsudeva and Rāvaṇa the Prativāsudeva; one consequence is that Lakṣmaṇa becomes the one who kills Rāvaṇa. Rāma is therefore not regarded as being Viṣṇu and similarly brahmanic sacrifices are not performed. Other changes that are usually present in Jain versions are that both Rākṣasas and Vānaras become *vidyādharas* (a category of semi-divine wonder-workers) and that Rāvaṇa is depicted as a pious Jain, devoted to the Jinas, in many respects an ideal ruler, though flawed by his passionate nature, and as having only one head (his supposed ten heads are explained as the reflection of his single head in a necklace of nine jewels).

The *Paümacariya* of Vimalasūri, mainly in Mahārāṣṭrī Prākrit with a few sections in Saurasenī, is the earliest self-contained version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and was completed, according to its colophon, in the year 530 after Mahāvīra’s death (on the traditional chronology equivalent to 4 A.D.) but it was assigned on linguistic evidence by Hermann Jacobi to the third century A.D. or later and by K.R. Chandra to the fifth century A.D. (Chandra 1963 and 1970: 4-17),[[94]](#footnote-94)  while Paul Dundas suggests more cautiously “in about the fourth century CE” (Dundas 2002: 238). The *Paümacariya* is in 118 sections, mainly in the *āryā* metre, of which the first 35 are called *uddeśa* (of which, however, the first 24 describe the *śalākāpuruṣas* who flourished before Rāma’s time) but the remainder are called *parvan*. Vimalasūri states that he is narrating the story as it was handed down in the “series of names”, such as are found in the *Samavāyāṅga* and the *Sthānāṅga* (the third and fourth *aṅgas* in the Śvetāmbara canon) and the *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* (the oldest available Digambara text on Jain cosmology, of uncertain date), as well as that his work is based on the *caritas* of Nārāyaṇas and Baladevas in the *Pūrvas* (no longer extant). But his indebtedness to the *Valmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* is shown in his very divergences from it,[[95]](#footnote-95) for, without naming the work that he is attacking, in his prologue he mentions various features of it which he regards as unbelievable and so modifies in his own account; his rationalist attitude is very apparent. Nevertheless, some scholars have suggested that he may also be following a pre-Vālmīki oral tradition (e.g. Cort 1993: 190) and William Smith has even suggested that Vimalasūri’s much expanded version of the *Kuśalavopākhyāna* derives from such a tradition (Smith 2003).

Vimalasūri renames the major characters, which accounts for the title of his poem, with Rāma being called Paüma (Sanskrit Padma), but he not infrequently reverts to the original names (noted for example at Kulkarni 1980: 237). He is also concerned to increase the moral elevation of his characters. He includes a version of the Vedavatī story as part of the past lives of the main characters, where she is called Vegavatī and is raped by Svayambhū, who is Rāvaṇa in a previous birth (De Clercq 2011: 199-200). Instead of eliminating the Śambūka episode he gives it greater significance by turning him into Candraṇakhā’s son accidentally killed by Lakṣmaṇa and so makes his death the catalyst for the rest of the action.[[96]](#footnote-96) He introduces the character of Bhāmaṇḍala, born as Sītā’s twin to Janaka and Videhā, stolen at birth and fostered, which is found in many subsequent Jain tellings. He gives a significant place to the story of Añjanā as Hanumān’s mother (in *uddeśas* 15-18), in which he is followed by a number of later Jain tellings;[[97]](#footnote-97) indeed, Añjanā has become quite a popular figure in contemporary Jain devotional literature. From the *Paümacariya* are derived directly or indirectly: in Sanskrit Raviṣeṇa’s *Padmapurāṇa* (7th century), Hemacandra’s versions in his *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* and *Yogaśāstrasvopajñavṛtti* (12th century), Dhaneśvara’s *Śatruñjayamāhātmya* (14th century) and Somasenabhaṭṭāraka’s *Rāmacarita* (17h century); in Prakrit Śīlācārya’s *Caüpannamahāpurisacariya* (868 A.D.) and Bhadreśvara’s *Kahāvalī* (11th century); and in Apabhraṃśa Svayambhū’s *Paümacariü* (9th-10th centuries, also following Vimalasūri closely, as Raviṣeṇa had done).

The *Vasudevahiṇḍi* is broadly a Jain version of Guṇāḍhya’s monumental story-collection, the *Bṛhatkathā,* in an archaic Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit, as Alsdorf established (Alsdorf 1935-37, cf. Jain 1975-76), which is combined with the Jain universal history and incorporates its value system. All that can be said with any certainty about its date is that it must be earlier than the mention of it in the *Āvaśyakacūrṇī* (which can be assigned to c. 600-650 A.D.) but it should probably be placed around the fifth century (Esposito 2012: 201). Saṅghadāsa replaces Guṇādhya’s hero, called Naravāhanadatta, with Vasudeva, father of Vāsudeva Kaṇha/Kṛṣṇa, so facilitating the insertion of the narrative about the ninth and last triad of heroes (Kaṇha, Rāma, Jarāsandha). Its relatively brief *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative is found within the *Mayaṇavegālambha* (one of the originally 28 *lambhas* – each named after its heroine – of the fifth and longest of the six sections into which the *Vasudevahiṇḍi* is divided).[[98]](#footnote-98) The reductionist approach typical of Jain treatments is less pronounced in the *Vasudevahiṇḍi,* which may argue for its preceding Vimalasūri’s *Paümacariya* (cf. Jain 1977 and 1975–76, also Chandra 1964 and 1966; against such a dating Kulkarni 1952), although the different outlook of all *Bṛhatkathā* derivatives is more likely to have been the decisive factor in this. In it, as in other *Bṛhatkathā* derivatives and some other Jain versions, the Rākṣasas and Vānaras are depicted as Vidyādharas, masters of magic who in general are benevolent, and so the Rākṣasasare given a distinctly more favourable treatment than in most tellings. The *Vasudevahiṇḍi’s* account is in general close to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* but there are certain divergences. It begins with Rāvaṇa’s genealogy (as does Vimalasūri’s version) and closes with Rāma’s installation, suggesting the possibility of some link with the *Rāmopākhyāna*; it also contains the earliest occurrence in Jain literature of the motif of Sītā as Rāvaṇa’s daughter, which is then found also in Guṇabhadra’s *Uttarapurāṇa* and Puṣpadanta’s *Mahāpurāna* (De Clercq 2011: 201-4).

Raviṣeṇa composed his *Padmapurāṇa* or *Padmacarita* in 677-8 A.D. (1,203 years and six months after Mahāvīrā’s *nirvāṇa*) in Sanskrit. It is based on but in its deliberately literary and emotive presentation greatly enlarges Vimalasūri’s work (its 123 parvans mostly correspond to the 118 sections of Vimalasūri’s work, with two complete additions and three subdividings), even though Raviṣeṇa himself was a Digambara monk (he does not specify his *gaṇa*) and Vimalasūri was probably a Śvetāmbara (at any rate most other authors of Rāma narratives in the tradition deriving from Vimalasūri were Śvetāmbara). Raviṣeṇa’s work is the fullest and most elaborate of the Jain treatments of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, which Gautama narrates at Mahāvīra’s *samavasaraṇa* to king Śreṇika when the latter is dismayed by the irrationality of the Hindu version (cf. Dundas 2002: 239-40, which includes a brief synopsis). Rāvaṇa is shown as a devout Jain, ruling a Jain kingdom, while Sītā at the “fire-ordeal” signals her intention to become a Jain nun by pulling out her hair.

The *Dvisaṃdhāna* or *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya* of Dhanaṃjaya has already been mentioned in the chapter on classical Sanskrit literature, since it is one of the earliest examples of the genre of works narrating two stories simultaneously, the *śleṣakāvya* or *dvisaṃdhanakāvya.* Dhanaṃjaya, a Digambara Jain, can be assigned to close to 800 A.D. (Bronner 2010: 291). In the eighteen sections of his poem, composed in a wide variety of metres, he gives only a bare outline of the story of both epics, following the Jain versions of both and in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa* particularly that of Vimalasūri (Warder 1972-92: V.73-75). A little later probably comes the *Rāmakathā* of Śivabhadra (simply called the *Śivabhadrakāvya* by its commentators), which Warder groups with other poets of the end of the ninth century (Warder 1972-92: V.392), although its editor, Nilanjana Shah, rather implausibly places it in the early fifth century (Śivabhadra 1973: 1); it is a rhymed or *yamaka* poem in 94 verses covering just a part of the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, from Rāma’s grieving and complaints against Sugrīva up to Tārā’s advice to Sugrīva and his promising to take action.

Another work of this period is the *Paümacariu* or *Rāmāyaṇapurāṇa* by Svayambhū(deva), from the later part of the ninth century to the first part of the tenth century (Bhayani 1989: 26; Svayambhū 2018: ix-x)), which is written in Apabhraṃśa (the earliest version in this language) and in *sandhibandha* form (that is, divided into *sandhis,* each subdivided into *kaḍavakas* consisting of rhyming couplets), the most popular style of Apabhraṃśa literature; this seems to have been added to by Svayambhū’s younger son Tribhuvana, who contributed the last eight *sandhis,* 83-90, but it is not clear whether this is because his father left the work incomplete or because the son wished to extend it, although Bhayani considers that it was left incomplete (Svayambhū 1953-60: I.42-46). It is divided into five *kaṇḍas* (*Vijjāharakaṇḍa, Ujjhākaṇḍa, Sundarakaṇḍa, Jujjhakaṇḍa* and *Uttarakaṇḍa*), each divided into a varying number of *sandhis,* totalling 90 and containing 1,269 *kaḍavakas.* The work opens with a long pre-history of the characters’ ancestors, beginning with the first Jina Ṛṣabha and his son Bharata, considered as the first kings of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, and the Rāma story proper starts in *sandhi* 9 with the marriage of Rāvaṇa’s parents. Svayambhū states that he is following Raviṣeṇa (1.2.9) but he has handled his source with some freedom, compressing it and concentrating more closely on the narrative itself, while also showing occasional indebtedness to Vimalasūri and possibly to Caturmukha. Caturmukha (Caümuha), a brāhmanical author who may haved lived in the eighth or ninth century, wrote three Apabhraṃśa works, one of which was a *Padmacarita* or *Rāmāyaṇapurāṇa,* also in *sandhibandha* form*.*[[99]](#footnote-99)

Also in the second half of the ninth century come the *Caüppannamahāpurisacariya* of Śīlāṅka (or Śīlācārya) and Guṇabhadra’s *Uttarapurāṇa.* Śīlāṅka’s *Cauppannamahāpurisacariya* is another version of the Jain Universal History, composed in Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit in VS 925 = 867/8 A.D.; it is in *campū* form, with some characteristics of a novel. It deals with the Rāma story only very briefly; its treatment follows Vimalasūri closely, with occasional features apparently deriving directly from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Bruhn 1954: Kulkarni 1990: 140-44; cf. Kulkarni 1955). Guṇabhadra’s *Uttarapurāṇa* constitutes the continuation of Jinasena’s *Ādipurāṇa* (in 47 *parvans,* of which Guṇabhadra composed the last four, as well as the *Uttarapurāṇa* which forms *parvans* 48-76), since Jinasena died before completing the *Ādipurāṇa*. In his continuation Jinasena’s disciple Guṇabhadra in fact narrated the lives of all except two of the *śalākāpuruṣas,* including the story of Rāma (cf. Kulkarni 1990: 115-39)*.* Guṇabhadra substantially reorders events, He agrees with Saṅghadāsa in making Sītā the daughter of Mandodarī and Rāvaṇa, abandoned and found by Janaka and his wife Vasudhā (= Earth); the motivation is supplied by Maṇimatī’s curse on Rāvaṇa which corresponds to Vedavatī’s. He states that Daśaratha originally ruled at Vārāṇasī but then migrated to Ayodhyā after the annihilation of Sagara’s family.[[100]](#footnote-100) Janaka gives Sītā in marriage to Rāma, who has protected a sacrifice undertaken by Janaka (a conflation of Viśvāmitra and Janaka). Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa then go off to Vārāṇasī to protect the subjects there — Kaikeyī’s intrigues accordingly are absent. Sītā’s abduction takes place on Citrakūṭa during a pleasure trip (*vanakrīḍā*) while they are at Vārāṇasī; Princess Maṇīmatī of Alkāpurī reincarnates herself as Sītā, the daughter of Rāvaṇa, because he tries to seduce her. Rāvaṇa, instigated by the sage Nārada, becomes enamoured of Sītā and sends his sister Śūrpaṇakhā as a go-between. It is then Daśaratha who informs Rāma of Sītā’s abduction. Lakṣmaṇa, not Rāma, fights and kills Vālin, which is another device to place Rāma above any violence and, although Guṇabhadra retains the episode of the golden deer, Mārīca simply flees. Rāvaṇa himself beheads the illusory Sītā.

The *Bṛhatkathākośa* of Hariṣeṇa is internally dated to VS 989/Śaka 853 (= 931-2 A.D.) and at the end it is stated that it is based on the Prakrit *Ārādhanā* (that is, the *Bhagavatī Ārādhanā* ascribed to Śivārya; Chatterjee 1979: 7 and Kulkarni 1990: 145). Hariṣeṇa was a Digambara Jain living in Gujarat under the Pratīhāra ruler Vināyakapāla. His work is another adaptation, this time in Sanskrit, of the *Bṛhatkathā*,containing in all 157 *kathānakas* (stories) in around 12,500 mainly *anuṣṭubh* verses, which include the *Rāmāyaṇakathānaka* (no. 84) and the *Sītākathānaka* (no. 89) in 57 verses between the two together.

From Guṇabhadra’s *Uttarapurāṇa* are derived the *Tisaṭṭhimahāpurisaguṇālaṃkāra,* more often called just *Mahāpurāṇa,* of Puṣpadanta (Pupphayanta in Apabhraṃśa, completed in 965 A.D.) in Apabhraṃśa and the *Puṇyacandrodayapurāṇa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa (sixteenth century) in Sanskrit. There is, however, a degree of cross influence, and some of these later versions follow Vālmīki more closely than earlier ones. Although Puṣpadanta’s *Mahāpurāṇa* mainly follows Guṇabhadra’s narrative, it also shows influence from Svayambhū’s *Paümacariu* in its form and style, more than in narrative content; indeed, he names both Svayambhū and Caturmukha as poets with whom his own work will never compare (De Clercq 2001). The whole work consists of 102 *sandhis* (1-37 named *Ādipurāṇa* and 38-102 *Uttarapurāṇa*) and around 20,000 *kaḍavakas*; the Rāma story comes in *sandhis* 69-79.

Bhadreśvara’s *Kahāvalī*, preserved in only one manuscript (or more exactly two slightly overlapping but even so incomplete manuscripts), has been studied by several scholars.[[101]](#footnote-101)  It is mostly in Prakrit prose, interspersed with occasional Prakrit and Sanskrit verses, and its Śvetāmbara author compiled a history not only of the *śalākāpuruṣas* but also of the Jain patriarchs down to the 8th-century Haribhadra; he himself probably lived in the 11th or 12th century (Malvania 1983: 79-81). He used several sources for the work as a whole but the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* which may well have been composed separately and then incorporated into the *Kahāvalī* as its 49th to 55th stories (*kahā*), follows basically that of the *Vasudevahiṇḍi* and in particular Vimalasūri’s *Paumacariya* (Kulkarni 1953; Shah 1983: 74-76). Bhadreśvara introduces into his narrative the motif of Sītā drawing a portrait of Rāvaṇa at the urging of her co-wives, which forms the cause of her banishment;[[102]](#footnote-102) this feature was then adopted by Hemacandra in his *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* and, through Kṛttibās’ Bengali version, has spread into the Southeast Asian versions of the Rāma story.

Another well-known version, because of the prominence of its author, is that contained in Hemacandra’s *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* but the author also included another version within his *Yogaśāstrasvopajñavṛtti* (Kulkarni 1990: 205-13). Hemacandra (1089-1172) was a noted Jain polymath and statesman as adviser to the Caulukya king of Gujarat Kumārapāla (1143-73), composing his *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* at Kumārapāla’s request (between 1160 and 1172). The Rāma story in the *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* begins at *parvan* 7; the most notable feature in his treatment is the bringing together of the stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa by replacing Balarāma with Rāma Dāśarathi. It includes a further variant on Daśaratha’s place of rule: after his marriage to Kaikeyī, Daśaratha leaves Ayodhyā for Rājagṛha out of fear of Rāvaṇa and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are born there, but Bharata and Śatrughna are borrn after his return to Ayodhyā. Sītā’s re‑acceptance by Rāma takes place without any ordeal. The version in his probably earlier *Yogaśāstrasvopajñavṛtti,* the *Sītārāvaṇakathānaka,* occurs in the commentary on *Yogaśāstra* 2.99. Both of Hemacandra’s versions draw on Vimalasūri’s *Paümacariya* for their treatment, although they show some significant divergences from each other (Kulkarni 1958).

A pupil of Hemacandra, called Rāmacandra (1093-1174), wrote two dramas on the *Rāmāyaṇa* story: the *Rāghavābhyudaya* and the *Raghuvilāsa* in seven acts, of which the first is thought to be lost but the second play has been published (Rāmacandra 1982; cf. Warder 1972-92: VII.160-2 and 171-75). The *Raghuvilāsa* is full of deceptions and disguises — the device of plays within plays (*kapaṭa nāṭakas*) so often used in the classical dramas on Rāma themes and details of the plot suggest that Rāmacandra was familiar with the *Kṛtyārāvaṇa* (Granoff 2013: 24-27).

At the end of the 13th century or beginning of the 14th come two plays on small parts of the story by Hastimalla, son of Govinda Bhaṭṭa: the *Añjanāpavanaṃjaya* (cf. above) and the *Maithilīkalyāṇa* (or *Maithilīpariṇaya* or *Sītānāṭaka*), both of which draw on Vimalasūri’s *Paümacariya* as their source, although Hastimalla was clearly acquainted with a wide range of classical Sanskrit literature as is shown by his imitations of them (Patwardhan 1950: 48-51), which is no doubt in part explained by his background as one of five literary sons of a brāhman convert to Digambara Jainism (Warder 1972-92: VII.829, cf. also 849-71). In the *Añjanāpavanaṃjaya,* though drawing on Vimalasūri and Raviṣeṇa for the plot, Hastimalla substantially remodels the love story of Añjanā and Pavanaṃjaya. The rather slight plot of the *Maithilīkalyāṇa* centres on the contest to string the bow between Rāma and other unnamed suitors; unusually the characters include a *vidūṣaka* and a eunuch.

In one of the several works entitled *Śatruñjayamāhātmya* in praise of the famous Jain pilgrimage destination, Mt Śatruñjaya, Dhaneśvara(sūri), writing probably in the 14th century,[[103]](#footnote-103) includes within his eulogy a version of the Rāma story in 539 verses in the ninth *sarga* (out of fourteen), basing his narrative on Hemacandra’s account and also directly on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Kulkarni 1990: 171-79); he also includes the story of Anaraṇya quite prominently in his treatment of the story.[[104]](#footnote-104) From the 15th century comes the *Balahaddacariu,* also known as *Paümacariu,* in Apabhraṃśa, written in Gwalior by the Digambara Jain Raidhū, which follows Raviṣeṇa’s narrative (De Clerq 2014: 349); Raidhū evidently chose to write in the late MIA Apabhraṃśa rather than the emerging vernacular of, for example, his contemporary at Gwalior, Viṣṇudās, in order to participate in a transregional, literary language.

From around the middle of the 15th century comes the *Padmapurāṇa* of Brahma Jinadāsa, a Digambara living in the *Balātkāra Gaṇa* temple complex at Īḍar, which is based on Raviṣeṇa’s work but is more condensed and employs a less literary style in the interests of greater clarity, largely devoid of the aesthetic sensibility of Raviṣeṇa’s work; it presents Rāvaṇa as an examplar of pride and arrogance (Clines 2018a, Clines 2022). The author also wrote an independent vernacular work on the Rāma story, the *Rām Rās,* in 1451*.* Later in that century or early in the 16th century Brahmājita composed in Sanskrit a narrative concentrating selectively on Hanumān’s part in the story, the *Hanumaccarita* (as yet unpublished), explicitly stating his dependence on Raviṣeṇa’s *Padmapurāṇa* and bringing out the moral significance of Hanumān’s allegiance to Rāma despite previous links with Rāvaṇa (Granoff 2013: 29-30). Possibly the last Jain treatment of the Rāma story composed in one of the classical languages is Somasenabhaṭṭāraka’s Sanskrit *Rāmacarita* from the 17th century. A manuscript (probably autograph) of Somasenabhaṭṭāraka’s work is in the Digambara temple libraries at Karanja (Paul Dundas, personal communication, 8th March 2011) and a Hindi translation has been published (Somasena 1952). Somasena mentions that he has followed Raviṣeṇa but he seems to have drawn on several earlier Jain versions as well.[[105]](#footnote-105)

However, Jain authors had meanwhile begun to produce Rāmāyaṇa versions in the vernacular languages, mainly in Gujarātī and Kannaḍa (the languages of the two areas where Jainism is numerically strongest). The earliest is the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* of Nāgacandra or, as he was popularly known, Abhinava Pampa (late 11th-12th century), composed in Kannaḍa, which for several centuries saw two *Rāmakathā* traditions flourishing side by side, one Jain and one Hindu; the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* will be discussed in the chapter on tellings in the South Indian vernacular languages. The next telling, in probably the later part of the thirteenth century, is the *Kumudēndu Rāmāyaṇa* composed in the *ṣaṭpadī* metre by Kumudēndu (Rice 1918: 53). Other Kannaḍa versions in the Jain tradition include: the *Sīyācariyam* and *Rāmalakkhaṇacariyam* of Bhuvanatuṅgasūri (14th century), the *Rāmadevapurāṇam* of Jinadāsa (around 15th century), the *Puṇyacandrodayapurāṇa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa (1528 A.D.), the *Rāmacarita* of Devavijayagaṇin (1596 A.D.) and the *Laghutriṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* of Meghavijayagaṇin (towards the end of the 17th century; an abridgement of Hemacandra’s *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*)[[106]](#footnote-106); both Devavijaya and Meghavijaya follow Vimalasūri. Later still come a *Rāmakathāvatāra* by Devacandra (in prose, c. 1797) and one by Candrasāgara Varṇī (1760-1835, composed as the author states in his colophon at the request of the *śrāvakas* of Śrīraṅgapaṭṭana). There are also briefer narratives within various Mahāpurāṇas, such as the *Triṣaṣṭilakṣaṇamahāpurāṇa* of Cāmuṇḍarāya (late tenth century).

There are fewer Jain retellings of the Rāma story in North Indian vernaculars. In Rājasthānī or its precursor Māru-Gurjara, the Digambara Brahma Jinadāsa composed his *Rām Rās* in 1451 A.D., which was probably “meant to be danced and sung in public” (Clines 2022: 107-8), and in the first half of the seventeenth century Jinarāj Sūri (1590-1643) among other poems meant to be sung composed a *Rāmāyaṇ.* Very early in the sixteenth century (in VS 1562 = 1506 A.D.) Lāvaṇyasamaya or Lahurāja — best known as the author of the *Vimalaprabandha* (1511) — composed in Gujarātī the *Rāvaṇamandodarīsaṃvāda* on just that small part of the whole story. In the next century a Śvetāmbara Jain *yati* or ascetic, Keśarāja, produced a Braj or Rājasthānī version in his *Rāmayaśorasāyana,* composed in VS 1680 = 1623 A.D. and intended to be sung; the chief interest of this text is that subsequently, at the end of the eighteenth century or into the nineteenth century, an artist working in the Mārvār style of western Rajasthan illustrated a manuscript of it with 213 miniatures (Keśarāja 1990; Keśarāja 2010). This artist, however, diverges from the text in making Rāvaṇa ten-headed, showing the Vānaras and Rākṣasas as monkeys and demons, and having Hanumān set light to Laṅkā with his burning tail; the artist is in effect creating a new text alongside that of Keśarāja (Granoff 2013: 34-37).

**A bibliographical note**

On all the Jain versions the most helpful single study is Kulkarni 1990, despite its limitations. We also gladly acknowledge the assistance received from Paul Dundas and from Eva De Clercq on many details.

**The Rāma story as an instructional tool**

Among the earliest instructional texts to make use of the Rāma story are the Buddhist Jātakas, several of which include one part or another of the complete narrative as the means to convey their didactic purpose. The Jātakas will be treated more extensively later in the context of Buddhist literature but some preliminary remarks are in order here. Although some earlier western scholars have suggested that the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is the oldest form of the Rāma narrative, with the others developing from it, it is in fact clear that its narrative is not only relatively late but also inconsistent between its older verse and younger prose passages. Some other Jātakas contain allusions to aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and yet others model their story-line on parts of it; for example, the well-known *Vessantara Jātaka* includes a *gāthā* where its heroine Maddī declares that she will never desert prince Vessantara, just as the devoted Sītā never deserted Rāma. Such use of the Rāma story “to point a moral or adorn a tale” attests its popularity not only as a good story but more specifically as one with definite moral overtones from at least the time of the Jātakas, in their extant form including the prose datable to the fifth century A.D. and probably some centuries earlier for the verse components.

At a comparable period but from a secular standpoint, comes the *Pañcatantra* composed, according to the text itself by Viṣṇuśarman; this is the earliest of a series of such collections of animal fables and proverbial material designed to inculcate the principles of *nīti,* which in this context can be translated as political wisdom. The *Pañcatantra* is not only the best-known collection of its kind in India but it is also the work of Indian literature which in various adaptations has spread most widely throughout the rest of the world.[[107]](#footnote-107)  The date of its composition is unknown; it has been placed around 300 A.D. by a recent translator (Olivelle 1997) and it cannot be later than the middle of the sixth century, since it was translated into Pahlavi by Borzūya around 570 A.D. The *Pañcatantra* and the other fable literature also sporadically, like the Jātakas, makes allusions to aspects of the Rāma story. Among the many versions and adaptations of the *Pañcatantra* still extant is the *Hitopadeśa,* compiled by Nārāyaṇa in twelfth-century Bengal and well-known as a Sanskrit “reader”; though based for its story-line on the *Pañcatantra,* it adds a great deal of aphoristic material drawn from the epics and *dharmaśāstras* (Sternbach 1960), as well as referring incidentally to the plots of both epics.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Both the Buddhist Jātakas and the Sanskrit fable and *kathā* literature share the purpose of instruction, whether in religious truths or worldly wisdom, which sets them apart from the large body of classical Sanskrit literature (surveyed in chapter 3), although Aśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita* stands somewhere in between, being clearly intended as a work of literature but also having a religious message, as well as making allusions to the Rāma story. They do have some similarities with the Purāṇas, although these texts usually incorporate summaries of the Rāma story rather than adapting it substantially, as do the Jātakas, or making incidental allusions, as does the fable and *kathā* literature.

The composition of whole texts in Sanskrit entitled *Rāmāyaṇa* comes at a significantly later period than the two streams of development represented by the Purāṇas and by classical Sanskrit literature, indeed later than almost all of the Jain versions in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa surveyed in the previous chapter. They draw on both the Purāṇas and classical literature but show a much more pronounced sectarian and theological or philosophical emphasis, while adhering at least nominally to the narrative pattern. This distinguishes them from the probably roughly contemporary sectarian Upaniṣads devoted to Rāma worship, which display only minimal interest in the story of Rāma, though broadly sharing the same theological outlook.[[109]](#footnote-109) The teachings contained in these Upaniṣads are significant for the development of devotion to Rāma, *Rāmabhakti,* which became prevalent from the 12th century (Bakker 1985 and Bakker 1986, also Bakker 1987b),and they were probably created in order to counter the lack till then of a didactic element within the *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition, unlike the *Mahābhārata-*based tradition that gave rise to Kṛṣṇa devotion (Stasik 2006: 293). Along with the ritually oriented *Agastyasaṃhitā* (or *Agastyasutīkṣṇasaṃvāda*) which can be placed in the twelfth century,[[110]](#footnote-110) they attest to the growth of devotion to Rāma, which must have been a gradual process, evolving over several centuries and developing alongside the spread of emotional *bhakti* across North India, but by this period had reached the significant stage of the production of these texts, as well as the installation and worship of various types of Rāma image in temples still primarily dedicated to Viṣṇu.

The earliest of the later *Rāmāyaṇas* is the lengthy text usually known as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa* (or *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in short) but also called *Mahārāmāyaṇa, Ārṣarāmāyaṇa* or *Jñānavāsiṣṭha* (all of these titles are also applied to one or another of the many other *Rāmāyaṇas,* with the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* itself quite often called the *Ārṣa Rāmāyaṇa*). However, this work has had a complex textual history which has only recently been being adequately unravelled.[[111]](#footnote-111) Essentially, an older philosophical text, originally entitled *Mokṣopāya* (or *Mokṣopāyaśāstra,* “treatise on the means to achieve release, *mokṣa*”, titles also found internally; other titles are *Vāsiṣṭha, Vāsiṣṭhadarśana, Vāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa* and *Vasiṣṭharāmasaṃvāda*) and composed in Kashmir from an inclusive standpoint apparently in the middle of the 10th century,[[112]](#footnote-112) was subsequently rewritten and expanded into the text commonly known as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (in 32,000 verses; this title is not used within the work except in a very few manuscripts). This was given a specifically Advaitin viewpoint, replacing an earlier one of extreme illusionism that was close to that of Gauḍapāda, some time between the 11th and 14th centuries. As part of the process of transmission of the earlier *Mokṣopāya* several abridged versions were produced; among these was the so-called *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (the “short” *Yogavāsiṣṭha,* such a title usually denoting an abridgement of the full text) and the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* turns out in fact to be a conflation of this text with the original *Mokṣopāya.*[[113]](#footnote-113) The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* was further modified from the earliest text, which had the form of a public sermon with a multiple audience, into Vasiṣṭha’s instruction of Rāma (the *Vasiṣṭharāmasaṃvāda*) by the introduction of multilayered frame stories that emphasise brāhmanical orthodoxy (YV 1.1), by the inclusion of passages emphasising devotion to Rāma instead of regarding devotees as ignorant (YV 6a.127-8), and by reducing the anti-Vedic and anti-ritualist stance of the *Mokṣopāya.*[[114]](#footnote-114) Rāma himself is thereby presented as a model of the liberated individual (*jīvanmukta*) who, although he has gained release himself, remains active on behalf of others. Subsequently, abridgements of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* were also compiled, of which the best known is Mahīdhara’s *Yogavāsiṣṭhasāra,* and even Persian translations made as part of the Mughal ruler Akbar’s programme to understand Hindu culture (and subsequently also made for other members of the dynasty).

As this brief history of its emergence shows, the association of the philosophical content of this text with the Rāma story forms a subsequent stage in its development and indeed the association is relatively superficial. Its location within the overall narrative is at the point in the Bālakāṇḍa when Viśvāmitra comes to demand Rāma’s aid against the rākṣasas, which is the starting point for Viśvāmitra to commission Vasiṣṭha to instruct Rāma, although it does at various other points refer to a number of the major episodes of the story. Nevertheless, it has influenced several later Rāma narratives, both the later Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇas and some vernacular tellings. Indeed, it has become one of the most influential texts in the more philosophical strands of Hinduism, as well as the devotional movements.

The dating of another of these instructional texts, the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa,* depends in part on its relationship to a major work in Marāṭhī, the *Bhāvārtharāmāyaṇa* of Eknāth (1533-99): if it is a source for the latter, as Bulke suggests (Bulke 1971: 168 and 251), presumably it was composed in the 15th century, but if it was itself influenced by Eknāth’s work, then it must be placed in the 17th century.[[115]](#footnote-115) It declares itself to be part of the *Śatakoṭi Rāmāyaṇa* (7.23.64-65), a decidedly shadowy work, as does the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa* (1.8-9). The title may possibly suggest that its writer was a member of the Ānandasaṃpradāya, a devotional movement based in Maharashtra and northern Karnataka. In any case, it does seem to show various features that indicate its origin within a Marāṭhī-speaking area (Aklujkar 2012), which could include the Tanjore area when that was under Marāṭhā rule at the later, 17th-century date (Raghavan 1998: 121). The text is divided into nine *kāṇḍas*: *Sāra, Yātrā, Yoga, Vilāsa, Janma, Vivāha, Rājya* (in two parts), *Manohara* and *Pūrṇa,* containing 109 *sargas* in total. The episodes in which Rāma checks Hanumān’s pride may possibly be a response to the growing significance of Hanumān in popular devotion in both Maharashtra and South India.

Only the first *kāṇḍa* narrates the Rāma story systematically and the remainder are basically didactic or ritually oriented,[[116]](#footnote-116) though making frequent allusions to the story and even narrating parts of it, often in a rather contorted fashion. For example, the *Yāgakāṇḍa* (book 3) is mainly concerned with Rāma’s performance of an *aśvamedha* but it is not until the *Janmakāṇḍa* that Kuśa and Lava capture the sacrificial horse and oddly then it is after they have recited the *Rāmāyaṇa* and been recognised by Rāma (5.7 and 8.1-7). The *Yātrākāṇḍa* begins with the story of Vālmīki being commissioned to compose the *Rāmāyaṇa* (2.1) but is mostly taken up with Rāmā’s visits to every known *tīrtha.*

The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* also carries the story forward, for example in the *Vivāhakāṇḍa,* which starts with marriages for Kuśa and Lava, then for the sons of the other brothers. It firmly links the story of Rāma with that of the next *avatāra,* Kṛṣṇa. For example, Rāma declares to the dying Vālin that he will be reborn as the Bhīl hunter who kills Kṛṣṇa with an arrow through his foot (1.8.62-68).[[117]](#footnote-117) Even more revealing of its theological attitude is Rāma’s promise to some *apsarases* that they may fulfil their desire for him in his *avatāra* as Kṛṣṇa (4.7.32-51) and more specifically his boons to a devoted maid-servant that she will take birth as Rādhā (2.7.40-50) and to the brāhman widow Guṇavatī that she will be reborn as Satyabhāmā (4.8.1-47). The first *kāṇḍa* of the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* is presented as a narative by Śiva to Pārvatī but early in the second, the Yātrākāṇḍa, Śiva introduces a teacher, Rāmadāsa, who from then on instructs his pupil, Viṣṇudāsa.[[118]](#footnote-118) The first *kāṇḍa* includes the episode frequent in traditional tales of the abduction of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa by Mahīrāvaṇa and their rescue by Hanumān (1.11.73-131). The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* also incorporates several *stotras* in praise of Rāma, including in particular the *Rāmarakṣāstotra,*a well known *stotra* composed according to its verse 15 by Budhakauśika;[[119]](#footnote-119) this *stotra* summarises, through epithets for Rāma, Rāma’s deeds in the order of the epic — an obvious transition between narrative and purely devotional literature. The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* also shows signs of influence from the Jain versions, for example in the episode of Śūrpaṇakha’s son, Sāmba/Śambūka, killed by Lakṣmaṇa (1.7.41‑45).

The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is claimed in many of its manuscripts to be a part of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* but in reality it is an entirely independent work; clearly that attribution was only made in order to give it greater status and authority, in itself an indication of the probable lateness of its dating.[[120]](#footnote-120) The actual date of its composition can only be determined approximately (cf. Raghavan 1998: 23-24; Whaling 1980: 112-3). The text must be earlier than the commentary on it by Narottama(dāsa), a disciple of Caitanya, which would have been composed towards the end of the 16th century and it was also a major influence on Tulsīdās’ *Rāmcaritmānas* at the same period and on the *Attiyātuma Rāmāyaṇam* of Tuñcatt Eẓuttaccan in Malayāḷam, which was probably written in the 16th century (although both its date and even the name of its author are uncertain). On the other hand, since the Marāṭhī poet Eknāth (traditionally *saṃvat* 1455-1521 / 1533-99 A.D.) calls the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* a modern work, it cannot be much older. P. C. Bagchi (Siddhantaratna 1935: introduction) draws attention to the fact that at 6.13.16 Vṛṇḍāvana is mentioned as a holy abode of Rāma and that this place, which had long been forgotten, was according to the tradition of the Caitanya school restored to its lost position in the last quarter of the 15th century; the passage could however be a later interpolation, since its Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* does not completely suit the context as a whole. Its authorship is credited in the *Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa* (3.4.19-32) to Rāmānanda (usually placed in the 14th century) and it is undoubtedly used by modern Rāmānandīs (Allen 2011: 83). But Rāmānanda’s earlier disciples were all non-brāhmans and probably followed Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita, so it is more probable that the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* was composed at a later period by brāhmans trying to direct the Rāma cult along their own path and to interpret it in the sense of Śaṅkara’s Advaita. On balance, the most likely dating seems to be in the first half of the 16th century.[[121]](#footnote-121)

Like the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is a philosophical work, which teaches that the world is an illusion imposed on the eternally blessed, peaceful absolute and seeks to combine non-dualist (*advaitin*) ideas with belief in Rāma’s saving grace. Unlike the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, however, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* does not attempt to supplement Vālmīki’s work but completely to supersede it in a shorter form and with a new meaning; its frame is Pārvatī asking Śiva for instruction on Rāma’s nature as the Supreme Being. It comprises around 4,200 verses, mostly in *anuṣṭubh* metre, arranged in 64 chapters, divided into the 7 books of the original. In accordance with its religious character, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* frequently interrupts the plot with longer or shorter philosophical reflections, hymns of praise to Rāma and the like, such as Nārada’s *stotra* praising Rāma as being the supreme being and all the gods with which the Ayodhyākāṇḍa begins (2.1.1-31). The mention of all sorts of childish games played by Rāma as a boy (at 1.3.43) recalls those of Kṛṣṇa told in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* That the author knew and used other Rāmāyaṇas is well illustrated when Sītā says to Rāma: “Many times have Rāmāyaṇas been heard from many brāhmans, but tell me when and where in any of them Rāma went to the forest without Sītā?” (2.4.77-78);[[122]](#footnote-122) he was also familiar with the *Agastyasaṃhitā,* which he even mentions by name (4.4.29). The text also includes the story of Vālmīki as the repentant hunter (2.6.64-88), which it has probably taken from the *Skanda Purāṇa.*

A whole series of individuals are declared to have attained release on their deaths: Jaṭāyu (3.8.35) Śabarī (3.10.41), Vālin’s wife Tārā (who achieves release while alive, 4.3.37), Svayamprabhā (4.6.84) and, in the future, Guha (6.16.15/13). Most notably opponents killed by Rāma reach eternal bliss: Virādha (3.1.44-46), Mārīca (3.7.19-24), Vālin (4.2.71) and above all Rāvaṇa himself (a sun-like brilliance leaves his dying body and enters Rāma, 6.11.78-79). The reason is that even the greatest sinner who has ever thought about Viṣṇu, even if only in anger or fear, enters into him after death, as Nārada is made to explain to the jealous gods on the last occasion (6.11.83-88). Two episodes relating to this, Sanatkumāra’s advice to Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa’s visit to Śvetadvīpa (7.3.29-40 and 4.1-11), both also occur in interpolations into the Uttarakāṇḍa of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (cf. Jacobi 1898: 207). The belief that an opponent of the deity nevertheless at death enters into him or his heavenly realm is no doubt derived from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* where it appears frequently. Another theological development is of course that of the illusory Sītā. This is introduced at 3.7.1-65 (Rāma informs Sītā that Rāvaṇa will come to her in the guise of a mendicant and she should therefore enter the hut and allow only a phantom of herself to emerge, while she herself should stay for a year in the fire, so it is the *chāyā-*Sītā who sees the deer into which Mārīca has transformed himself and is abducted by Rāvaṇa, who treats the captured *chāyā-*Sītā like his own mother) and unwound at 6.12.58–13.22, where the *chāyā-*Sītā hurls herself into the funeral pyre and the real Sītā emerges from it (cf. Allen 2011: 87-88). This feature has already been noted in the *Brahmavaivarta* and *Kūrma Purāṇas* and also occurs in the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as in Tulsīdās’ *Rāmcaritmānas* and in Eẓuttaccan’s *Attiyatuma Rāmāyaṇa*.

The *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa,* long presumed by scholars to have been lost, was rediscovered in the middle of the 20th century and has now been published (Singh, 1975-84); it is also called *Brahmarāmāyaṇa, Bṛhadrāmāyaṇa* or *Ādirāmāyaṇa* in some of its manuscripts. The text is in the form of a narrative spoken by Brahmā to the crow Bhuśuṇḍa and contains four *khaṇḍas* (totalling 36,000 verses): *Pūrva, Dakṣiṇa, Paścima* and *Uttara.* Since it shows signs of influence from the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva and the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* of Līlāśuka (V. Raghavan in Singh 1975-84), it cannot be earlier than the 14th century and more probably should be placed in the second half of the 16th century or even later. Indeed, on the basis that its author is Rāmarṣi, a follower of the 17th-century *rasik* teacher Bālakṛṣṇa Svāmi, it has been firmly dated to the late 17th or early 18th century (Keislar 1998).[[123]](#footnote-123)

Before its rediscovery it was commonly considered to be one source for Tulsīdās’s *Rāmcaritmānas* (e.g. Vaudeville 1955: 317-19, 323-34) but some acquaintance with its contents renders this highly implausible (Entwistle 1987: 245; Stasik 2006). Its most obvious feature is the extent to which it models its narrative of Rāma on that of Kṛṣṇa, under the influence of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* and so shows great interest in Rāma’s love-play and describes Ayodhyā in terms of the topography of Kṛṣṇa’s haunt of Braj; its standpoint is thus a blending of vedāntin thought with *madhura bhakti,* the form of devotion characterised by a strong emotional attachment to the deity.[[124]](#footnote-124) It also shows signs of śākta influence, especially in the way that it presents Sītā as Rāma’s *śakti* and calling the abode where she dwells with Rāma *Sītāloka* and *Sītāvaikuṇṭha* (Sītā’s world or Sītā’s Vaikuṇṭha). It constitutes in effect an esoteric rewrite of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the light of *rasik* practices (Stasik 2009: 22). Indeed, the reason for its long obscurity may well have been that it was available only within the Rāmānandī *rasik* sect; certainly manuscripts of the work were first located in Ayodhyā (Singh 1980: 476-77), where in more recent times adherents of this sect have their main seat and have became a very inward-looking and indeed secretive community (van der Veer 1988: 159-65).[[125]](#footnote-125) It also includes in its *Pūrvakhaṇḍa* two passages on places of pilgrimage (103-5 and 137), the first of which includes an itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathurā. The text begins by introducing Bhuśuṇḍa as the son of Sūrya and Kāla’s sister, Kālakaṇṭakī, who has defeated Garuḍa and become a menace to the world but becomes a reformed character as a result of Brahmā’s praise of the greatness of Rāma and of devotion to him.[[126]](#footnote-126) The narrative differences in its telling of the story of Rāma are less marked than its differences of attitude.

In contrast to the more didactic emphasis of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and the other devotional *Rāmāyaṇas,* the purpose of the much shorter *Adbhuta Rāmāyāṇa* is to give a decidedly *śākta* slant to the narrative and to enhance the status of Sītā, elevating her above Rāma and making her into Devī. It does this by adding a new episode to the end of the narrative (as its alternative title of *Adbhutottarakāṇḍa,* “the marvellous further book”, indicates) and it claims to be a kind of appendix to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* (in 27 *sargas*), further bolstering its status by asserting that it forms part of a much longer divine *Rāmāyaṇa*; it is cast in the form of Vālmīki’s reply to questioning by Bharadvāja. It outlines the reasons for Rāma’s incarnation (*sargas* 1-6) and then moves on to a partial and somewhat idiosyncratic narrative of his life (9-16), before launching into its longer narrative of the killing of the even more fearsome Sahasramukha Rāvaṇa by Sītā, who for this purpose takes on the appearance and attributes of Kālī in an obvious reminiscence of the *Devīmāhātmya*; the text also greatly elaborates on the story of her birth, making her the daughter of Mandodarī, secretly buried and then found by Janaka as he ploughs (8.27-37).[[127]](#footnote-127) Again its dating, and so its relationship to the other late Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇas,* is uncertain; Raghavan suggests that it “might have been composed in the 14th-15th centuries in North India” (Raghavan 1998: 3), whereas Coburn states that it “appears to date from the late sixteenth century and to have originated in northeast India, though there are also resemblances to Tamil materials” (Coburn 1995: 5 = 2009: 36).

An interesting addition to these devotional *Rāmāyaṇas* in Sanskrit is provided by the *Tattvasaṃgraha Rāmāyaṇa,* deliberately conceived by Rāmabrahmānanda Sarasvatī in the 18th century as a compendium of all forms of the Rāma story (Raghavan 1952-53 and *Tattvasaṃgraha Rāmāyaṇa* 2005: xxix).[[128]](#footnote-128) Rāmabrahmānanda names his sources as the *Dharmakhaṇḍa, Agastyasaṃhitā, Umāsaṃhitā, Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, Brahma Purāṇa, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Rāmatāpanīya Upaniṣad, Hiraṇyagarbhasaṃhitā, Bhārata* (i.e. *Mahābhārata*)*, Śeṣadharma, Puruṣārthasedhāsindhu, Itihāsasamuccaya, Purāṇasāra* and *Harimāhātmyadarpaṇa*. In fact, he ranges more widely still, mentioning for instance the *Padma* and *Kūrma Purāṇas* for their differing views on Rāma’s incarnation and also drawing on popular traditions. Like the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* it is presented as being narrated by Śiva to Pārvatī. Overall the work is quite definitely one of devotion to Rāma, *rāmabhakti*, as is the author’s similar *Rāmāyaṇatattvadarpaṇa,* a work intended to affirm Rāma as the Parabrahman and quoting extensively from other works glorifying the Rāmāyaṇa, including most of those in his *Tattvasaṃgraha Rāmāyaṇa* as well as others, in particular Vidyāraṇya’s *Rāmāyaṇarahasya* (Raghavan 2009: 171-72)*.* Both the *bhakti* emphasis and the author’s South Indian background are well illustrated by the story he includes that Rāma presented Vibhīṣaṇa with an image of Raṅganātha and that Vibhīṣaṇa subsequently established it at Śrīraṅgam.

There are also a number of references in various Sanskrit texts, in particular the commentaries on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* to an *Agniveśa Rāmāyaṇa* and works with that title are occasionally listed in manuscript catalogues. However, its existence is decidedly shadowy and most if not all references to it are actually to one or other of two short texts, both ascribed to Agniveśa or Agniveśya (about whom all that can be said is that he is clearly not the same as the author of the early medical text, the *Carakasaṃhitā*); one comprises just over 100 Śārdūlavikrīḍita verses and is more usually called the *Rāmāyaṇasāra* (also quite commonly called the *Śataślokīrāmāyaṇa*[[129]](#footnote-129) and occasionally the *Samayanirūpaṇarāmāyaṇa*), whereas the other normally contains around 60 *anuṣṭubhs,* although longer versions do occur in some manuscripts, and is more usually called the *Rāmāyaṇarahasya* and sometimes the *Rāmahṛdaya* (the slight variation in the total number of verses in both texts depends on whether the *phalaśruti* is included or not). The most notable feature of the *Rāmāyaṇasāra,* in line with its belonging to the category of text known as *kālanirṇaya,* ‘explanation of times’, is its elaborate attempt to fix specific dates for all the main incidents in Rāma’s life.[[130]](#footnote-130)

A category of text that also belongs with these later Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇas,* both by date and in their general attitude to the narrative, consists of the considerable number of commentaries in Sanskrit on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* although many of their authors are adherents of the Viśiṣṭādvaita propounded within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition rather than of the Advaita seen in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and less obtrusively in the *Tattvasaṃgraha Rāmāyaṇa*. The Śrīvaiṣṇava community has clearly played a major role in re-interpreting the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as a theological work. There are in addition a few commentaries in other languages, of which one of the most significant is that by the thirteenth-century Śrīvaiṣṇāva scholar, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai (author of the *Pāsurappaṭi Rāmāyaṇam*), on selected verses from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* written in *maṇipravālam,* a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit; he also quotes frequently from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* elsewhere in his writings (Narayanan 1994).

Most commentaries are therefore from South India but two significant exceptions are the Bengali Lokanātha Cakravartin (17th century or later), author of the *Manoharā* commentary used by Gorresio for his edition of the Bengali recension and cited several times in his notes (Gorresio 1843-50: I. xxi-xxiii and cxxxix-cxli),[[131]](#footnote-131) and the *Rāmāyaṇatilaka* (or *Tilaka*) commentary by the 18th-century grammarian Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (Nāgojībhaṭṭa), who shows a similar advaitin approach to, for example, the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.* Although the other commentators are commenting explicitly on the text of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* in its Southern recension, they are clearly fully aware not only of the existence of variant readings for that text (implying access to a number of manuscripts) but also of other treatments of the Rāma story. Their approach to the text is characterised by three main features: removing inconsistencies in the narrative, theologising and asserting its historicity.[[132]](#footnote-132)

The earliest extant commentator is Uḍāli Varadarāja, whose *Vivekatilaka* was composed before 1250 A.D. (Raghavan 1942-43) but remains unpublished (JLB 1995-96: 90); it is interesting to note that already he recognises the need to establish the correct reading by examining multiple manuscripts from several regions and the problem of scribes not being sufficiently skilled in different scripts, as well as rejecting the *Ādityahṛdaya* as spurious according to Govindarāja in his commentary; however, Robert and Sally Goldman note that a transcript of this commentary in their possession does include this passage (Goldman 1984-2017: VII, 1341-2). A great many commentaries were produced between the 13th century and probably the end of the 18th century, of which six were utilised in the preparation of the Critical Edition: the already-mentioned *Vivekatilaka* of Uḍāli Varadarāja, the *Rāmānujīya* of Rāmānuja (a different individual from the well-known Viśiṣṭādvaitin author; 14th or early 15th century), the *Rāmāyaṇabhūṣaṇa* of Govindarāja (15th or 16th century), the *Tattvadīpikā* of Maheśvaratīrtha,[[133]](#footnote-133) the *Amṛtakataka* (or *Kataka*) of Katakayogīndra or Mādhavayogin (who has a definite Brahmā-oriented approach; 17th or 18th century) and the *Rāmāyaṇatilaka* of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (18th century). Others include the *Sarvārthasāra* of Veṅkaṭakṛṣṇādhvarin (late 15th century), the *Rāmāyaṇadīpikā* of Vaidyanātha Dīkṣita (end of the 15th century), the *Bṛhadvivaraṇa* and *Laghuvivaraṇa* of Īśvara Dīkṣita (early 16th century), the *Taniśloki* of Ātreya Ahobala (who also wrote a *Vālmīkihṛdaya*; first half of 17th century),[[134]](#footnote-134) the *Dharmākūta* of Tryambaka Yajvan (or Tryambakarāyamakhin; his commentary was completed at Tanjore in 1719 A.D.; cf. Pollock 1983-84), the *Rāmāyaṇaśiromaṇi* of Vaṃśīdhara Śivasahāya (late 18th or 19th century), and the *Satyatīrthīya* of Satyatīrtha (who often cites dismissively Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa and so must belong to the late 18th or 19th century).

Govindarāja’s commentary contains a long passage (on *VR* 1.5.1) which seems to be aimed directly at refuting arguments made by the Śaiva scholar Appayya Dīkṣita (1520-92) in his *Rāmāyaṇatātparyasārasaṃgrahastotra,* although he does not name him but contemptuously refers to a view put forward by someone recently as being ridiculous (Bronner 2011: 60 fn. 52); it has also been argued that Govindarāja can be more precisely dated to around 1550-74 (Rao 2011: 36-37 with Bronner 2011: 60 fn. 52). Govindarāja presents the *Rāmāyaṇa* as inculcating *śaraṇāgati* in accord with Śrīvaiṣṇāva ideas.

Although theological issues predominate for all the commentators, Govindarāja does show a tendency towards a rationalist stance and Katakayogīndra is more independent minded than others, while most resort at times to an allegorical interpretation. All of them, however, tend to avoid any possibility of redundancy in what for them is Vālmīki’s inspired poetry, in effect scripture, either through choosing a different reading or by explaining virtually synonymous words as having appreciably different meanings, or even by resorting to a different word-division. Nevertheless, they are aware of textual issues and so they are willing to classify certain passages as inserted or interpolated (*prakṣipta*), as when Govindarāja and Katakayogīndra reject the episode of Hanumān’s encounter with Surasā because of their drastic changes of size. Often, they either explain away or simply deny what is actually stated by a text reading that they find distasteful but they do not alter it (i.e. the text itself is now sacrosanct). Indeed, their attitude towards the person of Rāma and to Vālmīki as the narrator of his deeds illustrates vividly how greatly the way in which Rāma was viewed had changed by the time that they were writing.

**A bibliographical note**

The secondary literature on the philosophical aspects of the *Mokṣopāya* or *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is extremely extensive and will not be taken note of here or in our bibliography, which will mainly note only those items which are relevant to the Rāma story as narrative.

Retelling the story in the vernacular: North India

Literature in the modern languages of North India (which derive through the various Apabhraṃśas from Sanskrit) only began to be composed some while after the Muslim domination of the region.[[135]](#footnote-135) By the middle of the thirteenth century it was obvious that the Muslims had come to stay and they began to make a distinctive contribution to Indian culture; they themselves mainly used Persian both for utilitarian and literary purposes, although in due course some began to write in Hindī and then other vernaculars. However, these developments had the effect of reducing the prestige of Sanskrit for most people and correspondingly increasing the attractiveness of writing in one of the regional languages. The earliest works composed in modern North Indian languages were predominantly religious, especially with a *bhakti* orientation, and adaptations of the Rāma story were among the most frequent of them.

The earliest full tellings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in any of the North Indian regional languages come from its eastern side, possibly because this area had been the least heavily influenced at the popular level by the orthodox brāhmaṇical tradition. The earliest of all seems to be the Assamese version of Mādhava Kandalī (who also names himself Kavirāja Kandalī and emphasises his brāhman status by calling himself *dvijarāja* and *vipra* on occasion), which is variously called the *Kathā Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mādhava Kandalī Rāmāyaṇa* and was composed in the middle of the fourteenth century (Barua 1964: 12; Deva Goswami 1994: 170).[[136]](#footnote-136) Although Mādhava Kandalī states that he translated all seven books, only the second to sixth *kāṇḍas* of his more courtly and broadly secular narrative work survive (Smith 1988: 35-36) and the first and last books have since been ousted by the more Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* oriented *Ādikāṇḍa* by Mādhavadeva (traditional dates 1489–1596 A.D.) and *Uttarakāṇḍa* by Śaṅkaradeva (traditional dates 1449-1568 A.D.). Mādhava Kandalī himself produced a poetic version quite close to the original in its Northeastern recension but with some popular elements incorporated and some incidents omitted. His work is of interest also for the social and cultural information about his own time that it includes (for example, the list of the different groups which accompany Bharata’s expedition after Rāma is modified to give those typical of his time, 2381-82). Śaṅkaradeva was a religious reformer, a leading figure in the sixteenth-century Vaiṣṇava revival and founder of the Ekaśaraṇanāma Dharma or Mahāpuruṣīya Dharma, who produced theological works in Sanskrit, made translations from Sanskrit into Assamese and wrote a one-act play (*aṅkīya nāṭa*) on the marriage of Rāma and Sītā, the *Rāmavijaya* or *Sītāsvayaṃvara* (supposedly composed in *śaka* 1490 = 1568 A.D., in an artificial blend of Maithilī and Assamese, that was called Brajāvalī,[[137]](#footnote-137) as were other plays by him), as well as a selective version of the Uttarakāṇḍa, which he himself terms a *kathāsāra* or summary (Barua 1964: 29-32; Neog 1980: 194-95; Smith 1988: 24). His most notable disciple was Mādhavadeva, who composed the Assamese Ādikāṇḍa, as well as various other *bhakti* texts. At the same period another reformer, Ananta Kandalī, rewrote Mādhava Kandalī’s work, in order to incorporate the new devotional attitude by adding homilies, but this revised version failed to displace the original in popularity (see further below).

Kṛttibās Ojhā (or Kṛttivāsa) probably composed his Bengali *Rāmāyaṇ,* usually called by his own name *Kṛttibāsī Rāmāyaṇ* but also *Śrīrāmpāñcālī,* some time in the fifteenth century; there is considerable uncertainty about his dating and about the authenticity of his supposed autobiography, *Ātmabiraraṇ,* where the astronomical data for his birth and references to ‘the sovereign of Gauṛ’ who asked him to compose a Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* seem to be in conflict, but most scholars accept the beginning of the fifteenth century for his work (Zbavitel 1976: 141).[[138]](#footnote-138)  His version was then followed by a series of others in Bengali, by the female poet Candrāvatī towards the end of the sixteenth century (see below), by Dvija Madhukantha and Kavicandra probably in the same century and from the end of the seventeenth century the *Adbhut Rāmāyaṇ* of Adbhutācāryya (also known as Nityānanda Ācārya).[[139]](#footnote-139)  In the course of its transmission Kṛttibās’ version has, because of its popularity not only in Bengal but also in neighbouring Assam, absorbed several passages from these other versions, as well as forming the basis of the popular song and dance performance, *Rāmāyaṇ gān,* still performed in Bengali-speaking parts of West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh (Ghosh 1948: 35-36; Zbavitel 1976: 141-42; Mukherjee and Zakaria 2020). There is no critical edition of Kṛttibās’ work (the first edition printed in 1802 at the Serampore Mission Press has become the standard version) and the name *Kṛttibāsī Rāmāyaṇ* in effect designates the Bengali Rāmāyaṇa in its current form, which follows the division into seven *kāṇḍas* and shows both popular and devotional emphases.

The narrative tends to be more strictly linear than in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* as well as drawing on other sources. The initial episode narrates the transformation of the bandit Ratnākara into the poet Vālmīki. Among the early episodes is that of Raghu giving away everything in charity, a possible sign of the Buddhist influence which was still at Kṛttibās’ period to be found in Bengal. In the Rāma story itself, the narration of the Paraśurāma episode emphasises Paraśurāma’sŚaiva affiliations; Śaiva influence is also seen in the depiction of Rāvaṇa as a worshipper of Śiva and the adducing of encouragement by Śiva to validate Vibhīṣaṇa’s desertion of his brother. This is at variance with the emphasis visible in the extant poem, but probably interpolated from Kavicandra’s version, on Rākṣasas as devotees, especially the novel figures of Taraṇisena (son of Saramā and Vibhīṣaṇa) and Vīrabāhu who go into battle with the name of Rāma on their banners and seeking death and release at Rāma’s hands. The same Śaiva tendency is seen in the *Śivarāmer Yuddha*, also attributed to Kṛttibās, in which Lakṣmaṇa’s gathering roots and fruits in Śiva’s garden leads to war between Rāma and Śiva, the outcome of which is that Śiva agrees to lend Rāma the services of his gate-keeper Hanumān, who thereafter becomes a worshipper of Rāma.[[140]](#footnote-140)

Kṛttibās diverges in several other respects from the traditional narrative. For example, from the beginning of their exile, Lakṣmaṇa is supposed, by virtue of a boon exacted from the goddess of sleep, to have foregone sleep, eating and the sight of any woman’s face. This is revealed only at the end of the story: Agastya alludes to such abstinences as being required in Indrajit’s conqueror and the incredulous Rāma demands that Lakṣmaṇa substantiate the sage’s statement, which he does by producing the fruit that had been his portion miraculously preserved by the touch of Rāma’s hands and accounting for every day down to the pedantic listing of those crisis days when no food was gathered.[[141]](#footnote-141) A later addition to Kṛttibās’ poem, drawn from popular tellings and found also in extra-Indian versions, is the story of Mahī Rāvaṇa, a son born to Rāvaṇa in the underworld.[[142]](#footnote-142)  In Rāvaṇa’s extremity, Mahī Rāvaṇa comes to his aid and, despite Vibhīṣaṇa’s warnings to Hanumān, tricks his way into the Vānara camp and magically carries off Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa back to the underworld. The wily Hanumān manages to penetrate there, learns of their imminent sacrifice to Kālī and, following Kālī’s advice, fools Mahī into becoming the sacrifice himself. Another lengthy addition to the battle sections is the *Aṅgader rāybar* taken over from the *Adbhut Rāmāyaṇ* of Adbhutācāryya: Aṅgada’s embassy to Rāvaṇa is vividly and dramatically narrated, with Aṅgada’s defiance to Rāvaṇa typified by his curling his tail into a seat as high as Rāvaṇa’s throne (a motif drawn from the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* and occurring also to the Malay and Thai versions).

Although the best known Hindi version is that by Tulsīdās, the fifteenth-century poet Viṣṇudās from Gwalior earlier composed a complete version in his *Rāmāyankathā* (dated 1442), which Stuart McGregor re-introduced to western scholarship (McGregor 1991, 1999, 2000; also McGregor 1984: 37-38).[[143]](#footnote-143) Viṣṇudās was a descendant of professional epic reciters (*kathāvacak*) and the court poet of the local Tomara ruler Ḍuṅgarendra Siṃh (Banghe 2014) and his versions of the epics — he also composed a *Pāṇḍavcarit* (i.e. *Mahābhārata*) a few years earlier, in 1435, and a *Svargārohan* — were more political than religious in nature (Bangha 2014: 370), although the balance has tended to shift in the course of transmission. His *Rāmāyan* relies heavily on Vālmīki but also shows some influence from the Jain Apabhraṃśa versions, as well as from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*.[[144]](#footnote-144)  Interestingly, it is divided into just three books: a Bālkāṇḍ (covering the story up Hanumān’s departure for Laṅkā in 31 *sargas*), a Sundarkāṇḍ (up to Rāma’s installation, in 13 *sargas*) and an Uttarakāṇḍ (from the genealogy of the Rākṣasas up to Rāma’s ascent to heaven, in 9 *sargas*), of which the Sundarkāṇḍis in fact the longest, forming over a third of the whole (Stasik 2009: 69-70). It is drastically shorter than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* totalling under eight thousand lines in the published text, which lends weight to “the suggestion that Viṣṇudās committed to writing a vernacular version that he (and his ancestors) had performed orally several times before” (Bangha 2014: 365-66 + 387-88; cf. McGregor 1991: 185 and Stasik 2009: 69). It also includes a significant number of Sanskrit *ślokas* (only a few of which come from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*) to mark break points and no doubt also to enhance the prestige of his composition (Bangha 2014: 385-86).[[145]](#footnote-145)

Later in the century Bhālaṇa (variously dated 1409-89 and 1434-1514) composed a brief *Rāmavivāha* and a fuller *Rāmabālacarita,* though still only on a part of Rāma’s life, in Old Gujarātī. Bhālaṇa’s two sons, Uddhav and Viṣṇudās, then composed a *Rāmāyaṇa* in six *kāṇḍas,* presumably early in the sixteenth century. Because of the popularity of the much later telling by Giradhara in modern Gujarātī, these and the numerous other versions by both Hindu and Jain authors, are relatively poorly known and almost all are extant only in manuscript.[[146]](#footnote-146) Among these other tellings are the *Rāmkathā* (1470) of Karmaṇ Mantrī, the *Rāvaṇamandodarīsaṃvāda,* “the argument between Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī”, (composed in VS 1562 = 1506 A.D.) by Lāvaṇyasamaya or Lahurāja, who was a major Jain poet and also a minister of Bhīma Solaṅki, and the *Raṇayajña,* “the sacrifice of battle”, by Premānand (1636-1724), which is basically on the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa.[[147]](#footnote-147)

In Orīya (Oḍīyā) the earliest continuous adaptation of the Rāma story, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is the *Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa* (“the world-enchanting Rāmāyaṇa”, Smith 1988: 32) of Baḷarāmdās, completed probably around 1504 A.D. and also popularly called the *Dāṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* (from the meter used in it); however, even before then Baḷarāmdās Śāraḷādās had incorporated elements of the Rāma tradition into his *Mahābhārata* of around 1475 A.D., in particular telling a more selective form of the Rāma story in his *Rāmopākhyāna* version (Smith 1988: 20, 33, 54-55, 56-57, 162; Smith 2004b).[[148]](#footnote-148) The story had undoubtedly been well known much earlier still, as the reliefs on temples at Bhubaneswar from the eighth century onwards clearly show.[[149]](#footnote-149) Although Baḷarāmdās’s dates are not known exactly, he was definitely active in the reign of the Gajapati ruler Pratāparudradeva (1497-1534) and he also informs us that he completed his poem at the age of thirty-two (Smith 1988: 32, 39-40). His lengthy work takes the form of a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī, as does the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, and it has a definite *bhakti* emphasis. Baḷarāmdās follows broadly the NE recension of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* which he delares that he listened to as it was recited by paṇḍits, but he also draws on many other sources and gives his work a decided regional emphasis. Its length prompted many subsequent abbreviated versions of it, entitled *Ṭīkā Rāmāyaṇa,* by Nīḷāmbaradāsa (sixteenth century), Maheśvaradāsa (written 1640-45), Lakṣmīdharadāsa and Śatṛghnadāsa. There exists also a vastly expanded version of Baḷarāmdās’s work, known as the *Dakṣiṇī Rāmāyaṇa,* since it circulated in southern Orissa (Smith 1988: 33).[[150]](#footnote-150)

Also at the beginning of the sixteenth century comes the earliest published version in Rājasthānī (more specifically northern Rājasthānī), the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Mehojī, which by tradition he composed at the age of 35 in VS 1575 = 1518 A.D. (Mehojī 1985; Maheshwari 1980: 94-97). It is a complete though brief telling, comprising 261 *sākhīs* in various metres and *rāgas* (musical modes), and clearly was intended for sung performance;at the end Mehojī claims that the merit of singing and reciting his *Rāmāyaṇa* is equal to the merit earned by bathing in the 68 *tīrthas,* a typical statement of *bhakti* texts*.*[[151]](#footnote-151)

In Maharashtra, where the rise of the Rāma cult starts from the establishment of the Yādava dynasty in the thirteenth century and is closely linked with the worship of the local forms of the goddess, Bhavānī and Tukāī (Sontheimer 2004: 383-84), the earliest Marāṭhī adaptation was composed in the later part of the sixteenth century.[[152]](#footnote-152) This is the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* of Eknāth (traditional dates *saṃvat* 1455-1521/1533-99 A.D.), which contains over 39,000 verses (*ovīs*) but was left incomplete at his death in chapter 45 of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, with a continuation supplied by his less able disciple Gāvbā (Tulpule 1991: 140), while Uttarakāṇḍas were also separately composed by Jayarām and by Eknāth’s grandson, Mukteśvar, as sequels to Eknāth’s work.[[153]](#footnote-153)  Although his guru Janārdanasvāmī, a worshipper of Dattātreya, combined elements of Hinduism and Sufism in his thought, Eknāth has been thought to use his work to some extent as a vehicle for anti-Muslim sentiment (Tulpule 1991; Tagare 1993: 25; Pollock 1993: 282-84). Also at the same period a Yuddhakāṇḍa was composed in Marāṭhi by Kṛṣṇadāsa Mudgal (or Kṛṣṇadāsa Loḷyā) in 78 chapters and some 8,000 *ovīs* (Tulpule 1979: 365).

However, much the best known work from the later part of the sixteenth century is the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsīdās, written in Avadhī Hindī and making use of a format earlier developed by Sufi poets in Avadhī from the poetry of *Nāth-yogi* and *Sant* poets (Lutgendorf 1991: 15-16; Bruijn 2005).[[154]](#footnote-154)  This is Tulsīdās’ major work and has become so popular that for many ordinary Indians it is *the* Rāmāyaṇa, while it has become the focus of a very large amount of secondary literature, the text on which the popular Rāmlīlā performances are usually based,[[155]](#footnote-155) and the text ritualised in oral expository traditions (Lutgendorf 1991); though written from the start, the text is thoroughly permeated by the oral dimension (Lutgendorf 1991; Stasik 2016). But Tulsīdās also composed at least eleven other works, mostly but not exclusively on the Rāma narrative (in whole or in part), for he adopted an inclusive approach with regard to other forms of Hinduism than his own and sought to integrate them within an overall reverence towards Rāma and his saving name, which served at the same time to present a more monotheistic emphasis that could resist the challenge from Islam. His works on the Rāma story in their probable order of composition are: *Rāmlalānahachū, Rāmājñāpraśna, Jānakīmaṅgal, Rāmcaritmānas, Gītāvalī* (which is to be distinguished from his *Kṛṣṇagītāvalī*), *Vinaypatrikā, Barvai Rāmāyaṇ* and *Kavitāvalī*; most are in Avadhī but the *Gītāvalī, Vinaypatrikā* and *Kavitāvalī* are in Braj, although the distinction is not always clear-cut (Stasik 2009: 74).[[156]](#footnote-156)

Tulsīdās began the *Rāmcaritmānas,* “Lake of Rāma’s deeds” (often abbreviated in the Hindi tradition to *Mānas,* “Lake”), at Ayodhyā in VS 1631 = 1574 A.D., as he states at 1.34.2-3, and apparently completed it after a considerable period at Varanasi; at any rate the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍ starts with an invocation to Kāśī, that is Varanasi.[[157]](#footnote-157)  He repeatedly states that his doctrine derives from the Vedas and Purāṇas and often refers to Vālmīki as the prime source for the Rāma story. However, it is clear that he has borrowed extensively from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*. Tulsīdās himself seems to have been a Rāmānandin (sometimes made the disciple of Narahari, himself Rāmānanda’s disciple), which may well link with his following of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (McGregor 1984: 109-13). He is nevertheless fairly eclectic in his use of sources and Charlotte Vaudeville argued that he is indebted also to the *Śiva* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha, Adbhuta* and *Bhuśuṇḍi**Rāmāyaṇas* and the Vaiṣṇava dramas, the *Prasannarāghava* and the *Hanumannāṭaka* (Vaudeville 1955); when she wrote, the *Bhuśuṇḍi**Rāmāyaṇa* was still only known by name and Danuta Stasik has since shown that differences of content mean that Tulsīdās took from it no more than the structural feature of the dialogue between Bhuśuṇḍi and Garuḍa (Stasik 2006; cf. Bakker 1986: 140 and Keislar 1998). There are also a significant number of episodes shared with the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa.*

The proportions of Tulsī’s work are very different from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* The Bālkāṇḍ is the longest of the seven books and, with the Ayodhyākāṇḍ (which is only a little shorter), comprises two thirds of the total, whereas the Araṇya, Kiṣkindhā and Sundar kāṇḍs are much briefer.[[158]](#footnote-158) The poem, of roughly 12,800 lines in 1,073 stanzas, consists of a sequence of usually four *caupāī* couplets followed by a *dohā* (after which the complete unit is usually called in Indian sources) in what was by Tulsī’s time a well-established literary tradition in Avadhī, used for example by Malik Muhammad Jāyasī in his *Padmāvat* (Stasik 2009: 78-79). The metaphor of a lake contained in its title is taken up in the presentation of the narrative through a series of four dialogues (corresponding to the *ghāṭs* surrounding a tank, seen by traditional commentators as representing different ways of approaching the text), which form its narrative frames: between Śiva and Pārvatī, Bhuśuṇḍi and Garuḍa, Yājñavalkya and Bharadvāja, Tulsīdās and his audience (Lutgendorf 1991a: 22-23; Stasik 2009: 80-84). The dialogue form no doubt also reflects the background of oral literature underlying the original composition of the work and the development before long of oral recitation of the text in a devotional and often highly ritualised context (Lutgendorf 1991a; also Lutgendorf 1989 and 1991b).

After a long prologue (1.1-43), partly invocatory and partly devotional, the Bālkāṇḍ continues with the story, based on the *Śiva Purāṇa*, of the meeting of Śiva and Satī with Rāma as he searches for Sītā, leading into the legend of Satī and Dakṣa’s sacrifice and then the marriage of Pārvatī taken from the same source,[[159]](#footnote-159) before the dialogue itself between Śiva and Pārvatī, which is derived through the *Adhyātma* *Rāmāyaṇa* from the *Padma Purāṇa*. Then, one third of the way through the Bālkāṇḍ, Tulsī moves on to the Rāma story proper with an account of the reasons for Viṣṇu’s incarnation, including Rāvaṇa’s oppression of gods and humans (1.176-87), Rāma’s birth and childhood (1.1.188-285) and the marriage of Rāma and Sītā (1.286-361). Tulsīdās himself is the narrator of the last part of the Bālkāṇḍ and the whole of the Ayodhyākāṇḍ. For the Araṇyakāṇḍ onwards Śiva is the main narrator but gives way at times to the crow Bhuśuṇḍi. The Kiṣkindhākāṇḍ is very brief, but still contains a strong didactic element owed to the *Adhyātma* in the hymns of Sugrīva and Vālin to Rāma and Rāma’s discourse to Tārā. Hanumān is particularly prominent in the first part of the Sundarkāṇḍ. Within his Laṅkākāṇḍ (which is twice as long as the Sundarkāṇḍ and four times as long as the Kiśkindhākāṇḍ) Tulsī follows the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* in having the shadow Sītā consumed in the fire. Tulsī postpones to the Uttarkāṇḍ the return to Ayodhyā itself, the reunion with Bharata and the installation, which form the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa of the *Vālmīki* and *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇas*. Then Bhuśuṇḍi abruptly takes up the narration and the hymns of the gods and sages to Rāma which he narrates are doctrinally different from the *Adhyātma.* This second half of the Uttarkāṇḍ (7.53-125) is in effect an epilogue in the form of a dialogue between Bhuśuṇḍi and Garuḍa; Garuḍa expresses doubts about Rāma’s power to Śiva, having had to free him from the bonds formed by Indrajit’s snake-arrows, so Śiva sends him to Bhuśuṇḍi, who then expounds to Garuḍa the power of *bhakti* and the saving power of Rāma’s Name in this Kali Yuga, as well as narrating his own story and how he became a devotee of Rāma.[[160]](#footnote-160)

Borrowing from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* Tulsīdās narrates in the *Rāmcaritmānas* that on Rāma’s instructions the real Sītā enters the fire just before Rāvaṇa’s arrival to remain there with unassailable chastity, until after the conquest of Laṅkā the illusory Sītā who has replaced her enters the fire and the real Sītā emerges. Tulsīdās’ strong moral emphasis is a conservative element by comparison with the often radical anti-caste position of some *bhakti* trends. It would have tended to encourage social stability and cohesion in the face of Muslim pressures, which at this period included the more sympathetic but syncretising interest of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605). Nevertheless, his success in opening the story of Rāma to the masses encountered opposition from the most orthodox of the brāhmans, while it led his contemporary Nābhādās, the great chronicler of the *bhakti* movement, to call him an incarnation of Vālmīki in his *Bhaktmāl* (129).

TulsIdās tends to distinguish Rāma from Viṣṇu and to elevate him to the status of supreme deity, as an incarnation of the absolute and even directly the unqualified, *nirguṇa,* and formless Brahman (cf. Stasik 2001b). Rāma is above Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, mysterious in his transcendence; indeed, Tulsīdās declares that his *nirguṇa* form is more intelligible than his *saguṇa* form, since the reasons for his incarnation are too mysterious and wonderful to be comprehended and can only be expressed in his Name, with all its saving power for the devotee. But Tulsī’s main concern is with devotion to the incarnate and gracious deity, though not narrowly so, for he shows a relatively open attitude towards other deities. Even so, in the final analysis all other deities are so far subordinate to Rāma that he alone is truly god.

Tulsīdās is usually held to be the author of at least eleven other works in both Avadhī and Braj, although sometimes nearly forty are ascribed to him (Stasik 2009: 74-75, 91-114). Of these his *Rāmlalānahachū, Rāmājñāpraśna* (1564) and *Jānakīmaṅgal* probably preceded the *Rāmcaritmānas* and the *Parvatīmaṅgal* (1586), *Gītāvalī, Kṛṣṇagītāvalī, Vinaypatrikā, Barvai-rāmāyaṇ, Kavitāvalī*  followed it. The *Dohāvalī* and *Satsaī,* which share a number of verses and so are often linked together, are also traditionally ascribed to him. Though mostly devoted to Rāma, his works thus also include some praising other gods: Śiva and Pārvatī, and Kṛṣṇa. The textual history of these minor works was rather varied before their standardisation in the second half of the nineteenth century (Bangha 2011: 150).

Tulsīdās’ *Rāmlalānahachū* is a short poem, consisting of 20 *sohar,* ‘celebratory’, stanzas (40 couplets, 20 *haṃsagati* verses) in the printed text,[[161]](#footnote-161) on two preliminary marriage rituals, *nahachū,* the symbolic paring of the bridegroom’s nails, and *māyan,* the inviting of the ancestors: topics such as the teasing of the groom by the bride’s womenfolk, the giving of gifts, and the women’s songs are stressed in this poem based on a popular type and adapted to the Rāma narrative, which is however treated with some freedom (McGregor 1984: 113; Stasik 1999, 2001a and 2005: 122-24). Some of its phraseology and devotional attitudes seem to anticipate the *Rāmcaritmānas.* The *Rāmājñāpraśna,* dated in a chronogram to 1564, is a work intended for use in divination; it summarises the Rāma story in 49 sections (seven *sargas* each divided into seven *saptaks,* with each unit containing seven *dohās*), referring to motifs of the story as portents (Stasik 2005: 125-29). This popular work refers to the Name of Rāma and contains other indications of devotion. The undated *Jānakīmaṅgal,* in couplets interspersed with longer verses, shows some similarities in narrative both with the *Rāmājñāpraśna* and with the *Rāmcaritmānas.* Its subject is Rāma’s journey to Mithilā and the breaking of Śiva’s bow, leading to his marriage with Sītā (McGregor 1984: 113; Stasik 2001a).

The *Gītāvalī* is Tulsīdās’ second longest work, comprising 325 *pads.* The date of its completion is uncertain and it seems to have developed from an earlier collection entitled in manuscript colophons *Padāvalī-rāmāyaṇ.* The songs are arranged in seven sections corresponding to the books of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition and present a range of the incidents of the Rāma story but their distribution is uneven, with more than half the total in the Uttarakāṇḍa. The *Gītāvalī* mainly expresses devotion to the *avatāra* Rāma and so Rāma’s childhood is emphasised, the Laṅkā theme is reduced, and philosophical interpretations disregarded. The emphasis on Rāma’s childhood entails some similarities to Kṛṣṇa but Tulsīdās gives him a different character. Tulsīdās shows great appreciation of beauty, whether that of Rāma or of nature, and uses alliteration, assonance and rhythm to great effect in this work (McGregor 1984: 114-15).

The *Vinaypatrikā,* also from the middle period of his life but finalised towards its end, shows a markedly different approach, which is dominated by the poet’s own devotional attitude; a smaller and probably earlier version is the *Rāmgītāvalī.* The *Vinaypatrikā* contains 279 *pads,* some in complex literary language and style, and is cast in the form of a petition delivered by the poet in Rāma’s court, asking to be freed from the evils of the present corrupt Kali age. The first 64 *padas* form an elaborate invocatory prologue, in which sacred sites are described and an upward progression of deities is invoked.[[162]](#footnote-162) *Padas* 65-276 form the main body of the petition. Tulsīdās’ approach in the *Vinaypatrikā* is broadly the same as in his *Rāmcaritmānas,* clearly expressing his personal experience; he regularly stresses the Name of Rāma, the interdependence of deities and *avatāras,* and the obligations and opportunities of birth in human form.

Tulsīdās’ later works are also collections. The main one is the *Kavitāvalī,* an anthology of 325 loosely linked verses, in which he starts to use new literary metres: the *savaiyā* and *kavitt* (*ghanākṣarī*), as well as some others.[[163]](#footnote-163) Astronomical references and mention of plague as present in Varanasi suggest a period of composition extending at least till 1615. The first six sections present a selection of Rāma themes; the betrothal of Sītā, details chosen from the exile theme to highlight Rāma’s perfection and man’s devotion, and the Laṅkā theme are emphasised. The last section, which departs most from the Rāma narrative, comprises more than half the work and consists of a collection of devotional poems to Rāma as supreme deity and to other gods and goddesses. A novel feature of the *Kavitāvalī* is a set of partly autobiographical verses; Tulsīdās speaks of his apparently inauspicious birth and his early life ‘born in a family of beggars’, his sins and ignorance, his chagrin at seeing his ill-deserved prestige in the world, and his contrition at the backsliding which he knows represent the reality of his worldly state, but supporting him always is his faith in Rāma (McGregor 1984: 116; Bangha 2004; Bangha 2011; [Bangha, *Hindi through texts,* 2 p.43]). He also refers to the fact that people believe him to be the great sage reborn, which in the context must mean Vālmīki (7.72.2).

The *Barvai-rāmāyaṇ* is named after the *barvai* metre used for its composition. It exists in two recensions, a shorter recension containing 69 *barvai* couplets in a style full of *alaṃkāras* and a longer one with 405 couplets which narrates the entire Rāma story; these have only fourteen couplets in common (Bangha 2011: 150).[[164]](#footnote-164) It is probably quite a late compilation, since its last section as extant has similarities to the *Kavitāvalī.* Although he refers in it to other patterns of belief, both Vaiṣṇava (Kṛṣṇa and Rādhākṛṣṇa) and Śaiva, Tulsīdās indicates his preference for faith in Rāma (McGregor 1984: 116-17).

Very little after the time of Tulsīdās another Hindī poet, Keśavdās (traditional dates 1555-1617 A.D.), who was court poet to Indrajīt Siṃh, brother of Vīr Siṃh (Bīr Singh) the ruler of Orchā, produced in 1601 A.D. a sophisticated Brajbhāṣā version of the Rāma story, the *Rāmacandracandrikā,* in 39 sections (*prakāśa*), giving particular emphasis to the Uttarakāṇḍa narrative (17 *prakāśas*) andusing a wide variety of metres and rather difficult language, as well as showing a definite *rasik* orientation. Keśavdās broadly follows the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* but also draws on works of classical Sanskrit literature, in particular the *Hanumannāṭaka* and the *Prasannarāghava,* as well as the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (Stasik 2009: 115-26); he deliberately emulates the style of Sanskrit *mahākāvya* and employs a wide range of metres.[[165]](#footnote-165)

At the same period, the later part of the sixteenth century to the first part of the seventeenth, a Rāmānandin, Agradās, composed the earliest known work definitely linked with the Rasik Sampradāya as an aid for *rasiks* in their contemplation of Sītā and Rāma, the *Dhyānmañjarī* or *Rāmdhyānmañjarī* in 79 rhyming couplets in Brajbhāṣā, which includes elements of the story centring on Rāma and Sītā in Sākeṭ/Ayodhyā before the exile; it is similar in outlook to the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* (McGregor 1983; Stasik 2009: 128-30; Burchett 2018). A little later, during the seventeenth century, a successor to Agradās as head of the Raivāsā *gaddī*, Bālkṛṣṇa or Bālalī, wrote similar works (Stasik 2009: 132). Several other works in the *rasik* tradition were composed in Sanskrit. Around the middle of the seventeenth century Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī, a Maharashtrian paṇḍit at Shāh Jahān’s court (celebrated for persuading the emperor to rescind the hated poll tax, the *jizyah*), among his works in Brajbhāṣā composed a *Yogavāsiṣṭhasāra* or *Jñānasāra.*

Also at this period several works based on the Rāma story were composed by Jain writers. Keśrāj (Keśarājayati), a Śvetāmbara Jain, in 1623 composed in Maru-Gūrjar his *Rāmyaśorasāyanrās,* which became very popular in the Sthānakavāsī and Terāpanthī communities. Also in Maru-Gūrjar, Samaysundar, a Jain monk of the Śvetāmbara Kharatara gaccha, composed at Merta in 1631 his *Sītārāmcaupāī,* based on the *Paumacariya* and more directly on Bhuvanatuṅgasūri’s Prakrit *Sīyacariya.* In 1657 Rāmcand Bālak, a Digambara Jain, composed a Brajbhāṣā *Sītācarit* in around 2550 verses; he essentially follows his Jain predecessors (noting that he draws his inspiration from “Raviṣeṇa’s *Raghu Purāṇa*” at verse 2531) as far as the storyline is concerned but he shifts the genre to that of a *satīkathā,* making the main Jain Rāma-story a subplot to Sītā’s forest exile and so beginning his narrative with Rāma banishing her on the basis of rumours among the people (Plau 2018b, 2018c).

Meanwhile, in Assam, in the first half of the sixteenth century, Durgāvara Kāyastha composed his *Gīti Rāmāyaṇa* (or *Durgābarī Rāmāyaṇa*) in a popular form intended for sung performance (*ojāpālī*) and romantic in tone but based mainly on Mādhava Kandalī’s rendering with a considerable folk element. The *Gīti Rāmāyaṇa* is essentially a collection of songs to be sung to various *rāgas* (as many as 21 are mentioned in the text) and is extant only from the Araṇyakāṇḍa onwards, with almost half its available 994 verses devoted to the Araṇyakāṇḍa (490 verses) and a lessening number to each successive *kāṇḍa,* in contrast to most other tellings in which the Yuddhakāṇḍa is the longest (Thakuria 2002). It circulated orally for a long time and its material is to a considerable degree divergent from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Datta 1979-82: 3-5; Smith 1988: 28; Rajkhowa 2011: 147-49).

Then, during the second half of the sixteenth century were composed the more Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* oriented *Ādikāṇḍa* by Mādhavadeva (traditional dates 1489–1596 A.D.) and *Uttarakāṇḍa* by Śaṅkaradeva (traditional dates 1449-1568 A.D.), already mentioned, which have supplanted the first and last books of Mādhava Kandalī’s version,[[166]](#footnote-166) as well as a *Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Ananta Kandali. Ananta Kandali, alias Candra Bhārati, was apparently a court poet of the Assamese ruler Naranārāyaṇa (1553-84 A.D.) and a younger contemporary and perhaps disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, whose work is a strongly devotional rewriting of Mādhava Kandalī’s work, adding devotional and didactic passages (Smith 1988: 105-07; Deva Goswami 1994: 184-92).

Another work, a *Mahīrāvaṇavadha,* is ascribed to Candra Bhārati but seems too different in tone to be by Ananta Kandalī (Smith 1988: 29-30; Rajkhowa 2011: 152-53), who is also credited under that name with a drama, the *Sītārpātālpraveś.*  Perhaps also belonging to this period are three dramas, *Sītāharaṇanāṭa, Pātālīkāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* and *Śataskandharāvaṇavadha,* attributed to an author Gopāla, if he is to be identified with Gopāladeva (1540-1606), and a *kāvya* by Dhanañjaya Kavi, the *Gaṇakacaritra* or *Maṇḍodarīmaṇiharaṇa.* The latter is centred mainly on the exploits of Hanumān, who takes the form of a cat to enter Mandodarī’s apartment, steal her jewels and scratch her breasts (hence its second title) and then in the guise of an astrologer (*gaṇaka*) goes to tell Rāvaṇa that Mandodarī has been robbed and injured, thus diverting his attentions from Sītā. Some other plays on episodes drawn from the Rāma story in Assamese are also known (Rajkhowa 2011: 31).

A strong devotional emphasis is also very apparent in the *Śrīrāmakīrtana* of Ananta Kāyastha (also known as Ananta Ṭhākur Āṭā or Hṛdayānanda), composed in *śaka* 1574/1655 A.D.,[[167]](#footnote-167) and in the three works by Raghunāth Mahant: the *Rāmāyaṇakathā* (a brief prose version of the Rāma story based on Mādhava Kandali’s, left incomplete in 1780 A.D.), the *Śatruñjaya* (completed in *śaka* 1658/1736 A.D., on the exploits of Hanumān, Vālin and other *vānaras*) and the *Adbhutarāmāyaṇa* (Sarma 1976: 64, 69-70). The *Adbhutarāmāyaṇa* is based on an episode from the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* where Sītā, after she is swallowed by Earth, pines for her sons and persuades the *nāga* king Vāsuki to kidnap them but, after a fierce struggle, Hanumān gets them back for Rāma. Despite the ambition of these later authors to make their devotional versions the standard Assamese *Rāmāyaṇa,* Mādhava Kandalī’s work retains its popularity.

In Manipur, now again a separate state from Assam, the earliest known version of the Rāmāyaṇa in Meiteilon (Manipuri) also comes from the eighteenth century, in the wake of the area’s conversion to Vaiṣṇavism under king Garib Niwaz or Meidingu Pamheiba (r. 1709-48). It is by Angom Gopi (c. 1710-80) and largely follows the Bengali version of Kṛttibās (Datta 1979-82: 16-17; Nilakanta Singh 1980: 575-76).

Meanwhile, in Bengal, towards the end of the sixteenth century, Candrāvatī (Candrābatī) composed a relatively brief *Rāmāyaṇa.*[[168]](#footnote-168)  The text may nonetheless have been subject to a certain degree of addition and alteration, as well as possible losses of episodes as a result of its oral transmission, but clearly it is basically a unitary work with a coherent plan (Candrāvatī 2013: 18-21). Candrāvatī’s precise dates are unknown but the late sixteenth century is generally accepted; she was the daughter of a brāhman named Vaṃśīdāsa and seems herself to have been familiar with both Bengali and Sanskrit literature (Candrāvatī 2013: 4-5). By tradition she was about to be married to a young Hindu bridegroom when he abandoned her at the last minute and converted to Islam in order to marry a Muslim girl. In consequence she retired into religious seclusion in a Śaiva temple (built for her by her father in their village in the Mymensingh area of what is now Bangladesh) and there composed her *Rāmāyaṇa* as a relief to her sorrow; she also composed two ballads, *Dasyu Kenārām* and *Maluā Sundarī,* which share the gloomy outlook of her major work (Candrāvatī 2013: 5-10). Her work is significant as one of the very few literary versions of the Rāma story told by a woman, although in more recent times popular songs on the theme composed and sung by women, often as protest songs, are by no means uncommon. The work begins with a *vandanā* to various gods and then a *bhaṇitā* on the poet and her family. It incorporates a typical genre of popular poetry, the *bārahmāsā* (Bengali *bāromāsī,* “twelve months”, originating as a calendar of the seasons), into the middle element of its structure in Sītā’s recollection of the twelve months of their exile. As a whole it places its focus firmly on Sītā right from its narrative opening with her birth (from Mandodarī) and is presented throughout from Sītā’s point of view and for a female audience.

Other poets were also composing on *Rāmāyaṇa* themes during the sixteenth century in Bengal. Of Dvija Madhukaṇṭha’s version only various parts are extant in manuscript (Sen 1920: 184-85). Ṣaṣṭhīvara and Gaṅgādāsa Sen, a father and son, also wrote poems on Rāmāyaṇa themes and, since manuscripts of these are known from the seventeenth century, they should presumably be placed in the sixteenth century (Sen 1920: 221-23). The author of the *Aṅgader Raibār,* again extant only in manuscript, is given the title Kavicandra and has often therefore been identified with the Kavicandra who translated the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the sixteenth century; however, his real name was probably Śaṅkara and the style of the work suggests that he was active in the eighteenth century (Sen 1920: 214-21).

Another language used in North India at this period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was Persian (not actually one of the New Indo-Aryan languages, though quite closely related within the Indo-Iranian subgroup of Indo-European languages), which was employed as the main court language of the Mughal rulers of North India. From the later part of the sixteenth century onwards a number of Persian translations of Sanskrit texts – in particular the two epics but also the *Kathāsaritsāgara* – were made under the Mughals; some of the manuscripts of these translations were then elaborately illustrated (and those of Rāmāyaṇa texts will be discussed in the section on visual narratives).

The first translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Rāmnāma,* was made for the emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) by his translation bureau (*maktabkhānā*); because of his more liberal religious policies, it is usually thought that the motive for translation was a desire to understand his subjects’ religious and so also social attitudes better but it has also been cogently argued that Mughal interest in the epics was for their political content more than their religious significance, and that the epics were seen primarily as histories of ancient India (Ernst 2003: 178-83). However, Akbar may also have seen himself as another incarnation of Viṣṇu and the paintings in the imperial copy certainly indicate that a parallelism was being made between Akbar and Rāma as a model ruler and so also Viṣṇu (Adamjee and Truschke 2015: 157; Truschke 2016: 204-5).

There are certain obscurities about this translation commissioned by Akbar in the mid 1580s. It was made from manuscripts of the Northern recension of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, first translated into Hindī by Deva Miśra and other paṇḍits, then turned into Persian (Seyller 1999: 65 and 75; Truschke in Seyller and others 2020: 24-31 + 187, esp. n. 12).[[169]](#footnote-169) On the basis of his own statements on the matter, the Persian translation is usually credited solely to Mullā ʿAbdul Qādir Badā’ūnī, who was certainly, though reluctantly, involved with the project (as he was with other translations); however, he also states that he translated it in verse.[[170]](#footnote-170) But the extant manuscripts of the translation made in Akbar’s reign reveal that it was in prose. However, the historian of Akbar’s reign, Abū al-Fażl ibn Mubārak in his Ā'īn-i Akbarī names as co-translators three men – Naqīb Khān (a court historian), Sultan Thānīsarī (a fiscal administrator) and Badā’ūnī (a court imām and secretary) – which is the most likely situation, while on the flyleaf of his copy of the work, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān has added a note crediting the work to Naqīb Khān (along with Deva Miśra), who had been in overall charge of the collaborative translation of the *Mahābhārata* for Akbar, called the *Razmnāmah*, and may well have had the same role with regard to the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

Further Persian translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* followed from Jahāngir’s reign onwards. The next version was the *Dāstān-i Rām ū Sītā* (also known as the *Masṉavī-i Rām va Sītā* and *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī*) by Mullā Shāh Saʿdullāh, whose pen-name was Masīḥ, known as Pānīpatī (since he was born at Kairāna, near Panipat), with a eulogy to Jahāngīr ; this is an abridged poetical translation in the *hazaj* metre which became popular in Kashmir. Masīh rejects the idea that the story is history and treats it as a romantic tragedy, though keeping fairly close to the standard narrative (Aggarwal 2007: 153-54; Truschke 2016: 214-15; Keshavmurthy 2015 and 2017; Gandhi 2017).[[171]](#footnote-171) Also during Jahāngir’s reign (and similarly dedicated to the emperor, though not commissioned by him) came an abridged verse adaptation of Tulsīdās’ *Rāmcaritmānas*, called *Rāmnāmah,* in 5,900 couplets by Girdhardās Kāyasth, completed in 1036 A.H. = 1626 A.D. and celebrating Rāma as a war hero (Sharma 1933; Seyller 1999: 77; Truschke 2016: 215-16). There are also numerous later translations: Candraman Bedil Kāyasth Madhpūrī, son of Śrī Rām, wrote versions in prose, in 1685-86, and later in verse, in 1693-94, called *Nigāristān*; Sumīr Cand composed a prose translation in 1715 (of which an illustrated copy is in the Raza Library, Rampur, Persian no. 5008); Amar Singh (or Amar Dās) made a prose version in 1705-6, called *Amarprakāś,* which draws on both the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Rāmcaritmānas*;andAmānat Rāi Lālpūrī, son of Subhānt, spent 25 years composing a verse *Rāmāyaṇa*, usually called the *Rāmāyan-i Fārsī,* completed in 1755 (Abidi 1964). Most are still unpublished.

Over twenty different Persian Rāmāyaṇas are now known and over fifty versions of the Rāma story generally. These also include a condensed Persian translation by Farmulī undertaken at Akbar’s command of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (an illustrated copy, dated 1602, is in the Chester Beatty Library; cf. below), an earlier translation of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* by Niẓām ud-Dīn Pānīpatī made for Jahāngir while still Prince Salīm, apparently in 1006 A.H./1597-8 A.D., a third made for Dārā Shukōh entitled *Jōg Vāsist,* finished in 1066 A.H./1655-56 A.D (Gandhi 2022: 194-98) and a fourth in prose by Gopāl, son of Śrī Gobind, the *Tarjama-i-Rāmāyan* (also called *Saṃpūrṇa Rāmāyaṇa* in some sources), completed in the 1680s (Mujtabai 1976: 138). Adaptations of these were also made, such as the *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht* of Mīr Abu’l-Qāsim Findiriskī, a selection from Niẓam al-Dīn’s translation of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* combined with extracts from Ṣūfī poetry (before 1640) and the *Tarjuma-ye Jūg-basasht* made in 1177 A.D. / 1764-5 A.D., an abridgement of Niẓām ud-Dīn’s work (Findiriskī 2006: 11-13).[[172]](#footnote-172)

In Marāṭhī the literary activity that began with Eknāth and others in the later sixteenth century continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Kānho Trimaladāsa wrote a *Pātāḷakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa,* which has been characterised as “a distorted form of the original epic in Sanskrit” (Tulpule 1979: 371). The well-known religious and political figure, Rāmdās (1608-81) himself produced adaptations of the Sundara and Yuddha kāṇḍas, while Veṇābāī or Veṇusvāmī, a disciple of Rāmdās (who traditionally appointed her the *mahant* of the Miraj maṭh; her traditional dates are 1628-1700) produced both a *Sītāsvayaṃvara,* a *kāvya* work in *ovī* metre, and an incomplete *Rāmāyaṇa* (Tulpule 1979: 401-02). Around 1700, Mādhavasvāmī, a Rāmdāsī poet at the court of king Śahājī of Tañjāvūr, 1684-1711) composed his *Ślokabaddha* *Rāmāyaṇa,* which is in fact in several meters (Tulpule 1979: 413); of its 724 verses no less than 259 comprise the Yuddhakāṇḍa.[[173]](#footnote-173) Mādhavasvāmī opens the narrative by comparing the Rāma story to the divine Gaṅgā who originates from Mount Vālmīki and ends in the Ocean of Rāma, whose water is nectar itself and before whom even Śiva prostrates himself. The *Rāmavijaya* of Śrīdhara (1658-1730) was completed in 1703 A.D. and consists of 9,147 *ovīs,* in seven *kāṇḍas*, with the Yuddhakāṇḍa treated more elaborately than the others; it draws on a wide variety of earlier treatments and indeed Śrīdhara lists as many as 19 *Rāmāyaṇas* on which he drew, as well as the *Hanumannāṭaka.* Its author was a well known Sanskrit scholar of the period and this is obvious in his work*.* Later still, Moropant (Moreshwar Ramji Paradkar**,** 1729-94 A.D.) produced a series of *Mantra Rāmāyaṇas*, traditionally 108 in all, employing complex systems of using various set phrases (*mantras*), sound combinations (including avoidance of particular consonants) or varying senses of one word in different ones (Armelin 1988; Tulpule 1979: 423-24); their total number is evidently modelled on the traditional Marāṭhī Vaiṣṇava practice of offering the same item — fruit, flowers, or the like – to a deity 108 times.

The last Sikh gurū, Gobind Singh, composed (as part of the *Caubīsavtār* on the 24 *avatāras* within the *Dasam Granth*) the *Rāmāvatār* in 864 verses (*dohrā* and *caupāī*) in 26 *adhyāyas* at the very end of the seventeenth century, in *saṃvat* 1755 = 1698 A.D (Sachdeva 2007).[[174]](#footnote-174) In *adhyāyas* 2-3 of his *Bachittar Nāṭak* Gobind Singh traces his ancestry back to the Sūryavaṃśa through Lava and Kuśa, who founded Kasur and Lahore and married Panjabi princesses, from whom are descended the Soḍi and Bedi families. Despite the common perception that Sikh texts are all in Panjabi, the *Rāmāvatār* was in fact composed in Brajbhāṣā, though written in the Gurmukhī script (Stasik 2009: 35); it has a pronounced martial emphasis, as might be expected from its author, for example describing in some detail the battle of Lava and Kuśa against Rāma’s forces. Some other works in Panjabi or by Sikhs include a *Hanumannāṭaka* ascribed to Hṛday Rām (1551-1629), an *Ādi Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to the Soḍhī Meharvān (or Miharbān, 1581-1640)[[175]](#footnote-175) and an *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* by Gulab Singh (1732), as well as mentions by Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636) in his work (Banerjee 1986: 259). There is also a little-known version in Panjabi from the eighteenth century, the *Rāmcaritra* by Kṛṣṇalāl (Stasik 2009: 35 n. 185).

In Kāśmīrī the first extant retelling (and so far as can be ascertained the first written version, though probably preceded by an earlier oral tradition) was written in the late eighteenth century by Divākara Prakāśa Bhaṭṭa,[[176]](#footnote-176) who wrote a *Rāmāvatāracarita* and also a *Lavakuśayuddhacarita,* together narrating the whole story in almost 1800 verses in various metres (Grierson 1929 and 1930). The published text shows clear evidence of influence from the popular oral tellings that are known from more modern times and which there is some evidence also preceded it; indeed it may well be basically a compilation of several episodes drawn from the oral tradition and then shaped into a more continuous narrative. An unusual feature is that the history of Rāvaṇa’s exploits is transferred from the Uttara to the Sundara kāṇḍa and inserted into the episode of Hanumān’s visit to Laṅkā, during which he meets Nārada and learns from him the history of Laṅkā (590–618) and of Pulastya and his descendants (619–38). Later events from the Uttarakāṇḍa are narrated in the *Lavakuśayuddhacarita*, the centre of which is, as its name shows, the conflict between Sītā’s sons and Bharata and Śatrughna, who are guarding the sacrificial horse (1322–79). Not only Bharata and Śatrughna but also in turn Lakṣmaṇa and Rāma are killed by the boys before being restored to life by Vālmīki (1540–50).

In Gujarat, exceptionally, the most popular version, eclipsing earlier retellings (as noted above), is also very late. This is the *Rāmāyana* of Girdhar (Giradhara, *saṃvat* 1843-1908/1787-1852 A.D.), completed in *śaka* 1758/*saṃvat* 1893/1836 A.D. (Nagar and Nagar 2003; Dave 2007). Its author was a Vaiṣṇava, belonging to the Puṣṭimārga tradition of Vallabha, who acknowledges a number of sources at various points in his work: the *Harivaṃśa,* the *Yogavāsiṣṭha,* the *Hanumannāṭaka* (Indra’s boast at *Hanumannāṭaka* 8.24 is directly translated at *Yuddhakāṇḍa* 9.3-6)and the *Agni, Padma* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas.* The work is in *ākhyāna* style, divided into seven *kāṇḍas* containing 299 *adhyāyas* totalling 9551 *copai* verses. It contains much didactic material, especially in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, which is also extended by repetitive battles.

Retelling the story in the vernacular: South India

Versions of the Rāma story appear in the languages of South India, the various Dravidian languages, much earlier than in North India and indeed the story of Rāma had evidently been current in South India from before the third century A.D., since there are several clear allusions to episodes from it in early Tamil literature from the Caṅkam anthologies onwards (Naidu 1977: 316-17; Nagaswamy 1980: 409; Zvelebil 1995: 618):[[177]](#footnote-177) in *Akanāṉūṟu* (a mention of Rāma as victorious in battle, 70.15), *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (Rāma and Sītā embracing and the vānaras putting the jewels dropped by Sītā, 378.13-22) and the rather later *Paripāṭal* (an allusion to Ahalyā, 14.50-52). Somewhat later, in his *Cilappatikāram* (probably composed in the fifth century) Ilaṅkōvaṭikaḷ compares a city’s grief to that of Ayodhyā on Rāma’s departure (13.63-66) and has its heroine refer to Sītā’s abduction (14.46-49). There is also a possibility that a now lost Tamil version in *veṇpā* metre was composed around 650 (Zvelebil 1995: 619) or in the eighth century (Nagaswamy 1980: 410); it is mentioned in the 10th-century text, the *Yāpparuṅkalam*. When Peruntēvaṉār, the author of the Pāratam (the earliest Tamil *Mahābhārata* version), in the ninth century refers to a *Rāmakathā,* he is more likely to have meant this text rather than Kampaṉ’s *Irāmāvatāram.*

The major background to Kampaṉ’s great adaptation of the epic into Tamil was provided by the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* poetry of the Āḻvārs (seventh-ninth centuries), which even includes a few incidents absent from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and possibly originating in South India (Narayanan 1987: 26-33; Narayana 1994: 56), not to mention the occasional allusions in the poetry of the Śaiva Nāyaṉmārs (most often the virtually independent episode of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa, but also Rāma erecting liṅgas to atone for killing Rāvaṇa). Periyāḻvār (probably eighth century) includes, for example, ten verses on Hanumān’s first meeting with Sītā in his *Tirumoḻi* (3.3.1-10), in which he speaks in Hanumān’s persona, among other allusions. Kulacēkara Āḻvār (probably ninth century) devotes the tenth decade of his *Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi* to what has been dubbed a mini-Rāmāyaṇa but is more of a hymn of praise to Rāma as deity than a narrative,[[178]](#footnote-178) as well as making numerous mentions elsewhere in the work (Anandakichenin 2014). The legend of Kulacēkara becoming so immersed in the story – and taking it so literally – that he marshals his army to cross the sea to rescue Sītā is welll-known. Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār refers to Rāma or the Rāma story over a hundred times in his poetry and composed one section (10.2) of his *Periya Tirumoḻi* on it, even at one point speaking with the voice of a defeated rākṣasa (10.2.3+5). Nammāḻvār (around 880-930 A.D.) in his *Tiruvāymoḻi* refers both fairly explicitly to the Rāma story (e.g. 7.5.1) and more allusively (e.g. 4.3.1 and 7.4.8) showing that it must have been well known to his audience. The mentions in the various Āḻvārs’ poetry are indeed sufficiently extensive for the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentator, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai (1228-1322), to compose the *Pāsurappaṭirāmāyaṇam* which presents a brief narrative of the whole story made up of phrases and lines taken from their poems.

The attitude of fervent devotion to an incarnate deity which characterises the Āḻvārs’ poetry, from which Kampaṉ even makes certain borrowings, is reflected in the very name of his work, the *Irāmāvatāram,* ‘The Descent of Rāma’; however, while the other characters often recognise Rāma as an *avatāra,* Rāma himself does not usually show awareness of his own divinity. This attitude and the particular poetic qualities with which he endowed his work are what distinguish Kampaṉ from Vālmīki, whom he follows quite closely in his narrative, though modifying some episodes and expanding others (Naidu 1971; Srinivasan 1994; Gnanasundaran 2007; cf. Zvelebil 1974: 146-59). Kampaṉ’s date has still not been agreed on with any finality but must fall within the period from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.[[179]](#footnote-179)

The *Irāmāvatāram* consists of 6 *kāṇṭams,* each divided into up to 40 *paṭalams,* amounting to between 10,500 and 12,000 verses in total (roughly half the length of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa)*; there also exists an *Uttarakāṇḍa* (in 30 *paṭalams* and 1532 verses) which tradition attributes to Kampaṉ’s rival, Oṭṭakkūttar, thereby denying that it is by Kampaṉ (Shulman 1991: 111 n.5). The *Irāmāvatāram* is generally accepted as being the first surviving adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into a language other than Sanskrit or Prakrit within India and the earliest devotional treatment of the story in the various living languages of India. Besides being an early example of the trend to localise the story in the area in which it is told (for Kampaṉ the Kāverī basin under the Cōḻas), it is notable for its sophisticated handling of aesthetics and the portrayal of emotions, evident in the way that Kampaṉ has modified certain episodes to increase their dramatic intensity. For example, he describes the marriage of Rāma and Sītā at considerable length and makes Rāma’s accusations of Sītā before the *agniparīkṣā* much harsher. He also includes digressions on other parts of Vaiṣṇava mythology, such as Narasiṃha’s killing of Hiranyakaśipu and the story of Madhu and Kaitabha.

Kampaṉ’s work has become the unchallenged Tamil version, so much so that it has been claimed that “No other Tamil poet has ever attempted a Rāmāyaṇa after Kampan, though there exists a modern anti-Rāmāyaṇa, a ‘chanson de Rāvaṇa’” (Zvelebil 1974: 159).[[180]](#footnote-180) However, not only is there evidence for a now lost Jain version dated around 1325 (Zvelebil 1995: 619) and an *Irāmāyaṇa veṇpā,* ascribed to the fifteenth century, of which only four *veṇpā* stanzas now survive,[[181]](#footnote-181) but the *Takkai Rāmāyaṇa* by Emperumān Kavirāyar of Tirucceṅgōṭu is still extant and much of it apparently published. The *Takkai Rāmāyaṇa* is broadly a condensation of Kampaṉ’s work (to about one third), composed towards the end of the sixteenth century in 3250 songs set to the rhythm of the *takkai,* a small drum, and indeed it helps to confirm what is authentic within Kampaṉ’s poem, which has been subject to considerable expansion over the centuries.

The oldest Rāma narrative in Kannaḍa is in reality little if any later in date than Kampaṉ’s *Irāmāvatāram* but was composed within the Jain tradition, which dominated Kannaḍa literature between about the ninth and twelfth centuries, although evidence for the prestige of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Karṇātaka in fact comes considerably earlier within Hindu or secular tradition in the form of the Mahākūṭa Pillar Inscription of 602 A.D. by the Cāḷukya ruler Maṅgaleśa (which echoes the definition of an ideal man in the opening *sarga* of the Bālakāṇḍa) and of reliefs on Cāḷukya temples from the seventh century onwards. This Jain version is the *Rāmacandracaritapurāṇa,* more commonly known as the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* after its author, Nāgacandra, who is usually called Abhinava Pampa, “the new Pampa” (the original Pampa wrote a Kannaḍa *Bhārata*), and probably lived at the court of the Hoysaḷa ruler Viṣṇuvardhana; his work can therefore be dated to the end of the eleventh or the first half of the twelfth century.[[182]](#footnote-182) Written mainly in the *campū* style, interspersed with paragraphs in prose, and divided into sixteen *āśvāsas,* it broadly follows Vimalasūri (through Raviṣeṇa) and Guṇabhadra, so it has, for example, Lakṣmaṇa killing Rāvaṇa but it presents Rāvaṇa rather more sympathetically (Aithal 1987: 4). The next Kannaḍa *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Jain tradition seems to be that in ṣ*aṭpadī* metre by Kumudendu, who is variously dated to around 1275 A.D. (Rice 1918: 53) or to the sixteenth century (Bulcke 1971: 68; Aithal 1987: 5); its narrative is close to that of the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* (Sitaramiah 1980: 187).

In Malayāḷam literature, the earliest versions of the Rāma story seem to be the *Rāmacaritam* (by an author named Cīramān or Cēramāṉ, sometimes thought to be a king of Travancore) and the *Rāmakathāppāṭṭu* (ascribed to Ayyi Piḷḷai Āśan), which may be little later in date than Kampaṉ’s Tamil version, although their authorship and date is not altogether clear and they are placed anywhere between the second half of the twelfth century and the fifteenth century (Menon 1940: 14; George 1956: 32-37; Unni 1993-94: 369-70). Both of these are only partial versions, however, since they are free renderings of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, although the *Rāmacaritam* does include a résumé of previous events when Bharata, on the eve of Rāma’s installation, asks Hanumān to narrate to him all that happened during the exile, as well as starting its narrative with Hanumān’s first meeting with Sītā (Menon 1991; Freeman 2003: 461). The *Rāmacaritam* is in *pāṭṭu* (song) form and contains 1814 verses in 164 *paṭalas* (Krishna Warrior 1980: 207; Sreekantan Nair and Joseph 2005: 145). Its language is heavily Sanskritised, even incorporating a number of verses in Sanskrit taken directly from sources such as Bhoja’s *Campūrāmāyaṇa;* it was composed for performance at a festival for Rāma as *avatāra* (Freeman 2003: 476-77). The *Rāmakathappāṭṭu,* in 3163 verses and 279 *vrittas*, contains the Pātāla episode, which is absent both from Kampaṉ’s *Irāmāvatāram* and from the first complete telling in Malayāḷam, the *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam* (Menon 1991).

The first adaptations in the fourth major Dravidian language, Telugu, are not a great deal later in date. One is the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Gōna Buddhā Reddi, which was composed in the 13th or 14th century; the reason for its name is unknown but possibly Raṅganātha was the author’s patron. Kulasekhara Rao (1988: 121-2) on the evidence of an inscription of 1276 A.D. by the maternal aunt of Gōna Buddhā Reddi dates his birth at around 1240 and the composition of the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* to between 1290 and 1295. It is composed in the *dvipada* metre (regarded as popular, *deśī,* and inferior by those writing in the more elevated and Sanskritised *mārga* form of Telugu) and, although in his prologue the author declares his dependence on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* it contains a number of incidents or episodes that derive from folk tradition. The absence of an Uttarakāṇḍa leaves unexplained the presence and identity of Kuśa and Lava in the Bālakāṇḍa; however, an Uttarakāṇḍa was added by the author’s sons, Kāca and Viṭṭhala. Nevertheless, the *Nirvacanottara Rāmāyaṇa* is sometimes thought to be a completion of the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* or alternatively of the lost *Rāmāyaṇa* by Bhāskara, Tikkana’s grandfather (Kulasekhara Rao, 1988: 42-44). This *Nirvacanottara Rāmāyaṇa* from the middle of the thirteenth century is by Tikkana Somayājī, who dedicated it to Manumasiddhi, the Telugu Cōḷa ruler of Nellore 1248-63 A.D. (whom Tikkana served as chief minister); as its name indicates, it is based on the Uttarakāṇḍa and is entirely in verse with no prose (*nirvacana*).

The other main early Telugu version is the *Bhāskara Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Huḷḷakki Bhāskara, which probably dates from the early fourteenth century, since its colophons dedicate the work to a certain Sāhiṇimāra, who is probably to be identified with a cavalry officer of Pratāparudra II (1295-1323) of the Kākatīya dynasty (Chenchiah and Bhujanga Rao 1928: 24). However, the evidence of the colophons also indicates that three other authors beside Bhāskara were involved in the composition of this work: Bhāskara writing the Araṇyakāṇḍa and the first part of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, Mallikārjuna Bhaṭṭu writing the Bāla, Kiṣkindhā and Sundara kāṇḍas, Kumāra Rudradeva the Ayodhyākāṇḍa and Ayyalārya the last part of the Yuddhakāṇḍa. The work is in *campū* form and is based on the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* in many places; it is about three-fifths of the length of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* Another author of this period, probably from the second half of the fourteenth century, Eṟṟa Preggaḍa (often written as Yerrapragada), who wrote an *Āndhra Mahābhārata,* claims also to have written a *Rāmāyaṇa* but, if so, it does not survive (Kulasekhara Rao 1988: 62 and 66). Then in the first half of the fifteenth century Maḍiki Siṅgana wrote a *Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa,* based on the *Jñāna Vasiṣṭha* (i.e. the Sanskrit *Yogavāsiṣṭha*),[[183]](#footnote-183) and Tāḷḷapāka Annamaya (or Annamācārya, trad. 1408 - 1503, well known for his devotional *padas* to Veṅkaṭeśvara of Tirupati) composed an apparently lost *Dvipada Rāmāyaṇa* (in *dvipada* metre on the evidence of its title).

The next major Kannaḍa retelling after the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* comes in the fifteenth century; this is the *Torave Rāmāyaṇa* by Narahari (also called Kumāra Vālmīki), which takes its name from having been written in Torave, Bijapur District. Though following the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* quite closely, the work is heavily weighted towards the Yuddhakāṇḍa (55 out of 112 chapters) and omits the Uttarakāṇḍa; it has enjoyed great popularity because of its simple language and the suitability of its *ṣaṭpadī* metre for singing (Aithal 1987: 5-6). Narahari’s work seems, indeed, to have inspired the Yakṣagāna folk theatre tradition. Later Kannaḍa versions have been of less significance but include a *Seṣarāmāyaṇa* contained within Lakṣmīśa’s *Jaiminibhārata* in the fifteenth to sixteenth century (Sitaramiah 1980: 189), the *Rāmavijayacarita* by the Jain Devappa in the sixteenth century, the *Kauśika Rāmāyaṇa* by Battaleśvara from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries,[[184]](#footnote-184) the *Cāmarājoktivilāsa* by, or at the court of, a seventeenth-century Wodeyar ruler (Goswamy 2007: 166-68), and from around the middle of the seventeenth century an *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa* by Tirumala Vaidya and an adaptation of the *Rāmopākhyāna* by Timmarasa, entitled *Mārkaṇḍeya Rāmāyaṇa* (Rice 1918: 58-59, 92).[[185]](#footnote-185)

The first complete retelling in Malayāḷam, composed in the early fifteenth century (by which time the language was becoming more sanskritised), is the *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam* of Niraṇam Rāma Paṇikkar, one of the so-called Niraṇam poets after their place of residence in Pathanamthitta district, Kerala;[[186]](#footnote-186) this is in *pāṭṭu* (song) form in 3059 verses. Rāma Paṇikkar gives prominence to the meeting of Rāma with Rāma Jāmadagnya, possibly reflecting antagonism to Paraśurāma as a symbol of brāhman superiority. His vivid image of Sītā dancing like a peacock when Rāma breaks the bow is copied by the later Malayāḷam poet Eẓuttaccan. In the second half of the fifteenth century came Ayyāpiḷḷai Āśān’s *Rāmakathāppaṭṭu,* influenced by colloquial Tamil, in 3163 verses in 279 sections, and the *Rāmāyaṇacampū* attributed to Punam Nampūtiri; the latter is divided into 20 *prabandhas,* each devoted to one major episode (beginning with the birth of Rāvaṇa and ending with Rāma’s ascent to heaven, *svargārohaṇa*), is composed in the highly sanskritised form of Malayāḷam known as *maṇipravāla* and was intended as a text for *pāṭakam,* a one-man dramatic performance held in temples (Sreekantan Nair and Joseph 2005: 146).

However, the best known retelling in Malayāḷam (much influenced by *maṇipravāla*) is the *Attiyātuma Rāmāyaṇam* of Tuñcatt Eẓuttaccan (alternative transliteration: Eḻuttaccan), which can probably be assigned to the sixteenth century, although both its date and even the name of its author are uncertain.[[187]](#footnote-187) As the title of the work indicates, it is based on the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* but Eẓuttaccan treats various incidents in a novel and more poetic manner than his original (Sherraden 2019a: 168-70) and by no means follows either the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* closely, for he freely adapts the narrative to his own *bhakti* outlook, which is very obvious throughout (for example, in the inclusion of no less than seven *stutis* to Rāma, uttered by Kausalyā, Ahalyā, Agastya, Jaṭāyu, a *gandharva,* Svayaṃprabhā and Nārada); he also draws on a range of other versions in Sanskrit and Malayāḷam. A considerable number of minor narrative details are shared, sometimes exclusively, with the Telugu *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa.*  He places the narrative of both his *Attiyātuma Rāmāyaṇam* and his *Bhāratam* in the mouth of a parrot and thereby inaugurated the *kiḷippāṭṭu,* “parrot song”, as a favoured literary device in Malayāḷam (Gabriel 1993). His *Attiyātuma Rāmāyaṇam* is written in a variety of Dravidian metres in couplet form, intended for singing or recitation.

In Telugu, the only really significant female poet of the Rāma story in South India,[[188]](#footnote-188) Atukuri Mollā, composed a relatively condensed and simple version of the story, usually called the *Mollā Rāmāyaṇa*, in around 900 verses mixed with prose; nonetheless it shows influence not only from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* but also from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and shares with the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* the motif of Guha washing Rāma’s feet lest their touch turn his boat into a woman, like Ahalyā restored to human form from the stone*.* Mollā is probably to be placed in the second half of the sixteenth century (Kulasekhara Rao 1988: 242-3), although her dates are often given as 1440-1530 A.D. on no very sound basis. At the start of her poem she names her father as Kesana, describing him as a Śaiva devotee, and declares that she herself writes by the grace of Śrīkaṇṭhamalleśa, but we know nothing more for certain about either of them, although tradition makes him a Liṅgāyat (Vīraśaiva) potter living at Gopavaram and legend has her composing the poem in just five days in response to a challenge to another villager from the legendary wit of the Vijayanagara court, Tenāli Rāmakṛṣṇa (Jackson 2005: 81-90). Her poem gives considerable prominence to Sītā, although this is challenged by Nabaneeta Dev Sen (Dev Sen 1997: 166-77), and also shows her personal devotion to Rāma; it ends the narrative with Rāma’s installation. She downplays the machinations over Rāma’s banishment: there is no Mantharā and Kaikeyī has only one boon. The language of the poem is closer to spoken forms of Telugu than was usual in literature of the period.

Other Telugu retellings composed in the sixteenth century are an *Uttararāmāyaṇam* by Kaṅkaṇṭi Pāparāju (c. 1575-1630) in 8 *āśvāsas,* a *Rāmābhyudayam (*a *prabandha Rāmāyaṇa* in eight *āśvāsas*) by Ayyalarāju Rāmabhadra, a *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya* (a *dvyarthī kāvya* narrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* simultaneously by play on words) by Piṅgaḷi Sūrana, and two works written without using any labial consonants (*niroṣṭhya*) by Mariṅganti Siṅgarāchārlu, the *Daśarathanandanacaritra* (a brief treatment of the whole *Rāmāyaṇa*) and the *Śuddhāndraniroṣṭhyasītākalyāṇa* (up to the wedding of Sītā with Rāma), both in the *prabandha* style (Kulasekhara Rao 1988: 245-46). Then, in the seventeenth century, Raghunātha Nāyak (ruler of Tanjore 1600-31) is credited with a *Rāmāyaṇa* in *campū kāvya* form and also a *Vālmīkicaritra* in *prabandha* form, which has Vālmīki as the highwayman converted by the *saptarṣis* (Kulasekhara Rao 1988: 275-76), Kaṅkaṇṭi Pāparāju (c. 1575-1630) wrote an *Uttararāmāyaṇam* in 8 *āśvāsas* and c. 3000 verses, and around 1669 Kaṭṭā Varadarāja wrote his *Śrī Rāmāyaṇamu,* which is a fairly exact translation into Telugu (in 23,170 *dvipada* verses over six *kāṇḍas*) of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.[[189]](#footnote-189)*

In Malayāḷam the works which followed Eẓuttaccan’s were of lesser status. Worth noting, however, is the adaptation by Vīra Kerala Varman (ruler of Koṭṭārakkara, 1653-94) into eight plays which form the basis of the Rāmanāṭṭam, a dance drama performed in temples from which Kathākaḷi has evolved; the episodes presented were Daśaratha’s sacrifice for sons (*putrakāmeṣṭi*), Sītā’s *svayaṃvara,* Rāma’s interrupted installation, the killing of Khara, the killing of Vālin, Hamumān’s fight at the gateway (*toraṇayuddha*), the building of the causeway and the battle. Other works on episodes from the narrative are also known: a *Rāmāśvamedha* from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century and, from the eighteenth century, a *Putrakāmēṣṭi, Bālivadham* and *Setubandhanam* (Chaitanya 1971: 136-7).

**Visual representations (India)**

Representations in various visual forms of the Rāma story are actually the oldest evidence for it that we possess, since some of them are centuries earlier than the oldest manuscripts of any written version. The main concern in this chapter is with narrative representations of the Rāma story contained in programmes of sculptural reliefs on temple walls and, at a much later period, series of paintings or drawings, whether accompanying a written text or created as a separate, purely visual narrative. However, the earliest known examples of objects which may illustrate the Rāma story are single items but this fact raises the issue of the accuracy of identification of the scene or episode, as well as whether it is indeed specific to the Rāma story. For example, one of the reliefs on the Bhārhut stūpa (datable around 200 B.C.) shows in two registers the birth of Ṛśyaśrṅga (labelled *isisiṃgiyajātaka*; Barua 1943-47: II, 145-47 and III pl. LXXXVIII), which is a story known in the Buddhist Jātakas (the *Alambusā* and *Nalinikā Jātakas*), the *Mahābhārata* and many later versions of the Rāma story.[[190]](#footnote-190) Again, a relief on a coping panel there has the name Dasaratha incised on a scene from the *Dasaratha Jātaka,* yet both have been identified by some as Rāmāyaṇa scenes. Similarly, at Sāñcī the western *toraṇa* of Stūpa 1 includes an illustration of the episode of the ascetic boy killed by a king from the *Sāmajātaka.* Among the many Gandhāran reliefs the subject of a stair-riser possibly from Jamālgaṛhī now in the British Museum (OA 1880.53) “may be a version of the Rāma legend, or a theme shared with it, and here perhaps used in a *jātaka”* (Zwalf 1996: I, 236); the figures carved could perhaps represent Rāvaṇa approaching Sītā in the *āśrama* and Rāma chasing a deer.[[191]](#footnote-191)

More plausibly, a Kauśāmbī terracotta plaque assigned to the second to first century B.C. and preserved in the Allahabad Museum (no. 5108) has been identified as Rāvaṇa carrying off Sītā (Shah 1972).[[192]](#footnote-192) The earliest paintings by far of a related episode are the two paintings at Ajaṇṭā, the earlier in Cave 10 and the much later one in Cave 17 (2nd or 1st century BC and last quarter of the 5th century AD respectively), but these are based on the *Sāmajātaka* version of the story of the ascetic boy killed by a king (Schlingloff 2011: I, 31-34 and 145-51; MB 2010). Similarly, sculptural panels at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa from the third to fourth centuries A.D. have been claimed as illustrating the Rāma story (e.g. Ray 2015: 205) but, if so, it is again the *Dasaratha Jātaka.*[[193]](#footnote-193) In a different way and from a somewhat later period there are the frequent representations of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa found on many Śaiva temples, the so-called *Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti* (i.e. Śiva showing favour to Rāvaṇa), which develops a largely separate distribution from any other episode linked to the Rāma story; the earliest examples come from the sixth century onwards.[[194]](#footnote-194)  These will only be noted when relevant for other reasons.

The popularity of different episodes and how they are represented varies at different periods (JLB 2020a). In general Bālakāṇḍa episodes are very well represented whereas Uttarakāṇḍā scenes are virtually unknown before the Vijayanagara period and even then are not frequent; one limited exception is the episode of Vālin seizing Rāvaṇa (*VR* 7.34), found occasionally on Pallava, Cōḻa and W. Cāḷukya temples. Scenes from the Ayodhyākāṇḍa are relatively under-represented, as are those from the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, apart from the extremely popular *saptatālabhedana* and the combat between Vālin and Sugrīva. On the other hand, the martial scenes in particular of the Araṇya and Yuddha kāṇḍas are well represented, from Rāma defeating Khara’s army and Jaṭāyus vainly attacking Rāvaṇa to multiple scenes of the battle for Laṅkā and the final contest between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Several episodes occur only in the period up to the tenth century: Bharata on his way to Citrakūṭa with his entourage (although the actual meeting with Rāma is common at all periods), the death of Triśiras, Lakṣmaṇa garlanding Sugrīva before his second fight with Vālin, Sugrīva instructing the search parties, and Hanumān searching Rāvaṇa’s *antaḥpura.* In addition, during this early period several scenes are uniquely represented: Kausalyā nursing an infant Rāma (elsewhere all three mothers with their four sons are shown), Rāma shooting an arrow at Sītā’s *svayaṃvara* rather than bending or breaking the bow, Sītā then garlanding Rāma, Bharata and Śatrughna comforting Daśaratha (after the departure of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Viśvāmitra), his queens mourning Daśaratha, Daśaratha’s corpse being placed in a vat of oil, the exiles crossing the Yamunā by raft, the crow attacking Sītā, Hanumān searching Rāvaṇa’s *antaḥpura,* and Hanumān announcing Rāma’s victory to Sītā.

By the early centuries A.D. we find limited epigraphic evidence of some form of worship of Rāma as deity, for example in a Prakrit inscription from Kosam (ancient Kauśāmbī; Allahabad district, U.P.). What is legible of its third line reads *bhagavato rāmanārāyana,* “of the blessed Rāma Nārāyaṇa”, in Brāhmī script which suggests a date in the later part of the 2nd century A.D. (Shukla 1990 = 1997; Shastri 1994). An inscription of Gupta year 148 (= 467-8 A.D.) on the pavement of the Daśāvatāra temple at Gaḍhvā (Allahabad dist., U.P.) records the installation of an image of Anantasvāmin (= Viṣṇu) and mentions a divine figure Citrakūṭasvāmin (*bhaga<v>cchitra<k>ūṭasvāmi-*), which must mean Rāma (Fleet 1888: 267-9, no. 66). Somewhat more frequent are those royal inscriptions which compare the ruler to Rāma, but often in association with other heroic figures, as is the case with the earliest example known, a Sālivāhana inscription at Nasik of around 150 A.D. However, cult images of Rāma, even as subsidiary icons within niches on temple walls, are considerably later.[[195]](#footnote-195) While all of these constitute an indication of the prestige of Rāma and of acquaintance with the Rāma story, they do not reveal the form in which it was known.

The earliest certain representations of the Rāma story are reliefs of various types on Gupta-period temples from the fifth to seventh centuries in North India and the Deccan. From this period onwards a significant number of clearly identifiable representations survive, mostly in the form of relief sculptures in stone but also of several terracottas, which are among the earliest representations. A considerable proportion of the numerous terracottas have identifying captions or labels; this is a feature of this early period which is then not common again until the Vijayanagara period. A perhaps 4th-century terracotta panel from Jīnd of Hanumān destroying the *aśokavana* is captioned *hanumān aśokavāṭikāhantā* (Pande 2015: 5; Lal 2008: 40 + fig. 1.14). Another panel from Jind appears to show the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva. A group of around fifteen early-fifth-century panels has been identified as coming from Katingara (Etah district, U.P.; Greaves 2018). Among them is one on which the two figures shown are labelled in Brāhmī script as Siṃghikā (i.e. Siṃhikā) and Hanumān (Sotheby’s 1985: lot 257; Greaves 2018: 124-5)[[196]](#footnote-196) and another on which Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are similarly labelled (Michigan 2012/2.160), while some other panels from Katingara have identificatory labels which are indecipherable.

Several panels apparently from the fifth-century temple at Bhītargāon (Kanpur district, U.P.), which certainly was decorated with terracotta panels of Vaiṣṇava themes, have been identified with varying degrees of plausibility as showing Rāmāyaṇa scenes (Zaheer 1981: 90-92; Ray 2015: 209). In a set of Rāmāyaṇa terracotta panels assignable to the fifth or sixth century which were found at Nachārkherhā in Haryana several panels include brief Brāhmī inscriptions identifying characters and one scene even has part of a verse from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* written above it (Pal 1986-87: I, 232, citing Yogananda 1970; these are now in the Gurukul Archaeological Museum, Jhajjar, Haryana); there is also a terracotta image of Rāma (so identified by an inscription near its left thigh) most probably from the same place (LACMA M.83.221.6; Markel 2010: 104). Presumably all these were once part of a Gupta-period brick temple there (Pal 1986-87: I, 232). A group of about forty terracotta plaques found in 1983-84 at Palasabari/Palasbadi (near Mahāsthāngaṛh, Bogra dist., Bangladesh) in most instances actually include brief captions identifying the scenes shown, which come from the Bāla, Ayodhyā and Araṇya kāṇḍas; these captions, in an eastern Prakrit, are written in a Brāhmī script which suggests that they should be dated in the seventh century, although the artistic style of the plaques seems a century or more earlier (Akmam 1991; Ray 1989; Bhattacharya 1990; Bhattacharya and Pal 1991). A similar group of 17 plaques, somewhat damaged, was collected in 1975 from the nearby village of Saralpur which were the same size, also had identificatory labels and seem to have come from the same temple (Akmam 1991).

Other terracottas showing Rāmāyaṇa scenes have been discovered in smaller numbers at Barehat (Bhind dist., M.P.; *IAR* 1959-60: 69 and pl. LVIII c), Bhīṭā (Allahabad dist., U.P.; Kala 1982-83: 235-36), Bilsad (Etah dist., U. P.), Chandraketugarh (now in the Asutosh Museum, Kolkata), Chausā (Buxar dist., Bihar; Patna Museum no. 6528), Kauśāmbī (Allahabad dist., U.P.; Allahabad Museum no. 5108), Newal (Unnao dist., U.P.; five panels but one now missing; Shukla 1989), Paharpur (several panels found in the debris of an eighth-century temple; Kala 1982-83: 230-31), Saheṭh-Maheṭh (ancient Śrāvastī; fifth century; Vogel 1907-08: 96-97; Srivastava 1967-68), Sandhaya (Yamunanagar dist, Haryana; Handa 2006: 106-7), Śṛṅgaverapura (near Allahabad, U. P.; Allahabad Museum no. 261), ranging in date from the first to as late as the eighth century (Agrawala 1967: 279-80; Kala 1982-83; Shukla 2006), Sirsa (Sirsa dist., Haryana; ancient Śairīṣaka; Handa 2006: 110) and Sugh (ancient Śrughna, Haryana), as well as fragments probably of Rāmāyaṇa themes from a brick temple at Pawāyā (Gwalior dist., M.P.; Greaves 2014: 190-91) and possibly on the Vākāṭaka-period Pravareśvara temple at Mānsar (Nagpur dist., Maharashtra; Greaves 2014: 191).[[197]](#footnote-197) The caption on an unprovenanced, probably fifth-century panel, identifies the scene as Rāma killing Triśiras (Stadtner 2014).[[198]](#footnote-198) Another unprovenanced panel, dated c. 400-500, shows Jaṭāyus trying to prevent Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā (Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, acc. no. 1988.40). A terracotta panel from Ghātiyari showing Sītā seated on a platform under an *aśoka* tree with to the left of the panel Hanumān kneeling before her and making *namaskāra* and behind him a *haṃsa* holding a lotus bud in its beak is probably from the seventh-eighth centuries (Yadav 1988). From an unidentified site in Uttar Pradesh comes a fifth-century relief showing Rāvaṇa in the guise of an ascetic with an ass’s head above the single human head which is now in the National Museum, New Delhi (71.246; Sivaramamurti 1974: fig. 56; Dhar 2023: 136-8, fig. 7.6); this motif is found sporadically in reliefs from now on (cf. Donaldson 2007: I, 186-88; Dhar 2015) and very frequently later in miniature paintings but not in literature. Towards the end of this period – in the late seventh or eighth century, in the territories of the later Guptas of Magadha – come a series of eight stucco relief panels on a brick temple at Aphsaḍ (Gayā dist., Bihar), which illustrate the story from the crossing of the Gaṅgā to the meeting with Bharata within the Ayodhyākāṇḍa (Sinha 1968; Kala 1988: 20-22; Dehejia 1994b: 9).

Stone temples of the Gupta period were also decorated with panels illustrating the Rāmāyaṇa narrative. Best known are the ten panels which once ornamented the plinth of the so-called Daśāvatāra temple at Deogaṛh (Lalitpur dist., U.P.), a clearly Vaiṣṇava temple and probably of fifth-century date or early sixth-century according to Joanna Williams (Williams 1982: 132); most of these panels have now been removed to the National Museum, New Delhi. They include Rāma’s transformation of Ahalyā,[[199]](#footnote-199) Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā crossing the river, the visit to Atri’s *āśrama,* Lakṣmaṇa mutilating Śūrpaṇakhā, Rāma killing *rākṣasas*, the abduction of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa garlanding Sugrīva, Tārā with the dying Vālin, Rāvana threatening Sītā in the *aśokavana,* Hanumān bringing the herb mountain, and a detached slab which is plausibly claimed to show the earliest representation yet known of Rāvaṇa offering his heads to Śiva (Agrawala 1994).

Among scattered fragments at the site of Nācnā, often referred to as Nācnā-Kuṭhārā (Panna dist., Madhya Pradesh), six Rāmāyaṇa panels have been identified (Deva 1981; Williams 1982: 113-14 and pl. 165-70); the site is better known for its Gupta-period Pārvatī temple, probably dating to the fifth century, and these panels may be of the same date or a little later. From a now ruined temple at Rājaona (Lakhi Serai dist., Bihar) come several finds of the fifth or sixth century, including a matching pair of relief panels that perhaps flanked its entrance stairway, one showing a scene at Sugrīva’s court and the other one at Rāvaṇa’s court (Asher 1986: 230-31). In the territories of the Gupta allies, the Vākāṭakas, stray finds of a series of larger reliefs from Pavnār (evidently the ancient Pravarapura; Mirashi 1960-66) which are thought to come from a temple built by Prabhāvatīguptā may show scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa (Williams 1982: 135; Mirashi 1960-66), although Hans Bakker has declared this to be untenable (Bakker 2019: 170-71);[[200]](#footnote-200)  this temple, which most probably enshrined Viṣṇu’s or perhaps Rāma’s footprints, is datable to the very beginning of the 5th century. At Nālandā (Bihar) a Hindu temple designated temple 2 has on its dado a series of 211 stone panels, five of which show Rāmāyaṇa scenes; the panels seem to have been carved in the seventh century, although the temple itself is probably later.

Outside the territories controlled by the imperial Guptas and their subordinates or allies, such as the Vākāṭakas, evidence for the popularity of the Rāma story is on the whole rather later. Nevertheless, some Rāmāyaṇa reliefs on pillars in the third storey of the main rock-cut cave at Uṇḍavalli (Guntur dist., Andhra Pradesh), the Anantaśayanagudi cave, have been tentatively assigned to the Viṣṇukuṇḍins — the dynasty which superseded the Vākāṭakas in this area — and so dated in the fourth to fifth centuries; they include Hanumān’s meeting with Sītā (Ramamohan Rao 1992: 44) and the killing of Jaṭāyus (Sankalia 1982: 174). Hanumān’s meeting with Sītā is apparently also carved on a pillar in one of the Mogalrājapuram caves (Krishna dist., Andhra Pradesh); this too can be ascribed to the Viṣṇukuṇḍins in the sixth century (Sivaramamurti 1977: 177).

In Orissa a number of temples constructed between the seventh and tenth centuries carry Rāmāyaṇa friezes. One instance is even earlier: a damaged relief panel discovered during restoration work at the Liṅgarāja temple in Bhubaneswar, showing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with a group of four *vānaras,* is in the Gupta style and datable to the fifth or sixth century A.D. (Chauley 2004). Reliefs from the seventh century onwards are in the Orissan style. The earliest are a group of five carved blocks below a niche for an image on the Śatrughneśvara temple at Bhubaneswar (c. 600 A.D.), which carry scenes leading up to the death of Vālin and form an exception to the lack of narrative on other such blocks (Williams 1996: 70-71). The Svarṇajāleśvara temple at Bhubaneswar is also early, being dated to the early seventh century; the scenes here (carved on the *baraṇḍa* frieze at the top of the shrine wall) are in two sequences, that on the north wall reads from right to left and that on the west wall from left to right, raising problematic questions about the direction of circumambulation (Williams 1996: 71-72 and figures 273-276). There are also scenes on the Paraśurāma temple (late 7th century), as well as on the eaves of the Śiśireśvara temple   
(c. 775 A.D.), which has *Mahābhārata* scenes too (Donaldson 1985-87: III, 1169).

Elsewhere in Orissa Rāmāyaṇa narrative reliefs are found on the Siṃhanātha temple (late 9th century, located on Siṃhanātha Island in the Mahānadī river), the Vārāhī temple at Caurāsi (perhaps first quarter of the 10th century) and the Pañcapāṇḍava temple at Ganeśvarpur (second quarter of the 10th century); at the latter two sites frieze fragments are preserved which probably formed the cornice of the *jagamohana* roof. There are also a few detached panels from Śukleśvara (c. 20 km S of Ratnagiri, the site of the 9th-century Maṇikeśvara Śiva temple) depicting Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān (Williams 1996: 72-74; Donaldson 1985-87: III, 1169) and a single panel, now detached, from the Trilocaneśvara temple, Kundeswar (Jagatsinghapur dist.), showing Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa. An interesting point is that all these temples are Śaiva, apart from the Śākta Vārāhī temple, and none are Vaiṣṇava. The Anantavāsudeva temple is the only major Vaiṣṇava temple still standing at Bhubaneswar (Mitra 1978: 65) and its Rāma-related sculpture is limited to the balusters of the north window of the *jagamohana* with figures of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, Sītā, Hanumān and a monkey-attendant (Mitra 1978: 66).

In the Deccan during the seventh and eighth centuries a number of the temples erected in Karnataka by the Early or Western Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi and in Andhra Pradesh by the branch line of the Eastern Cāḷukyas of Veṅgi provide frequent instances of carved scenes taken from the Rāmāyaṇa and also the *Mahābhārata*. At the Cāḷukyas’ capital of Bādāmi (originally Vātāpi: Bagalkot dist., Karnataka) there are such scenes on the Upper Śivālaya temple (originally a Vaiṣṇava temple; erected under Pulakeśin II, r. 608-642 A.D.) on its *adhiṣṭhāna* on the south face; these number about a dozen and show scenes from Śūrpaṇakh’s approach up to Sugrīva’s installation, including the piercing of the seven trees (one of the earliest representations of this scene). Also at Bādāmi is a relief of Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā on the Mālegitti Śivālaya temple (built around 700 A.D.). At the nearby Aihoḷe (or Aivalli) in the inner porch and verandah of the Durgā temple (dated c. 725-30 A.D.; Tartakov 1997: 95) there are, as Sivaramamurti was the first to notice (Sivaramamurti 1956), narrative reliefs of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with scenes from the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* on the north through to scenes from the *Sundarakāṇḍa* on the south, including Hanumān’s exploration of Rāvaṇa’s harem, signed by the artist Mudyasili (Tartakov 1997: 88; Dhar 2022: 28-29). The Mahākūṭeśvara temple at Mahākūṭa has Rāmāyaṇa episodes carved on its *vedikā,* between the uprights and the crossbar (Bolon 1979: 258); two images of demonic figures, which in local tradition (recorded in the *Mahākūṭamāhātmya*) are identified as Vātāpi and Ilvala, are now installed in a gateway at the SE corner of the compound, but one is female and so they may be Tāṭakā and Mārīca (Bolon 1980).[[201]](#footnote-201)

At Paṭṭadakal the Virūpākṣa temple was built by Vikramāditya II’s chief queen, Lokamahādevī (the older of two sisters), to commemorate his victory over the Pallavas in 740 A.D. Three pillars in its *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* are carved in broad bands round the shafts with scenes from both epics;[[202]](#footnote-202) on one pillar the figures are identified above in vernacular forms of the names (Fleet 1881:168 [No. CX]). Among them is Hanumān sitting on his coiled tail when captured and brought before Rāvaṇa. Apart from an instance at Nācnā-Kuṭhārā, this is the first example of this motif of sitting on the coiled tail being transferred to Hanumān from Aṅgada’s later embassy to Rāvaṇa; it is very common later on Vijayanagara temples probably due to the particular importance of Hanumān at Vijayanagara. Very interestingly, this same transfer occurs in Orissan verbal texts, where in the versions by Śāraḷadāsa (second half of 15th century) and Upendra Bhañja (c. 1701) it is Aṅgada who by coiling his tail raises himself above Rāvaṇa but in the *Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa* (6.57-60; composed c. 1490-1500) Hanumān follows Aṅgada as envoy and the incident is transferred to him (Williams 1996: 100). Niches in the *maṇḍapa* wall contain scenes of the contest between Vālin and Sugrīva, Jaṭāyus fighting Rāvaṇa and the three exiles in the forest. *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are also found on one pillar in the *maṇḍapa* of the contemporary Mallikārjuna temple (built by the younger sister and queen, Trailokyamahādevī).

Scenes from both epics cover the outer walls of the Pāpanātha temple at Paṭṭadakal (listed at Loizeau 2017: 190-91), which was built in three phases during the first half of the 8th century ending with the reign of Kīrtivarman II (746-53 A.D.). They seem to have been designed to bolster the dynasty’s legitimacy shortly before its fall to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (Wechsler 1994). They are also the earliest narrative sequences to be preserved in a good enough state to permit reasonable inferences about the sculptor’s or patron’s intentions. The starting point for both narrative sequences is nearer the *garbhagṛha,* so that the triumphant conclusion can be depicted on the façade, which means that the 28 *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, starting in the middle of the south wall of the western *maṇḍapa,* are in reverse order for viewing when worshippers were circumbulating the temple; Wechsler (1995: 30) notes that this is exceptional among Western Cāḷukya monuments, although it is also found at the Hoysaḷa Amṛteśvara temple and the Noḷamba Kāmākṣamma temple (cf. below). These scenes on the Pāpanātha temple are perhaps the earliest to show Rāvaṇa’s ten heads as a circle (artistically more effective than the row common in miniature paintings).

Eastern Cāḷukya sites in Andhra Pradesh with *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs include Ālampur, Bhīmavaram, Kaḍamarakālava, Kūḍavēli, Mahānandi, Pāṇyam and Satyavōlu. At Ālampur (Mahbubnagar dist.) several scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are found on the Navabrahmā group of temples (7th-8th century) which, despite their name, are Śaiva: the *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* pillars of the Viśvabrahmā temple are decorated with Rāmāyaṇa themes (Prasad 1978: 25) and the niches of the walls of the Svargabrahmā temple contain *dikpāla* figures and scenes from the epics (Rāmacandra Rao 2005: 29); an inscription in this temple records its construction in honour of the queen of Vinayāditya, who reigned 680-96 A.D. (Ramacandra Rao 2005: 21). There are also a few panels in the local museum showing scenes from both epics (*IAR 1960-61*: 50). At Bhīmavaram (now absorbed into Sāmarlakōṭa, East Godavari dist.) the Māndavya Nārāyaṇa temple has some *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs attached to the outer compound walls (Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 11). At Kaḍamarakālava (Kurnool dist.) the Śivanandīśvara temple’s *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* pillars carry panels with *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs (Prasad 1975-76: 29; Prasad 1983: 109) similar to those on the Saṅgameśvara temple at Kūḍavēli (Mahbubnagar dist.; Ramacandra Rao 2005: 35), which dates from the late seventh century (Bolon 1985: 51). At Mahānandi (Kurnool dist.) the Mahānandīśvara temple has *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs, dated to the mid 7th century (Divakaran 1971) and at Pāṇyam (also Kurnool dist.) one temple has *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs on its *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* pillars (Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 11). In Karnataka, a *Rāmāyaṇa* frieze is carved in low relief – and now much obscured by whitewash – just below the eaves of the Mahādeveśvara (or Mahāliṅgeśvara) temple at Varuṇā (Mysore dist.; 7 miles E of Mysore), which goes back to the time of the Gaṅga ruler Śrīpuruṣa (mid eighth century); the scenes shown include Rāvaṇa in durbar, the death of Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa’s soul being carried by two birds, and end with the *Rāmapaṭṭābhiṣeka* (Mysore Archaeological Department 1941: 19-23).

Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the successors of the Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi as overlords of the Deccan, representation of Rāmāyaṇa scenes on temples continued, though on a reduced scale, it seems.[[203]](#footnote-203) The major exception is the rock-cut Kailāsanātha temple at Elūrā, excavated in the reign of Kṛṣṇa I in the third quarter of the eighth century (as indicated by its original name, the Kṛṣṇeśvara or Kaṇṇeśvara temple).[[204]](#footnote-204) Tiers of friezes on the exterior of the front porch (*sabhāmaṇḍapa*) depict episodes from both the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa in a style quite similar to those of the interior pillars of the Virūpākṣa temple at Paṭṭadakal (which served as a model for the Kailāsanātha temple). The 23 *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are arranged in eight registers of continuous narration carved in high relief on the southern wall of the *sabhāmaṇḍapa,* at first alternately from right to left and back again but from the fourth register onwards read only from left to right. The first register begins with the departure from Ayodhyā of the exiles takes the narrative up to Bharata’s departure after failing to persuade Rāma to return towards the end of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa;* the second and third registers show the events of the *Araṇyakāṇḍa*;the fourth and most of the fifth registers show *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* episodes; the fifth register ends with Hanumān’s leap to Laṅkā, the sixth with Hanumān setting Laṅkā on fire with his blazing tail, and the seventh with the building of the causeway. The final, eighth register begins with the army crossing to Laṅkā and the final scene before its unfinished right end shows either Rāma killing Rāvaṇa (Gail 1985: 180) or Lakṣmaṇa killing Indrajit, with the unfinished area at the end of this register giving space to show Rāma killing Rāvaṇa and so to complete the basic narrative (Markel 2000: 68-69).[[205]](#footnote-205) It is noticeable that the whole of the Bālakāṇḍa, the first part of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa and all of the Uttarakāṇḍa are unrepresented. Quite close to this narrative frieze is sculpted a large representation of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa (the *Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti*;there are others in caves 14, 15, 21 and 29), while in niches on the south wall of the *garbhagṛha* there are large relief sculptures of Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā and being attacked by Jaṭāyus and of the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva*.*

Elsewhere instances from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period, all in Karnataka, are scanty. At Kukanūr (Koppal dist.) *Rāmāyaṇa* panels have been found in the Navaliṅga temple complex, built in the 9th century during the reign of Amoghavarṣa I or his son Kṛṣṇa II (Patil 1996: 249). At Mudhol (Bagalkot dist.) the Siddheśvara temple (assignable to the first quarter of the tenth century) has *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs (Patil 1996: 249). At Sirivāḷ (Gulbarga dist.) there are three locations: well no. 1 with a row of sculptures round its inner side depicting scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and other texts, datable to the late Rāṣṭrakūṭa period (*IAR* 1963-64: 99), the Īśvara temple where a band of carving on the *adhiṣṭhāna* includes five Rāmāyaṇa scenes, and a single scene of Vālin and Sugrīva fighting on the Siddheśvara temple on the southwestern pillar in its south *sabhāmaṇḍapa* (Patil and Balasubramanya 2001: 104-05). Also, at Kaḍūr (Chikkmagalur dist.) four pillars in all have been found — three reused in a modern Hanumān temple and one found lying in a pond — which are carved with panels showing Rāvaṇa lifting Kailāsa (on the third panel from the top on one of the pillars, divided into five narrative sub-panels, based on the *Śiva Purāṇa* account; Patil 1993).

The nominally at least Buddhist Pāla dynasty ruling in the Bengal and Bihar area sponsored several Buddhist monuments but it is noteworthy that the relief friezes on the basement of the huge Somapura vihāra (Pāhāṛpur, Bangladesh), datable to the late eighth or the ninth century, include scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* placed on both sides of the *kunda* at the centre of the southern face of the basement wall. Under the successors of the Pālas, the Sena dynasty, a Vaiṣṇava temple in the Triveṇī-Saptagrāma region (mod. Sātgāon), subsequently converted into a mosque (in 1298 by Zāfar Khān), evidently once had reliefs of scenes from the Rāma and Kṛṣṇa narratives of which the descriptive labels in proto-Bengali script of the twelfth to thirteenth century still remain (Mukherji 1966: 75-76). In the adjacent region of Assam, ruins of a temple dating to the eleventh or twelfth century at Deoparbat has 5 panels of a *Rāmāyaṇa* frieze showing meeting of Rāma and Sugrīva (Ramachandran 1936-37: 57-60).

At the same period in north India the contemporaries – and rivals – of both the Pālas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pratīhāras and their feudatories, erected a great many surviving temples between the ninth and twelfth centuries and mostly in Rajasthan, on which the frequency of reliefs of the Rāma story is a little greater. At Māṅglod (Nagaur dist.) the 9th-century Dadhimatīmātā temple has a series of 15 panels showing scenes from the entry into the forest through to the victory over Laṅkā **(**Vashishtha 2002). At Padhaoli (Morena dist., M. P.) a fragmentary Kachvāhā temple, datable to the tenth century, has ornate pillars and friezes with scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa,* as well as the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in its *gadhi* (*IAR 1961-62*: 120). At Nāgdā (Udaipur dist.; 23 km NW of Udaipur) there are relief panels of the Rāma story on the *maṇḍapa* pillars and ceiling of the late-tenth-century Sāsbahu temple (Margabandhu 1983: 135-38; Vashishtha 1992: 218. At Kekīnda (modern Jasnagar, Nāgaur dist.), then ruled by the Cāhamānas, there is a set of eight *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes on the pillars of the *maṇḍapa* of the Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva temple dating from the 10th-11th century (Vashishta 2004); the name of the place comes from Kiṣkindhā (Margabandhu 1983: 132; Vashishta 2004: 35). At Arthuna (Banswara dist.; the capital of the Paramāras of Vāgaḍa in the 11th-12th centuries) the Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva group of temples includes Rāmāyaṇa scenes: the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva on Śiva temple 2 and Hanumān bringing the mountain with the medicinal herbs to the unconscious Lakṣmaṇa, the latter found also on the Śiva temple at Baroda (Bhilwara dist.) (Trivedi 1995: 117). On a ruined Śiva temple at Jhar (Ratlam dist., Madhya Pradesh), datable to around the 11th century and erected under the Paramāras, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are shown standing in *tribhaṅga* on a fragment of the *kumbha* moulding (*IAR 1985-86 – A Review*: 141). On the Someśvara temple at Kirāḍū (Barmer dist.; early 11th century) panels in a horizontal band below the main niches show scenes including Jaṭāyus attacking Rāvaṇa, the meeting with Sugrīva, the wounded Lakṣmaṇa lying on Rāma’s lap with on the left Hanumān bringing the mountain of healing herbs, and Rāma fighting Rāvaṇa (Vashishtha 1992: 218; Margabandhu 1983: 133-34; Dhaky 1967: 41-42). At Osiāñ (Jodhpur dist.) the Sacciyā Mātā temple includes some *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes as part of the decoration of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* dome (dated to 1177 A.D.), while the plinth of Viṣṇu temple 5 (probably early 11th century) has a frieze with some *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes (Handa 1984: 54, 69, 91).[[206]](#footnote-206) From a derelict temple at Haidarpur, Delhi, comes a section of a *Rāmāyaṇa* frieze datable to the twelfth century when this area was under the Tomaras (Sivaramamurti 1980: 646-47). At Khajuraho, better known for its elaborate temples, there is also a 2.5 metre tall statue of Hanumān which has a dedicatory inscription on its base giving a date of 922 (year 316 of presumably the Harṣa era),[[207]](#footnote-207) which is undoubtedly the oldest known colossal Hanumān image and remains in active worship. At this period also temples erected by the Caulukyas of Gujarat contain Rāmāyaṇa scenes, extensive on the eleventh-century Sun Temple at Moḍherā (Giri 1984) and more limited on the Śāmalājī temple of the same or a later date (Banerjee 1986: 244-45).

In due course the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were supplanted as overlords of the Deccan by the later Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇa (also known as Western Cāḷukyas); between the late eleventh and the thirteenth centuries they and their feudatories erected a number of temples which contain narrative reliefs of the Rāma story, even though many of these temples are Śaiva, as their names demonstrate. Sites with such reliefs include: Ablūr, Āsandi, Balaganur, Bandaḷike, Beḷgāmi/Baḷḷigāṃve, Gandai, Hampi, Jāñjgīr, Kuruvatti, Lakkuṇḍi, Mārkaṇḍī, Nīlaguṇḍa, Palasdev, Palya, Panhale, Pāpanāśī, Pattancheru and Prātakoṭa. Possibly the oldest of these is the Tripurāntakeśvara temple at Beḷgāmi/Baḷḷigāṃve (Shimoga dist., Karnataka probably c. 1070), where the basement friezes include *Rāmāyaṇa* themes but many have been destroyed; among those remaining are Rāma piercing the seven *sāl* trees on the back of a snake and Rāma killing Vālin. But nearly contemporary is the Bhīmeśvara temple at Nīlaguṇḍa (Bagalkot dist., Karnataka), constructed about the end of the third quarter to the beginning of the fourth quarter of the eleventh century, which contains Rāmāyaṇa panels (Patil 1992: 172 and 219).[[208]](#footnote-208) Others at this period are the Mallikārjuna temple at Kuruvatti (Bellary dist., Karnataka), built around 1085 A.D., which contains a panel showing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa (Patil 1992: 164 and 219), and the Kāśīviśveśvara temple at Lakkundi (Gadag dist. Karnataka), dated by an inscription on a beam to 1087 A.D., which has panels either side of its large central niches, one showing Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa.[[209]](#footnote-209) At Pāpanāśī (or Pāpanāśanam, near Ālampur, Andhra Pradesh) the eleventh-century Pāpavināśeśvara complex of Śaiva temples has eight *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, each in two registers, on the pillars of the covered passage linking temples 2 and 12 and further scenes on two pillars in the central *maṇḍapa* of group 9 (Dagens 1984: 213-16 and 227). Another motif recorded almost simultaneously in verbal and visual versions, that of Rāma piercing the seven *śālas* with the innovation that the trees are growing on the back of a huge *nāga,*[[210]](#footnote-210) is first found in visual form here on the Pāpavināśeśvara temple and then very commonly on Hoysaḷa and Vijayanagara-period temples (Desai 1984; Loizeau 2017: 258-62); the verbal instances of this innovation are found in a 5th-stage addition to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (4 App.6), and in the *Mahānāṭaka* (in an elaborate form), the *Narasiṃha Purāna* and the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* — none of which is any earlier than, if as early as, the Cāḷukya temple — and also for example in the Kannaḍa *Torave Rāmāyaṇa*. Also quite close at Prātakoṭa (Kurnool dist.) the Nandanagollu triple temples (again Śaiva), erected in the tenth or eleventh century, have on one pillar of the covered passage linking two of them a relief of Vālin seizing Rāvaṇa (Dagens 1984: 228).

The Basaveśvara temple (originally called Brahmeśvara) at Ablūr (or Abbalūru; Dharwar dist., Karnataka), which was in existence by 1101 on inscriptional evidence, contains parts of a frieze on the northwestern corner of the parapet wall round the common *maṇḍapa* of this triple temple (Foekema 2003: I, 53-54). At Palasdev (Pune dist., Maharashtra) *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are sculpted in the *jaṅgha* portion of a twelfth-century Śilāhāra temple (*IAR 1972-73*: 67) and at Panhale (Ratnagiri dist., Maharashtra) cave 19 has carvings on the ceiling with scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*; the whole series of caves here probably dates from the Śilāhāra period, c, A.D. 1100-1200 (*IAR 1970-7*:34 and 75; *IAR 1981-82*: 97).

The Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa temple at Balaganur (Bijapur dist., Karnataka), built c. 1175 A.D. under the Kalacuri dynasty contains several Rāmāyaṇa scenes carved in the scroll-work on an inner doorway, including Rāma shooting through the seven trees on a snake (Patil 1992: 73). Also built under the Kalacuris in the 12th century, the Viṣṇu temple at Jāñjgir (Janjgir-Champa dist., Chattisgarh), called locally Nakata Mandira, shows several Rāmāyaṇa scenes on its platform near the steps at the north, including Rāma shooting arrow through the seven trees, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa chasing the golden deer, Rāma killing the deer, monkeys carrying stones to build the causeway and Rāma worshipping the liṅga at Rāmeśvaram (*IAR 1990-91*: 115-16). At Gandai (Rajnandgaon dist., Chattisgarh) the thirteenth-century Deur temple, also built under the Kalacuris, includes a frieze showing various *Rāmāyaṇa* along with Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes and amorous couples (*IAR 1987-88*: 168-9). At Āsandi (Chikmagalur dist., Karnataka) the Gaṅgeśvara and Brahmeśvara temples, linked by a common *maṇḍapa,* were built in 1191 by the local Gaṅga chief and have ceilings which show *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes (*Annual Report,* *Mysore Arch. Dept* *(for 1942)* 1943: 66-67). The Bhuvaneśvarī temple at Hampi, located within the compound of the later Vijayanagara-period Virūpākṣa temple, but itself dating from the early thirteenth century,contains a relief of Rāma fighting Rāvaṇa (Patil 1992: 208).[[211]](#footnote-211) The Someśvara or Ānekal Sōmayya temple at Bandaḷike (Shimoga dist., Karnataka; 35 km N of Shikaripur), built in 1274 A.D., carries bands of epic narratives on the sculptured screens of its porch, with *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes on the south (*Annual Report,* *Mysore Arch. Dept (for 1941)* 1942: 86-94; Foekema 2003: I, 127-29).

In the territory of the Noḷamba dynasty, ruling in the ninth and tenth centuries in the border area between Karnataka and Tamilnadu, a number of temples are carved with reliefs drawn from the epics. At Hemāvati (former Heñjeru, the Noḷamba capital; Anantapur Dist., Andhra Pradesh) the Doḍḍēśvara temple, a granite temple datable to the early part of the tenth century (Cohen 1998: 42), includes scenes from both epicson the *caturasra* section of the pillars in its *maṇḍapas*; these include the mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā, the shooting of the golden deer and Jaṭāyus attacking a three-headed Rāvaṇa and Sītā in the *aśokavana* from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Cohen 1998: 38-41). The dilapidated Virūpākṣa temple, which can probably be assigned to the middle of the tenth century, similarly has epic scenes on the *caturasra* sections of its *maṇḍapa* pillars, including Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā in his chariot and the battle between Arjuna and Karṇa (Cohen 1998: 46-47). At Dharmapuri (Dharmapuri dist., Tamilnadu) the Kāmākṣamma temple, also called the Mallikārjuna temple, is built on a basement which has *Rāmāyaṇa* panels in a set of continuous friezes carved all round it, with the narration starting on the rear wall to the west and proceeding counter-clockwise from the *Bālakāṇḍa* through to the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*;a brief listing of the scenes is provided by Andrew Cohen (1998: 88-89), including successive scenes of Rāma shooting Mārīca in the form of the golden deer and in his *rākṣasa* form (panel 13b and 13c).

In South India the earliest representations come from the period of Pallava rule in Tamilnadu during the seventh to ninth centuries. There are a few scenes on the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñcī and one panel of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa (out of three surviving panels showing Śiva) on the Olakkaṇṇēśvara (or Olakkanātha) temple at Māmallapuram, both erected by the Pallava ruler, Narasiṃhavarman II Rājasiṃha (c. 690-720 A.D.). The Vaikuṇṭha Perumāl temple at Kāñcī is thought to have been built by Nandivarman II (720-96 CE), though with later contributions from Cōḻa and Vijayanagara rulers**;** the sixth panel on the northern part of the middle-floor sanctum shows Rāma disciplining the ocean on the way to Laṅkā (cf. Hudson 2008: 159-60); among the *vimāna* panels on the east side one shows Hanumān worshipping Rāma.[[212]](#footnote-212) Also from Kāñcī come two detached reliefs of Lava and Kuśa dated to the ninth century (National Museum, New Delhi, acc. nos 74.218 and 219).

There is substantially more evidence from the period of Cōḻa dominance of South India between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Indeed, the tenth-century Kōdaṇḍarāma temple at Tirupati (Chittoor dist., Andhra Pradesh) is dedicated to Rāma, as well as having *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs (Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 108-10, 115, 119-23).[[213]](#footnote-213)  But the majority of the *Rāmāyaṇa* panels from this period are found on Śaiva temples, ornamenting the *mekhalā* (‘girdle’) section of their basements, and are located in the Tanjavur district of Tamilnad. The adoption by Āditya I (871-907 A.D.) of the title Kodaṇḍarāma may have influenced this frequency of representation. Small bas-relief *Rāmāyaṇa* panels, assignable to Āditya I’s reign and probably dating from around 900 A.D., are found on temples at Kaṇṭiyūr and Tiruppūnturutti (Puṣpavaneśvara temple; *IAR 1955-56*: 78). A series of *Rāmāyaṇa* relief panels is found on the Brahmapurīśvara temple at Pullamaṅgai (c. 910 A.D.) among the 65 small panels below the pilasters of the walls (Harle 1958: 9; Sanford 1987; Krishnan 2010: 84). Similar relief panels are also found on the Caṭaiyar kōyil at Tiruccennampūṇḍi (reign of Parāntaka I, c. 915-20 A.D.), the Saptarṣīśvara temple at Lālgudi (earlier than 937 A.D.) and the Naḷtunai Īśvara temple at Puñjai (c. 940 A.D.), although the last are not continuous but are interspersed with others and on occasion in reverse order. Their depiction of the first meeting between Rāma and Sugrīva seems closer to Vālmīki than to Kampaṉ, since Hanumān carries Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on his shoulders to Sugrīva (Nagaswamy 1980: 416-7).

At Kumbakonam (Tanjavur dist.) the Nāgeśvara temple, usually held to date from the reign of Parāntaka I (907-c. 940), contains a series of figures in its secondary niches, which have been interpreted as the *Rāmāyaṇa* characters Lava or Kuśa, Kausalyā or Sumitrā, Lakṣmaṇa, Kaikeyī and the Pāṇḍya ruler Śrīmāra Śrīvallabha as Rāma (Sanford 1994) — and with still less cogency assigned to the reign of Śrīmāra Śrīvallabha (815-62 A.D.)[[214]](#footnote-214) or his successor Varaguṇa II — thus supplementing the 53 miniature relief panels of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on its base, which provide a continuous narration from the birth of Rāma through to the battles for Laṅkā. There is a similar series of tiny panels on the Avanīśvara Uḍaiyār temple at Gopurapaṭṭi (Hariharan 1973), which is datable around 975 A.D. At Tirumaṅgalam (Madurai dist.) there is a series of Rāmāyaṇa narrative reliefs on the basement of the Sāmavedīśvara temple dating from the late 10th century (Seshadri 2012). The Airāvaṭeśvata temple at Dārāsuram (mid twelfth century) has reliefs of Rāmāyaṇa scenes, including Rāma shooting Vālin. It has been claimed that the *Rāmāyaṇa* panels on the Kampahareśvara or Tribhuvanavīrēśvara temple at Tribhuvanam near Kumbakonam, built by Kulottuṅga III (1178-1216 A.D.) towards the end of his reign (Sarkar 1974: 48), follow a version closer to Vālmīki than to Kampaṉ, with some local variants (Nagaswamy 1980: 418-9; Sivaramamurti 1980: 642); the panels cover only a selection of scenes starting with the arrival of Śūrpaṇakhā. Early Cōḻa bronzes of this period attest to an incipient Rāma cult, with several groups of processional images (*utsavamūrti*) of Rāma with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa (and occasionally Hanumān) which are now in various museums coming for example from Vaḍakkuppaṉayūr (Tanjavur dist.), Tirucherai (Tanjavur dist.), Tiruvalangadu (Tanjavur dist.), Paruttiyūr (Tiruvarur dist.), Kappalūr (Madurai dist.), Tiruppattūr (Vellore dist.), while an eleventh-century inscription from the Sundararāja Perumāḷ temple at Anbil (Tiruchirappalli dist.) records the installation of bronze images of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān (Nagaswamy 1980: 417-18). Still in the temple for which they were made are images of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa in Adambar or Hathambar (Tanjavur dist.).[[215]](#footnote-215)

The prestige of the imperial Cōḻa dynasty was such that several ruling families claimed descent from early members of it, including several Telugu Cōḻa dynasties in Andhra Pradesh. Under the Telugu Cōḻa dynasty of Nellore, ruling in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as subordinates of the Western Cāḷukyas and at times independently, *Rāmāyaṇa* panels continued to be carved on temple walls: for example on the Veṇugopāla temple at Kṛṣṇapaṭanam (Nellore dist.; probably early thirteenth century), the Aḷaharanātha temple at Gūḍūr (Nellore dist.; probably built 1160-95) and the Aḷaharanātha temple at Ātmakūr (Nellore dist.; Mohan 1996: 174). The Veṇugopāla temple at Kṛṣṇapaṭanam shows the episode of the ascetic youth accidentally killed by Daśaratha, popularly called Śravaṇakumāra, carrying his aged parents in a *kāvaḍi,* which is also carved on one of the pillars of the *dvāramaṇḍapa* of another temple at Kṛṣṇapaṭanam, the Manumasiddheśvara, and on the enclosure wall of the Rāmacandra temple at Vijayanagara (see below). The earliest inscription on the Ātmakūr site is dated 1276 but the temple is referred to in an inscription of 1246 from elsewhere. Similar panels are found on the Chennakeśava temple at Mācherla (Guntur dist.) (Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 114-15, 117 and 123-24). In Kerala several local dynasties gained power and under one of these the smaller shrine at the Subrahmanya temple at Makreri (Kannur dist.) was painted with murals which included a multi-headed Rāvāṇa (Frenz and Marar 2004: 52-53).

With the decline by the twelfth to thirteenth centuries of both the imperial Cōḻa dynasty and their rivals to the north, the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇa, more regional powers took control in the Deccan and South India. Among these the most significant were the Hoysaḷas, Yādavas and Kākatīyas. Under the Hoysaḷas, centred in Karnataka, a series of spectacular temples was erected in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A notable feature on many is the narrative friezes of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which form one of the six or eight friezes decorating the lower part (*adhiṣṭhana*) of the external walls of their star-shaped sanctuaries and their *maṇḍapas,* with the *Rāmāyaṇa* sequence usually placed on the southern face*.* Sites with substantial *Rāmāyaṇa* friezes in this position are Araḷaguppe, Bēlūr, Haḷebīḍ, Hosahoḷalu, Jāvagallu and Somnāthpur; but one of the most spectacular examples of a *Rāmāyaṇa* sequence is further north, on the Amṛteśvara temple at Amṛtapura, where they are located on the outer seat-backs of its *maṇḍapa* (this location is only found elsewhere at Beḷavāḍi and Bēlūr), and in addition the Lakṣmaṇeśvara temple at Mallarājapaṭaṇa (Hassan dist.) has panels below the eaves, among which are three *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes.[[216]](#footnote-216) The way in which the individual scenes are shown sometimes accords better with the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* than with any other version.

The twelfth-century friezes are mainly found on Śaiva temples, although the frieze on the Cennakeśava temple at Bēlūr also dates to the first half of the twelfth century. The Hoysaḷēśvara temple at Haḷebīḍ (Hassan dist.; built around 1125 A.D.) contains an epic frieze, all the scenes of which have been individually identified (Mysore Arch. Dept 1934: 34-49), showing that the *Rāmāyaṇa* representations are drawn mainly from the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (with a repeat of the episode of Rāma piercing the seven *sāl* trees, shown as elsewhere on the back of the king of snakes, and Vālin’s combat with Sugrīva); disruptions in the sequence may suggest that the large external niches (which are considered to be later) conceal some episodes, rendering it unwise to draw inferences from what is or is not shown (Foekema 1996: 59-65). On the Kedāreśvara temple, built by Vīra Ballāla II (1173-1220 A.D.), the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes cover basically the *Sundara* and *Yuddha kāṇḍas*.[[217]](#footnote-217)

Excavations in the 1980s revealed the lower levels of two temple complexes near the palace area at Haḷebīd. Only the platforms of the three largest temples in the Nāgareśvara complex remain but the narrative layers are well preserved on the southern temple, with only single episodes surviving on the middle and northern temples; on the southern temple, after a lost first section, the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are drawn from the *Kiṣkindhā, Sundara* and *Yuddha kāṇḍas* (Evans 1997: 221-231; Loizeau 2017: 79-84). The ruined Hūceśvara temple (earlier known as the Viraktamaṭha; Mysore Arch. Dept [for 1930] 1934: 59), probably from the reign of Vīra Ballāḷa II (1173-1220), still shows extensive episodes from both epics on its basement (Evans 1997: 213-220; Loizeau 2017: 76-79), with the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes drawn mainly from the *Kiṣkindhā* and *Yuddha kāṇḍas*.

The Amṛteśvara temple at Amṛtapura (Chikmagalūr dist.), dedicated in 1196 A.D., has extensive reliefs on its large open *maṇḍapa* added around 1200-06 (Evans 1997; Foekema 1996: 37-38; Loizeau 2017: 85-93; cf. “photographs (JLB)” in “Ancillary material”); exceptionally these are carved on its slanting seat-backs (*kakṣāsana*) with unusual stellate *śikharas* below. There are about 140 panels in all, separated by pairs of small round pilasters, with the *Rāmāyaṇa* narration in 76 panels on the southern side; the story runs from left to right, reversing the natural sequence for circumambulation, covers the *Bāla* to *Yuddha kāṇḍas* and ends with Rāma and Sītā meeting again – an arrangement found earlier on the Pāpanātha temple at Paṭṭadakal. They concentrate heavily on the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (46 panels) and the *Bālakāṇḍa* (11 panels); no episode from the *Uttarakāṇḍa* is represented either here or on any other Hoysaḷa temple for which we have information.

The Mallikārjuna temple at Basarāḷu (1234 A.D.) is still a Śaiva temple and its *Rāmāyaṇa* friezes start at the southeastern angle of the porch and continue along the whole of the south face and part of the western wall (Loizeau 2017: 95-100). The first section begins with the ascetic boy carrying his parents in a *baṅghi;* this motif is yet another recorded almost simultaneously in verbal and visual versions, since it is firstshown on the Sun temple at Moḍherā (1026-27 ad), here at Basarāḷu (1234 ad), on the Vēṇugopāla temple at Kṛṣṇapaṭanam (probably early 13th century) and most elaborately on the north gateway of the Rāmacandra temple, Vijayanagara, while it is implied in the *Gautamīmāhātmya* (123.4 – he places them in a tree), added in its final redaction to the *Brahma Purāṇa,* and also found in the Telugu *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* (probably 13th or 14th century).

By contrast, other thirteenth-century Hoysaḷa temples with *Rāmāyaṇa* friezes are all Vaiṣṇava and cluster in the reign of Vīra Someśvara (1235–54 A.D.) or just after. On the mid-thirteenth-century Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa temple at Hosahoḷalu (Mandya dist.) the epic frieze shows the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the south side of the temple (Mysore Arch. Dept. 1936a: 3-13; Foekema 1996: 71-72; Loizeau 2017: 103-11). At Jāvagallu (Hassan dist.) the epic frieze on the Lakṣmīnarasiṃha temple – much worn and obscured by lime plaster – shows episodes from both epics, including the Indrakīla episode (Foekema 1996: 73-75; Loizeau 2017: 113-18). At Somnāthpur (Mysore dist.) the epic frieze on the Keśava temple (1268 A.D.) shows *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes (*Bāla* to *Kiṣkindhā kāṇḍas*) on the southern one of its three shrines (Mysore Arch. Dept 1935: 16-39; Foekema 1996: 87-90; Devaraj 1994: 94-95; Loizeau 2017: 123-25).[[218]](#footnote-218) The epic frieze on the Cennakeśava temple at Araḷaguppe (Tumkūr dist.), which starts clockwise from the entrance, first shows scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa,* mainly from the *Bāla* to *Kiṣkindhā kāṇḍas,* which are very similar in style to those on the Keśava temple at Somnāthpur (Mysore Arch. Dept 1936c: 3-10; Foekema 1996: 39-40; Loizeau 2017: 131-35).

An episode occurring very frequently on Hoysaḷa temples is that of Lakṣmaṇa slashing bamboos and accidentally decapitating Śambūka, Śūrpaṇakhā’s son; this episode is particularly characteristic of the Jain verbal narratives from Vimalasūri onwards, including the Kannaḍa *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* by Nāgacandra (late 11th to 12th century), which follows the standard Jain version (specifically subverting the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*) and is probably the immmediate source for these visual representations. The occasional representations on Hoysaḷa temples of Rāvaṇa sacrificing (rather than Indrajit) have analogues in the broadly contemporary *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* by Nāgacandra and *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Gōna Buddhā Reddi (also in the *Adhyātma*, *Ānanda* and *Mollā Rāmāyaṇas*; cf. Loizeau 2017: 266-7). It is also on some Hoysaḷa temples that we first find the motif of Sītā being lifted still in the hut as Rāvaṇa abducts her, either in his chariot or more often on the palm of his hand; this renders more precise still the motif found in the *Uttarapurāṇa* of the Jain Guṇabhadra (second half of the 9th century) that Rāvaṇa dare not touch a woman against her will, already made more concrete in Kampaṉ’s *Irāmavatāram* where Rāvaṇa lifts Sītā on a huge ball of earth and places it on his chariot.

Under the Yādavas of Devagiri (Seuna Yādavas), the northern neighbours and rivals of the Hoysaḷas who controlled the area of modern Maharashtra, a few temples from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries contain *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs.[[219]](#footnote-219) The Goṇḍeśvara temple at Sinnar (Nasik dist.), assignable to the twelfth century, has such reliefs on the outer walls of its porches where they slope outwards as bench backrests (Naik 1947: 239). Reliefs on the thirteenth-century Bhairavanātha temple at Kikli (Satara dist.) include Rāma killing the golden deer, Rāma shooting Vālin as he fights with Sugrīva (who has a long looping garland) and Sītā in the *aśokavana*. Others on thirteenth-century temples are found at the formerly Vaiṣṇava Mallikārjuna temple at Loni-Bhapkar (Pune dist.), which has some narrative panels on the pillars of its *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* (the killing of Mārīca and abduction of Sītā, the vānaras before Rāma, the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva) and a *puṣkariṇī* close to it has on the exterior of its *vedikā* scenes of Rāma breaking the bow, Rāvaṇa disguised as a mendicant, the fight between Jaṭāyus and Rāvaṇa, the killing of Mārīca, Hanumān bringing the mountain and various battle scenes (Dandwate and others 2004-5: 150-52), and at the Bhuleśvara Śivālaya, Yavat (Pune dist.), originally had three Rāmāyaṇa relief panels on the south dwarf-wall of its *maṇḍapa,* of which one remains largely intact (Deshpande 1985: 70‑71; Naik 1942-43: 102-3; Kanitkar 2020: 53-68), while another Śaiva temple at Nagpur (Osmanabad dist.) in Hemadpanti style contains paintings on the wall of its antechamber and *sabhā* *maṇḍapa* (*IAR 1989-90*: 69-70).

Among the temples erected under the Kākatīyas of Varaṅgal (Warangal), who dominated basically the area of modern Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, temples at Hanamkoṇḍa, Kaṭṭāṅgūr, Nāgulāpaḍu, Nidikoṇḍa, Pālampēt, Pānagal, and Pillalamaṛṛi contain Rāmāyaṇa scenes (Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 13 and 112-25). At Pānagal (Nalgonda dist.) the eleventh-century Paccalasomeśvara temple has *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes on its *maṇḍapa* pillars. At Hanamkoṇḍa (or Hanumakoṇḍa, Warangal dist.) the temple is the so-called Trikūṭa or “thousand-pillared” temple, built in 1163 A.D. by Rudradeva. At Pillalamaṛṛi (Nalgonda dist.) there are *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs on the beams of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* of the temple, dating from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century. At Nidikoṇḍa (Warangal dist.) a relief on one of the *chajjā* slabs of the Śaiva temple dated 1219 A.D. shows Rāma piercing the seven *tāla* trees mounted on the body of the snake and stamping on the snake’s tail (Banerjee 1986: 27). At Palampet (Warangal dist.) the Rāmappa (or Rāmaliṅgeśvara) temple, constructed entirely of granite in 1213 A.D., has ornate carvings of scenes from both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* on its ceiling, pillars and walls. At Nāgulāpaḍu (Prakasam dist.) the mid-thirteenth-century Trikūṭa temple has *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes carved on the beams between the columns of its *maṇḍapa.*

During the confused period in Andhra Pradesh between the collapse of the Kākatīyas and the expansion of the Vijayanagara empire into the area, a local chieftain ruling at Kōrukoṇḍa erected the Lakṣmīnarasiṃha temple there (consecrated *saṃ* 1275 = 1353 A.D.). This has an extensive series of panels covering the outer walls in five tiers, of which the middle three are largely devoted to the Rāmāyaṇa narrative, concentrating on scenes of conflict, and so they draw mainly on the Araṇyakāṇḍā (from the arrival of the golden deer) to the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍā but they also include Rāma’s killing of Tāṭakā from the Bālakāṇḍā. They are carved in high relief in a simple style and are clearly intended to shed the lustre of Rāma’s might on this actually very minor ruler (Krishna Kumari 2008: 1-57).

The Vijayanagara empire, which emerged out of the disruption to this earlier pattern of dynasties caused by the Muslim incursions into the Deccan early in the fourteenth century, in due course gave considerable patronage to the Rāma cult and a number of separate temples dedicated to Rāma were erected.[[220]](#footnote-220) It should be noted, however, that the early Vijayanagara rulers were Śaiva (the first Vaiṣṇava rulers belonged to the second Sāḷuva dynasty ruling from towards the end of the 15th century) and it was not until the early fifteenth century that the first Rāma temple, the Rāmacandra temple, was built as a royal temple by Devarāya I (1406-24).

The Rāma cult, therefore, is clearly not a direct reaction to the Muslim presence in the Deccan; indeed, various sites in and around the city had popularly become associated with Rāmāyaṇa episodes (as the location of Kiṣkindhā) from at least the eleventh century and many of these are noted in the local *sthalapurāṇa,* the *Pampāmāhātmya,* which is nominally part of the *Bharadvājasaṃhitā* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*.[[221]](#footnote-221) Eight temples in total are dedicated to Rāma at Vijayanagara itself, including the Kodaṇḍarāma, Mālyavanta Raghunātha and Paṭṭābhirāma temples, probably all built in the sixteenth century. In many cases their sculptural decoration includes Śrīvaiṣṇāva insignia, reflecting the considerable impact of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas within the increasing Vaiṣṇava influence from this period onwards, while the influence of the Mādhva tradition (in particular of Vyāsatīrtha, cf. Stoker 2016: 82) is no doubt to be seen in the substantial number of representations of Hanumān (Rao 2011). Indeed, the rulers were now identified with Rāma, seen as the ideal king and so the model for the earthly ruler, during the public festival of Mahānavamī.

As is natural, the most significant examples are at the capital of the empire, the city of Vijayanagara (modern Hampi and surrounding area, Bellary dist., Karnataka), where there are three particularly extensive series of reliefs of the whole narrative: two are within the Rāmacandra temple (also known as the Hazāra Rāma, “thousand Rāmas”) and the third is on the south gopuram of the Rāmānuja temple (built at the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century). The Rāmacandra temple is located within the “royal centre” and is generally considered to be the royal chapel, whereas the main state temple continued to be the ultimately much larger Śaiva temple, the Virūpākṣa temple. It is aligned visually with both the Mataṅga Hill and the Mālyavanta Hill, both of which are traditionally associated with the Rāmāyaṇa narrative. One series of reliefs is carved on the outside of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* of the main shrine, with the Uttarakāṇḍa added on the walls of the subsidiary shrine northwest of the main shrine;[[222]](#footnote-222) they are placed in a clockwise sequence in three rows, comprising 108 panels, those in the middle and lower rows normally flanked by a pair of pilasters (Dallapiccola and others 1992; Dallapiccola 1994; Dallapiccola 2011: 182-87; Suresh 2010: 71-95). The other series is on the inner face of the enclosure wall, running from the north gateway round to the main, eastern gateway in five rows; the panels are of varying length according to the dimensions of the stone on which they are carved in a more fluent manner than those on the main shrine. Even more extensive than these two is the series found on the southern *gopuram* (which is the main entrance) of the Rāmānuja temple, also known erroneously as the old Śiva temple and identified by some scholars as the Brahma-Viṭṭhala temple;[[223]](#footnote-223) this consists of 131 panels set in four rows (Dallapiccola and Verghese 1991 and 2001; Dallapiccola 2011: 187-88; Suresh 2010: 95-101). Reliefs are also found on other Vaiṣṇava temples: the Veṇkateśvara (a narrative sequence of 28 reliefs on its *gopuram* (Dallapiccola and Verghese 1998: App. IV), Viṭṭhala (over fifty relief panels), Kṛṣṇa and Mālyavanta Raghunātha temples (these two have reliefs on their *maṇḍapa* pillars and the boulder around which the *garbhagṛha* of the Mālyavanta Raghunātha is built is carved with relief of Rāma and Sītā attended by Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān). But even temples to Śiva and the goddess contain occasional representations, for example, Rāma stringing Śiva’s bow and the marriage of Rāma and Sītā painted on the *maṇḍapa* ceiling of the Virūpākṣa temple and the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa on the Bhuvaneśvarī temple (Sivaramamurti 1968: 104; Patil 1992: 208).

Elsewhere within the empire temples with *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes carved in stone include the Narasiṃha temple at Ahobilam (Kurnool dist., Andhra Pradesh; a large number of reliefs on the west *gopuram*), the Aḷakar Kōyil at Alagarmalai (Tirumāliruñcōḻai; Madurai dist., Tamilnadu; murals on its Vasanta Maṇḍapa and four reliefs on its sub-basement), the Tirumalanāthasvāmī temple at Alambgiri (Chikkaballapur dist., Karnataka; Mysore Arch. Dept (for 1935) 1936: 39-40), the Anantaśayana temple at Anantaśayanaguḍi (Bellary dist., Karnataka), the Chennakeśava temple at Ānekal (Bangalore urban dist.; reliefs on its *navaraṅga* pillars), a temple at Attirāla (Kadapa dist., Andhra Pradesh), the Khetapai Nārāyaṇa temple at Bhaṭkal (Uttara Kannada dist., Karnataka, built c. 1546 A.D.; Branfoot and Dallapiccola 2005), the Kodaṇḍarāmasvāmī temple at Chandragiri (Chittoor dist., Andhra Pradesh), the Chennakeśava temple at Chukkalūru (Anantapur dist., Andhra Pradesh), the Raṅganāyaka temple at Gaṇḍikoṭa (Kadapa dist., Andhra Pradesh), the Mādhavarāya temple at Goraṇṭlā (Anantapur dist., Andhra Pradesh), a series of bas-reliefs on the *maṇḍapa* wall of a ruined temple at Gummanayakapalya (Kolar dist., Karnataka; Loizeau 2017: 218 fn.6, 261-5), the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñcī (Tamilnadu; a narrative sequence on its sub-basement; Le Sauce–Carnis 2016: I, 292-94 and 333), the Varadarāja temple at Kāñcī (a very large number of reliefs on the pillars and base of the *maṇḍapa* added in the sixteenth century; Sivaramamurti 1980: 643; Nagaswamy 1980: 420), the fifteenth-century Chennakeśava temple at Mārkāpūr (Prakasam dist., Andhra Pradesh), pillars on a *maṇḍapa* at the Nārāyaṇasvāmi temple at Mēlkōṭe (Mandya dist., Karnataka; Vasantha 1991: 80-81), on *gopurams* of the Rāmacandraperumāḷ temple at Neḍuṅguṇḍram (Tiruvannamalai dist. Tamilnadu), on a *gopuram* of the sixteenth-century Kōḍaṇḍarāma temple at Oṇṭimiṭṭa/Voṇṭimiṭṭa (Kadapa dist., Andhra Pradesh), the fifteenth-century Koḍaṇḍarāma temple at Penukoṇḍa (Anantapur dist., Andhra Pradesh),[[224]](#footnote-224) the Chennakeśava temple at Puṣpagiri (Kadapa dist., Andhra Pradesh; 19 reliefs), the Rāmaliṅgeśvara temple at Rāmeśvaram (Rāmanāthapuram dist., Tamilnadu; 7 reliefs on its cornice), the Cennakeśava temple at Somapālem (Chittoor dist., Andhra Pradesh; pillar reliefs), the Śrīraṅganātha temple at Śrīraṅgam (on pillars in the Śeṣagiri *maṇḍapa*), the Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśailam (Kurnool dist., Andhra Pradesh; frieze on south *prākāra* wall), the Kōḍaṇḍarāma and Govindarājasvāmī temples at Tirupati (Chittoor dist., Andhra Pradesh) and the mid‑sixteenth-century Jalakaṇṭheśvara temple at Vellore (Tamilnadu). There are also Rāmāyaṇa series carved on a dilapidated *gopuram* at Thondavada (near Chandragiri) and on the *gopuram* of the Ādikeśava temple at Śrīperumbudur (Dallapiccola 2011: 189).

Temples with panels carved in wood include the Śrīrāma temple at Kadavallur (Trichur dist., Kerala), the Mahādeva temple at Ettumanur (Kottayam dist., Kerala), the Mahādeva temple at Kaviyur (Pathanamthitta dist., Kerala) and the Mahādeva temple at Tiruvañcikulam (Kodungallur, Trichur dist. Kerala). There are also several temple cars, the huge wooden edifices in which the processional images of the temple deities were dragged round the nearby streets at festivals, from this or a later period with *Rāmāyaṇa* carvings **(**Dallapiccola 1990 and 1994b and Rajarajan 1998 and 2001: 794-5). Temples with painted ceilings that include *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are the Pāṇḍuraṅgasvāmī temple at Koilkuntla (Kurnool dist., Andhra Pradesh; *IAR 1966-67*: 11), the Cennakeśava temple at Somapālem (in its *mukhamaṇḍapa,* as well as the pillar reliefs already noted) and the Vīrabhadra temple at Lepākṣi (Anantapur dist., Andhra Pradesh).

Particularly noteworthy are the Mahādeva temple at Ettumanur, reconstructed in 717 ME (1542 A.D.), which has panels covering the whole Rāmāyaṇa carved in high relief on the wooden screens round its *maṇḍapa* (Kramrisch 1953: 35-36; Banerjee 1986: 227), the Veṅkaṭaramana or Cintālaveṅkaṭaramana temple at Tāḍapatri (Anantapur dist., Andhra Pradesh, probably from the first half of the sixteenth century), which has reliefs of *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes with Telugu captions in three rows between the pilasters of its walls and further *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes on the lintels over the doorways of its enclosed *maṇḍapa* (Dallapiccola 2016; *IAR 1962-63*: 61; Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 72-99), totalling over two hundred panels,[[225]](#footnote-225) and the Cennakeśava temple at Somapālem (mid sixteenth century), which preserves traces of paintings of *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes in 10 panels on the ceiling of its *mukhamaṇḍapa,* including Rāma bending bow, Rāma killing Tāṭakā, Daśaratha trying to appease Kaikeyī, Rāma saying farewell to Daśaratha (Sivaramamurti 1968: 120; Dallapiccola 2016b, Rao 2019), as well as the reliefs on its pillars already noted. It was not only temples that were so decorated; Kṛṣṇadevarāya had *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs inserted into the northern gateway Naurangi Darwaza) of Raichur fort after he conquered it from Bījāpur in 1520 (Eaton and Wagoner 2014: 301-6).[[226]](#footnote-226)

The successors in South India of the Vijayanagara rulers, more local dynasties such as the Wadeyars of Mysore and the various Nāyak dynasties in Tamilnad, continued the same general pattern of temple building in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From this period come the earliest surviving examples of temple cars, of which a number include *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs among their decoration. The entire outer wall of the sixteenth-century Veṇugopālasvāmī temple at Devanahalli (Bangalore rural dist., Karnataka) has a frieze illustrating the Rāmāyaṇa; the Bālakāṇḍa is illustrated on the northern and southern walls. The Mārgasahāyeśvara or Mārgabandhusvāmī temple at Virinchipuram (Vellore dist., Tamilnādu; Ceñci Nāyaks) has reliefs on it pillars. The Nārāyaṇasvāmi temple at Mēlkōṭe (Mandya dist., Karnataka) has pillar reliefs from the Wadeyar period (sixteenth-seventeenth century; Vasantha 1991: 80-81). The much older Gokarṇeśvara temple at Tirugokarṇam (Pudukkottai dist., Tamilnad) has additions from the Vijayanagara or Nāyak period which include the *anuppamaṇḍapa* in front of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* (a corridor-like structure) with paintings covering the Rāmāyaṇa story up to the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa in three rows on the ceiling, with labels in both Tamil and Telugu below each panel (Rajarajan 2006: 59); similarly the much older Aḷakar Koyil at Alagarmalai or Tirumaliruñcōḻai (Madurai dist., Tamilnad) has several additions made under Tirumala Nāyak (1623-59), including Rāmāyaṇa paintings on the ceiling and walls of its *vasanta maṇḍapa* with labels in Tamil (Banerjee 1986: 222; Dallapiccola 2015a).[[227]](#footnote-227) The Pārthasārathi temple at Cheṅgam (Tiruvannamalai dist., Tamilnādu) has ceiling paintings from the first half of the seventeenth century which once told the entire story, although now only *Yuddhakāṇḍa* episodes survive on the central square (Loizeau 2017: 267-68). The *mahāmaṇḍapa* of the Chennarāyaperumāl temple at Adiyamāṇkōṭṭai (Dharmapuri dist., Tamilnad) has an important series of paintings, probably from the mid-17th or early 18th century, on its ceiling. Nāyak-period paintings, some in black and white and some in colour, once in the Puṇḍārīkākṣa temple at Tiruveḷḷarai (Tiruccirappalli dist., Tamilnad; Raman and Padmaja 1995: 88) have now been whitewashed over (*The Hindu*, June 3, 2011). A series of Rāmāyaṇa paintings labelled in Tamil from the time of the Madurai Nāyaks is found in the Āṇḍāl temple at Śrīvilliputtūr (Virudhunagar dist., Tamilnad; Nagaswamy 1980: 425). The sculptures on the *mahāmaṇḍapa* of the Rāmasvāmī temple at Kumbakonam (Tanjavur dist., Tamilnad), built by Raghunātha Nāyak (c. 1600-33 A.D.), give a particular emphasis to Rāma as teacher and Hanumān as a musician (Nagaswamy 1980: 422-4; Nanda and others 1997); there are also *Rāmāyaṇa* murals on the wall of the outer court and carved panels on the temple car (Dallapiccola 1990 and 1994).[[228]](#footnote-228) Ceiling paintings from the late seventeenth century are found in the *maṇḍapa* adjoining the Veṇugopāla shrine in the Śrīraṅganātha temple at Śrīraṅgam. Instances are also found in secular buildings, most notably the mural paintings of the Bālakāṇḍa in the audience hall at the Rāmaliṅgavilāsam palace of the Setupatis (“protectors of the causeway”, a title also taken by the rulers of Jaffna) at Rāmanāthapuram (late 17th century), but also in the Nāyak palace at Tañjāvūr.

In Kerala also, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries murals painted on temple walls include Rāmāyaṇa scenes. At Todīkalam (Kannur dist.) the murals on the west wall of the sanctuary interior in the Śiva temple illustrate the Rāma story (Frenz and Marar 2004: 11 and 36-45) and at Morazha (Kannur dist.) the Śiva temple has some Yuddhakāṇḍa scenes (Frenz and Marar 2004: 100-09).[[229]](#footnote-229) In the Bhadrakālī temple at Panayannarkavu (near Mannar, Alappuzha dist.) paintings of the late sixteenth century on the east wall of the Śiva shrine again illustrate the Yuddhakāṇḍa (Ramachandran 2005: 322-23). However, the best known series of such murals are in a secular building, the Maṭṭāñceri royal palace at Cochin (Kochi, Ernakulam dist.; built by the Portuguese around 1557 and presented to the Raja Vīrakeralavarman; Sivaramamurti 1968: 138-41); these are variously dated between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[[230]](#footnote-230) Also, wood carvings continue. The Śrīrāma temple at Triparayar (Trichur dist.) has a few Rāmāyaṇa episodes carved in wood on the outer wall of the sanctuary (Ramachandran 2005: 177-200). At Vañcaikkaḷam (or Tiruvañcikulam, Kodungallur, Trichur dist.) Rāmāyaṇa sculptures in wood were added in the seventeenth to eighteenth century to a much earlier Śaiva temple; located as bracket motifs on the ceiling of the eastern porch at *prastara* level, they mostly show figures found in the Bālakāṇḍa: Daśaratha, Sumantra, Visvāmitra, the killing of Tāṭakā and the release of Ahalyā (Rajarajan 2015b). Carved wooden panels on the Vadakunnātha temple at Trichur probably date to the late eighteenth century (Banerjee 1986: 227).

By contrast, in much of North India temple building virtually ceased for some centuries after the establishment of Muslim dominance from the thirteenth century. However, there are occasional instances of Rāmāyaṇa scenes carved or painted on secular buildings. A very public example from the fifteenth century is the Vijayastambha, “victory pillar”, at Chitor (Citauḍgaḍh in Rajasthan) built by Rāṇā Kumbha of Mewar between 1448 and 1460 A.D., while his Śiśodiyā dynasty were resisting the Delhi Sultanate.[[231]](#footnote-231) On the other hand, ceiling paintings in the Lakṣmī temple and the Rājā Mahal within the palace area at Orchā in Madhya Pradesh, which were probably done in the second half of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, at a period when the rulers were prominent courtiers of the Mughals, are more private in location.[[232]](#footnote-232) Also, in areas on the outer fringes of Muslim control temple building and decoration could continue relatively unhindered. In Orissa, which came under Muslim control later than most of North India, there is a relief panel from the fourteenth century showing two scenes from the Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa on the ruined Somanātha temple at Vishnupur (Williams 1996: 75-76). Another instance consists of the carvings on the Markulādevī temple (Markulā-Udaipur, Chamba), where scenes from the Sundara and Yuddha kāṇḍas are carved on the wooden architrave on the western side of the shrine ceiling, which probably date from just after the middle of the sixteenth century (Goetz 1955: 90-93 and 108-9). In eastern North India, the twelve-sided Mathurapur Deul at Mathurapur(Bangladesh), built by Sangram Singh in 1636 (?), is decorated on its horizontal bands by terracotta mouldings which include Rāmāyaṇa scenes, and in the middle of the seventeenth century the local Malla ruler, Raghunath Singh II built the Keṣṭharāya and Śyāmarāya temples at Bishnupur (Bankura dist., W. Bengal) which are decorated with terracotta relief panels that include Rāmāyaṇa scenes. At much the same period in Nepal (an area entirely beyond Mughal control) the Malla ruler, Siddhi Narasingha, had the Kṛṣṇa maṇḍir at Lalitpur (modern Patan) built in 1637 and its interior decorated with *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes.[[233]](#footnote-233) At Puri in Orissa a few *maṭhas* (the Nevaladas, Baḍa Oḍīya and Sanachata *maṭhas*) contain murals of the seventeenth century or later (Pradhan 2010).

By the eighteenth century, with the waning of Mughal power, regional rulers had little hesitation in erecting temples and palaces ornamented with *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes. In Bengal, the ruler Prān Nāth of Dinajpur began the Kāntajī temple at Kāntanagar (near Dinajpur, Bangladesh), completed by his adopted son in 1752, which is covered externally with terracotta panels that include Rāmāyaṇa scenes. In Rajasthan, paintings of scenes from both epics on the ceiling one of the three *maṇḍapas* of the Javāhar Burj (built by Suraj Mal in1765 to celebrate a successful attack on Delhi) within the Lohgarh fort at Bharatpur. In Uttar Pradesh, the Balaji Sundari Devi temple at Deoband, erected probably in the third quarter of the eighteenth century has contemporary Rāmāyaṇa murals on the interior of the *garbhagṛha* (Tyagi 1988-89).

What did flourish from the end of the sixteenth century onwards was miniature painting but paradoxically the earliest examples of such *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings come from the Mughal court, a product of the emperor Akbar’s efforts to understand better his subjects’ culture.[[234]](#footnote-234) Three lavishly illustrated copies of the translation he commissioned in the 1580s are preserved. Akbar’s own copy, completed by the imperial atelier (*kitābkhāna*) on 6th November 1588 according to its colophon (Das 1983, 1986 and 1994),[[235]](#footnote-235) is now preserved in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum in Jaipur and contains 176 full-page miniatures, thirteen of which are double-page compositions, among its 365 folios (Das 1994: 74), the great majority ascribed to more than one artist.[[236]](#footnote-236) A second copy, dated 16th May 1594 in its colophon, from two notes to it evidently belonged originally to Akbar’s mother Hamīda Bānū Begum (posthumously entitled Maryam Makānī), was apparently made specifically for her and was subsequently owned by Akbar’s son, Prince Salim, the future Jahāngir; it contained 56 paintings, most of which are in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MS.20.2000), and the rest are widely dispersed (Leach 1998: 40-49; Seyller and others 2020).[[237]](#footnote-237) They are in a slightly old-fashioned style and can be ascribed on grounds of style to several painters, including Ḥusayn Naqqāsh, Nūr Muhammad and possibly Nūr Muhammad’s father, Mulla Shah Muhammad (Seyller and others 2020: 45-50).

A third copy was made for one of Akbar’s most important courtiers, ‛Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i khānān, son of Bairam Khān, who in a note at the beginning of the manuscript recorded that it contained 135 paintings (actually 133), was begun in AH 996 (1587-88) and completed in AH 1007 (1598-99) but the dates recorded on individual paintings show that it was not in fact completed until at least AH 1013 (1604-05; Seyller 1999: 75-76; cf. Truschke 2016: 212); this copy is now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington.[[238]](#footnote-238) In addition, Akbar’s imperial copy of the *Razmnāma,* the translation of the *Mahābhārata* (now in the Jaipur Palace collection), includes 12 paintings on the Rāma story (AG 1707-18), as do other copies; for example, a manuscript dated 1007 AH / 1598 A.D. (BL Or. 12076) and another dated 1014 AH / 1605 A.D. in the Birla collection (similar to court copies but evidently by an artist dismissed from the court atelier) which includes just one among its 81 miniatures (folio 125r; Das 2005). Also, an illustrated manuscript of the *Jogbāṣiṣṭh,* a condensed translation of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* made for Akbar by Farmulī and dated in its colophon to December 1602, is now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin , Ind. MS. 5 (Franke 2011; cf. Wilkinson 1948; Losty 1982: 92; Leach 1995: 155-89); this contains 41 miniatures among its 323 folios by at least seven painters but the illustrations are not always close to the relevant text folio nor correspond to it closely (Franke 2022: 367-73).

Besides the manuscripts of the translation commissioned by Akbar and produced in the context of the imperial court, a manuscript of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* itself was illustrated in a sub-imperial Mughal style. All the folios have suffered considerable damage (it is sometimes therefore called “the burnt *Rāmāyaṇa”*) and some have been repaired, probably at an early date.[[239]](#footnote-239) The extent to which this depends conceptually on the illustrated Mughal manuscripts indicate that it was the earliest illustrated manuscript to incorporate text from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and its patron was a Hindu courtier, while various evidence assigns its dating to the period 1605-1610. That patron was almost certainly Bīr Singh Deo Bundela (Vīrasiṃhadeva, r. 1605-27), the ruler of Orchā and Datia in Bundelkhand and an ally of Jahāngīr against Akbar (he is notorious for the murder of Abu‘l Fażl in 1602 on behalf of Jahāngīr, when he was still Prince Salīm and rebelling against Akbar) and Bīr Singh himself was in revolt against his older brother, Rām Shāh, Akbar’s nominee to succeed their father Madhukar Shāh.[[240]](#footnote-240) Stylistic continuities between this manuscript and works produced in the imperial Mughal ateliers indicate that Bīr Singh Deo employed some of the same artists: Jagajīvana, Makara, Lohanka, Khemana and Bhora (Seyller 2001: 62-63), though with influences also from Rājput painting styles. The text of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* text on the verso in *devanāgarī* was evidently written by several scribes and on the great majority of versos is aligned with the Northern recension, often with either the NE or the NW recension, although that on two versos (Nat. Mus. 56.114/13 and 56.114/9, their text coming from consecutive *sargas*) aligns with the Southern recension. In the majority of cases examined the painting on the recto and the text on the verso correlate closely and is broadly continuous. The text is strictly separated from the painting on the recto, reverting in this respect to the traditional Indian pattern, though retaining the upright format of the imperial Rāmāyaṇa manuscripts.[[241]](#footnote-241) The prestige aspect behind its production is obvious not only in the style of the paintings and the painters employed but also in the choice of the Sanskrit *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as the text to be written on the versos. It is not known how many folios the set originally comprised or whether it ever included any text-only folios. The completeness of the text on the illustrated manuscripts of the Persian translation which it is emulating may suggest that it would have been on a similarly large scale. The spread of known folios does indeed indicate that it was an extensive set but whether it was intended to include all significant episodes is unclear. However, there is a definite possibility that the text was intended to be complete – a manuscript in the fullest sense.[[242]](#footnote-242)

There are several pointers to Bīr Singh Bundela as the commissioner of this series of paintings, none of them conclusive separately but collectively making it almost certain. The most obvious but least decisive is that several folios have on the verso a stamp in purple ink of the Datia Palace Library (*tasvīr khānā datiyā sṭeṭ*) in addition to a number but these date from the colonial period and so the folios might possibly have entered the collection at a later date than when they were made. Closer in date to the paintings are the occasional Hindi captions added below the Sanskrit text, which are in the Bundeli dialect (Seyller 2001: 62-63, Sardar 2016: 68). Most nearly decisive is the use of artists formerly in the imperial atelier for this could only have been feasible for a major Hindu courtier such as Bīr Singh was from the beginning of Jahāngīr’s reign. Bīr Singh is known on other counts as a patron of both Vaiṣṇavism and the arts: the builder of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple decorated with frescoes in Orchā itself, the sponsor of temples in Mathurā and elsewhere in the Braj region, and the patron of the Brajbhāṣā poet Keśavdās, author among several other works of the *Rāmacandracandrikā* (probably written for his then patron, Bīr Singh’s brother Indrajīt, a devotee of Rāma).

Somewhat later comes a group of leaves from one or more manuscripts of the *Rāmcaritmānas* in a provincial Mughal or folk Rajasthani style, possibly dated 1646 and all illustrating the Laṅkākāṇḍa; apart from size (all are c. 15 × 27 cm.), their common feature is that the text is written alongside, below or around the illustrations (JLB 2018a).[[243]](#footnote-243) The way in which the text is inventively arranged above, around and beside the painting is reminiscent of the Mughal treatment of text (although that is placed in defined blocks within the painting) and it contrasts with other indigenous styles which either have a single column of text on the same side of the leaf as the painting or only on the verso, while the rocky ridges common in Mughal painting become in these folios a looped string of reddish pink lobes and mainly serve to separate one part of a scene from another; on the other hand, the horizontal format, the naïve treatment of the figures, the way the available space is crowded with them, the treatment of trees and the bright colours are more typical of Rajput painting. Later paintings produced at the provincial Mughal courts of Lakhnau, Oudh and Murshidabad from the eighteenth century onwards will be mentioned below.

From early in the 17th century Rajput courts were also producing illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscripts and sets or series illustrating the Rāma story in indigenous painting styles, perhaps partly stimulated to do so by the Mughal example, although the role of Rāmānandī ascetics in spreading Rāma worship in Pahāṛī kingdoms during the 16th century should not be overlooked (Moran 2013). For convenience, Rāmāyaṇa paintings and drawings produced in Rājasthān and central India will be treated first, next those produced in the hill states (Pahāṛī), and then those from southern and from eastern India. Konrad Seitz has argued strongly that the early so-called Mālvā (Malwa) paintings were produced in Bundelkhand at Orchā, Datiā and Panna and that one Rāmāyaṇa series was produced at Orchā around 1600 (Seitz 2015: I, 317-19; cf. Losty 2017: 9 + fig. 2).[[244]](#footnote-244) However, this is identical to an early Rājasthānī manuscript in the so-called Mālvā style that was made for Hīrā Rāṇī, wife of Pahāra Singh of Orchā (r. 1641-53), according to a later note on the first leaf (BKB 6796), and in that case should be assigned to around 1642-45.[[245]](#footnote-245) A few paintings assigned to Māṇḍū in Mālvā are dated as early as around 1630 (e.g. San Diego Museum of Art 1990.944 and 945). A series of at least twelve paintings in approximately square format (between 14.5 and 16.5 cm. in height and width) has been dated by Konrad Seitz to around 1645 (Seitz 2015: I, 290-99) and by the National Museum, New Delhi, to the eighteenth century. At least two more sets of paintings in the style usually called the “Malwa” style were produced by the middle of the seventeenth century; one is a dispersed series of 99 folios produced at Orchā (Seitz 2015: I, 317-19; Museum Rietberg, Zūrich, 2021.73-83; Bonhams NY 14.3.16: 84) and another slightly later series of 98 “Malwa” miniatures without text in the National Museum, New Delhi (Nat. Mus. 51.65;[[246]](#footnote-246) cf. Parlier 1985: 147).

When mahārāṇā Jagat Singh (r. 1628-52) planned the restocking of the Mewar (Mevāṛ) royal library, destroyed in 1568 during the Mughal sack of Chittaur, the highlight was the now well known Jagat Singh or Mewar *Rāmāyaṇa*, dated 1649-53, which has been mounted on the web in a joint project of the British Library and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.[[247]](#footnote-247) This was definitely a complete manuscript with lavish illustrations. The main artists who worked on it were Manohar (*Bāla* and probably *Uttara kāṇḍas*) and the senior artist Sāhib Dīn (*Ayodhyā* and *Yuddha kāṇḍas*), the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* appears to be by another artist in Manohar’s studio, and the *Kiṣkindhā* and *Sundara kāṇḍas* are in a very different mixed Mewar-Deccani style; all were assisted by several junior artists. But the entire text was then written by one scribe, the Jain Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda, and the colophons contain dates ranging from 1649 to 1653.[[248]](#footnote-248) Out of approximately 700 surviving folios 145 are held in four collections in India and the other 555 are in the British Library; of the 413 known paintings, 304 are in Britain and 109 in the various Indian collections. J.P. Losty suggests that the reason for the lavishness of the Mewar *Rāmāyaṇa* was the position of the Śiśodiyas as the most prominent dynasty claiming to belong to the solar dynasty and so to have Rāma as an ancestor (Losty 1994: 102),[[249]](#footnote-249) quite apart from the general understanding of Rāma as the ideal king.

A later successor of Jagat Singh, mahārāṇā Saṅgrām Singh II (1710-34 A.D.) also commissioned a large number of illustrated manuscripts, among which is a Bālakāṇḍa manuscript with 202 paintings, completed in 1712 and now in the British Library (BL Add. 15295; it was given to James Todd at the same time as several *kāṇḍas* of the Jagat Singh *Rāmāyaṇa*). Its paintings seem unrelated to those in the Jagat Singh *Bālakāṇḍa* and it has been suggested that it could have been made as a replacement, if that had already left the royal collection (Topsfield 2002: 142). Another very extensive series but of paintings only, though based on the *Rāmcaritmānas,* was also produced in Mewar at this period (it is usually dated c. 1710), which is now widely dispersed in various public and private collections.[[250]](#footnote-250)

Throughout the rest of the eighteenth century (and beyond), a considerable number of the Rajput courts in Rājasthān were commissioning sets of *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings. A group of paintings in a mixed Bikaner-Deccani style was produced early in the century (Nat. Mus., New Delhi, 47.110/197 etc.). A set attributed to the Kotah Master was probably commissioned by Rao Ram Singh (r. 1696-1707) and left unfinished at his death according to Carey Welch (Welch 1997: 28). A set was produced at Sawar, near Ajmer, that is dated 1723 (Beach 1992: 187). A few numbered paintings are known from a set possibly produced around 1725 at Isarda (c. 80 miles SE of Jaipur; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 29.1048-52).[[251]](#footnote-251) Paintings in a manuscript of the *Candanamalayagirivartā* by Bhadrasena, produced in Kiṣangaṛh, though not in the usual Kishangarh style, include depictions of the Rāmāyaṇa narrative.[[252]](#footnote-252) A series based on the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* was painted by the artist Guman in a Jaipur-Datia mixed style in the middle of the century (Nat. Mus., New Delhi, 47.110/182-88). In the second half of the century, from around 1760 to perhaps as late as 1780, another complete illustrated *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* was produced at Uniara. Although the Narukas of Uniara (Uniyārā) originated as a branch of the Kachvāhā family ruling Āmber, the painting style they patronised at that period derived from that of neighbouring Bundi as a result of some rather tortuous dynastic politics. Milo Cleveland Beach states that the earliest paintings in the manuscript are identical in style to those in an extensive *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* completed in 1759 by the painter Mira Bagas and also that paintings towards the end of the manuscript are less well finished than earlier ones (Beach 1974: 24). So far sixteen folios have come onto the art market.[[253]](#footnote-253)

A very large-sized (c. 64 × 130 cm.) illustrated manuscript of the *Rāmcaritmānas* containing 90 paintings was produced at Jodhpur around 1775 in Vijay Singh’s reign (1752-93; now owned by the Mehrangarh Museum Trust); this has a more devotional aspect than earlier court productions (Diamond and others 2009: 118-35).[[254]](#footnote-254) An extensive Marwar series produced around 1780 has captions/descriptions in a form of Hindi in the top margin (often continued in the lower margin and sometimes in the side margins); most is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, InE 1444 — *Bālakāṇḍa* (44 ff.), *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (25 ff.), *Sundarakāṇḍā* (46 ff.) and *Uttarakāṇḍa* (36 ff. but f.5 missing) — but the *Laṅkākāṇḍa* is widely dispersed. Isolated leaves, some of which may be all that remain from sets, are also known from Alipura, Alwar, Āmber, Bīkāner, Bundi, Datia, Devgaṛh, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kiśangaṛh, Kotah, Nāgaur, Narsinghgaṛh (Narasiṃhagaḍh), Orchā, Rāghogaṛh, Rājgaṛh, Sāvar and Sirohi. Production continued on a reduced scale into the nineteenth century.[[255]](#footnote-255)

By the eighteenth century the Rajput courts in the Panjab hills were also patronising painting in the various Pahāṛī styles. Even before then, possibly the earliest Pahāṛī *Rāmāyaṇa* series was a set of large-sized folios produced at the Maṇḍi court by the “Early Master at the Maṇḍi Court” around 1630-45 (the end of Hari Sen’s reign and the start of Suraj Sen’s) but only five folios are still known (Glynn 1983: 52-54).[[256]](#footnote-256) A few folios are also known from another set by the “Master of the Maṇḍi Court” , produced around 1725-30, and **a group of paintings in the National Museum, New Delhi, is “said to bear an inscription giving Mandi as the place of painting and the date 1765” (Barrett and Gray 1963: 169)**. The Mandi court also commissioned one of the latest sets to be produced, around 1840.

The very extensive but unfinished “Shangri Rāmāyaṇa” series is named after the minor court of Shangri, a former dependency of Kulu, since it was once in the possession of Raja Raghubir Singh of Shangri; however, after an earlier attribution to Kulu around 1690-1710 by W.G. Archer, who distinguished four different painting styles (Archer 1973: 325-29), the usually accepted view now is that part at least (Archer’s styles I and II) was painted at Bahu in the reigns of Kripal Dev (c. 1660-90) and Anand Dev (c. 1690-1730), since a series of portraits of Bahu rulers are in the same style (Goswamy and Fischer 1992: 76; Kossak 2011).[[257]](#footnote-257)  Possible modifications to that view are the suggestion that seven styles by as many as fifteen artists can be discerned (Bagri 2010) and the possible identification of one artist (Archer’s Style II Master) as Devīdāsa of Nurpur, on the basis of similarities to the Basohli *Rasamañjari* of 1694-95 (Kossak 1997: 76). However, recently it has been again suggested that it was painted in Kulu in 1670-90 but was the work of imported artists from Basohli, Nurpur and Bilaspur (Losty 2017: 20). Several more paintings in the Bahu style, c. 1690-1700, may well belong either to this or to another incomplete series.[[258]](#footnote-258)

Also in the first quarter of the eighteenth century comes the most monumental of Pahāṛī illustrated *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* manuscripts, if we accept that the sets listed next do all belong to the same series, as many art historians suggest. One part is the so-called small Guler *Rāmāyaṇa* of around 1720, which is the only major series of paintings ascribed to Paṇḍit Seu;[[259]](#footnote-259) its extant folios illustrate episodes from the *Araṇya* and *Sundara kāṇḍas.* The first of the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* group depicts the episode of the exiles’ visit to Atri’s hermitage with Anasūyā and Sītā conversing inside the hut, narrated at the end of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* in the Critical Edition but starting the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* in the Northern recension, with which the text on the versos is aligned, where identifiable. The text on several folios from the *Sundarakāṇḍa* which are now in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich,[[260]](#footnote-260) follows the Northern recension and indeed mainly the NE recension, despite the location of its production (JLB 2023); consequently the first two extant versos, folios 2 and 3, contain text located in the Southern recension at the end of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*. The selection of verses on the versos, which is taken from the NE recension (indeed sometimes closest to the Maithilī and Bengali mss alone), has been skilfully done to produce a coherent text by an unknown compiler who was evidently not the actual scribe, since he makes a number of elementary blunders in his writing of the Sanskrit. On some folios the amount of text is fairly brief but on one it had to be continued in the right margin to accommodate what was needed to correspond with the painting on the recto.

The *Kiṣkindhākāṇda* comprises another series datable between 1710 and 1725 in a very similar format that has been called the “Mankoṭ *Rāmāyaṇa*” (Goswamy and Fischer 2011); it is not known where exactly it was painted but it was not in Paṇḍit Seu’s own workshop.[[261]](#footnote-261) This series also has *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* text on the versos (Goswamy 1999: 234-7; Britschgi and Fischer 2008: 14), consisting usually of a sequential selection of verses forming a more condensed narrative relating to the painting on the recto.[[262]](#footnote-262) The selection of verses from the search party accounts on folio 35 exceptionally is not in sequence but was carefully selected to include all four directions, echoing the painting on the recto which shows a separate group of *vānaras* in each of its four corners; the text is prefaced by an apparently unique *śloka,* either from an unidentified source or composed by the compiler of the selection.

However, the most spectacular part, in terms of its size (the standard folio size is around 60 × 83 cm), is the *Yuddhakāṇḍa,* the “Siege of Laṅkā” series by the painter Mānaku, a son of Paṇḍit Seu, produced probably around 1725 but abandoned with most of its forty folios left just as preliminary drawings; only the first four folios have text on the versos.[[263]](#footnote-263) These forty folios form a continuous sequence up to the point when the project was abandoned and not, as usually thought (e.g. Goswamy 2017: 347), a series in which there were a number of gaps (MB and JLB 2013). The first folio has an incipit (in red): *atha laṃkākāṇḍacitraṃ likhyate* || “here/next the painting of the *Laṅkākāṇḍa* (OR the pictorial *Laṅkākāṇḍa*) is written”; this unusual form of words suggests the deliberate combining of text and illustration. The text on the first four folios forms a continuous text and contains several colophons on the third and fourth folios, as well as a final caption to each painting except on folio 4. This is a major shift from the practice in the other *kāṇḍas* towards the layout of a text-only manuscript.

The scale on which the work was planned seems to have steadily increased from one *kāṇḍa* to the next. The *Araṇyakāṇḍa* paintings are essentially complete at 27 in total, the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* paintings must have totalled over 48, there must have been a similar number of *Sundarakāṇḍa* paintings, and the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* paintings and drawings comprise 40 up to the point when the project was abandoned and, if completed, would have totalled perhaps twice as many. Similarly, plans for the amount of text on the versos became steadily more ambitious, from the limited selection on the *Araṇyakāṇḍā* versos, through the condensed narrative on the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* versos and the fuller continuous text on some *Sundarakāṇḍa* versos, to the complete text found across the first four versos of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*. Although the patron of the small Guler *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Siege of Laṅkā series is not named, the fact that both Seu and Mānaku were natives of Guler and that the Siege of Laṅkā paintings were in the possession of the then raja of Guler early last century makes it virtually certain that he was Dalip Singh of Guler (1695-1741), who presumably was as keen as Jagat Singh of Mewar to proclaim his own and his dynasty’s standing.

Other series from the Panjab hills include several groups produced for the Chambā rulers, around 1730-40 (a series of drawings, of which several are in the Museum Rietberg, Zürich, and more in the J. and K. Mittal Museum, Hyderabad), between about 1760 and 1785 (widely scattered), another from about 1760-1800 (87 paintings in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, with several more elsewhere; Ohri 1983) and a fourth in the late eighteenth century (a group in the British Museum, BM 1923,0716,0.4-0.8).[[264]](#footnote-264) Others are a series from Maṇḍi dated 1765 (several in the National Museum, New Delhi); a Guler-Kāṅgṛā series apparently dated 1769 (formerly Sir Cowasji Jehangir’s collection; Barrett and Gray 1963: 185); a Guler-Kāṅgṛā manuscript of around 1780-90 attributed to one of Mānaku or Nainsukh’s sons (on which more below) and another closely-related set painted slightly later (Mason 2001: 190). 23 folios from a late-18th-century *Rāmcaritmānas* manuscript illustrated in a Pahāṛī style closer to Basohli than Kāṅgṛā are in Baroda (Parimoo 2010).

A second Guler Rāmāyaṇa series was produced in two parts, the first around 1770-75 and the second around 1790-1810, by one or more masters of the first generation after Mānaku and Nainsukh (often referred to as the “Bharany” *Ramayana,* since it was once in the possession of the art dealer C.L. Bharany); the first part consists of illustrations of the *Bāla* to *Araṇya kāṇḍas,* with a few also from the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa,* and the second part of illustrations of the *Sundara* and *Yuddha kāṇḍas* with a few folios available just as (unfinished) primed drawings; they lack text, captions and folio numbers.[[265]](#footnote-265) This family of painters descended from Paṇḍit Seu continued to produce Rāmāyaṇa paintings and drawings into the 19th century. A painting by Mānaku’s son Khushala (Rietberg RVI 2127) has been identified as an illustration to the *Yogavāsiṣṭha,* which “has not until now been known to have been the subject of any Pahari work, but this leaf clearly suggests that a whole series based on the great text might have been painted” (Goswamy and Fischer 2017: 78, quoting a few words from the Sanskrit text written on the verso). A series of sketches in *sindhuri kalam* (≈ red crayon) was produced at Baśohli by Rāñjhā, son of Nainsukh, dated 1816 and probably produced for his own workshop as models for future generations (702 out of 707 drawings from this series are in the Bharata Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, acc. nos 2001-2702; Goswamy 1971; Beach, Fischer and Goswamy 2011: II, 693). An artist named Chaitu (more exactly Cettū), a descendant of Mānaku employed at Tehri Garhwal under Raja Sudarshan Shah, produced around 1820 a Rāmāyaṇa series (Bhatia 1998: 141-48), The so-called Nadāun *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kāṅgṛā style was painted around 1820 for Sansar Chand (r. 1775–1823), possibly by Gaudhu or Purkhu, with text on the versos from the *Kuśalavopākhyāna* of the *Jaiminīyāśvamedhikaparvan*.[[266]](#footnote-266) A Guler-Kāṅgṛā series was produced around 1820-30 by an artist of the second or third generation after Nainsukh and Mānaku. A large-format series in Kāṅgṛā style was produced in Purkhu’s atelier around 1825-30; and yet another large-format series in the atelier of a master of the third generation after Nainsukh around 1850 (Britschgi and Fischer 2008). Many more single Kāṅgṛā miniatures are found in various collections. Other courts also continued to produces series of paintings into the nineteenth century, in particular several from Maṇḍi (Aijazuddin 1977) and a complete illustrated manuscript, c. 1820, from Jammu (Sotheby’s sale, 8th June 2012),[[267]](#footnote-267) but the most elaborate is a *Rāmcaritmānas* manuscript produced for Udit Narayan Singh, maharaja of Kāśī (r. 1796-1835), variously called the *Citrarāmāyaṇa, Svārnākṣarī Rāmāyaṇa* and *Kāñcanacitrarāmāyaṇa,* which contains 548 paintings by various artists to accompany the *Rāmcaritmānas* text*s,* produced between 1796 and 1814.[[268]](#footnote-268) Single paintings (which again may be the sole remnant of series) are known from several more courts.

Extant paintings from elsewhere in the subcontinent are mostly later in date than those from the Rajput kingdoms. However, possibly the earliest example is a palm-leaf *Citrarāmāyaṇa* manuscript in Trivandrum dated Kollam 628 = 1453 A.D., with the incised line drawings of the main scenes and characters accompanied by more or less extensive captions, at first in Malayāḷam and then in Sanskrit but still in Malayāḷam script, on many of them; the version followed is that of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (Jones 1963; Vijayan 1997). Another interesting example is contained within an accordion-pleated picture book from early 17th-century Nepal, of which 30 out of its 144 pictures form a *Rāmāyaṇa* sequence from the departure into exile up to Rāma’s *abhiṣeka* on their return (Cuneo 2017: 568-74); the scenes shown include an analogue of the SE Asian Benjakai episode. The earliest mural paintings are found in two South Indian temples dating from the first half of the 16th century: the Vῑrabhadra temple at Lepakshi (Hindupur dist. A.P.) and the Cennakeśava temple at Somapalem (Chittoor dist. A.P.) preserves traces of paintings of *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes on the ceiling of its *mukhamaṇḍapa* (Sivaramamurti 1968: 120; Dallapiccola 2016a). The Rāmaliṅgavilāsa palace, Rāmanāthapuram, Tamilnad (end of 17th century), has mural paintings which include a complete Bālakāṇḍa series (Dallapiccola 2016b: 90). Other series of similar paintings from the late 17th to mid 18th centuries are found on the ceiling of the entrance *maṇḍapa* of the Bṛhadambāḷ temple, Thirugokarna (Pudukottai), in the Vasanta *maṇḍapa* of the Āḷakar temple, Alagar Koyil and in the Āṇṭāḷ, Rājamannār and Garuḍāḷvār temple**s** at Srivilliputtur (Dallapiccola 2016b).

Illustrated manuscripts of several other vernacular versions were also produced in the 19th century. A complete manuscript of 294 folios written in *ṭākrī* script with 16 paintings was produced in Jammu around 1820. At least 56 folios are extant from a 19th-century manuscript of an unidentified Hindi version elaborately illustrated in Kishangarh or Mewar style. Several folios from a manuscript, again of an unidentified Hindi version, from Marwar c. 1820-40 are also known. Narottama Adhvaryu wrote a manuscript of the Ayodhyā and Araṇya kāṇḍas from Giradhara’s Gujarati version (in *devanāgarī* script) in 1838 with 48 paintings by an unnamed artist (Wadekar 2012). An illuminated manuscript of Mādhavasvāmi’s Marāṭhī version was produced at Tanjore in the middle of the 19th century (Losty 1982: 141).[[269]](#footnote-269)  Jerry Losty notes that “Under the patronage of the Mysore Rājas, lavishly gilded manuscripts in Kannada of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and similar texts were prepared in the 19th century” (Losty 1982: 119). A manuscript of the Jain Keśarāja’s *Rāmayaśorasāyana* illustrated with 213 paintings in Jaipur style was produced in the middle of the 19th century (now in Sri Dev Kumar Jain Oriental Library, Bihar; Jain and others 1990). Upendra Bhañja’s *Vaidehīśavilāsa* was illustrated on palm-leaf by several Orissan artists in the 19th century; a notable example is one by the artist Śatrughna at Baripada in 1833 (Williams 1996).

Various seventeenth-century paintings from Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnad of Rāmāyaṇa episodes are preserved in the Sarasvati Mahal library, Tañjāvur (Sivaramamurti 1968: 137). An album of 137 paintings of deities and sages, which includes a series (numbers 93-104) relating to Rāma, is interesting because it includes narrative elements.[[270]](#footnote-270) Part of a set of 100 Hindu deities produced in southern Andhra Pradesh around 1720 consists of twenty which illustrate Bālakāṇḍa episodes (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 293b. 176-182; Hurel 2010). Between 1727 and 1758 an album of 132 illustrations was produced at Masulipatam to accompany the text of one of four volumes of Abraham Pierre Porcher des Oulches, *Histoire et figures des dieux des Indiens, ou théogonie des Malabariquois,* which cover all the narrative except the Uttarakāṇḍa (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 297.1‑132; Hurel 2010).[[271]](#footnote-271) A manuscript from Rajahmundry, dated in its colophon 9th October 1757, (Völkerkunde Museum, Hamburg, ms As 4673; Mittal 1985; Srinivas 2005) has full-page paintings on each obverse, of which 53 out of the total of 86 are on the Rāma story (Kolapelli Buchenna 2005; Dallapiccola 2010).[[272]](#footnote-272) Another mid-eighteenth-century manuscript from southern Andhra Pradesh is in the State Museum, Hyderabad (Mittal 1969) and eleven folios from another mid-eighteenth-century manuscript from Andhra Pradesh are also known (Victoria and Albert Museum, IS 233-2006; Philadelphia Museum of Art 75-149-1).[[273]](#footnote-273) Around 1800 Major Edward Moor commissioned paintings from a Poona artist, including 60 of episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa to accompany a translation which he planned (BM 1940,0713,0.31 etc., given by his descendant).[[274]](#footnote-274)

A number of individual paintings on Rāmāyaṇa subjects (some possibly from unidentified sets) were produced in provincial Mughal styles at Lakhnau, Oudh and Murshidabad throughout the eighteenth century.[[275]](#footnote-275) These were usually produced as single items, probably for mounting in albums, but fragments of illustrated manuscripts are known (e.g. Portland 2011.131.22). However, there is a later parallel to Akbar’s interest in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a key to his subjects’ self-image in the album of *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings in the provincial Mughal style of Murshidabad with influence from folk Bengali art which was made around 1770-80 for Sir Elijah Impey, the first Chief Justice of the Bengal Supreme Court, and from which around fifty leaves survive.[[276]](#footnote-276) A manuscript of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* with oval illustrations in the centre of the leaf was producedin the late provincial Mughal style of Oudh around 1790 (Bonhams sale 18488, lot 252). Several illustrated manuscripts of the *Rāmcaritmānas* are also known from eastern India. An illustrated manuscript dated *saṃvat* 1794 (= 1737 A.D.) is kept in the Uttar Pradesh State Archives, as well as another undated one. A manuscript in the Asutosh Museum, University of Calcutta (T.448), which is virtually complete at 343 folios with 153 illustrations, was written in bold *nāgarī* by Ichārāmamiśra at Kamalapura (Mahisādal Pargana, mod. Midnapore dist.) for rāṇī Jānakī (widow of Ānandalāl Upādhyāya, who held the zamindari of Mahisādal, 1765-1804); it is dated in colophons to the equivalents of 1773, 1774 and 1775 A.D. (Goswami 1983).[[277]](#footnote-277) Another *Rāmcaritmānas* manuscript in 349 folios was copied in 1785 at Patna by Vaiṣṇava Dās, who calls himself a servant of Rāma, and is profusely illustrated with large paintings and vignettes (sometimes 2 or 3 on a page) in a style derived from the Western Indian style (BL Or. MS. 12867; Poovaya-Smith and others 1989 ). Production of such illustrated manuscripts of the *Rāmcaritmānas* did not end of course at the close of the eighteenth century, although it was by then becoming much less frequent. Five pages from an early-19th-century manuscript illustrated in Kāṅgṛā style and attributed to the family of Purkhu are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A manuscript of the *Uttarkāṇḍ,* dated VS 1869 (= 1812 A.D.), in 67 folios contains seven full-page paintings in a Pahāṛī style, possibly from Chambā. The Wellcome collection has an illustrated copy dated VS 1874 (= 1817 A.D.) which may have been commissioned by the Maharaja of Benares (Friedlander 1996: cat. no. 395).[[278]](#footnote-278)

Temple hangings from South India depicting scenes from the Rāma story are only known from recent times but this is because older examples have not survived, since this style of textile goes back to the 13th century.[[279]](#footnote-279) Painted scrolls from Telangana, used by the hereditary picture-showmen, *patamuvaru,* are known from as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, though basically illustrating legends about various castes, in some cases draw on stories from the epics, with the Rāma narrative incorporated in scrolls produced for the *Mangallolu,* barber, and *Mudiraj,* fruitpicker and fisherman, castes (Mittal 2014: 8-11).[[280]](#footnote-280) Similarly painted scrolls, *paṭ,* were used in Bengal from the seventeenth century up to the present by itinerant story-tellers, *paṭuās* of the *citrakar jāti*, using a distinctive high-pitched vocal style, *paṭuā-saṃgīt,* for their performances; but the painted scrolls, *tipanu,* used in Gujarat by the Garoda picture showmen are known only from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards. However, illustrated storytelling in general has a much longer history, since the grammarian Patañjali mentions story-tellers using painted scrolls (Bose 2015; Jain 1998b), while in some regions a more recent development is the production of narrative boxes which open out to show scenes from various stories, among which the Rāma story is a popular one. The so-called Paiṭhān paintings from Maharashtra take that name from the place where the first sets (*pothis*) identified were first discovered but the only known centre of production is the village of Pingulī and all known examples are assigned to around the middle of the nineteenth century; they too were used by itinerant oral storytellers (*citrakathis*) in Maharasthtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, held up to illustrate the action to the audience (Ray 1978, Dallapiccola 1980; Dallapiccola 1998; Stache-Rosen 1984; Rossi 1998: 128-37). All these scrolls, whether from Bengal, Gujarat or Maharashtra, show the large format and bold lines appropriate to their use.[[281]](#footnote-281)

Another type of popular devotional object from Maharashtra and Karnataka is the circular bronze plaques depicting Hanumān flying with the healing herb clutched in his left hand, produced from the seventeenth century onwards; specimens were collected by Major Edward Moor (1771-1848) and are now in the British Museum. A comment on one of these (1940,0716.323) on the British Museum collection website suggests that “These plaques were carried by mendicant devotees on long poles and used to encourage the giving of alms”, which leaves unexplained the suspension loop at the top, but may originate from notes by Moor with the collection. A broadly similar object in the Victoria and Albert Museum, a tear-drop shaped silver amulet (IM.33-1926) again showing Hanumān flying and holding the healing herb and with a loop at the top, is described on its website as an “Amulet made for pilgrims visiting the sacred site of Pushkar, Ajmer, Rajasthan”. However precisely they were used, Hanumān, who had become so popular in his own right particularly in Maharashtra, is in all these items still being firmly linked with the Rāma story.

**A bibliographical note**

A broad survey of the whole field can be found in Banerjee 1986, which frustratingly lacks adequate references to the material handled and illustrated (the 2nd volume of plates does not include any accession numbers).

**The *Rāmāyaṇa* in Buddhist literature**

Many aspects of Indian culture spread to other parts of Asia along two main routes. One, in which mercantile motives were often closely linked with the spread of Buddhism, went northwards and then eastwards overland into Tibet, Central Asia and beyond; in the other route, by sea southeastwards to both insular and mainland Southeast Asia, the accompanying religious elements were more mixed between Hindu and Buddhist. Because of the predominantly Buddhist nature of the society within which the Rāma story migrated by the overland route, it is convenient to examine in this chapter both the earliest Buddhist recastings of the Rāma story from India or Sri Lanka and the often non-religious versions in Tibet, Central Asia (at the relevant period much influenced or controlled by Tibet) and beyond. Versions localised in Southeast Asia, often in Buddhist guise, will be considered in the next chapter. Chronologically, some of these developments precede many of the treatments within the Sanskrit tradition already surveyed; indeed, claims have even been made that a Buddhist version is the antecedent of all others. It has been argued that the *Dasaratha Jātaka* gives a version of the Rāma story which, because of certain fundamental differences, must have had an independent origin, despite being essentially just the narration of a single episode, used and adapted to fulfil the specific purpose of an exemplum to display the virtue of imperturbability.  One of the major differences is that in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā are all children of Daśaratha by his unnamed queen-consort, after whose death Bharata is born to another queen, also unnamed, who is promised a boon. When Bharata is seven she claims the boon — the kingdom for Bharata — and Daśaratha banishes the other three for twelve years (his expected life-span) to protect them from the queen. Weber and some subsequent scholars have seen this as the oldest form of the legend, with other forms developing from it (Weber 1870, Sen 1920: 4-15, Przyłuski 1939). The contrary view has been argued cogently by a succession of scholars (Jacobi 1893: 64-67, Utgikar 1924, Sircar 1976-77, Gombrich 1985) and in our opinion these arguments are correct; the possibility has even been raised that the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is closer to the Northern recension of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Pellegrini 2008: 276-78, referring to the Gorresio and Lahore editions). Rāma’s exile is also mentioned in the *Jayaddisa Jātaka* and the *Anāmaka Jātaka* gives a much modified version of the story(see below).

In reality it is clear that the story in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* is relatively late. Indeed the narrator of the prose passages (which in their present form are a Pali translation of a Sinhalese original of the fifth century A.D.) contradicts some details of the much older verses, *gāthās,* or has in fact misunderstood them. Well over a century ago Lüders argued that the first *gāthā* referred to the offering of water to the dead, clearly alluded to in the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* (2.95.21-32), but that it was misunderstood by the writer of the prose passage and turned into thestory of Rāma telling Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to enter the water before he would reveal the news of their father’s death; equally *gāthā* 10 paraphrases the proverbial *VR* 2.110.3 (Lüders 1897: 128–29; cf. Utgikar 1924, Sircar 1976–77: 50–55, JLB 1979: 144, Gombrich 1985: 434-6; MB 2002a:139-40; Zhang Xing 2010: 40). The *gāthās* themselves seem mostly to be a Buddhist adaptation of the *kaccit* *sarga* (*VR* 2.94)*,* although their proverbial or aphoristic nature makes this less than certain; what is certain is that they do not contain anything incompatible with the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* and that the final one is clearly an adaptation of a verse from the *rāmarājya* passage at the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa (*gāthā* 13/93, cf. *VR* 6.116.90 + 3702\*); together these demonstrate clearly that even the *gāthās* are dependent on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as it had developed by the end of the second stage of its growth.[[282]](#footnote-282)

Minor differences in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* include relocating Daśaratha’s kingdom in Vārāṇasī, that the number of his wives is 16,000 and that he does not die until nine years after Rāma’s departure for the forest (here the Himālayas), to which he has sent his three eldest children for twelve years to protect Rāma from his stepmother. Not only does this revision of the narrative preserve the image of Dasaratha as a just and wise sovereign and loving, protective father (his death all the more likely to arouse in his favourite son the excessive grief being warned against in the Jātaka’s frame-story), but it envisages Rāma’s return without conflict to succeed to the throne on Dasaratha’s death, which had been predicted to occur twelve years later. More significant may be the fact that the fourteen-year limit of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is not fixed throughout the tradition; a number of other versions, including the *Narasiṃha Purāṇa* (*NarSP* 48.48-50,57,75,159) and at least three Southeast Asian tellings, also set it at twelve years.[[283]](#footnote-283)

The *gāthās* of several other Jātakas contain allusions to aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, for example, the blessing pronounced by Rāma’s mother on his departure for Daṇḍaka forest is mentioned in the *Jayadissa Jātaka* (513.17). In particular the *Vessantara Jātaka* includes a *gāthā* where Maddī declares that she will never desert Vessantara, just as the devoted Sītā never deserted Rāma (547.541).[[284]](#footnote-284) Its overall story-line clearly has pronounced similarity to that of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and it has many analogues to Rāma’s journey to the forest, leading one scholar to argue for “a shared story-matrix” of the two, evolving side by side (Collins 2003: 658-62). By contrast, Alsdorf sought to establish the pre-Buddhist origin of its *gāthās* (Alsdorf 1957), a position rebutted by Gombrich, who nevertheless regarded them as archaic and found no evidence that either text borrowed directly from the other, even though he did find similarities of wording (Gombrich 1985: 427-33). However, in what is probably the closest parallel of wording (that between *Vessantara Jātaka* 69ab and *VR* 2.24.17ab) the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* passage is in *triṣṭubh* metre, indicating that it belongs to the second stage of growth.

In the *Sambulā Jātaka* also the story-line has some similarities to that of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* Sambulā follows her husband, the *yuvarāja* Sotthisena, to the forest when he develops leprosy, caring devotedly for him. She rejects the wooing by a demon with almost the same words and arguments as Rāvaṇa uses with Sītā, she is seized but rescued by Sakka who exiles the demon and returns to the hermitage, lamenting to Nature. Sotthisena is suspicious when she returns late and refuses to believe her explanation until she performs an Act of Truth simultaneously confirming her chastity and curing Sotthisena’s leprosy. On their return to the city Sotthisena is appointed king and Sambulā chief queen but she pines to return to forest-life.

Rather more than these mere allusions and broad similarities,[[285]](#footnote-285) the tale of a king accidentally killing an ascetic boy represents a complete remodelling of the similar episode to which the dying Daśaratha attributes his troubles (*VR* 2.57—58). The Buddhist versions are found in the Pali *Sāma Jātaka* and the Sanskrit *Śyāma Jātakas* of the *Mahāvastu* (once in verse, once in prose, 2.208.2–231.6), as well as in the *Haribhaṭṭajātakamālā,* once known only from a Tibetan translation but much of the Sanskrit original has been rediscovered since 1973, including much of the *Śyāmajātaka* (Hahn1976; Haribhaṭṭa 2011, Haribhaṭṭa2017; see also Hofstetter 1980: 100–15).

As it is told in the Rāmāyaṇa, it is a brief, dark tale with the focus largely on Daśaratha and the curse he incurs from the dead boy’s parents. The Jātaka versions however are not set in a *Rāmāyaṇa* context and the emphasis, with a happy ending, is shifted to the victim: the boy is a Bodhisattva who is preserved or resurrected by the power of his good deeds. The boy has been elevated to become a widely popular hero and role model of filial piety in Buddhist, Hindu and other circles, enjoying a status out of all proportion to his original significance; more interestingly, in different religious traditions the tales have intermingled, with details from one being absorbed by the other and developed, with the aid of frequent visual representation, in a process of continuous motif transfer (MB 2010b). Narrative and linguistic criteria suggest to us that the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* version is the original, but since that episode belongs to its second stage, it is theoretically possible that it was taken from Buddhist literature, as Oldenberg argued on the basis of the greater stylistic elaboration seen in the epic (1918: 456–59). Even the unlikely suggestion that both incidents have been derived separately from folk tradition cannot be entirely discounted.

If it is accepted that the Jātakas, at least in their present form, can be dated to the fifth century A.D., then the earliest example of a Buddhist author familiar with the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is the poet Aśvaghoṣa, for the usual dating assigns him to the first century A.D. (although a second-century date is also quite possible); his work has already been discussed in the chapter on classical Sanskrit literature, where it was shown that in his *Buddhacarita* he was familiar with both epics, making allusions to their plots and echoing their wording; he even declares that Vālmīki created the first poem in verse. Another work of the same period, the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā* of Kātyāyanīputra, during a comparison of Buddhist *sūtras* and other literature, incidentally mentions, without naming it, a work in 12,000 verses in which Rāvaṇa kidnaps Sītā and Rāma rescues her (*Mahāvibhāṣā* 46, T1545: 27); the only reasonable inference is that the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is meant (and the number of verses corresponds well with the length of the Ayodhyā to Yuddha kāṇḍas at the end of the second stage of growth).[[286]](#footnote-286)

As the final redaction of the *Daśaratha Jātaka* in the fifth century and the probable authorship of the *Jānakīharaṇa* by the Sinhala king Kumāradāsa in the seventh century indicate, the Rāma story was certainly part of the culture of Sri Lanka until it attracted the opprobrium of the Buddhist hierarchy, which either ignored it or dismissed it as ‘a pointless story’ (Buddhaghosa in his *Papañcasūdani,* referring to *sītāharaṇa*) or ‘worldly stories’ (*Mahāvaṃsa* 64.43-44).[[287]](#footnote-287) But in court circles and generally among lay people there was evidently a continuing interest in the Rāma story and a trend towards relating it to the landscape of the island. There are references to the Rāmāyaṇa in Sinhala verse and prose works of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and these include several messenger poems in the style of Kālidāsa’s *Meghadūta* such as the *Tisarasandeśaya* (mid 14th century), where a swan visits Vibhīṣaṇa’s temple at Kelaniya with the blessing of the deity Utpalavarṇa, identified with Rāma (Godakumbura 1980: 437-8), the *Mayūrasandeśaya* (written between 1360 and 1391), where a peacock as messenger is directed to Vibhīṣaṇa’s shrine at Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara (Henry 2023: 51), and others. At the popular level the *Kohom̆bā Yakkama* text performed at the Kohom̆bā Kankāriya ritual includes the story of Sītā’s son, Malaya, who is brought to the island as a healer, along with much of Sītā’s back story and can be traced back in origin to the fifteenth century (Godakumbura 1946a+b; Kariyawasam 1990; Henry 2023: 53-55).[[288]](#footnote-288) The *Rāvaṇa Katāva* of perhaps the seventeenth century also belongs to the popular tradition; it is a somewhat more complete but equally idiosyncratic telling in 120 quatrains of the Rāma story from the arrival of Śūrpaṇakhā up to the aftermath of Rāvaṇa’s defeat (not actually narrated in extant manuscripts), when he is not killed but lives on in the ruins of his old citadel (Henry 2023: 61-67 and 207-47).[[289]](#footnote-289)

Mahāyāna Buddhist literature as a whole shows considerable familiarity with the Rāmāyaṇa*.* Most of this was originally written in Sanskrit but many of the texts survive only in Chinese, Tibetan or other translations. The *Lieou tou tsi king* (*Liudu ji jing,* probably representing an original *Ṣaṭpāramitāsaṃgrahasūtra*), translated into Chinese by a Sogdian monk K’ang-seng-hui (Kang Senghui) before his death in 280 A.D., gives as its *juan* 46 a brief version without names adapted as a Jātaka*,* which has therefore been termed the *Anāmajātaka* (Nanjio catalogue 143; Huber 1904, Chavannes 1910-34 I.173-78 + IV.114-15, Vira and Yamamoto 1938). The overall framework is clearly Buddhist — the king leaves his kingdom to avoid bloodshed threatened by his uncle’s aggression — but the details are equally clearly drawn from the Rāma story: his queen is abducted by a fierce dragon disguised as a monk, who is opposed by a large bird but slices off one of its wings; the king is offered help by a monkey if the king helps him in a dispute with a relative; the monkey king and his troops build a bridge to the island where the queen is captive; and after the victory over the dragon the queen has to prove her chastity.

The *Tsa-pao-tsang-king* (*Za baozang jing,* probably representing *Saṃyuktaratnapiṭakasūtra,* Nanjio catalogue 1329;translated by Chi-chia-yeh [Jijiaye] in 472 A.D.) contains in *juan* 1 the *Nidāna of king “ten-luxuries”* or *Shishewang yuan* (*Dasarathāvadāna*): the narrative islimited to a version of the court intrigue, the banishment, Bharata’s enthronement of the sandals and then the return of the exiles, with no mention of Sītā, Rāvaṇa or Hanumān, but it nevertheless includes the king killing the ascetic boy Śyāma, so emphasising filial piety (Vira and Yamamoto 1955; Willemin 1994; Ji Xianlin 2012).[[290]](#footnote-290) Xuan Zang (Hsüan-tsang, c. 602-64) produced a Chinese translation of the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā* of Kātyāyanīputra already mentioned, but whereas the original had not named the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Xuan Zang does so, states that it contains 12,000 stanzas and defines its subject matter as Sītā’s abduction by Rāvaṇa and Rāma’s recovery of Sītā, with further references to the narrative elsewhere (Watanabe 1907; Zhang Xing 2010: 40-41). But the general pattern for Mahāyāna texts is of incidental allusions rather than any kind of narrative, however brief (cf. Mair 1989: 683-88).

Another exception is found in the first and the last chapters of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra,* which abound, not surprisingly, in references to the Rāma story; in addition the first chapter creates a preamble to the main body of the text with Rāvaṇa asking for instruction from the Buddha. However, these two chapters are absent from the first Chinese translation of this *sūtra,* that made by Guṇabhadra in 443 A.D. (the original text itself probably comes from the fourth century), and no doubt this framework was generated later, prompted by the name of the *sūtra* (in full *Āryasaddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra,* “discourse on the descent of the noble true *dharma* to Laṅkā”). Similarly, the *Mahāyānādhisamayasūtra,* translated into Chinese by Jinayaśas in 570 A.D. and written perhaps around 520, states that Vibhīṣaṇa came to the Buddha for instruction (Guruge 1993-94: 141-42) but contains nothing further relating to the Rāma narrative. Both of these texts may well have originated in South India, thus explaining the positive evaluation of the two *rākṣasa* rulers. An alternative explanation is that the author of *sūtras* concerning the genesis of Buddhism in Śrī Laṅkā would feel under some obligation to present a positive picture of the island’s supposed first two rulers.

All of the Chinese texts mentioned in the last three paragraphs seem essentially to be translations and there is no way of determining whether any variations in the narrative had been present in the Sanskrit original or were introduced by the translator. Apart from these, there is no good evidence of the impact of the Rāma story in China. In what is sometimes seen as an exception, the hero of the much later sixteenth-century novel, *Si Yeou-Ki* (*Xī yóu jì*), “*Journey to the West”,* the monkey Wou Kong (Sun Wukong) has often been compared with Hanumān but, although some link is plausible, the relevance to the main Rāma narrative is minimal.[[291]](#footnote-291)

Similarly, the main evidence for any influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Japan comes in the form of two narratives transmitted via the Chinese *Tipiṭaka.* The earlier comes in the collection of Buddhist tales, *Sambo-ekotoba* or *Sanbōe* (“Illustrations of the Three Jewels”), composed by Minamoto no Tamenori in the winter of 984 and intended as a narrative accompaniment to a painting-scroll which has not survived and may indeed not in the event have been painted, although evidently it was planned; the story at 1.13 in the collection is simply an adaptation of the *Sāma Jātaka* or *Śyāma Jātaka*, following an adaptation of the *Vessantara Jātaka* at 1.12 (Hara 1978, Hara 1980, Hara 1983, Kamens 1988). The other is a very brief and aberrant version of the basic narrative within a collection of popular tales, the *Hōbutsushū* (“Collection of Jewels”, perhaps *Ratnasaṃgraha*) made in the late twelfth century by Taira no Yasuyori who refers to the *Lieou tou tsi king* (*Liudu ji jin,* Japanese *Rokudojikkyo*) as his source (Hara 1980 and 1983). This points to the *Anāmajātaka* mentioned above as his source but there are some differences of detail which have led Hara to speculate that the Rāma story may also have reached Japan through oral versions carried by such Indian brāhmans as Bharadvāja Bodhisena, who was in Japan in 750 (Hara 1983: 345-48; Verma 2002: 156-57). In addition, the *Konjaku Monogatori* (“Tales of times now past”), perhaps compiled between 1130 and 1140 by Minamoto no Takakuni, contains among its many tales “The monk and the monkey”, in which the monkey has, very doubtfully, been linked to Hanumān; this perhaps has parallels with the popular tale of *Momotarō,* where Momotarō, a son taking care of aged parents, is helped by a monkey and a bird to subdue a devil chief in his island stronghold — a possible blend of Rāmāyaṇa themes (Sioris 2002-3). Finally, also derived from China, there is the Doragaku,“Music from Dora (= Dvāravatī, the older name of Ayutthayā)”, which was a dance-drama first presented at the Japanese court in 668 and still popular there in 809; its four sections or scenes comprised “the dance of Bāli” (i.e. the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva), “the leading lady Sītā”, “the dance of the woman held captive by an ogre” and “the dance of the struggle between Han and Chu for the woman” (Mair 1989: 674-75; cf. Verma 2002: 157-58). In the last scene Rāma is equated with Han, the northern kingdom in the Warring States period in China, and Rāvaṇa with the Chu kingdom of southern China. Deriving more immediately from T’ang music in China, the dance’s name suggests an earlier transmission from the older Dvāravatī kingdom located in modern central Thailand.

Several independent versions of the Rāma story in Tibetan are known, called either simply a story or a *Rāma-avadāna,* using a typically Buddhist genre designation; however, they tend to focus on the heroic, the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, rather than the romantic, the story of Rāma and Sītā. Unlike later tellings the oldest Tibetan version lacks any obvious Buddhist influence in the narrative but belongs in this chapter, since it was produced in a culture that was clearly Buddhist and its six extant manscripts were all found at Dunhuang (or Tun-huang), the site of one of the major cave groups along the so-called “Silk Route” by which Buddhism was carried from Northwest India into China.[[292]](#footnote-292) Indeed, two of the manuscripts (mss A and D, in reality a single ms) are written on the back of Chinese texts and were almost certainly, therefore, written at Tun-huang during the period of Tibetan occupation from the end of the eighth century to the middle of the ninth. This is probably true for all six, although some could have been written in central Tibet and taken to Dunhuang, so they could in theory have been written any time between the late eighth and the early eleventh centuries, when the “library cave” which contained the manuscripts was sealed; if so, they may well represent a Rāmāyaṇa tradition widespread in Central Asia but with specific Tibetan features, closely related to an unknown Indian original, and not showing any appreciable Buddhist influence, unlike the first especially of the two Chinese Rāma stories. Each manuscript is incomplete but piecing the fragments together yields two recensions of a fuller text (de Jong 1972: 192-93; de Jong 1977: 37; translation in de Jong 1989; Roesler 2016: 49-57);[[293]](#footnote-293) this is a condensed version of the whole story, drastically abbreviating many episodes and, for example, limiting Daśaratha’s sons to two, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and lacking the court intrigues. Indeed, one manuscript contains only the first part, the conflict between Rāvaṇa and the gods (manuscript C, de Jong 1989: 14). The story is told in prose, with speeches and the letters between Rāma and Sītā in verse. Sītā is unambiguously the daughter of Rāvaṇa and his wife, using the widespread narrative motif of the child destined to bring about the death of its father.

The Rāma story clearly continued to be popular in central Tibet: the ninth-century *Mahāvyutpatti,* a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary, has an entry for a *Sītāharaṇa* (Tibetan *rol-rned phrogs-pa*) and at much the same period a *kāvya* called *Sītāharaṇa* is mentioned by Kamalaśīla in his commentary on Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasaṃgraha*, while a biography of Atiśa composed somewhere between the middle of the thirteenth century and the fifteenth century refers to a similar work (de Jong 1983: 166-67; Roesler 2002: 446-47 and 2016: 48-49). In the early eleventh century a Tibetan translation was made of Prajñāvarman’s commentaries on the *Viśeṣastava* and *Devatāvimarṣastuti,* within which he briefly narrates the story of Daśaratha and his sons (Roesler 2016: 48). Subsequently a summary of both the Sanskrit epics was given by Dmar-ston Chos-kyi-rgyal-po, a pupil of Sa-skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251), in his commentary on his master’s *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* (Tib. *Legs par bshad pa rin po che’i gter*), written before 1245 (Roesler 2002: 432-33 and 2016: 57-58). The summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa* resembles the earlier Dunhuang version but is clearly not solely based on it, since it includes for example a third brother corresponding to Bharata (de Jong 1983: 171-72; Roesler 2002: 442-48 and 2016: 57-58). Later still, commentaries on the thirteenth-century Tibetan translation of Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa* tell the story of Rāma, including for example the commentary by Dge-’dun-’phel or Saṅghaśrī written probably in 1429 (de Jong 1983: 173-77) and that by Rin-spuṅs-pa ṅag-dbaṅ ’jig-rten dbaṅ-phyug grags-pa written in 1586 (de Jong 1983: 177-81). In 1438 Zhangzhungpa Chōwang Drakpa (Zhang-zhung-ba Chos-dbang-grags-pa, 1404-69) composed a Tibetan *kāvya,* the *Tale of Ramaṇa* (*Ramaṇa’i gtam rgyud*), which again resembles the old Tibetan version (Kapstein 2003: 783-85; Roesler 2016: 58-60).

Between Tibet itself and the find-spot of the old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* at Dunhuang lay the ancient kingdom of Khotan, so it is not surprising that the late Khotanese version also found at Dunhuang should show some similarities to the Tibetan version (Bailey 1939: 466-67). The sole text is on the back of the three rolls of a Chinese translation of a Buddhist *sūtra* (Emmerick 2000: 238) and it was identified, edited and translated by Sir Harold Bailey (Bailey 1939; Bailey 1940-42).[[294]](#footnote-294) Its date of composition is uncertain but may be as late as the tenth century (Emmerick 2000: 238; cf. Bailey 1939: 468). There are identifications at the end in the manner of a Buddhist Jātaka*,* in which the Buddha identifies himself as jointly Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who act equally throughout, not as superior and supporting brothers. It also has a Buddhist prologue in eleven verses and its author was a Khotanese Buddhist monk.

The Tocharian *Puṇyavantajātaka,* a divergent derivative of the text contained in the Buddhist Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* (in the Tocharian A language of Qarashahr and Turfan), which is known in a single manuscript found at Shorchuk in Qarashahr (within the ancient kingdom of Yanqi), includes as an illustration of the drawbacks of inferiority in knowledge a brief account of Rāvaṇa’s quarrel with Vibhīṣaṇa and the latter’s departure to join Rāma (Lane 1947: 45-46; Zhang Xing 2016: 125). Another manuscript fragment contains part of the Tocharian version of the *Viśvāntarajātaka* (Sieg 1952: 43-44).

A fragmentary Uighur version is found on the reverse of a confessional text. The first eighteen out of its thirtyfour lines in cursive Uighur script give a very brief summary of the Rāma story from the abduction of Sītā to the death of Rāvaṇa and Sītā’s recovery, preceding a text on the celebration of the New Year; it seems to draw on both the Khotanese and Tocharian versions, to judge by the form of personal names (Zieme 1978). The great brevity of its allusions may well indicate the currency of a longer version.

Along the same routes through Central Asia the Rama story subsequently spread to Mongolia and Siberia. T͡S Damdinsürèn has identified four tales about Rāma in Mongolian: the story in Jātaka form about king Jīvaka was probably translated from an unknown Tibetan original in the eighteenth century (its six known manuscripts are all in the Oirat script); several Mongolian commentaries on the Tibetan *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi* (Tib. *Legs par bshad pa rin po che’i gter*) of Sa-skya Paṇḍita, composed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, include brief summaries in commenting on verse 321 which refers to the killing of Rāvaṇa; the story is included in the historical work “Crystal Mirror”;[[295]](#footnote-295) and there is a tale about Rāma in the terminological dictionary “Ear-Ornament” (Damdinsürèn 1980; de Jong 1983: 172-73; Roesler 2016: 46). An Oirat version of the Rāma story was studied by K.F. Golstunsky, which was then translated by a Kalmyk scholar into the Kalmyk language;[[296]](#footnote-296) the limited knowledge of these two versions previously available has caused them to be confused or conflated (e.g. Chandra 1970: 631).

These Buddhist and Central Asian tellings clearly bear a close relationship to the traditional story developed from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, but the details or direction of influence are by no means clear. The complex question of Sītā’s parentage and birth presents a series of motifs by which it may become possible to trace linkages between different retellings, but here it is important to distinguish between two unrelated strands: her role as Rāma’s sister and subsequently his wife in the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, and her function as the daughter of Mandodarī, widespread in later, disparate texts. Attempts have been made to explain the *Dasaratha Jātaka* version in terms of an early Buddhist tradition of brother–sister marriages, citing a reference in the *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.1.15 (*Ambaṭṭha Sutta*) to princes who ‘through fear of injuring the purity of their line’ ‘intermarried with their sisters’ giving rise to the Sākya clan, and being banished by their father, king Okkāka,[[297]](#footnote-297) but nowhere in the wider Rāma tradition, even in areas of Central, Southeast, or East Asia, where Buddhist influence on the narrative was once or is still strong, have we yet come across any analogue to the version of Sītā’s birth as Daśaratha’s daughter and acknowledged full sister of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa found in the *Dasaratha Jātaka*. If this portrayal reflects a genuine tradition rather than being a clumsily operated narrative device, it has not been accepted into later tellings.

In the other strand of Sītā’s birth story prevalent in much of the wider Rāma tradition, the earliest reference to Rāvaṇa as father of Sītā is probably to be found at Saṅghadāsa’s Jain *Vasudevahiṇḍi* 1,14 of the fifth century or earlier, and was also well-established in the mainstream Hindu tradition by the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries (JLB, MB and Loizeau 2016: 83-84). Similar references in Tibetan and Mongolian versions from the eighth century or later, whether Buddhist or not, give every appearance of being derived primarily from such sources. The standard pattern is for the ill-omened baby Sītā then to be abandoned and transferred to the care of a foster-parent, usually identified with Janaka, to conform to the birth-story that had been well-established in Rāma tradition from the first or second century A.D. A variant introduced into four Tibetan sources and one Mongolian, but not in the versions from Buddhist Southeast Asia, is that the foster-father should be neither hermit nor king but a farmer.

A striking detail of the Khotanese version, pointed out by R.E. Emmerick (2000), demonstrates the problems faced in adapting a well-known narrative to a new religious context. From the tale’s inception the Indian hero had three brothers; when the concept of Rāma as an *avatāra* was adopted, Viṣṇu was made to assume a fourfold incarnation, and the disparity of esteem between the brothers long established in the narrative was rather glossed over. When the story becomes a Jātaka of the Buddha, the identity of any brothers attributed to Rāma is rarely addressed, but the author of the Khotanese version follows the Vaiṣṇava tradition in the frame-story by having the Buddha declare Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to have been joint incarnations of himself. When he then tackles the marriage with Sītā, he finds himself in a considerable difficulty, and has her presented as wife to both brothers. This polyandrous relationship, and the ensuing need for one brother to respect the privacy of the other, has an obvious parallel in the *Mahābhārata*: when Arjuna finds himself obliged to enter the hut that he knows is occupied at the time by Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī, he insists on redeeming his intrusion by a penance (*MBh*. 1.204.25-30; 205.1-30). Bailey was unable to produce a coherent translation of what he called an ‘obscure’ passage in the Khotanese text (Bailey 1940: 369, 565, 581.8), but Emmerick’s rendering points to the use of an axe placed at the door as a signal of a wish for privacy (Emmerick 2000: 234-35). This method of prohibiting entry strikingly resembles a custom reported among the Tiyans of southern India within the last two centuries (MB 2008: 25, citing Thurston 1906: 112). As far as we are aware this overtly polyandrous relationship is unique in the Rāma tradition, and stands in startling contrast to the conventional picture of Sītā. As in the case of the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, how far this feature should be viewed as a reflection of current practice in the area, and how far simply as a narrative solution to a difficulty noticed by an alert and logically-minded adapter, is largely a matter of choice. Neither variant has any impact on the tradition as a whole.

The climate of Central Asia and the fact that many manuscripts were hidden for centuries undisturbed in a cave at Dunhuang mean that a number of motifs and variants are found first recorded in texts surviving from this area. Evidence of the early date of such material in absolute terms is of great value, but it must be stressed that it still tells us little about its date or place of origin in the tradition as a whole. The earliest recorded literary occurrence of one of Rāvaṇa’s heads being that of a horse or ass — he will lose his life only when this one is severed — is found in the Tibetan version secreted in the cave at Dunhuang between the eighth and eleventh centuries (de Jong 1989: 28; Roesler 2016: 49) and repeated in later Tibetan and Mongolian tellings; within India this motif is not recorded in narratives until much later, although it occurs sporadically in visual representations from the 5th century onwards.

The same is even more true of the magic circle that should protect Sītā in the absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. It is found in the Khotanese version and in later Tibetan and Mongolian texts; but it is also found in Indian texts in Sanskrit (no earlier than the eleventh century) and in a vernacular telling (fourteenth century), as well as in many later versions. More crucially, the motif of a protective circle that repels evil spirits is widespread internationally in folklore (*T, TB:* motif *C 614.1.0.3*).

Attention was drawn in the chapter on classical Sanskrit literature to the positive view of Rāma that lies behind references in Aśvaghoṣa’s work. His use of elements of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative on which to model his portrayal of Siddhārtha Gautama is a tacit commentary on his approbation of its hero Rāma. This attitude also clearly lies behind the story of Siddhārtha winning his bride in the *Lalitavistara* (perhaps third century). This positive view is replicated in the Central Asian use of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition.

Although there are complete narrations (not necessarily Buddhist in content or framed as Jātakas but functioning in the predominantly Buddhist environment of Central Asia), there are also many mere allusions; a considerable proportion of narratives consist of partial retellings — single creative episodes. When the context in which these episodes are presented is considered, two things become clear. One is that they are *extracts*, carefully selected to prove or illustrate some point; they function as exempla, or parables, and it is futile to think of the other parts of the narrative as *omissions*. They are not in themselves any reliable indication of the existence or non-existence of any part of the narrative other than themselves. There is no reason to suppose that the subject-matter of the *Dasaratha Jātaka* was the only part of the Rāma story known to the Buddhist author; rather it was the only part of the story able to fulfil that author’s purpose. Rāma’s ravings at discovering the abduction of Sītā (his distress exaggerated for good narrative reasons) make him a poor role model of imperturbability in general. Similarly, the Tocharian *Puṇyavantajātaka* uses a brief account of Rāvaṇa’s quarrel with Vibhīṣaṇa, which leads to Vibhīṣaṇa’s defection to Rāma, to illustrate the drawbacks of inferiority in knowledge (Lane 1947: 45-46). The absence of Sītā, Rāvaṇa and Hanumān from the *Nidāna of king “ten-luxuries”* is no indication of the extent of the narrative, for these characters and their activities are irrelevant when what the author wants to emphasise is the virtue of filial piety. The *Sāma/Śyāma Jātaka* itself furnished repeated brief allusions in later Buddhist didactic material to illustrate a number of virtues (including imperturbability).

The brief allusions to the Rāma story as exemplars are by no means random, and depend for their effectiveness on the audience or reader having considerable familiarity with the narrative in question. When this evidence is combined with the obvious acquaintance of Aśvaghoṣa with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is clear that the authors of Buddhist works from many schools and periods and writing in different genres were entirely familiar with the epics and willing to assign them a place in the sphere of relevant knowledge. It is clear that the Buddhist authors who selected the exempla viewed the Rāma story largely with approval, perhaps with the exception of those who initially refashioned the Sāma story. Their pragmatic approach to a tale that had achieved great popularity — to use it to serve their own ends — was the diametrical opposite to the Jains’ confrontational but largely unsuccesful attempts to reform it.

**The Rāma storyin Southeast Asia**

Tracing the history of the spread of the Rāma story in Southeast Asia is made particularly complicated by the complex political and cultural history of the region, which has been subject to repeated population movements; indeed migrations into the mainland parts of SE Asia from the north have continued well into historic times. Consequently, in many areas there is visual evidence, mostly in the form of sculptural friezes on temples, of the popularity of the Rāma story centuries before the earliest extant text. A brief sketch of these population migrations and of the political history will help to clarify the position, before the spread of the Rāma story is traced; though inevitably somewhat oversimplified, this will at least emphasise the poor fit of modern political boundaries with earlier cultural and ethnic patterns.

Seafaring is integral to the cultures of especially insular Southeast Asia and there is growing archaeological evidence that maritime trade between South Asia (mainly but probably not exclusively South India) and Southeast Asia began much earlier than once thought, a century or two B.C. (Manguin 2011) and by the second century A.D. the seasonal monsoon winds were being fully exploited by traders along these routes.[[298]](#footnote-298) The earliest major participant in this trade in Southeast Asia was the kingdom of Funan (the southern coastal region of modern Vietnam, centred on the Mekong delta and with its capital almost certainly at Angkor Borei, Takéo province, southern Cambodia), which was founded in the first century A.D. according to Chinese dynastic annals (from which the name Funan is taken) and flourished in the third century but had vanished as a political entity by the seventh century, being replaced by Chenla (Zhēnlà).[[299]](#footnote-299) How much more than just goods was exchanged at this period it is impossible to determine.

Only later, from the late fourth century A.D., do inscriptions in Sanskrit and in Indian scripts appear in several parts of SE Asia at dates not so widely different in different regions (Guy 2011), attesting obvious cultural influence from India and the prestige value attached to Sanskrit and no doubt also to the texts of which it is the vehicle. Temples, both Buddhist and Hindu, in Indian-influenced styles were being erected from the seventh century onwards.[[300]](#footnote-300) But it is clear that local peoples selected from Indian culture only such features as they found beneficial or useful in some way. Among these was undoubtedly the Rāma story, although it is often not possible to trace the period of its arrival because of the many political upheavals and population migrations that SE Asia has undergone. However, the prominence of SE Asian shipbuilding techniques suggests that SE Asian mariners took the initiative in these maritime exchanges, while merchant associations seem dominant in both the internal and the external trade of South India and Sri Lanka from the late ninth to the late thirteenth century.

In the area of modern Myanmar, the Tibeto-Burman people known usually as Pyū established settlements in the Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady) valley around the second century B.C., of which the most significant is the city of Śrī Kṣetra (Thayekittaya, near Prome), flourishing in the fifth to seventh centuries A.D.; here they became influenced by Theravāda Buddhism and Indian culture, including script. Tai peoples who migrated into northeastern Myanmar from the seventh century became known there as the Shan. Mon peoples, whose language is part of the Mon-Khmer group within Austro-Asiatic, also moved into Tenasserim in lower Burma and established the state of Haṃsāvatī, centred on the cities of Pegu (Bago) and Thaton (Sadhuim, Sudhammapura). The Mranmā (Burmans) by the middle of the ninth century had moved into the Irrawaddy valley from the Yunnan area of modern China (significant from an early period for its tin mines) and replaced the former Pyū kingdom. From this there gradually developed in the middle of the eleventh century, by dominating and absorbing its surrounding regions, the kingdom of Bagān under Anawratha (or Anawrahta, Aniruddha; r. 1044-77), which further expanded into most of modern Myanmar and parts of northern Thailand before its decline by the middle of the thirteenth century, amid challenges by the Mon and Shan (Tai) peoples previously subservient to it, and its collapse later in the century before the Mongol invasions of 1287 which also ended the Singhasāri kingdom in East Java and had an impact on virtually the whole of SE Asia.

The early Mon people, having migrated from southern China many centuries B.C., settled in an area extending over part of modern Myanmar and the northeastern part of modern Thailand; in both areas their culture has been assimilated into the later Burmese and Thai cultures. Among the evidence for their adoption of elements of Indian culture is their use of a form of the southern Brāhmī script. The Mon kingdom of Thaton in lower Myanmar, from the fourth century A.D. was trading directly with South India and Sri Lanka, until its conquest according to later Burmese chronicles by the Bagān kingdom under Anawratha in 1056/7. With the decline of Funan in the sixth century, Mon kingdoms became prominent in the area – Haripuñjaya (Lamphun) to the north and Dvāravatī to the south (there is some archaeological evidence for a Dvāravatī culture considerably earlier). The Bagān kingdom under Kyanzittha (Htilaing Min, 1084-1112) subsequently adopted key elements of Mon culture, including issuing inscriptions in Old Mon.

In the area of modern Thailand, Indian culture entered through the neighbouring kingdoms. From the second until the sixth centuries A.D. the northeast (Isan, the Khorat plateau) formed part of the kingdom of Funan, which was probably centred on the Mekong delta in modern Cambodia and also extended into modern southern Vietnam; the kings of Funan in the fifth to sixth centuries had Sanskritised names in Chinese records, indicating links with both India and China. Then from about the sixth century the Mon culture of Dvāravatī flourished in the Menam delta in the central plains, bringing Sanskrit and other Indian influences to that area,[[301]](#footnote-301) and the Mon remained the dominant culture here until the eleventh century when it was increasingly replaced by the Khmer, although it lasted rather longer in the north of Thailand (Lanna) and is still extant within Myanmar. The Thai people migrated from the Yunnan plateau of southern China into modern Thailand during the eighth to tenth centuries but at first only established small settlements. The Khmer people, who had already built a major kingdom within modern Cambodia, were occupying the Menam delta and erected many temples in the plains of the northeast of Thailand, such as that at Phimai. From early in the thirteenth century the Thai gradually broke free from Khmer dominance and Lopburi even sent envoys to the Mongol court between 1280 and 1299; by the middle of the century the territory of Nakhon Si Thammarat was under Thai control; and by the end of it, in the wake of the Mongol invasions, they had extended their control of the Malay Peninsula to its southern tip, absorbing in the process significant elements of other ethnic groups. Also no later than the beginning of the thirteenth century there developed in the Yom river area from Si Satcanalai northwards the ceramics industry which by the middle of the following century, when the Ming dynasty imposed restrictions on the export of Chinese ceramics, was supplying an international trade in fine ceramics reaching as far as the Philippines, China, Borneo, Java and India.

The first Thai kingdom of Sukhothai in the central plains (traditionally founded in 1238) was supplanted in 1378 by the kingdom of Ayutthayā, the capital of which had been founded in the middle of that century, according to chronicles in March 1351 by Rāmāthibodhi I. Despite its attempts to take over the declining Khmer empire of Angkor,[[302]](#footnote-302) Ayutthayā was strongly influenced by Khmer culture and even more strongly by the Rāma story, as the names of its capital and several of its rulers attest, as well as literary references. But extant versions of the Rāma story are later than the catastrophic sacking of Ayutthayā by the Burmese in 1767, after which also Bangkok became the capital of Thailand.[[303]](#footnote-303) There is a possibility, even probability, that Ayutthayā was a port city from the beginning and so looking outwards towards China, the rest of Southeast Asia and (across or round the peninsula) to S. India and Bengal (Baker 2003).[[304]](#footnote-304) Certainly from late in the fifteenth century, when it took control of a portage route across the peninsula, its prosperity rested on trade.

The Khmer people were also immigrants into mainland SE Asia from further north, at a period when the area of modern Cambodia (Kampuchea) was under the kingdoms of Campā and Funan, and in the mid sixth century they established the state of Chenla (Zhēnlà – the name again coming from Chinese sources), which under Bhavavarman became the successor state to the earlier kingdom of Funan (of which it was at first a vassal) with its capital at Īśānapura (Sambor Prei Kuk, on the eastern bank of the Tonle Sap, founded by Īśānavarman I, 616-37 A.D.). By the eighth century, according to Chinese sources, it split into “Land Chenla” located in the area of modern Laos, and “Water Chenla” within modern Cambodia. although again these probably consisted of several political entities. The latter was located in the lower Mekong basin, which included the Tonle Sap (Great Lake), and lasted until the ninth century when it was replaced by the unified Angkor empire under Jayavarman II (802-34 A.D.) with its first capital at Mahendraparvata (the Phnom Kulen plateau, c. 30-40 km NE of Angkor) replaced around the beginning of the tenth century by Yaśodharapura (which becomes the site of Angkor). The Sanskrit names adopted by their rulers testify to the prestige of Sanskrit and Indian culture at this period. At its height under Sūryavarman I of Angkor (1002-50 A.D.), the Khmer empire, having subdued the Mon kingdom of Dvāravatī, controlled most of modern Thailand and Laos, as well as the northern part of the Malay peninsula. Conflict with Campā towards the end of the twelfth century ultimately led to success for Angkor, despite the surprise capture of the capital by the Cam (Cham) forces in 1177 A.D. Subsequently the rise of the Thai kingdoms of successively Sukhothai and Ayutthaya led to a long period of competition during the fourteenth century and ultimately the Thai invasion of Angkor in 1431-32 A.D.; Angkor, occupied by the Thais for more than a decade apparently, declined in importance and the capital was moved to Phnom Penh in 1434.

In the area of modern Laos the earlier Mon city states were replaced after a period of disturbed times by the Lao group of the Tai-Kadai speaking peoples (which also includes the Thai now situated in Thailand) moving from the Yunnan area in the ninth to tenth centuries. By the twelfth century they established several principalities called *muang.* Gradually there emerged the kingdoms of Vienchang (later called Vientiane) and Luang Prabang (formerly Muang Sua), as they broke free from the kingdom of Lanna (1296–1768; in the north of modern Thailand, on the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya river system, with its main centre at Chiangmai); these remained as independent city-states until the establishment in 1354 of Lan Xang, which is the precursor of the modern Lao state.

From the second century B.C. until nearly the middle of the tenth century A.D. the Vietnamese people in northern Vietnam formed in effect the Chinese protectorate of Annam (known also by other names at various periods) as a result of the southward expansion of the Han Chinese empire; indeed their name is derived from the Chinese name for them, “the southern people”. Even after their assertion of independence in 939 A.D., successive Chinese dynasties attempted to reconquer their Dai Viet kingdom, with the Ming dynasty holding Tongking (Dong Kinh, also known as Thang Long) for about twenty years early in the fifteenth century. On their side Vietnamese rulers continued to maintain some cultural links with China. But gradually the Vietnamese became more and more involved with the rest of mainland SE Asia and became engaged in a long conflict with the Cam (Cham) state of Campā, finally defeating it in the late fifteenth century.

Campā emerged as an entity around the second century (probably out of the earlier Lin Yi kingdom mentioned in Chinese records) and was centred on the south-central coast of modern Vietnam, a region separated from the rest of mainland SE Asia by a band of mountains to the west and broken up into small units by lines of mountains running to the sea. Nevertheless, Campā suffered repeated Khmer invasions in the twelfth century (subjugated briefly in 1145-49) and attacks from the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Inscriptions of various rulers of Campā from the seventh century onwards, written in both Sanskrit and Old Cam (for which a script derived from Brāhmi was used), have been found throughout central Vietnam.

On the narrow isthmus that in modern times is divided between southern Thailand and Malaysia and round the Strait of Malacca (Melaka), small trading settlements emerged which gradually came to control the trans-shipment routes between India and elsewhere in SE Asia.[[305]](#footnote-305) By the tenth century A.D. the strongest of them, Tāmbraliṅga (the area of present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat), had gained control of the main routes across the isthmus.[[306]](#footnote-306) Along with other trading cities on the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra (such as Kota Kapur, Kedah, Panpan, Langkasuka and Malāyu), it had become part of Śrīvijaya, a maritime confederation that dominated trade on the South China Sea between the seventh and thirteenth centuries and collected tolls from all traffic through the Melaka Strait; the T’ang dynasty in China recognised Śrīvijaya as the successor to Funan in 670 A.D. Śrīvijaya was clearly a centre of Sanskrit learning for several centuries and visited by Buddhist monks on the way to India, for example Yijing (I-tsing) stopped at Malāyu within Śrīvijaya, naming it as Shilifoshi, for six months in 671 to study Sanskrit grammar and on his way back for four years between 685-89 to copy and translate Buddhist texts. The confederation's main focus was on southern Sumatra, in particular at Jambi and at Palembang, which may well have been its main centre, with secondary hubs along the coasts of Sumatra or acrosse the Melaka Strait.[[307]](#footnote-307) The often-claimed raid in 1025 (described in the Tirukkadaiyur inscription of c.1027 on the Amṛtaghāṭeśvara temple) by the Cōḻa king Rājendra I against ŚrIvijaya lacks clear evidence for its reality or at least its scale but may represent an unsuccessful attempt to take over control of trade across the Indian Ocean (at this period stretching between Fatimid Egypt and Song China). Towards the end of the thirteenth century the Thai began to push their control all the way down the peninsula towards Sumatra, eliminating the last vestiges of the Śrīvijaya confederation; Tāmbraliṅga was annexed by Ayutthayā around the fifteenth century.

The first inscriptional evidence of Sanskrit influence in the Indonesian archipelago comes from the fifth century A.D.: inscriptions by Pūrṇavarman, king of Tārumā in west Java, and seven inscribed *yūpa* steles from Kutei, E. Kalimantan, Borneo, installed by a king Mūlavarman, son of Aśvavarman, son of Kuṇḍuṅga (Guy 2011).[[308]](#footnote-308) The state of Mataram was founded early in the eighth century, probably in the northern part of the Kedu plain of central Java. Two dynasties seem to have emerged in central Java at this period. The Sañjaya dynasty is first known from the Canggal inscription of 732 A.D. (*śaka* 654) in which Sañjaya (r. 716-46), son of Sanna, declares himself king of Mĕḍang (the Diëng plateau); their power was linked with the development of wet rice cultivation. The Śailendra dynasty, of uncertain origin, emerged in central Java in the late eighth century, were notable for their connections to maritime trade, and later came to control southern Sumatra and later dominated Śrīvijaya.[[309]](#footnote-309) By the ninth century Mataram had grown to prominence and a prosperity reflected in its large stone temples and a large corpus of inscriptions. Subsequently, early in the tenth century, the central Javanese rulers settled in east Java, the shift possibly the result of an eruption or eruptions of Mount Merapi (there was a particularly large one in 928-9 A.D.) or perhaps of conflict with Śrīvijaya.

The history of east Java is commonly divided into periods linked to the three major kingdoms: Kaḍiri (1049-1222 A.D.), Singhasāri (1222-92 A.D.) and Majapahit (1292-c.1527 A.D.). Majapahit became dominant over all of east Java and extended its influence over the whole of the Indonesian archipelago,[[310]](#footnote-310) as well as developing cultural links with South India, until it was slowly squeezed out by the relentless Islamic expansion (centred on Malaka in the west of the archipelago) towards the end of the fifteenth century . One of the major Majapahit monuments is the great Caṇḍi Panataran temple (treated further below). Bali, whose role in preserving the Javanese literary heritage is well known, was conquered at least twice by East Java, by Singhasāri forces in 1284 and by Majapahit forces in 1334, with resulting cultural influences. The story of Rāma is still central to Bali’s culture and illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts remained popular in the twentieth century.

The earliest evidence for dissemination of the Rāma story iself in Southeast Asia comes from inscriptions and sculptures, since with one significant exception no verbal narratives in written form are earlier than the thirteenth century. So in most areas evidence for the popularity of the Rāma story in visual form or from inscriptions long precedes the earliest extant verbal text, even though visual representations presuppose a verbal text. Such evidence is widespread but more is extant, or at least recorded, in some parts of the region than others, with Cambodia and northeast Thailand being richest in material. Although knowledge of the Rāma story in Southeast Asia is attested before the tenth century in Cambodia, in Campā within modern Vietnam and in Java, only in two regions – Cambodia and Java – is there anything approaching a continuous attestation in the visual record, while in Campā there is apparently no evidence after the tenth century. Moreover, there seems to be a total lack of attestation in the area earlier inhabited by the Viet people, the more northern parts of modern Vietnam, and in Malaysia, where Islam became dominant early on. In Burma and in Thailand there is limited evidence, with many temporal gaps, from the eleventh century. However, in Laos there appears to be no visual evidence before the nineteenth century, despite the fact that there are multiple verbal versions in Lao.[[311]](#footnote-311)

The oldest certain and datable evidence is epigraphic: the Veal Kantel inscription from the reign of Bhavavarman, the first king of Chenla (580-98 A.D.) in the area of modern Cambodia, and the inscription (c. 173, dated 657 A.D.) at Trà-kiẹ̆u, the ancient Siṃhapura (the site itself going back to the first or second century A.D.),of king Prakāśadharman of Campā (r. 653–c.687) in the area of modern south Vietnam.[[312]](#footnote-312) The Veal Kantel inscription (K. 359) mentions that a brāhman Ākṛtisvāmin or Somaśarman, who had married the king’s sister, donated copies – evidently physical copies – of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and a Purāṇa to a Śaiva temple on the Mekong river for daily recitation.[[313]](#footnote-313) The Trà-kiẹ̆u inscription (C. 173), dedicating the temple to Vālmīki, refers both to Vālmīki as the first poet and to Rāma as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Paul Mus suggested that its founder, king Prakāśadharman, was indebted to Khmer culture for his attachment to the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Mus 1928), while archaeological evidence indicates also Han Chinese influence. The inscription does indeed reveal close acquaintance with the opening of the Bālakāṇḍa, even replicating *VR* 1.2.30c (Mus 1928; Goodall and Griffiths 2013: 434-37), while the Mỹ Sơn stele inscription of 656 A.D. compares Prakāśadharman to Rāma. A seventh-century Vietnamese inscription mentions the *krauñca* episode (Mus 1928: 147, 150; cf. Filliozat 1983: 193). There are also roughly contemporary inscriptions about the erection of statues of Jaimini at Sambor Prei Kuk (Īśānapura; K. 609) and of Vālmīki at Prasat Phnom Bayang (K. 851); to this epigraphic material can be added the evidence of a statue from the first half of the sixth century of a standing archer, which most probably represents Rāma, from the Phnom Dà temple group in the Angkor Borei district of southern Cambodia (Cooler 1978; Dowling 1999). A large pedestal also found at Trà-kiẹ̆u, variously dated between the seventh and tenth centuries may be the base of a liṅga with relief panels on each side which, according to Tran Ky Phuong (refuting an earlier interpretation by Coedès as scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa) shows scenes from the Rāma story (Tran 2000 and 2008); he argues for the pedestal and the inscription being related (a view rejected by Goodall and Griffiths 2013: 437).[[314]](#footnote-314)

Both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* seem to have arrived early in the history of Javanese literature. The earliest extant text is the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* from the second half of the ninth or early tenth century (quite probably during king Balituṅ’s reign, 898-930 A.D.), which is ascribed in the Balinese tradition to Yogīśvara, although this is most probably a scholarly title rather than a personal name; it is in fact the only surviving *kakawin* from the Central Javanese period and was almost certainly produced under the patronage of the Sañjaya dynasty of Mataram. Another view of its dating is that the poem celebrates the victory of the Śaiva Sañjaya dynasty over the Buddhist Śailendra dynasty, which ruled in the eighth and early ninth centuries (Robson 1980), or of factions within the dynasty which resulted from their amalgamation.[[315]](#footnote-315) This view would give added relevance to the construction of the Prambanan or Loro Jonggrang temple complex for the rulers of Mataram in the middle of the ninth century.

The Prambanan temple complex has an elaborate scheme of Rāma-narrative reliefs on what is overall a Śaiva monument, although they follow a different version from that in the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin*, one which has some features in common with the rather later Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* (Robson 1980: 12-13, citing Stutterheim 1925; cf. Saran and Khanna 2004: 137-38).[[316]](#footnote-316) Although they are probably inspired by Gupta art, these reliefs show a completeness unequalled in India by this date and rarely later. The 106 narrative panels begin on the central Caṇḍi Śiwa with the churning of the ocean, continue on Caṇḍi Brahmā and finish on Caṇḍi Wiṣṇu with Rāma and Sītā shown accompanied by Kuśa and Lava; they are carved at a low level on the inner face of the balustrade to the terrace which surrounds each temple, beginning at the petition to Viṣṇu for help against Rāvaṇa (Kats 1925; Stutterheim 1925; Levin 1999a, 2000 and 2011). This Śaiva monument would then also, as many scholars believe, represent a response to Caṇḍi Borobudur, begun by the Buddhist Śailendra dynasty perhaps as early as 778, though probably completed by 832 under Sañjaya patronage.[[317]](#footnote-317) The spectacular and carefully selected visual texts carved at great expense here, like those at Angkor Vat, were a much-needed affirmation of the power of their royal patrons and the legitimacy of their newly-acquired position; this may well also help to explain the absence of any depiction of Rāvaṇa being killed, as well as their ending with Rāma, Sītā, Lava and Kuśa shown together. Moreover, several Central Javanese inscriptions from the ninth and tenth centuries mention characters from the Rāma story, including the Mantyāsih copperplate charter of king Balituṅ, dated 907 A.D., which mentions recitation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Also relevant in relation to royal patronage is an early-tenth-century gold bowl of a type produced for royal distribution which forms part of the Wonoboyo hoard (found c. 5 km east of Prambanan and apparently forming the contents of the strong room of a branch of the Mataram royal family); this is decorated with scenes in repoussé work identified as centring on Rāma’s killing the deer and Sītā’s abduction (van der Molen 2003; Levin 1999b; Levin 2008: 96-98). In East Java, a relief from the tenth-century Jalatunda temple on Mt Penanggungan (now in the Jakarta museum) has been claimed to show the returning Hanumān leading the *vānaras* back to report to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva (Saran and Khanna 2004: 116-17).[[318]](#footnote-318)

To return to the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin,* this is not based directly on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* but on Bhaṭṭi’s *Rāvaṇavadha,* the *Bhaṭṭikāvya,* although its author was familiar with both works (Khanna and Saran 1993) and various others, including Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyālaṃkāra*, Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa* and quite possibly the *Manusmṛti* and the *Kāmandakīyanītisāra*; it has a fairly standard plot outline, with few dialogues but some lengthy nature descriptions. It also contains some extended narrative but often it is a brief summary, relying on the audience’s knowledge or perhaps the reciter’s improvisation for detail, for example there is no mention of Mantharā’s role, except that Kaikeyī is said (3.7) to rely too much ‘on the words of a suitor’ and no mention of Rāma’s visit to Bharadvāja, although the sage’s miraculous entertainment of Bharata’s army is narrated (3.37-39); this feature is less apparent in the second half of the text. It is referred to within the Uttarakāṇḍa as a *kidung,* ‘song’ (Zoetmulder 1974: 144). Unlike other SE Asian tellings its narrative is placed in an Indian setting for the first 12 *sargas,* though increasingly localised thereafter in Java, which is actually named at 25.2 (*RKakawin* 2015b: 22-23 and 739-40). Whereas the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is intended to exemplify the rules of Sanskrit grammar, the variety of metres in the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* — a total of 81 — suggests that its author may have intended it similarly as a textbook of metrics, although the degree of concentration on figures of sound and sense, *śabdālaṃkāra* and *arthālaṃkāra,* may indicate an alternative possibility*;* clearly the author had an excellent command of Sanskrit.[[319]](#footnote-319) The *Rāmāyaṇa kakawin* also differs considerably from later *kakawins*. showing great variation in the length of cantos, hiatus and doubling of consonants *metri causa,* and vocabulary not found later, which are also features found in the OJ version of the *Lalitavistara* (Hunter 2014: 204-07).

Santoso affirms that the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* “had been followed by the Javanese author right to the end” (Santoso 1980: 18) against the views of Ghosh 1936 and of Hooykaas 1955 (followed by Zoetmulder 1974 and Uhlenbeck 1989) that only the first two thirds are modelled on Bhaṭṭi’s work and Santoso claims that Bulcke in conversation agreed.[[320]](#footnote-320) It is fairly generally agreed that some parts are later, such rewriting taking place up to the fifteenth century (Santoso 1980: 24). For example, Rāma’s long lecture to Bharata on statecraft (3.53-85) has been seen as interpolated, since the passage comes between 3.52 and 3.86 (the final verse of the *sarga*), both of which are in *mālinī* metre and fit well together (Uhlenbeck 1989, cf. Hooykaas 1955: 32); certainly it could be regarded as an interpolation on narrative grounds and it is perhaps a relocation of an equivalent to the *kaccit sarga* (*VR* 2.94) to suit the Javanese and Malay custom of sermons to mark major departures but the passage is highly popular in Java. There are also several other long passages on the duty of kings, including Vibhīṣaṇa advising Rāvaṇa on good policy (13.40-96) and Rāma addressing Vibhīṣaṇa on ruling Laṅkā (24.48-86), both of which have similarly been considered interpolations into the main narrative (Andō 1996).[[321]](#footnote-321)

The author also adds Sītā’s lament on being seized by Rāvaṇa (6.6-14, cf. *VR* 3.47), an elaborate story of the Śabarī’s hostility in a former birth to Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation (6.106-11), and the deception of the *vānaras* by Svayamprabhā (7.63-80); he describes in detail a Śaiva temple seen by Hanumān when reconnoitring Laṅkā (8.43-59), doing so significantly in terms of a Javanese *caṇḍi,* perhaps even Prambanan (as first suggested in Poerbatjaraka 1932), and he also increases Trijaṭā’s role. Zoetmulder suggests that the end, comprising parts of *sarga* 24 and *sargas* 25 and 26, differs in style and is probably by a different author (Zoetmulder 1974: 230), while Stuart Robson suggests that the last section from around 24.200 onwards was probably added in the period 900-930 (*Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* 2015b: 15-16, 31). However, Thomas Hunter has suggested that “the OJR is the result of a collective project, led by a master designer with an overall blueprint, but carried out by a plurality of artists and artisans” (Hunter 2023: 418), which accounts in a different way for the observed inconsistencies and ‘interpolations’.

In its 26 *sargas* the work covers the story from the sacrifice for the birth of Daśaratha’s sons through to the triumphant return to Ayodhyā and gifts being given on their departure to Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa by Rāma and to Trijaṭā by Sītā (26.37-46), climaxing in Parameśvara declaring to Rāma his identity with Viṣṇu and Sītā’s with Śrī (26.200-201). Rāma is consistently presented as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu throughout the Javanese versions but there is little sign of a cult of Rāma and none of a Hanumān cult, although Hanumān becomes more prominent later in Java as a heroic figure, at least in East Javanese temple reliefs (personal communication from Willem van der Molen, 25th July 2017). Indeed, Rāma’s characterisation becomes more secular, as well as more Indonesian.

The *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* was followed by the Old Javanese *Uttarakāṇḍa,* composed by an unknown author around 1000 A.D.[[322]](#footnote-322) This is in *kawi* prose, so in a different style which is similar to that used for the *parwas* of the OJ *Mahābhārata,* and Tom Hunter shows that in form it is part gloss and part narrative (Hunter 2018).Itstarts with Agastya’s narrative of the genealogies and exploits of the *rākṣasas* and continues up to Rāma’s self-immolation in the Sarayū, following quite closely the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*; episodes from this text formed the subject matter of the later *Arjunawijaya* and *Hariśraya*. It also shares some episodes with Bhaumaka’s *Rāvaṇārjunīya,* notable for its use of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*; possibly both Bhaṭṭi’s and Bhaumaka’s works were valued in Indonesia for their grammatical content. Though following the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* closely for its plot, its narrative is selective and more compact.

The *Arjunawijaya* was composed in 1378 A.D. by Mpu Tantular in the reign of the Majapahit ruler Hayam Wuruk. Based on the OJ *Uttarakāṇḍā* (so indirectly and possibly also directly on Bhaumaka’s *Rāvaṇārjunīya*) it describes the struggle between king Arjuna Sahasrabāhu (also called Kārtavīrya), king of Māhismatī, and Rāvaṇa which ends in Rāvaṇa’s defeat; the extant manuscripts represent two distinct traditions, the Balinese and the Javanese (Supomo 1977: 83 and 326-7).[[323]](#footnote-323) The *Hariśraya* is based on *Uttarakāṇḍa* 5-8, in which the gods approach Viṣṇu for aid against Rāvaṇa’s ancestors, Mālyavān, Māli and Sumāli; it exists in two versions — a short version in 198 stanzas and a long version in 304 stanzas (one manuscript of which includes a chronogram giving a date *śaka* 1496 = 1574 A.D.) — which are so distinct that they may be separate works (Creese 2011: 105-6). While these Old Javanese texts were most probably produced in Java itself, we must not overlook the significant role of Bali in preserving this literary heritage after Java became largely Islamic; indeed, selections from the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* and others remain integral to some aspects of Balinese religion and to *wayang* and similar performances even now,[[324]](#footnote-324) while manuscripts of the texts continued to be produced there well into the twentieth century.

Episodes from these *kakawins* are depicted on temple reliefs throughout Central and East Java, particularly at Caṇḍi Panataran (c. 12 km NE of Blitar, East Java, on the SW slope of the Kelud volcano), which was built over a period of more than two and a half centuries (in situ inscriptions range in date from *śaka* 1119 = 1197 A.D to *śaka* 1376 = 1454 A.D.). The main temple (dating from *śaka* 1269 = 1347 A.D. and thought to be the personal temple of Hayam Wuruk, the great king of Majapahit) ascends in three large terraces that bear sculptured reliefs on their walls. The 106 *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs on the first terrace of the west front of the main temple read in counterclockwise order, starting and ending on the north side (Stutterheim 1925; Kieven 2013: 221-25); these are based on the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin,* unlike the Prambanan reliefs, showing that this had become the predominant version by then (Robson 1980: 12-13). The scenes begin with the arrival on Laṅkā of Hanumān and end with the death of Kumbhakarṇa. Hanumān is more prominent here than Rāma (Kieven 2011; cf. Stutterheim 1925: plates 105-210), as he is also elsewhere in East Java, shown for example in the appearance of statues of him in the Majapahit period (Klokke 2006; Kieven 2013: 221-35). For example, the SE gate at Trowulan, built in the 14th century, has a relief of Hanumān fighting a *rākṣasa* on the door frame in the same style as at Panataran. [[325]](#footnote-325)

With the exception of Old Javanese, no written texts are earlier than the thirteenth century and evidence for the popularity of the Rāma story elsewhere in Southeast Asia continues to come from inscriptions and sculptures. At Khương Mỹ in central Vietnam (the ancient Campā) the basement of the southern temple in a group of three has incomplete remains of around ten sandstone relief sculptures of the Rāma story from the tenth or early eleventh century, with a text in old Cam above the reliefs naming the figures (Griffiths and others 2012: 239; Griffiths and others 2017). The scenes shown are: the sighting of the golden deer, its pursuit by Rāma, the abduction of Sītā, the intervention by Jaṭāyus, and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa searching for Sītā; only the upper half remains of a panel showing a ten-headed Rāvaṇa addressing Sītā in the *aśokavana.* Levin (2008: 92-3) regards them as showing analogies to representations on early Cōḻa temples rather than to Java.[[326]](#footnote-326) A group of four reliefs from near Mỹ Sơn and Trà-kiệu, now in the Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng (formerly Tourane Museum), show standing figures of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān, a seated Sītā, a three-headed and eight-armed figure who is presumably Rāvaṇa, and a figure brandishing a club (Boisselier 1963: 191-92; Guillon 2001: 132-33).

By the tenth and eleventh centuries the Khmer rulers of Kambuja show extensive knowledge of the Rāma story: the Thnal Baray stele inscription of Yaśovarman I (r. 889-910 A.D.) refers to Pravarasena and his *Setubandha,* the Pre Rūp stele inscription (K. 806) of Rājendravarman (r. 944-968 A.D.) implicitly but unmistakably refers to many Sanskrit texts, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa*; a stele dated 1006 A.D. at the ruined Prāsāt Trapāṅ Run (K. 598) describes the donor as an expounder of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*; and the Prāsāt Sankhah inscription (K. 128) describes Sūryavarman I (1002-50 A.D.) as listening to recitations of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the Purāṇas (Majumdar 1953: 232-68).[[327]](#footnote-327) Angkor (ancient Yaśodharapura) was the sprawling capital of the Khmer empire from the ninth to the fifteenth century. Numerous temples in the Angkor area have Rāma story reliefs: Banteay Samre (mid 9th century onwards), Bakong (9th century), Baphuon (mid 11th century), Thomannon (early 12th century), Angkor Vat (first half of 12th century), Chau Say Tevoda (mid 12th century), Banteay Srei (consecrated in 967 A.D. but with later rebuilding), Beng Mealea (12th century?), Preah Pithu (12th century?), Preah Khan (1191) and Ta Prohm (12th-13th centuries) (Roveda 2005:116-43).

The reliefs carved at Banteay Samre (mid 9th century onwards; at SE corner of East or Thnal Baray) include the abduction of Sītā, Vālin wrestling with Dundubhi, the death of Kabandha, Kumbhakarṇa fighting *vānaras* and Rāma fighting Rāvaṇa (Krishnan 2010: 51, 55 and 87; Giteau 1995: 70; Roveda 2005: 137).[[328]](#footnote-328) At Banteay Srei (consecrated on 22 April 967, and therefore first built at the end of the reign of Rajendravarman II, who died in 968) there are a number of Rāmāyaṇa reliefs, among them one of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa on the east gable of the southern ‘library’ (illustration at Krishnan 2010: 52);[[329]](#footnote-329) the earliest reliefs of the Virādha episode are found here, appearing twice, and it is then often shown on twelfth-century temples (Loizeau 2021: 85-87). At the Baphuon temple, begun by Sūryavarman (1002-49), completed by Udayādityavarman II (1050-66) and dedicated to Śiva, the Rāma story is shown mainly on the inner walls (also on the outer walls of the north pavilion) at the second level in a progression – not always sequential and with some repeated scenes – from east to north, starting with the Tāṭakā episode and ending with the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa (Loizeau 2016); the story of Kumbhakarṇa is depicted at length on the external wall of the western gateway (Loizeau 2021: 91); Hanumān meeting Sītā in the *aśokavana* is shown in several locations here, as well as at Vat Ek and Prāsāt Kamphaeng Yai (Loizeau 2021: 90-91). Both the sanctuary and the *maṇḍapa* at Thommanon (end of 11th century to first half of 12th) have Rāmāyaṇa reliefs, which include Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa, Kabandha seizing Rāma and Lakśmaṇa, Sītā in the *aśokavana* and Lakṣmaṇa trapped in the *nāgapāśa.*

Angkor Vat, built by Sūryavarman II (r. 1113-c.1150 as the third ruler of the Mahīdharapura dynasty) in the first half of the twelfth century, was probably intended to become his funerary monument and is dedicated to Viṣṇu (hence its later Khmer name of Brah Bisnuloka, despite its having become a Theravāda Buddhist temple); either of these factors may account for its facing west, unlike earlier Śaiva temples.[[330]](#footnote-330) The main emphasis of its sculptural programme is on battle scenes, most notably in the 51 metre long panel in the north wing of the western gallery showing the battle for Laṅkā; but some new episodes are introduced, such as Virādha seizing Sītā (illustrated at Krishnan ed. 2010: 53) and Vālin’s fight with Māyāvin.

Outside the Angkor plateau, Koh Ker (Preah Vihear Province), founded in 921 by Jayavarman IV (r. 921-41), was briefly the Khmer capital. Here, at the looted temple of Prāsāt Ceṅ, a narrative sequence of sculptures illustrating the *Mahābhārata* was placed in the western pavilion and another illustrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the eastern. Items no longer in situ include a sculpture in the round of Vālin and Sugrīva of the second quarter of the 10th century (National Museum of Cambodia, K. 1664; illustrated at Jessup and others 2006: 58 no. 33), a flying Hanumān (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1987.43; illustrated surrounded by *apsaras* dancers on its return to Cambodia at Tythacott and Ardiyansyah 2021: 76, fig. 3.5), and a torso of Rāma (Denver Art Museum, returned in 2016). Elsewhere in Cambodia reliefs showing Rāmāyaṇa scenes are also found, for example, at Prāsāt Khna Sen Keo (Kompong Thom province, 11th century) which show close similarities to those at the Baphuon (Loizeau 2010), and several at or from Banteay Chhmar (Banteay Mean Chey province) from the reign of Jayavarman VII (late 12th to early 13th century),[[331]](#footnote-331) others on the walls of the *maṇḍapa* at Prāsāt Khna Sen Keo (Prāsād Khnār Saen Kaev, Kompong Thom province; Loizeau 2010: 5-6) and a detached lintel showing the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva from Vat Baset (Battambang province; c. 1075-1125; Guimet MG18218).[[332]](#footnote-332)

Major temples in the Khmer style with sculptures of the Rāma story can be found within modern northeast Thailand, in particular at Phimai (Vimāya, late 11th to 12th century) and Phnom Rung (12th century) but also at Prāsāt Kamphaeng Yai and elsewhere. The Phimai sanctuary, a Vajrayāna Buddhist temple, has a number of such reliefs on its lintels and pediments, including the building of the causeway, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the *nāgapāśa*, and Rāma fighting Rāvaṇa (Roveda 2005: 466-72); the reliefs do not form a narrative sequence and so it has been suggested that they have an apotropaic function (Ly 2009), a suggestion that could apply to several other sites too.[[333]](#footnote-333) The Śaiva temple at Phnom Rung similarly has numerous scenes, including Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa fighting Virādha, the abduction of Sītā, Rāma killing Mārīca, the combat between Vālin and Sugrīva, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the *nāgapāśa,* Sītā on *puṣpaka* viewing the illusory severed heads of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the death of Indrajit, and Kumbhakarṇa fighting *vānaras* (Roveda 2005: 473-78). In addition, the reliefs on a boundary stone (*sema*) at a Buddhist monastery, Wat Ban Ma (Sakon Nakhon Province), have been claimed to show Rāmāyaṇa scenes (Suriyavudh Suksavasti 1991).

The Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* is probably the next oldest written text after the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin.* It is a vast, sprawling compilation popular in much of Indonesia as well as the present Malaysian peninsula and it represents a popular form of the story carried orally from South India and elsewhere to Indonesia and transmitted there between the 13th and 17th centuries; it exists in several recensions showing varying degrees of assimilation to this very different cultural environment, while also continuing to be transmitted orally (Zieseniss 1928/Burch 1963).[[334]](#footnote-334) Of the literary versions, that edited by Shellabear is taken from a manuscript presented to the Bodleian Library by Archbishop Laud in 1633 (Shellabear 1917); though the oldest manuscript extant, it actually represents a younger version than that edited by Roorda van Eysinga (Roorda 1843).[[335]](#footnote-335) The poem begins in the Shellabear recension with the past exploits of Rāvaṇa, starting with his coming by ship to Būkit Sĕrĕndīb (subsequently called Laṅgkāpurī), which is based on the story of Vijaya the founder of Ceylon told at the end of *Mahāvaṃśa* VI; such a transfer presumably took place in Sri Lanka or Tamilnad. Indeed, at the start (on the *‘anwan,* equivalent to a title page) the work is called a *ḥikāyat* about maharaja Rāwaṇa, although clearly it later becomes the story of Rāma. In contrast, the *‘anwan* at the start of the Roorda van Eysinga text (which was in fact composed by the editor) names the text as the *Ḥikāyat Mahārāja Serī Rāma* and starts its version of the story with Daśaratha. A manuscript in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society, London (Raffles Malay MS. 22), contains an earlier start to the narrative than either of the Shellabear and Roorda van Eysinga versions, as well as preserving a possibly original division into chapters (Winstedt 1944; Brakel 1980: 149), while another manuscript (Cambridge Univ. Lib. Add. 3756) takes the start of the story a little further back still (Barrett 1963). In fact several of the various manuscripts extant start at different points in the preliminary material, which is particularly un-Muslim in outlook and has perhaps therefore been deliberately omitted by their copyists for religious motives (Winstedt 1944; Barrett 1963).

Whether within India or beyond, a major factor in the development of the Rāma story has been the religious outlook of teller and audience. Buddhists on the whole had little difficulty accommodating the Vaiṣṇava Rāma into their narrative, since at the popular level the transition from *avatāra* to Bodhisattva was not hard to make. But this Malay version was presumably Islamicised at a considerably later date than the corresponding Buddhist transformations of the Rāma story, even though written versions of these are all later. In Muslim areas the deities are given appropriate new identities as Allah, Nabi Adam and the angel Gabriel, but traces of Rāma’s identity with Viṣṇu and other examples of reincarnation remain and the Muslim elements found in the extant manuscripts are little more than a veneer over an already-established core. The *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* also incorporates a considerable number of fantastic elements into its narrative; for example it develops further the wide-spread idea that Sītā is Mandodarī’s daughter, which can ultimately be traced back to the Jain *Vasudevahiṇḍi,* where she is the child of Rāvaṇa and Mandodarī,[[336]](#footnote-336) by making her the daughter of a replica Mandodarī, married to Rāvaṇa, but impregnated by Daśaratha on the wedding night (the original Mandodarī having been demanded by Rāvaṇa from Daśaratha, to whom she is married, and reluctantly conceded). Episodes are on the whole preserved but the chronology is much re-arranged.

Several folk-versions within the Malay tradition are also known: William Maxwell had the *Serī Rāma,* of Sumatran origin, written down in Perak from its narration by a well-known story-teller, Mir Hassan (Maxwell 1886; Francisco 1962), Hans Overbeck published a summary of a Berlin manuscript entitled *Ḥikāyat Mahārāja Rāwaṇa* (now Berlin Or. Fol. 407; Overbeck 1933), and Richard Winstedt gave an outline of a Patani version (Winstedt 1929). In Mir Hassan's version as told to Maxwell Hanumān plays a particularly prominent role: he is born after Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are temporarily transformed into monkeys on bathing in a forbidden lake and, because of his monkey form, is banished to the forest, he defeats Rāvaṇa in battle and carries Sītā back to Rāma, he defeats Rāvaṇa again when he pursues them, in consequence he is acknowledged by Rāma as his son, marries a princess and assumes human form, finally succeeding to the kingdom of his father-in-law. Another feature of this telling is that Maharaja Duwana (= Rāvaṇa), ruler of the island of Kacapuri, himself takes the form of a golden goat to decoy Rāma away.[[337]](#footnote-337) In the *Ḥikāyat Mahārāja Rāwaṇa* the major episodes are preserved but the chronology is considerably re-arranged; for example, the visit by Bharata and Śatrughna and Rāma’s refusal to return with them is transposed to after the victory and relocated to Laṅkā (Overbeck 1933: 130) and no-one dies permanently except Jaṭāyus; even Rāvaṇa is only imprisoned. The Patani version, copied around 1911 in the Thai-Malaysia border area, is elaborate but rather confused, with affinities to both the Thai and the Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* versions.

Further tellings are known from Java from the sixteenth century onwards. A version from western Java, the Old Sundanese “The sons of Rama and Rawana”, is assignable to the 16th century or earlier. This starts from the *Uttarakāṇḍa* narrative and develops further episodes which repeat the conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa in a second generation (Noorduyn 1971; Noorduyn and Teeuw 2006); it uses many motifs from other versions but applies them to different situations. It introduces the story of Mandodarī giving birth to a posthumous son of Ravaṇa, Manabaya, who brings his brother and his father’s warriors back to life and launches an attack on the city of Rāma. It also makes Sītā Rāvaṇa’s daughter and her children cousins of their enemies. [[338]](#footnote-338)

A rather different version from the older Javanese tellings is found within the *Serāt Kāṇḍa* (= “book of tales”, a universal history from the 17th century) and in the *Rāma Kling* (also 17th century) from the Mataram period of Javanese history.[[339]](#footnote-339) The more important of the two, the *Serāt Kāṇḍa*, still unpublished, has incorporated much Islamic material, in the same way as the Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma*, with which it also agrees in making Mandodarī originally Daśaratha’s wife and Sītā’s mother (Stutterheim 1925: 66-80; Saran and Khanna 2004: 138-40; Ghosh 2006: 180). Agreements between these two texts are only to be expected, since the *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* was particularly influential in Java, where upper-class merchants were largely Malay.

Although there is ample inscriptional and sculptural evidence of Khmer acquaintance with the Rāma story much earlier, as was noted above, the *Rāmakerti* (so spelt, the alternative form *Reamker* is closer to the modern pronunciation) only emerged in the middle period (15th-17th centuries) of the Khmer language, when there are several versions of the Rāma story, all given the generic title *Rāmakerti*; the oldest was composed mainly in the seventeenth century although some parts may go back to the sixteenth. Saveros Pou’s *Rāmakerti I* translationcorresponds to fascicules 1-10 of the Institut Bouddhique edition (Phnom Penh 1937) and her *Rāmakerti II* to fascicules 75-80; this numbering implies that there is a considerable lacuna in the extant text, confirmed by the existence of several further episodes in oral versions and the mostly more recent mural paintings. However, a manuscript of a version of the Mahīrāvaṇa episode has now been identified and this has been edited and translated into French (Khing 1995).[[340]](#footnote-340) This episode, of uncertain date and independent of Pou’s *Rāmakerti I* but filling one of the lacunae in its narrative, is closely allied with the Thai version.

The oldest part, *Rāmakerti I,* emerged as the libretto of a mimed dance-drama called *lkhon khol,* composed as individual scenes or tableaux, which sometimes demand prior knowledge of the story, by several poets in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. These were co-ordinated by the last of them into the long poem we now have, which still forms part of the repertoire of the Cambodian Royal Ballet. It reveals less input from popular imagination or other cultures than subsequent *Rāmakertis,* which show the increasing impact of these two factors (Pou 1977). Itcan be regarded as a condensed and selective version of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* in just over 5,000 verses, containing many lyrical passages (for example, the poem opens with a lyrical description of Bisvāmitr’s hermitage), much flyting, and many duplications or differing accounts from incompatible sources, but much of the narrative is close to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and merely superficially modified to fit it into a Buddhist context. Composed at a period when Buddhism was at its strongest in Cambodia, it presents a distinctly Buddhist outlook and, although Rāma is frequently called Nārāy (= Nārāyaṇa), the stress is rather on Rāma as a Buddhist figure, portrayed both as a Bodhisattva and as a Buddha, so still characterised as the upholder of *dharma* (Pou 1975b). The narrative breaks off in the middle of the battle over Laṅkā, as Rāvaṇa seeks help from his friend Mūlaphalam (5025–34).[[341]](#footnote-341)

The later *Rāmakerti II,* most probably composed in the eighteenth century, again as the libretto for mime or dance drama, recounts the events of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* and includes several features which are standard in many SE Asian versions (Pou 1982). Thus, in Rāma’s absence Sītā is inveigled by a servant (one of Rāvaṇa’s family in disguise) into drawing a portrait of Rāvaṇa, which is hidden under Rāma’s bed on his return and causes him such discomfort that in anger he commands Lakṣmaṇa to execute Sītā, but Lakṣmaṇa cannot do it and leaves her in the forest, escaping Rāma’s anger by bringing back a deer’s liver instead of hers (1–215). This motif of making Rāvaṇa’s likeness at the request of female companions is found in many other SE Asian versions (the Javanese *Serāt Kāṇḍa,* the Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma,* the Thai *Rāmakīen,* several Lao versions and others) and can be traced back to the Jain tellings of Bhadreśvara and Hemacandra; later it also features prominently in Candrāvatī’s Bengali telling, where the woman is Kaikeyī’s daughter Kukuyā (Bose and Bose 2013).[[342]](#footnote-342) After she is abandoned by Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā then reaches Vajjamrik’s (= Vālmīki’s) hermitage and there gives birth to one son, the other being created by the sage through a fire-sacrifice; they are named Rāmalaks and Japalaks (216–346). Rāma releases the sacrificial horse guarded by his brothers Bhirut and Sutrut and by Hanumān. Rāmalaks and Hanumān fight and Hanumān is worsted, but in a subsequent encounter with the boys Rāmalaks is captured (458–753); Japalaks then goes to rescue his brother and with various supernatural help succeeds (754–952). Rām pursues them and discovers their true identity, but, despite repeated urgings, Sītā refuses to resume married life (953–1596). When she is tricked into coming back by Rāma’s supposed death, on discovering the deception she calls on the Earth to take her to its bosom, where she is hospitably received by Varuṇa (1597–1774). Though ending with the episode of Sītā’s appeal to the Earth, this gives a totally new slant to Sītā’s behaviour. The text is incomplete, ending after Sītā’s entry into Earth and Rāma’s decision to consult Bibhek (= Vibhīṣaṇa).

The *Trai Bhet* (or more fully *Traibed Traitāyug*), dating from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, begins with a traditional Khmer cosmogony but then develops into a version of the Rāma story, in which it describes first the origins of the main *vānara* figures, then the origins of Rāvaṇa and his relatives, the birth of Sītā as Mandodarī’s daughter, Daśaratha’s background, and the sequence of events from the birth of Rāma and his brothers up to the exile, with some variations of treatment (Pou 1989: 4-5; de Bernon 1994). Part of the *Lpoek Aṅgar Vatt,* “Poem of Aṅgkor Vat”, which is dated *śaka* 1542/1620 A.D. (Pou 1975a), contains at one point a fanciful description of the Rāma scenes supposedly sculpted on the Angkor Vat galleries which closely follows the *Rāmakerti* in its description of the events depicted (st. 203-374), indicating that the description is in fact based on the *Rāmakerti* rather than any actual sculptures, despite the way that the author presents it. He also asserts that Aṅgkor Vat was not built by humans but by the gods (by Preah Pisnukar [= Viśvakarman] for Indra).

In Myanmar archaeological evidence of Rāma’s presence is found as early as the 11th century: the only remaining Hindu temple at Bagān (Pagān), the Nat Hlaung Kyaung temple, thought to have been built by king Anawratha (1044-1077), has images of six *avatāras* in exterior niches, the last on the north wall being Rāma with his bow and another being Balarāma with his plough.[[343]](#footnote-343) King Kyanzittha (1084-1113) claims in two inscriptions at Mya Kan, Bagān, and on the Kyaik Tha Lan pagoda near Thaton, to have been born in the family of Rama of Ayodhapur.[[344]](#footnote-344) There is also a reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* in a Myanmar *pyo* (Jātaka poem), *Thuwunna-shan Thahte-khan Pyo* based on the *Suvaṇṇasāma Jātaka* by Shin Agga Thamadi of 1527; the author warns his fellow monks not to tell the stories of Sītā and Hanumān in public. Bronze images brought back from Thailand in 1563, following the conquest of the Shan states by king Bayinnaung (r. 1550-1581), included images of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa and Hanumān (Aung Thwin 2003: 133).

Evidence of links with the NE of India, such as the use of scripts derived from Northern Brāhmī in Rakhine (i.e. Arakan) and Śrī Kṣetra, and the presence in Bagān of Mons, who may well have had links with the Mon kingdoms of Haripuñjaya and Dvāravatī, mean that the Rāma story (known as *Yama Zatdaw* in Burmese) might have been first transmitted from either direction. While it is quite possible that an oral tradition in Myanmar dates as far back as the eleventh century (there is some documentary evidence from Innwa [Ava] by the end of the 13th century), the earliest written Burmese version, the *Yama Wuthtu* (*Rāma Vatthu*)*,* probably comes from the seventeenth century (Ohno 1999a: 11; Aung Thwin 2003: 136) and was perhaps based on an early, now lost, Thai text (Ohno 1999a: 44, 66; cf. Thaw Kaung 2002: 138).[[345]](#footnote-345) It has a thoroughly Buddhist appearance, using Buddhist terminology and allowing no role to any gods or to sacrifices, but it keeps fairly close to the general outline of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*. The characters are repeatedly said to observe and preach specifically Buddhist codes of conduct and Rāma is presented as a *bodhisattva*; distasteful episodes such as the bereaved blind ascetic’s curse on Daśaratha, the mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā, repeated examples of Rāvaṇa’s lust and generally immoral behaviour, are minimized or eliminated, and there is less killing (Ohno 1999a); it starts with Rāvaṇa’s brith and ends with Sītā’s banishment and then reconciliation with Rāma.

After the sack of the Thai capital Ayutthayā in 1767, when the Burmese ruler Hsinbyushin brought back a troupe of actors of Rāma plays along with other captives, there was evidently renewed interest in the Rāma story: a ballad in *thagyin* rhyme, called Y*ama Thagyin,* was composed in 1775 (1137 Burmese era) at Innwa (Ava) by U Aung Phyo, who mentions that he used an earlier prose work and his poem is very similar to the *Yama Wuthtu,* except that it ends with the death of Rāvaṇa and so lacks anything from the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (Thaw Kaung 2002: 138). This was followed shortly afterwards, in 1784 (1146 Burmese era), by the *Rama Yagan of* U Toe (the administrator of the Royal Treasury), which gives the story a rustic setting; this was left incomplete at the author’s death, ending with Rāma’s meeting with Sugrīva (Ohno 1999a: 1; Ohno 2003: 90).[[346]](#footnote-346)

Visual evidence is also rather meagre and almost all from the nineteenth century: some illustrated *parabaiks* (folding books) show scenes from the Rāma story, as do various *kalagas* (appliquéd and embroidered velvet hangings); several masks for performers in dramatic presentations or statuettes of performers are known; but more numerous are Rāmāyaṇa scenes on silver offering bowls. The Rāma story was depicted in a continuous series of 347 labelled stone relief sculptures round the base of the *stūpa* of Maha Loka Marazein (also known as Paya-Gyi, ‘Big Pagoda’) near Thakhuttanai village, built in 1846-49 during the reign of King Bagan (1846-1853), of the Konbaung dynasty. Also around 1864 a series of wood carvings on the *ubosot* of the Moda Kyaung monastery, Mandalay, were carved illustrating scenes from the Rāma story, but they were destroyed by fire in the 1960s (Ohno 1999: iii and plates; personal information from John Okell, 28th April 2015).[[347]](#footnote-347) However, the Rāma story never became as popular in Burma as it has done elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

The previous political and cultural history of the area comprising modern Thailand is complex, as was noted earlier in this chapter. There is some evidence for the popularity of the Rāma story even in the first actual Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, since its third ruler was named Ramkhamhaeng (Rāma the great, 1279-98). The kingdom of Ayutthayā which supplanted the Sukhothai kingdom in 1378 was strongly influenced by Khmer culture and even more strongly by the Rāma story, as the names of its capital and several of its rulers clearly attest.[[348]](#footnote-348) Not only was Ayutthayā, founded around 1350, named after Daśaratha’s capital but Lopburi was identified with the *vānara* capital and at the same time linked with Lava (Lop) as Lavodayapura. Physical evidence is limited; however, a lintel from Prâsât Kû Kradô̦n (Kaset Wisai district, Roi Et), probably of the second half of the eleventh century, bears a scene from the Rāmāyaṇa (Woodward 2005: 130), a twelfth-century *sema* from Bahn Ma (Sawang Deang Din district, Sakon Nakorn province; S1206, stolen in 1981 but photographed before its loss) shows Sītā being abducted by Rāvaṇa on one side (Suriyavudh Suksavasti 1991), and the ordination hall, *ubosot,* of Wat Phra Non (in the Aranyik area north of Kamphang Phet), built in the 15th-16th century, once had eight boundary stones with decoration which included Rāma-story scenes, which were later removed and are now in the Kamphang Phet National Museum (Rooney 2008: 226).

After Ayutthayā was sacked by the Burmese for a second time in 1767, the surviving Thai army started a 15-year war against the Burmese, the Vietnamese and the Lao under the command of General Chakri, who subsequently, in 1782, deposed the then ruler (the former General Taksin), assumed the throne as the founder of the Chakri dynasty, under the name Phutthayotfa Chulalok, and was later giventhe dynastic name Rāma I, establishing Bangkok (more correctly Krung Thep) as the capital of Thailand. One consequence of the sack of Ayutthayā was the wholesale destruction of records (both archives and libraries), with only some fragments of verse on the Rāma story surviving.[[349]](#footnote-349) Rāma I therefore, as part of the renewal effort, commissioned and supervised the production of the Thai *Rāmakīen* (Reynolds 1991: 55-56), completed in 1797, to replace lost texts of the Rāma story*.* This was written as a dance-drama (*lakhon*) and is the fullest Thai version, in over 53,000 verses, although the earliest known rendering is that consisting of four episodes made around 1775 for king Taksin, ruling from Thonburi (1769-82). Rāma I’s successor, Rāma II (1809-24), had certain scenes re-arranged around 1815 to make a work more suitable for dramatic presentation (Chagsuchinda 1973). The next ruler, Rāma III, had the Wat Phra Jetubon (Wat Pho) temple in Bangkok restored; this has 152 marble bas-relief panels based on the *Rāmakīen* round the base of the *ubosot* which are usually thought to date from this 1825 restoration, although J.M. Cadet has suggested that they are older and were brought to Bangkok from Ayutthayā (Cadet 1982: 34).[[350]](#footnote-350)

The *Rāmakīen* is regarded not just as literature but rather as the poetic history of the monarchy and has been fully indigenised. In all its forms it is neither Hindu nor Buddhist, but a non-devotional, secular narrative, although Buddhist sensibilities are not ignored and so more overtly Hindu elements tend to be reduced or eliminated (for example, no sacrifices and few sages, chiefly Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra who are companions, although the gods remain prominent). Indeed, the frequency with which manuscript cabinets for the storage of Buddhist scriptures, produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, include scenes from the Rāma story as part of their lacquered decoration demonstrates that no incompatibility is perceived between Buddhism and the Rāma-story.[[351]](#footnote-351)

The narrative is sometimes romantic, robust in its attitude and often rather racy. Rāma is not a Bodhisattva but Phra Narai (= Nārāyaṇa) and conscious of that fact throughout but he nonetheless is sometimes shown as acting harshly; his whole purpose is to kill demons, not only Rāvaṇa, and Daśaratha’s integrity is not treated as an issue. In general the *Rāmakīen* emphasises the role of rulers as the supreme authority in society, this considerable dynastic emphasis clearly to quite an extent being its *raison d’être*. It presents a relatively sympathetic portrayal of Rāvaṇa, as a tragic hero rather than just a villain,[[352]](#footnote-352) although he tries to kill the gods by burning their images and his relationship with Śiva is particularly prominent. Hanumān, who is described as a white monkey, also gains in prominence and, to a greater extent than in other SE Asian tellings, has many sexual adventures: during the search for Sītā he makes love to Butsamalī, guardian of Śiva’s jungle palace (Olsson 1968: 136-37); as he takes Vibhīṣaṇa’s daughter, Benjakai, back to Laṅkā, he seduces her on the way (Olsson 1968: 161-64; MB 2012c); he has a son, Makaradhvaja, by the queen of the sea creatures (Olsson 1968: 168-69); he seduces Vānarin, thus releasing her from a curse (Olsson 1968: 257-64); and disguised as Rāvaṇa he seduces Mandodarī (Olsson 1968: 283-87).[[353]](#footnote-353) Hanumān, indeed, is actually responsible for the death of Rāvaṇa by crushing his heart after Rāma has shot him. There ar fewer battles during the war, but many new allies are summoned and posthumous avengers extend into the next generation, leading to a rather repetitive narrative.

There are multiple Lao versions of the Rāma story, which was probably introduced into Laos in the 15th century, although the extant versions are much later. There is a Tai Lu version from Muongsing known as *P’ommachak* or *Phommachak* (Lafont 2003; Ohno 2001), one from Vientiane called *Phra Lak Phra Lam* or *Phra Lam Sadok* (Sahai 1996), one from Luang Prabang (Vo 1971), and the *Gvāy dvóraḥbī* probably from Xieng-Mai or northern Laos (Sahai 1976 and 1977), as well as a fragmentary narrative within a Lao version of the *Pañcatantra* (Finot 1917: 101) and librettos for the Royal Ballet (performed up to 1975 and revived since 2002 by the Royal Ballet Theatre of Luang Prabang).

The Muongsing version, the *P’ommachak* or *Phommachak,* is in Jātaka form, so Rāvaṇa is reborn as Devadatta (and shown sometimes as human, sometimes as a *rākṣasa* with six arms), with all the other major characters given new identities at rebirth within the Buddha’s life-story (Lafont 1957; Lafont 2003: 203-7).[[354]](#footnote-354) Unlike many other SE Asian versions, Hanumān is celibate, though as elsewhere a white monkey, and Benjakai’s impersonation of a dead Sītā is present only in an attenuated form but has no consequences. Sītā herself is a rather marginal figure who at the end of the narrative meekly returns to live with Rāma. After the recognition of Lava and Kuśa the narrative is continued, not with the revenge of second-generation battles, but with an unsuccessful search for a suitable bride for Hanumān and successful hunts for brides for Lava (a long, detailed romance culminating in a lengthy battle) and in a single sentence for Kuśa. Though not wholly in tune with Buddhist ideals (Rāma does not always practise what as the Buddha he preaches, rather lacking compassion and liable to anger), it is rather closer to the original Rāma story than the Vientiane version.

The highly aberrant Vientiane version, the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* (exact transcription *Brăḥ Lăk Brăḥ Lăm*) or *Phra Lam Sadok*, was written down, probably in 1850, by Phutthaphōchān (possibly a misreading for Phutthakhōchan, i.e. Buddhaghoṣa) on the basis of an earlier oral or perhaps written text (Sahai 1973: XXXVII);[[355]](#footnote-355) it has clearly been much influenced by other Southeast Asian versions. It too is cast in the form of a Jātaka, as its alternative title of *Phra Lam Sadok* indicates, with the Buddha identifying himself as Rāma at the end of the narrative and the other characters suitably. In a similar manner to the Khmer *Rāmakerti I,* it seeks to make Rāma into an ideal upholder of dharma and Buddhism but, nevertheless, besides the union with Añjanā which produces Hanumān (found also in the Luang Prabang version), he also collects many wives on his long journeys. The whole work has a salacious tone; Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, and many other characters, have numerous amorous adventures. The basis of the narrative is inter-cousin rivalry and father/son relationships; brotherly love is largely unexplored. Lakṣmaṇa is Rāma’s constant companion but plays a reduced role of little emotional value. Bharata and Śatrughna are absent, so succession not an issue in Rāma’s generation (no exile; but separate kingdoms all created for sons). Rāvaṇa’s only two brothers oppose him and are thrown out of the kingdom; they do not fight for him or have their deaths mourned. Vālin and Sugrīva are brothers however. Both protagonists are supported by numerous sons. This version is also framed as a foundation myth, with Vientiane being established by Daśaratha.

The opening of the eclectic and inconsistent Luang Prabang version (also entitled *PhraLak PhraLam*)[[356]](#footnote-356) seems specifically indebted to the Thai version (indeed, its opening 223 verses narrate the myth of the foundation of Ayutthaya by Indra), but it also knows the Javanese, Khmer and Malay forms of the story; indeed, not infrequently different forms have been combined, leading to duplication of incidents or characters. In particular, the roles of Sugrīva and Vālin are reversed in the first part but they have their standard roles in the second part.

The *Gvāy dvóraḥbī* (also *Khvay Thuraphi*) is brief and incomplete;[[357]](#footnote-357) nevertheless it incorporates several anomalies resulting from attempts to fuse several incompatible narrative elements; it lacks the Jātaka framework of other Lao versions and presents a largely secular adaptation, after its opening Buddhist invocation. Its title reflects the importance of the buffalo episode in popular imagination but the narrative of this episode is no more prominent than in other versions. Noteworthy features of its narrative are that there is no deceptive cry from Mārīca (= Indra) and Lakṣmaṇa does not refuse to search for Rāma so Sītā does not accuse him of improper designs and the golden deer is not killed but just disappears (Sahai 1976: 45); the abduction takes place on the way back to Ayodhyā, so there are no court intrigues or banishment (Sahai 1976: 45-46); and there is no parallelism of suffering with Sugrīva, for Rāma has not lost his kingdom nor Sugrīva his wife.

There are also a number of other SE Asian versions of the Rāma story that have received limited scholarly attention up to the present. No earlier than the 18th century, in the former Annam (north Vietnam), the story was given a local setting in the *Truyện Da Thoa Vương*, ‘the King of the Demons’, with Annam itself as the kingdom of Daśaratha and Campā to the south as that of Rāvaṇa (Huber 1905; Moussay 1976) and the Cam people as descendants of the *vānaras* (Ohno 2003: 78-79).[[358]](#footnote-358) Gérard Moussay examines two versions from Phan Rang (ancient Pāṇḍuraṅga): *Dalikal Pram Dit Pram Lak,* ‘Tale of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa’, and *Damnuy Po Keitai Muherasih,* ‘Tale of the ascetic king’ (Moussay 1976; Marrison 1985: 49). This is a brief telling, including only the abduction (from Ayodhyā) and rescue of Sītā up to the killing of Rāvaṇa, in which there are several simplifications, transpositions and alterations of the narrative, some probably drawn from the Malay Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma and others from the Khmer tradition. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are friends, not brothers, and Rāma wins Sītā by shooting through seven trees with one arrow. Rāma himself becomes the leader of the monkeys and there is no description of Vālin or Sugrīva, while Kra-lai (= Hanumān) is Rāma’s son by the monkey queen and it is he who kills Rak Binsvor (= Rāvaṇa).

Further north still, the Dai (Tai) ethnic group in Yunnan, SW China, have the *Lanka Xihe,* ‘Ten-Heads of Laṅkā’, in their Tai-Lu language; this shares episodes with both the Burmese and the Lao Muongsing versions (Ohno 1999b: 33-43; Ohno 2003: 87-90; Zhang 2010: 41), for example making the length of Langma’s (Rāma’s) exile only twelve years, as in the Burmese and Mon versions. Its narrative starts with the birth of Rāvaṇa and his two brothers. An interesting conflation of *Bālakāṇḍa* episodes is that the young hermit shot by Daśaratha is tended by the king, on his recovery grants him a boon, and in response to Daśaratha’s asking about an heir, gives him two bananas to give to his queens, leading to the birth of Rāma and his brothers in the standard pattern (Ohno 2003: 87-88). Khara and Duṣaṇa are Śūrpaṇakhā’s children killed in a fight with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa which causes her to seek Rāvaṇa’s aid against them and Śūrpaṇakhā herself assumes the form of the golden deer; in a borrowing from the *Mahābhārata* tradition, while they are first searching for Sītā, and Rāma is resting in Lakṣmaṇa’s lap Lakṣmaṇa is severely bitten by a gadfly but nonetheless does not stir (Ohno 2003: 88-89). The Mon version, the *Loik Samoing Ram,* was apparently compiled by a Buddhist monk named Uttamu and is dated 1196 in the Burmese era (= 1834 A.D.). It was compiled mainly on the basis of the Burmese version, as the author himself declares in his preface, but was also influenced by the Thai, Javanese and Malay versions (Ohno 1996a+b).[[359]](#footnote-359) Here too there is some conflation with the *Mahābhārata* tradition: Ayodhyā is conflated with Dvāravatī and Ahalyā summons the Sun to be her lover with a *mantra.*

The story has even spread as far as the Philippines, where an oral version in the Maranao language, entitled *Maharadia Lawana,* was current on the island of Mindanao in the 17th-19th centuries; this was clearly not inherited directly from India but is related to the Malay folk versions, the *Sĕri Rāma* and the *Ḥikāyat Mahārāja Rāvaṇa,* and possibly also to Lao versions(Francisco 1994);[[360]](#footnote-360) its teller often replaces earlier elements with international motifs, simplifies or modifies a number of episodes (most notably the pursuit of the deer) and shows no interest in moral issues, although the narrative is given a superficially Islamic veneer (for example, Rāvaṇa performs *tapas* to Allah and is released by the angel Gabriel, and the wedding priest is an *imam*). Lakṣmaṇa kills Rāvaṇa when Rāma tires.

The tradition of visual representation also continued in various forms. Particularly intriguing are a group of trade textiles, produced in the workshops of the Coromandel coast for export to Indonesia, where they are mostly recorded from Sulawesi, Lombok and Bali; all show essentially the same battle scene of Rāma surrounded by the *vānaras* fighting Rāvaṇa surrounded by the *rākṣasas.* Their dating is uncertain but some at least must have been produced before 1800, since they bear the stamp of the Dutch VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), whose charter expired at the end of 1799 (Guy 1998: 115-17); no doubt these were traded between the VOC’s base in Coromandel with its base at Makassar.[[361]](#footnote-361) Although they are similar in technique and style to South Indian *kalāṃkaris,* these cloths are known only from Indonesia.[[362]](#footnote-362) Rather similar temple hangings (*ider-ider*) are known from Bali in the nineteenth century.

Instances of sculpture and painting are more frequent, and include the 152 marble bas-relief panels based on the *Rāmakīen* round the base of the *ubosot* of the Wat Phra Jetubon temple in Bangkok noted above; other later examples not noted above include: a Thai-inspired set of early-20th-century paintings that portray the life of Rāma in the Buddhist temple of Wat Bo at Siem Reap, Cambodia (Giteau 2004), murals based on the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* at Vat Up Mung in Vientiane, Laos, painted in 1938 by Thit Panh when a monk there (Vo 1971 and 1972) but destroyed in 2000, and the murals showing *Rāmakerti* scenes, painted between 1930 and 1940 by a team of students to cover the walls of the compound of the Royal Palace at Phnom Penh, as well as others in Cambodia (Giteau 2003).

**Conclusion**

The basic outline of the Rāma story has remained largely unchanged since it was first told in India in about the 5th century B.C. — a heroic, steadfast warrior-prince must kill a wicked monster who has captured his wife — although its popularity ensured that it was retold with an ever-increasing number of narrative additions. Whether within India or beyond, a major factor in the development of the Rāma story has been the religious outlook of teller and audience. Buddhists on the whole had little difficulty accommodating the Vaiṣṇava Rāma into their narrative, since at the popular level the transition from *avatāra* to Bodhisattva was not hard to make. Jain tellers were troubled by some of the more aggressive or fantastic elements in the old story, but used its popular appeal to propagate their own values, modifying what they found objectionable; other tellers retained the original view of Rāma as a secular human hero. But many Indian tellers have made the story a religious epic, identifying Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and eventually as the supreme deity; for others, Śiva or even the Goddess played a more important role. For the Sikh guru Gobind Singh, who respected all religions but had to face severe military challenges, Rāma provided a useful example to his followers at the start of the eighteenth century.

The story became popular in Southeast Asia at an early date, with inscriptional evidence going back at least to the sixth century A.D., and it was known in Java from at least the tenth century A.D. and from at least the eleventh in Myanmar, and similar factors applied to these tellings as to those in India. The further the story was taken from India, the further it became indigenised, that is to say, accepted as part of the tradition of its new home or homes: it is more difficult to recognise the Rāma story in some of the Laotian versions and in the Philippines than it is in Myanmar. A number of rulers made use of its popularity to consolidate their own prestige or to provide a focus for national regeneration after a crisis. In countries dominated by Buddhist ideals, or eventually by Islam, tellers made significant modifications to render appropriate to their new audiences the actions of a deity no longer seen as foreign but regularly as indigenised. The Javanese, Khmer, Lao, Myanmar, Malay, Philippino and Thai versions are not Hindu tales any more than the Jain versions in India. The *Rāmakerti* and the *Rāma Vatthu* are both aimed at a Buddhist audience and one of the Lao versions is cast in the form of a *jātaka*, the Ḥikāyat Serī Rāmaand *Maharadia Lawana* have an Islamic overlay, and the *Rāmakīen* is an action-packed thriller with a relaxed view of moral conventions, portraying an authoritarian king as its hero, composed by a Buddhist for a Buddhist audience but dominated by issues of sovereignty and so essentially secular in outlook. Throughout the subsequent development of the Rāma story (or indeed any traditional story, in India or elsewhere), two opposing processes are in tension: acculturation on the one hand, and fidelity to the received narrative on the other. Once the story had been indigenised, liberated from its Indian ethos and setting, acculturation encouraged the new tellers to make the characters and plot conform to local expectations and experience. But when a narrative has been taken into a new culture as a matter of choice, because of its inherent attractions, those attractions of plot and characterisation cannot be abandoned too hastily. The well-loved narrative must remain paramount.

Because of the durability of the materials used representations in relief sculptures and friezes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative are among the oldest evidence that we possess for the text, both in India and in Southeast Asia. The frequency of such representations is not only a demonstration of the Rāma story’s influence on Indian culture as a whole, it is also a valuable testimony to the evolution of the texts under the influence of popular culture, while the scenes chosen for depiction can reveal which episodes were most favoured, either by the artists or by their patrons; in other words they can tell us something about the reception of the story. Nevertheless, the picture is fragmentary and skewed by the destruction of monuments in the wars and by the population movements endemic to the region, as well as by religious factors. For example, very little survives before modern times from Myanmar, even though one possible route for the spread of the Rāma story from India into Southeast Asia is by sea from Bengal to Myanmar and the eastern seaboard of Thailand, and apparently nothing at all from Malaysia. Increasingly, over the centuries, the scenes depicted show versions of such episodes that depart from the form of the narrative occurring in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and resemble those found in later vernacular adaptations, often providing our earliest evidence for such developments, which may well have originated in oral tellings in any case, just as the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* was originally oral. Comparison of such visual evidence with the verbal sources is therefore a potentially significant means of refining our knowledge of the evolution of the epic over time.

All this raises the question why generations of tellers of so many different religious persuasions should have chosen to translate or adapt this text which had become in many tellings firmly Vaiṣṇava — a text so unacceptable in consequence that they had to introduce repeated modifications to make it suit their purpose or culture. Throughout the journey from the Gaṅgā basin to the Philippines, despite all the additions and religious and cultural constraints, the narrative has been felt to be so important that the main plot-line and fundamental details could not be discarded.The attraction of a good story, well told, cannot be overestimated.

Nor should its continuing impact be overlooked. In the modern period — which has been beyond the scope of our project for practical reasons — the story has been used for narrowly religious purposes (as in the Rāmjanmabhūmi dispute, used so emotively by the Bharatiya Janata Party to whip up feeling against Muslims), as part of a socially conservative programme (as with the Ram Rajya Parishad in the 1950s and 1960s), more subversively (whether for the improvement of women’s position, as in the Kannaḍa women’s protest songs, or more broadly, as in Gandhi’s espousal of the concept of *Rāmrājya* or the Bahujan Samaj party’s use of the Śambūka episode to further its anti-brāhman cause), or creatively in many forms of artistic expression too numerous to detail. We hope that our research on their background will form a significant contribution to a better understanding of all these more modern developments.

1. We should make it clear that throughout we are using the term India to refer to the whole of the Indian sub-continent, to what is more often termed South Asia in modern usage, since we are dealing with periods before the modern political divisions came into being. Exact transcriptions will be used where identifiable; otherwise, the spelling found in the source used will be given. In references our own names are abbreviated to the initials JLB and MB. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Scholars are in the habit of referring to both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* as epics, but their origins lie in very different genres, as the Indian tradition recognises by generally classifying the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the *ādikāvya* (‘the first <true> poetic work’) and the *Mahābhārata* as *itihāsa* (‘chronicle’). In the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa* the term “epic” can properly be applied only to its later, developed form; the story lying at its heart would in Western literary terms best be classified as a heroic romance, for it is the personal story of the Prince, a lone figure, supported in his adventures only by a younger brother who functions merely as his squire or confidant, and the outcome affects only himself and the individuals he encounters: no wider or national interests are involved. It is the struggle for integrity and happiness of one man, not a war of conquest. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Our concern is with the narration of the Rāma story and we shall therefore mostly ignore single images or groups (for example, of Rāma attended by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa or with a kneeling Hanumān) which are primarily iconographic, unless mention is relevant for some specific reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In order to distinguish this original narrative from the many other texts that have been called *Rāmāyaṇa,* we shall designate it as the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* italicising the whole term as a way of marking the fact that, even if the core could perhaps be ascribed to Vālmīki, much of the extant poem, consisting of subsequent expansion of that narrative core, definitely cannot. By extension, Rāmāyaṇa in Roman (with its abbreviation Rām.) will be used as an alternative designation for the Rāma narrative tradition as a whole or several texts together. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Although the division into separate *kāṇḍas* was only established quite late in the growth of the text (see most fully MB in F. ‘New Beginnings’: 21-24), it will be convenient to use their names in most contexts. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Another aspect of the Indian desire to link the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* with the Vedas is seen in the so-called *Gāyatrī Rāmāyaṇa.* Despite what the title suggests, this is not a connected narrative; all 24 *ślokas* of this *stotra* are taken from the *VR,* not in order, however, but in such [a](http://www.hindupedia.com/en/A) way that the first letters of the 24 *ślokas* form the *Gāyatrī mantra*. It thus suggests that the *VR* is the essence of the entire [Vedas](http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Vedas) and that Rāma is Nārāyaṇa. Discussion of the way that Vedic myths are used in the *Rāmāyaṇa* can be found in Feller 2004 and 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Attempts to link archaeological evidence to the geography and the historicity of both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are numerous; for the *Rāmāyaṇa* the most notable is the national project “Archaeology of the Ramayana Sites”, reported on by B.B. Lal 1973, 1978-79, 1981, and 2008: 19-32, Dikshit 2002-03, Lal and Dikshit 1978-79 and 1979-80, and Krishna Kumar 1991-92 and 1994; cf. Vishwakarma 1994 and Dave 2017. This project has been briefly discussed elsewhere (JLB 1998: 398-400). An ingenious attempt to link the origins of the story with South India (Parpola 2004) has also been made. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The English translation in JLB and MB 2006 (which broadly reproduces this early phase and adds further comment on its nature in a Note on the text translated at pp. 373-80) has been estimated to take at least twenty hours to perform. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For some assessment of the Critical Edition see Sheldon Pollock’s “The *Rāmāyaṇa* Text and the Critical Edition” in Goldman 1984-2017: I, 82-93, also Pollock 1979 and Chatterjee, A.K. 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This manuscript, in the Bir Library, Kathmandu (no. 934), contains all seven books but the date (V.S. 1076 ≠ 1020 A.D.) is found in the colophon of the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* and applies only to the preceding books. Most manuscripts are much more recent, dating from the 17th century onwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A further indication that the division into *kāṇḍas* is not original is the use in colophons towards the end of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of *Abhyudayika* in addition to or to replace *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (or *Laṅkākāṇda*) and reference in 1. App.I.1.252+290 as the sequel to *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of *Abhyudaya/Ābhyudayika* and *Uttara* (also between these two of *Bhaviṣya* at line 290). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The summary in this and the following paragraphs is taken with some adaptations from JLB 1985: 1-8. In particular, it is limited to those episodes attested in the earliest levels of development of the text. Much of the rest of this chapter is also adapted from JLB 1985 and 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The identity of the original Ayodhyā, ‘invincible’, is a matter of dispute, with many Indian scholars considering it to be the site known now as Ayodhyā (e.g. Lal 1985-86). However, it is clear that in fact this later Ayodhyā was known until about the 5th century A.D. when the Guptas shifted their capital there from Pāṭaliputra, as Sāketa and renamed it Ayodhyā (Bakker 1986a: 1-35 and 1986b). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. However, the elaborate description of the miraculous entertainment which Bharadvāja provides for Bharata’s army (2.85) clearly belongs to the second stage of development. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rāma’s martial ability means that he has quite often been compared elsewhere to Indra, the leader of the Vedic gods in battle. On occasion, indeed, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are compared to Indra and Viṣṇu respectively, reflecting the relative status of the two gods in Vedic literature (JLB 2000: 257) but contradicting Rāma’s later identification with Viṣṇu. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Such alternatives had occurred even in the first stage (e.g. Kabandha’s contradictory accounts of his history at 3,67.1–6 and 7–17), pointing to the conclusion that from a very early point in the history of the Rāma story there had been no unitary text, but a series of parallel versions (‘variants’, in folk narrative terminology). We should think not of *the* *Rāmāyaṇa*, but of many *Rāmāyaṇas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Although the *kaccit sarga* is undoubtedly a later insertion (JLB 1985: 333), a date of about the end of the 4th century (Tiwari 1960: 21) is implausibly late for it. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The fact that no scenes from the *Bāla* and *Uttara kāṇḍas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are included on the friezes on the Kailāsanātha temple at Elūrā (mid 8th century) was used by Adalbert Gail to reinforce a late dating for both books (Gail 1985); however, not only are there the Deogaṛh panels of the Ahalyā episode and of Rāvaṇa offering his heads as counter-examples but also, as later instances will show, it is normal for narrative friezes to omit the *Uttarakāṇḍa,* as of course so also do a number of later verbal adaptations and no doubt for the same reasons. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. To that extent Pollock’s assertion that this account is a reminiscence of orality from outside, from a culture of writing, is valid (Pollock 2006: 78-81; cf. Pollock 2003: 80-87). But his further claim that the whole *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* must therefore be placed later than the Mauryan ruler Aśoka, so after about 250 B.C., ignores the evidence for the gradual development of the epic outlined above. Undoubtedly the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* represents the culmination of a lengthy tradition of oral poetry, transmitted through recitation by bards, before being committed to writing considerably later (cf. JLB 2013). This episode also provides a kind of frame to the whole epic. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Viśvāmitra is mentioned as a character only in references to his sacrifice and to the journey to Mithilā (leading to Satānanda’s in-tale). There are two references to the *Bālakāṇḍa* episode in *kāṇḍas* 2‑3 (Anasūyā and Mārīca, both of which episodes are in various ways dubious) but all other references are to him as a mythical figure. Evidence from the two outlines of contents at 1.1 and 1.3 is inconclusive but points to the incorporation of such mythical figures into the *Bālakāṇḍa* not being at all early, at the very least. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. For the way in which this material has developed, its lateness and its sources see MB in F. ‘New Beginnings’: 104-22. It shows considerable linguistic and stylistic differences from the remainder of the book (7.37-100). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The changing understandings of Vālmīki’s status and character over time are ably presented in Leslie 2003. It should also be noted that there are other Vālmīkis mentioned in various texts. . [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. There are also differences in vocabulary, for example the much greater frequency of *bhāṣita* as noun in 7.37-100 noted by Robert and Sally Goldman (Goldman and others 1984-2017: VII, 77-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The direction of borrowing can at times be an open question. For example, Pollock states (Goldman and others (trans.) 1984-2017: III.338) in his notes on 3.60.18: “An interpolation after the first line here in the SR (1163\*) is in fact a verse from Kālidāsa’s *Vikramorvaśīya* (4.51)”; it is just lines 2-3 of this passage that are virtually identical to Kālidāsa’s verse (which is 4.27 in M. R. Kale’s edition) but there seem no decisive grounds for determining the direction of travel.Similarly Handiqui’s suggestion (Pravarasena 1976: 33) that Pravarasena was aware of 6.249\* seems more likely to be the opposite situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*, expressions apparently borrowed from the *Rāmāyaṇa* text often occur in close proximity to narrative references, although such borrowings also occur in passages with no *Rāmāyaṇa* significance (see JLB 1978/2000, and 1985b/2000, esp. pp. 349-50). Consequently, the absence of any overt narrative references in the *Draupadīharaṇa* (3.248–56) seems to indicate deliberate exclusion, for in terms of its construction this passage, with its pale imitation of the abduction of Sītā, would have no place in the *Mahābhārata* without the *Rāmopākhyāna* which it introduces and with which its text is linked. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The absence of parallels to the NW or W recensions is striking. There are also a significant number of instances where for one *Rāmopākhyāna* verse the parallels are found partly in the N recension and partly in the S, which suggests that the *Rāmopākhyāna* may be reproducing something closer to the original form from which the *Rāmāyaṇa* recensions diverged. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Another such naming occurs in a late addition at the end of the *Harivaṃśa* (App. 40.168–69, cf. Rm 2.60\*), while another actually refers to several plays being performed (App.29F.236-95), beginning with one on the birth of Rāma and his brothers (ll. 242-55) and ending with one on Rāvaṇa’s rape of Rambhā and Nalakūbara cursing him (ll. 286-92; cf. Ravivarman 2019: 14 + 147). It is a reasonable surmise that mention of the text is later than narration of the story. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. MBh 3 App.14.33–34 may be compared with Rm 1.74.28; 36 with 75.3ab; 42 with 75.4cd; 71 with 75.20cd; and 72 with 75.19ab. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Raghavan included these four passages along with many others in his study of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Mahābhārata* (Raghavan 1973). He commented acutely and in some detail on their subject-matter, but to a rather lesser extent on their textual history. For a discussion of the section on Rāma Jāmadagnya in the *Harivaṃśa* passage see Gail 1977: 46–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. In *VR* 1.1-4 the references to Vālmīki as the author must be particularly late (Söhnen-Thieme 1998). As a participant in the narrative he appears in the core of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* at an earlier date. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The title *Jaiminīya Aśvamedha* denotes the extant portion, which is nominally a retelling of the Āśvamedhikaparvan of the *Mahābhārata,* while *Jaimini Bhārata* includes other parts of the *Mahābhārata* in this *bhakti-*oriented version of which some small parts are extant in manuscript only; the latter name is found in some manuscripts and as the title of many vernacular adaptations. At 58.95-97 the work quotes the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* which should probably be dated to the 10th century, and the earliest and most important regional version was composed in Kannaḍa by Lakṣmīśa in the 14th century or soon after. It became widely popular within India but has been rather neglected by Western scholarship. Also ascribed to Jaimini are a *Jaiminibhāgavata,* extant only in manuscript, and a *Jaiminirāmāyaṇa,* of which very few manuscripts seem still to be extant (NCC VII: 311, also NCC IV: 257 for the *Kuśalavopākhyāna* from it; Koskikallio and Vielle 2001: 83-84). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Their actual alignment thus differs from the traditional assignment of their affiliation as relating to Brahmā, Viṣṇu or Śiva, with six each of the traditional eighteen major Purāṇas belonging to each deity. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The *Matsya* *Purāṇa* version, though little longer, also introduces both the *avatāra* aspect and Vālmīki as author; it is found almost unchanged at *Padma Purāṇa* 1.8.164-6 and *Agni Purāṇa* 273.32‑35. The *Padma Purāṇa* version differs only in naming just Kuśa of Rāma’s two sons (which is more relevant to the genealogy), while the *Agni Purāṇa* calls them both Sītā’s sons and adds that Vālmīki heard Rāma’s story from Nārada . [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. There is considerable evidence that the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* originate from a common core in the Gupta period, subsequently expanded and separated into the two extant Purāṇas (see Vielle 2005 and 2009). Incidentally, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* also provides a genealogy of the *rākṣasas* (2.9.31-51) which gives a slightly different ancestry for Rāvaṇa, since Viśravas’ three wives are named as Mālyavān’s daughters Puṣpotkaṭā and Vākā (for Rākā) and Mālin’s daughter Kaikasī (2.9.34); it also makes him four-legged, in addition to his ten heads and twenty arms (2.9.42), as well as mentioning his killing by Rāma (2.9.48). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. A geographical section (*adhy.* 162) contains several verses paralleled in the search party accounts (*VR* 4.39-42) and most probably taken from them (Mankad 1966 and JLB 1984: 113); it also contains two descriptions of Śiva burning Tripura (140.58–75 and 188.15–56), which are evidently based on the burning of Laṅkā, first by Hanumān and later by the Vānaras during the battle (*VR* 5.52 and 6.62), as well as a description of a moonlit night and the pleasures of Tripura’s inhabitants (139.15–47). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For example, within a narrative by Pulastya about the establishment of Puṣkara as a *tīrtha,* on Atri’s advice, Rāma visits Puṣkara in order to perform *śrāddha* for Daśaratha but during the ritual Sītā suddenly hides herself and afterwards explains her conduct by the shame she felt at being seen in her ascetic clothes of bark-cloth by Daśaratha who has actually appeared visibly to her (1.33.89-110); soon afterwards Lakṣmaṇa turns rebellious, declaring that he will no longer serve Rāma and Sītā, and no sooner is he pacified than Rāma offends Lakṣmaṇa, before all is smoothed over and put down to the influence of the locality, an unexpected manifestation of human frailty (1.33.123-48 and 172-82). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Short as it is, this *Garuḍa Purāṇa* passage includes Rāma, his brothers and all their sons in its genealogy (138.36-38), from which it is clear that its author was aware of the *Uttarakāṇḍa,* but it does not give any further details at this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This *Liṅga Purāṇa* genealogy names all four brothers and briefly mentions Rāma’s killing of Rāvaṇa, his performance of sacrifices and his ten-thousand-year rule, the last of which is clearly modelled on the last line of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. For an outline of the various attempts at dating it see *Viṣṇu Purāna* 1997: 20-23. More recently Peter Schreiner has suggested that it plausibly originates in the middle of the 4th century A.D. (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 2013: 592). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* then goes on to devote almost as much space to Bharata conquering the Gandharvas, Śatrughna killing Lavaṇa and the sons of the four brothers founding various cities, before listing the later members of the dynasty. In the next chapter, on the kings of Mithilā, as one member of Janaka’s line is ploughing the ground for a sacrifice to secure a child, his daughter Sītā springs up in the furrow. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Regarding the dating of the *Kūrma Purāṇa,* the editor of the Critical Edition, A.S. Gupta, merely notes that “according to Hazra, the dates of the original Viṣṇuite Kūrma-Purāna and its *Pāśupata* recast are between 550–650 A.D. and between 700–800 A.D. respectively” (Kūrma Purāṇa 1971: ix, citing Hazra, 1940: 57-75). The stress here (2.34.126 + 138) that Agni’s purpose is Rāvaṇa’s destruction suggests that this *KūP* version is a later refutation of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* account where Rāma is reassured by Agni at the time (if Rāma knows that Sītā has not been abducted, why bother with the search and war?). This development of an illusory Sītā is later taken up by the *Adhyātma, Adbhuta,* *Ānanda* and *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇas* and by Tulsīdās in his *Rāmcaritmānas.* That the concept of an illusory Sītā occurs elsewhere no earlier than the 14th century suggests a later date. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Hazra dated the *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa* to the 10th or 11th century, whereas Sircar’s work indicates the 17th century, but Patricia Dold argues that it mainly dates from the period 1400-1600 (Dold 2003: 56). The emphasis on Śārada Navarātri leads to a marked emphasis on the precise dating (in terms of months and *tithis*) of all the events in the narrative, as well as extensive passages within these twelve *adhyāyas* which are primarily on worship of the goddess (especially *adhyāyas* 43 and 48). The text also uses frequently the name Rāmacandra for Rāma himself (confirming Hazra’s dating as the earliest possible one for the text; cf. JLB 1997) and occasionally the typically South Indian term *kodaṇḍa* (e.g. 44.25c) for his bow. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The most extreme example of this is the *Ādi Purāna,* which claims by that name to be the original Purāṇa but is in fact an extremely late (sixteenth century or later) Kṛṣṇa-oriented text, incorporating a brief narrative of the Rāma story put into Kṛṣṇa’s own mouth. This is also known by the name *Nāradaśaunakasaṃvāda* (cf. NCC 2:83-84 and Raghavan 1973: 65). It should be noted that the name *Ādi Purāṇa* is sometimes applied to the *Brahma Purāṇa* and that there is also an *Ādi(upa)purāṇa* or *Ādya Purāṇa* quoted by the *Nibandha* writers (writers of legal digests) but no longer extant, which is a different work from either. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Literature in Prakrit is surveyed here alongside that in Sanskrit for several reasons, not the least of which is that authors of Sanskrit dramas regularly used the convention that less well educated characters (including most women) spoke in one of the Prakrits, the particular Prakrit used being determined by their role, status or occupation; the most commonly used are Śaurasenī, Māgadhī and Mahārāṣṭrī. Generically, the Prakrits represent the Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) phase of development of Indo-Aryan from Sanskrit (Vedic, epic and classical = Old Indo-Aryan, OIA) through to the modern languages of North India and the Siṃhala of Sri Lanka (New Indo-Aryan, NIA). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. For a recent assessment of Aśvaghoṣa’s date and relevant background see the introduction in Patrick Olivelle’s translation (Olivelle 2008); on his use of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* see Gawroński 1914-15 and 1919: 27-40, Johnston1935-36, Raghavan 1956; Hiltebeitel 2006: 248-54 and 2011b: 625-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Saundarananda* 1.26cd:  *vālmīkir iva dhīmāṃś ca dhīmator maithileyayoḥ.* This points strongly to his knowing the Uttarakāṇḍa, as may his mention in the *Buddhacarita* of Vālmīki as poet, but his reference there to Anaraṇya (Olivelle 2008: 2.15; cf. the genealogies in*VR* 2,102.8-10 and 1,69.21) need only suggest that he knew the Ayodhyākāṇḍa (cf. MB in F. ‘New Beginnings’: 58-59). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. There is a good early analysis of the evidence in Gawroński 1914–15b. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. In particular the cloud in his *Meghadūta* starts its journey from Rāmagiri, which may well be Rāmṭek, named Rāmagiri in the Ṛddhapur plates of Prabhāvatīguptā, the Vākāṭaka queen and daughter of Candragupta II; there may have been a Vākāṭaka temple to Rāma here, as there were to other *avatāras* of Viṣṇu (Bakker 1990a, also 1997: 86). Michael Willis suggests that ‘an inchoate Rāma cult under Skandagupta seems demonstrated by the Supiā inscription that praises Skandagupta as “equal to Rāma in righteous conduct.” That Rāma was actually worshipped, as opposed to appearing simply in narrative contexts, is shown by the Valkhā plates. These present Viṣṇu as an object of adoration in several guises including ‘the slayer of Daśavadana.”’ (Willis 2009: 241). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. U.P. Shah (*Rāmāyaṇa* CE 1960-75: VII,51) interestingly suggests that *Raghuvaṃśa* 15.37, stating that Śatrughna avoided Vālmīki’s *āśrama* on his return from Madhupurī, was intended by Kālidāsa to reject as inappropriate or interpolated Śatrughna’s second visit to Vālmīki (Rm 7 App.9, which is in fact read by all manuscripts used for the CE). Kālidāsa also alters the balance of the Śambūka episode by making the śūdra ascetic attain the course of the virtuous by his death at Rāma’s hands (15.42-57). On the other hand his brevity of treatment at some points means that no inference is permissable concerning any incident omitted. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The similarity of *sarga* 13 of Bhaṭṭi’s poem (to be treated next), which significantly is mostly written in Prakrit, to *sargas* 6-8 of the *Setubandha* may suggest that the earlier dating is correct (Pravarasena 1976: 35). Interestingly, Pravarasena and his poem are mentioned in an inscription of Yaśovarman of Kambuja (889-910 A.D.; Sharan 2003: 48-49). One of its commentators suggests that the play was ghosted by Kālidāsa. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Phyllis Granoff emphasises the significance of the story of building the bridge as a topic in literary works and notes about the *Setubandha* (which incidentally she dates to the 7th century): “Pravarasena embellished the *Rāmāyaṇa* account and described really two attempts to build the bridge. Curiously enough, the first effort failed, when the mountains used to make the bridge simply sunk into the ocean and out of view. In the second attempt, through the efforts of the marvellous monkey named Nala, the bridge was constructed in such a way that it formed a solid, visible structure across the ocean. This saga of the invisible bridge seems to me to be particularly telling, for one of the more trying questions that the accounts of actual pilgrimages to the bridge raise is, in what sense did or could a pilgrim ‘see’ this bridge of Rāma, reaching from India to Sri Laṅkā?” (Granoff 1998: 97). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Its last verse (22.35) states that the *Rāvaṇavadha* was composed in the reign of Śrīdharasena, one of the rulers of Valabhī (in western India); the dates of the four Maitraka rulers so named range between approximately 490 and 650 AD. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The names of the four *kāṇḍas* (*Prakīrṇa, Adhikāra, Prasanna, Tiṅanta*) into which its 22 *sargas* are divided demonstrate clearly its pedagogic purpose. It is almost exactly one tenth of the length of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (1625 stanzas against 16,380 of the Bāla to Yuddha kāṇḍas). There is little if any evidence that Bhaṭṭi drew on any other source than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. cf. Słuszkiewicz 1938: ch.3, who shows that where it directly follows the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is based on a text intermediate between the present NE and S recensions. Despite originating in Śrī Laṅkā, no manuscripts of it survive there and just a fragment of its Sinhala translation was preserved in one manuscript (Bechert 1978: 231). Bechert also notes the absence of any version of the Rāma story from classical Sinhalese literature and its occurrence only in certain popular poems connected with the Kohom̆bā kankāriya ritual (Bechert 1978: 231; cf. Godakumbura 1946 and 1980), explaining it as “a consequence of the fear that it could endanger the exclusive validity of the traditions on the early history of the island found in the Ceylonese chronicles.” [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Herman Tieken rejects the common ascription of the Trivandrum plays to Bhāsa, dating one, the *Pratiyajñāyaugandharāyaṇa,* on the grounds of borrowing to later than the *Mattavilāsa* of Mahendravarman (= Pallava Mahendravikramavarman, r. 610-630 A.D.); he implicitly extends this dating to the other Trivandrum plays too (Tieken 1993 + 1997). Tieken’s arguments for links with ritual of several of the plays could also support a dating and location to the Pallava period and South India (Tieken 1997: 36-38).

    Another play, the *Yajñaphala,* not found among these Trivandrum manscripts but in two manuscripts which are claimed to have been found in North India and published in 1941, has also been attributed to Bhāsa. Though similar in several features, it is almost certainly a later imitation; whereas R.N. Dandekar was willing to go as far as to accept as genuine the date (*vikrama saṃvat* 1727 = 1670 A.D.) of one of its two manuscripts (Dandekar 1950), G.C. Jhala, after a careful examination of its grammar, vocabulary and text readings, reached “the conclusion that it is a fabrication of modern times” (Jhala 1978: 224), with which V. Raghavan trenchantly agreed: “I belong to the camp which discounts the play as a modern forgery” (in Jhala 1978: xvii). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. In the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* tradition these two plays are linked with the *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaktibhadra (see below) to form a group called *Rāmāyaṇanāṭaka,* which it is traditionally believed were performed in the temple for the year preceding the coronation of the kings of Cochin. Only one act of any play is presented in a performance, since the Sanskrit text is accompanied by extensive explanations and comments (often on contemporary events) in Malayāḷam in a tradition that seems to go back at least to the 9th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Death at Rāma’s hands absolves Vālin from his sins and sends him to heaven (I,2), which is a concept that only emerges at a later date than the one assigned to Bhāsa. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. The form of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* which they follow appears to be intermediate between the Northern and Southern recensions (cf. S¬uszkiewicz 1957). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Bhavabhūti’s date is suggested by the fact that the Kashmiri historian Kalhaṇa links him to king Yaśovarman of Kanauj and to Vākpatirāja, as well as absence of mention of him by Bāṇa or Daṇḍin. In another of his works, the *Mālatīmādhava*, Bhavabhūti states that he was born in Padmapura, which Mirashi identifies with Pravarapura, the Vākāṭaka capital (Mirashi 1974: 35). The *Mahāvīracarita* was critically edited by Todar Mall (1928). The *Uttararāmacarita* was critically edited by S.K. Belvalkar (Belvalkar 1915, Belvalkar 1921) but unfortunately the volume which would have contained the critical apparatus and related material was a casualty of the First World War (Belvalkar 1921: iii-iv; Pollock 2007: 51-52). Yaśovarman, Bhavabhūti’s probable patron, is credited with the now lost *Rāmābhyudaya*, a play in six acts on the Rāma story, mentioned by various poetical theorists from the ninth-century Ānandavardhana onwards (Raghavan 1961: 1-25). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The incompleteness of the *Mahāvīracarita* is explicable by the defective manuscript evidence underlying the text (Todar Mall 1928; Warder 1972-92: IV, 310) rather than its being left unfinished by the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Borrowing in the opposite direction is the more likely explanation for the identity of *Uttararāmacarita* 6.36 and *VR* 2.2078\* (found only in two S mss, T1 and T2). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Two manuscripts are now known: one in the Kaiser Library, Kathmandu (ms 88) and another in the Raj Library, Darbhanga (in which the author’s name is consistently given as Māgharāja), from which V. Raghavan began to produce an edition (Raghavan, 1961: xiii; Raghavan 1980: 12), published posthumously by associates (Māyurāja 2016). Hemacandra’s 12th-century Prakrit grammar quotes examples from the play, as does Sāgaranandin (who also names the second act as *Kulapatyaṅka,* the fourth as *Sugrīvāṅka* and the fifth as *Kumbhāṅka*). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. It must be later than Māyuraja’s *Udāttarāghava,* by which it is strongly influenced (Warder 1972-82: IV, 233) but Śaktibhadra tells us in the prologue to his play that he comes from South India and he probably predates Kulacēkara, the poet and Cēra ruler of about the 10th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* performance *Aṅgulīyāṅkam* is based on its 6th act but includes further verses from previous acts, as well as from various other sources. The incipient *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* performance style may even have influenced the form and the presentation of Śaktibhadra’s play (Bansat-Boudon 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. V.V. Mirashi has argued for this dating (Mirashi 1974: 284-305, Mirashi 1975: 54-60, in part based on Woolner 1935: v-xiv) in opposition to K.K. Datta, the editor of an edition of the work (Dutta 1964), who assigns it to the 5th century (in which he is followed by Sankalia 1965-66). The four South Indian manuscripts of the play are evenly divided about the name of the author, two giving Dhīranāga of Anupurādha (a name and place otherwise unknown but quite possibly a corruption of Anurādhapura) and two as Diṅnāga (the name of a well-known Buddhist logician), while a work on dramaturgy, the 12th-century *Nāṭyadarpaṇa,* names its author as Vīranāga and an anthology, the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta,* cites a verse from it as being by Ravināga. Its ascription to Diṅnāga is distinctly improbable on several grounds (not least that of date) and Ravināga is easily explained as arising from an inversion of the first two syllables of Vīranāga; nevertheless, editors of the play have preferred to assign it to Diṅnāga (although Datta 1964 regards the author as a different Diṅnāga). All printed editions are based on the 4 mss from South India but two Newari-script mss have now been identified, both of which give the author’s name as Dhīranāga, increasing the probability that this is the correct form (corrupted first to Vīranāga and then to Ravināga), and which present a significantly different form of the text in many places (Dezső 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. So V.V. Mirashi has correctly argued (Mirashi 1974: 284-305, Mirashi 1975: 54-60), whereas K.K. Dutta in the introduction to his edition asserts that “Bhavabhūti was deeply influenced by” the *Kundamālā* (1964: 223; so too Sankalia 1965-66). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. A hymn to Rāma at *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* 6.17.11-58 is found in almost exactly the same form at *Rāmacarita* 3199-148 but this is not conclusive for identity of authorship, since the borrowing could be in either direction (Tubb 2014: 368). In keeping with its possible composition in NE India Abhinanda places Hanumān’s meeting with Maināka after that with Surasā, as in some NE mss (Ñ2 B D6) of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* and includes SugrIva’s killing of Vajradaṃṣṭra found in rather more NE mss (Ñ V B2-4 D4.13). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Later, when the Pratīhāra dynasty declined under the impact of raids from the Kalacuri Yuvarājadeva I, Rājaśekhara seems to have moved to Tripuri, Yuvarāja’s capital. The *Bālarāmāyaṇa* has the somewhat dubious distinction of being apparently the longest Sanskrit play extant. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Bhartṛmeṇṭha (or Meṇṭha) can be assigned to the early 5th century but his works are lost, although he is quoted appreciatively by many later authors and known to have written a *mahākāvya* called *Hayagrīvavadha.* [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. In this connection, it is curious to note the reference at 2. 102 to the curly hair of Keralan women, which may imply an origin further south. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. His indebtedness is primarily to the *Mahāvīracarita* but in addition the prologue of the *Anargharāghava* is influenced by the prologue of Bhavabhūti’s  *Mālatīmādhava* (Murāri 1997: 28-29). Also, Murāri’s account of the Paraśurāma episode shows influence from Kālidās’s *Raghuvaṃśa* 11.61-91 (Steiner 1999b). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. If the direction of influence is indeed from it to Rājaśekhara’s *Bālārāmāyaṇa,* as some scholars have thought, it should be dated before the end of the 9th century (cf. above); already in 1135 A.D. Maṅkha refers to Murāri as earlier than Rājaśekhara (*Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.74), while Dhanaṃjaya (late 10th century) quotes a verse from the play in his *Daśarūpaka*. One of its stanzas is quoted in an inscription of 1521 A.D. (Sircar 1965: 174) and not far short of a quarter of its verses are quoted in the poetic anthologies (Sternbach 1978: 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The existence of as many as five retellings of the *Bṛhatkathā* – the Jain *Vasudevahiṇḍi* of Saṅghadāsa in Mahārāṣṭrī (around 5th century), the Tamil *Peruṅkatai* of Koṅkuvēḷir (10th century), and in Sanskrit the *Bṛhatkathāślokasaṃgraha* of Budhasvāmin (8th or 9th century), the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva and the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* of Kṣemendra (1037 A.D.) – argues for its having once been extant but the degree of divergence between these retellings gives weight to arguments for either two very different originals or its non-existence as anything more than a convenient peg on which to hang collections of tales (Nelson 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Nevertheless, the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* assigns it to the 13th century (*NCC* 25: 92-93). Warder argues that the original form of the name was Bhosa, of which the others are all corruptions (Warder 1972-92: IV, 128-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. This is symptomatic of the increasing emphasis given to the *Śambūkavadha* episode over time. For example, it is told straightforwardly and briefly by Kālidāsa in the *Raghuvaṃśa* but more fully in Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmacarita* where Rāma questions his own action (2.10) but Śambūka gains heaven as a result; the episode is also elaborated in the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* with borrowing from the Jain tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Besides the work ascribed to Bhoja, texts entitled *Rāmāyaṇacampū* are recorded as written by Kṛṣṇamācārya, Govindarāja, Ghanaśyāma, Bālamukunda Dīkṣita, Rāghava, Rāmānujācārya, Śivarāmasūri/Śivarāmasāstrin, Śrīśailācārya and Sundaravalli (NCC 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. The motif of Vālin reborn as Jara is taken up later by Eẓuttaccan in his *kiḷippāṭṭu Bhārata,* whereas in the Assamese and Oriya Mahābhārata retellings Aṅgada himself is reborn as Jara to avenge his father (Granoff 2008: 548). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The opposite view — that the *Dutāṅgada* copies from the *Mahānāṭaka* — is taken by Georg Jacob, who places the *Mahānāṭaka* before 850 (*Dūtāṅgada* 1931: 10-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Although the poetician Daṇḍin (6th-7th century) is credited with writing the first example of this genre, this work is no longer extant, it seems, and all known examples come from after about 1000 A.D., apart from the Jain Dhanaṃjaya’s *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya* of around 800. For a full study of the genre see Bronner 2010, which also lists further examples that include the Rāma story beyond those given below (Bronner 2010: 267-71). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Because Rāmapāla began his reign in the 11th century (but ruled well into the 12th), the *Rāmacarita* is sometimes assigned to the 11th century but it was in fact written during the reign of Madanapāla, son of Rāmapāla (accession in 1144); in its fourth chapter the story is continued beyond Rāmapāla’s death to conclude with some allusions to Madanapāla’s reign and beyond the death of Rāma in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* to cover Kuśa’s reign (cf. *Raghuvaṃśa* 16). The work is known from a single manuscript discovered early in the 20th century (and now apparently lost again; Brocquet 2010: iii) which was accompanied by a broadly contemporary commentary (up to 2.35 — around 40% of the text), without which the events of Rāmapāla’s reign would be even less intelligible; the commentary is however by a different author from the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Centuries earlier, the Tāḷaginda inscription of the Kadamba Śāntivarman in the 5th century mentions the early Kadamba rulers, Bhagīratha, Raghu and Kāku<t>stha, and the Dāvaṇagere plates of Ravivarman in the 6th century mentions four of his predecessors (Raghu, Kākustha, Śāntivarman and Mṛgeśavarman) and compares Kātustha to both Kākutstha and Rāma, while in an inscription of 1125 Śaṣṭadeva II’s enemy, the Śīlāhāra ruler of the Konkan, is compared to Rāvaṇa (Dhara 2021b: 21-22). The dynasty’s involvement with the *Rāmāyaṇa* was evidently an enduring one. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Six verses of the play are quoted in the *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa (of 1257 A.D.) and a later author (Keśavamiśra in his *Alaṃkāraśekhara*) links this Jayadeva with the court of king Anaṅgabhīma III (c. 1211-38). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. One of three other works by Śākalyamalla, no longer extant, was a *Niroṣṭhyarāmāyaṇa* — a narration of the story without using any labials. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Three other mss are known (one palm-leaf and two paper) from the Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project; it was possibly staged for the birth of prince Jayadharmamalla in 1367. It was produced in the court of king Jayārjunadeva at Patan, who perhaps significantly was engaged in a struggle for power with the rising Jayastitirājamalla of Bhatgaon. Other works on the Rāma story written in Nepal at this period are also still only extant in manuscript: the *Abhinavānandarāghava* (CUL MS Add. 1658.1), the *Mahārāmāyaṇanāṭaka* (NGMCP A 20-2) and the *Caturaṅkagītināṭaka* (NGMCP B 15-16) (Formigatti 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Vedānta Deśika’s is not the only *dūtakāvya* or *saṃdeśakāvya* (messenger poem) on the theme of Rāma sending another messenger to the captive Sītā. Others include Rudranyāyapañcānana’s *Bhramaradūta* and Kṛṣṇaśrīcandananābhi’s *Abdadūta,* whereas Nityānandaśāstri’s Hanumaddūta retains Hanumān as the messenger. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. The editor gives some examples in the third appendix to the text (*Citrabandharāmāyaṇa* 1992); they include verses of which the syllables should be arranged to form a swing, a bracelet, a sword, a drum or a wheel, as well as some to be read in a zigzag fashion (*gomūtrikā*), of which there are 16 in total, or set out in a block to be read either horizontally or vertically (*sarvatobhadra*). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita’s *Raghuvīrastava* in 33 *vasantatilaka* verses summarises the narrative as it praises Rāma; similarly the *Rāmāṣṭapadī* of Rāmakavi (late 17th to 18th century) in effect gives a brief version of the narrative often using the actual wording of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Raghavan 2009: 176-78). Nīlakāṇṭha Dīkṣita also compiled the *Mantrarāmāyaṇa,* a work “in which verses drawn from the *Ṛgveda* are arranged and read in such a way that they reveal the story and theology of the *Rāmāyaṇa*” (Minkowski 2002: 331). Nīlakāṇṭha was the initiator of the *mantrarahasyaprakāśikā* genre to which this belongs along with his *Mantrabhāgavata,* *Mantrakāśīkhaṇḍa* and *Mantraśārīraka* (Minkowski forthcoming). Appayya Dīkṣita (1520-92), Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita’s great uncle, wrote the *Rāmāyaṇatātparyasārasaṃgrahastotra,* focusing on Vibhīṣaṇa’s coming to Rāma, in which he vigorously refutes from a Śaiva perspective the Śrīvaiṣṇava claim going back to Vedānta Deśika (traditionally 1268-1369 A.D.) that Vibhīṣaṇa’s surrender is the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa’s* main lesson (*pradhāna*), seeing in it simply his desire to get the rākṣasa kingdom instead of Rāvaṇa, and argues that many episodes suggest Śiva’s supremacy (Bronner 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Another work that may be mentioned at this point is the Sanskrit *Raghunāthābhyudaya* of Rāmabhadrāmbā in twelve *sargas*; it is not directly on a Rāma theme – it is basically on this same Raghunātha – but its author (one of Raghunātha’s consorts) considers him an incarnation of Rāma and so his battles and deeds are compared to Rāma’s and she also describes him as reciting the *Bālakāṇḍa* himself and presenting gifts to reciters of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* It thus resembles, in its use of means integral to the work, Sandhyākaranandin’s *Rāmacarita* in identifying its patron with Rāma Dāśarathi, while many of the compositions from the preceding three or four centuries had implicitly the aim of enhancing their patron’s prestige by association with Rāma. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The poem is dedicated to king Devanārāyaṇa of Cempakaśśery and so must have been written before 1746 A.D. (Rāma Pāṇivāda 1942: 20). It too survives in a single manuscript (T.U.OM. L. 1746). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. There are yet further poems called *Rāmacarita,* for example one in 13 *sargas* by Kāśīnātha Śarman (I.O.L. cat. no. 3921). Texts called *Rāmāyaṇa* are also recorded (in *NCC* vol. 25) by Mallikārjuna, Rāmagulam Trivedin, Rāmānanda Mayūra, Viśvanātha Siṃha (Darbhaṅga, 1729) and Śivarāma Mahīśa; also a *(Viśeṣana)Rāmāyaṇa* by Vīrarāghava, son of Vīṇāveṅkaṭapati. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. There is an allusion in the *Kṛtyārāvaṇa* to Rāvaṇa performing a ritual in a Śāntigṛha in order to create illusions (Raghavan 1961: 27), which seems to echo the way that in several Jain *Rāmāyaṇas* from Vimalasūri onwards Rāvaṇa enters a temple of the Jina Śāntinātha, whom he worships and then seeks to gain the magic spell, *Bahurūpa* (Granoff 2013: 26-27). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. S.D. Laddu comments on a slight variant, citing as his source an anthology published in 1872, and notes that one verse in an inscription of the Yādava ruler Rāmadeva dated 1310 is evidently modelled on it, thereby establishing its considerable antiquity (Laddu 1957). B.D. Tiwari also refers to it in passing (Tiwari 1983: 88), without actually quoting it, and Stephan Levitt records a ms. in an American collection but misunderstands its final line (Levitt 2009). Otherwise it seems only to be found on numerous Hindu devotional websites (sometimes with the variant *pūrvaṃ* for its first word). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. The particular form of Prakrit most often used in Jain works is Ardhamāgadhī; Pali, the language of Theravāda Buddhism, is in reality another Prakrit, though often treated as though it were completely separate. The various Apabhraṃśas form the next stage in the evolution of the Indo-Aryan language group, with a still more regionalised distribution in their spoken forms than the Prakrits, and themselves develop into the modern languages of North India; however, as literary vehicles the variety is limited and scholars are not agreed on their designation. Though originally used also by brāhmanical authors, Apabhraṃśa came to be used almost exclusively by Jains. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Chandra suggests that the year 530 should be in the Vikrama era (VS): “Thus the correct date of *Paumacariyaṁ* comes to (530 – 57 = 473 A.D.)” (Chandra 1970: 17). Vimalasūri was also the author of a now lost *Harivaṃśacariya*. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Chandra 1970: 234-51 examines how Vimala’s work relates to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and in particular (pp. 245-51) to which recension, noting some similarities with all and concluding (p. 251): “Thus on the whole we find that the PCV bears more similarity with the Northern Recension of the VR and specially with the N-W. version rather than the Southern Recension of the VR as regards either being influenced by or having exercised its influence on the VR.” [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Śambūka, now the son of Candraṇakhā (= Śūrpaṇakha) and Kharadūṣaṇa, has entered the forest carrying the *sūryahāsa* sword which he places near him as he begins his *tapas.* Lakṣmaṇa sees the sword and uses it idly to slash a clump of bamboo, so accidentally decapitating Śambūka and providing the motivation for Candraṇakhā to send Kharadūśaṇa to ask Rāvaṇa for help to avenge their son, which leads him in due course to abduct Sītā (cf. De Clercq 2016; Sherraden 2023: 66-72). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. One is solely devoted to it: the *Añjanāpavanaṃjaya* written around 1300 by Hastimalla, who also composed a *Maithilīkalyāṇa.* Extended summaries of Vimalasūri’s Rāma narrative can be found at Kulkarni 1990: 15-50 (ch. II) and Chandra 1970: 18-32. Chandra also (1970: 234-51) examines the relationship of Vimala’s narrative with the recensions of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and concludes: “Thus on the whole we find that the PCV bears more similarity with the Northern Recension of the VR and specially with the N-W. version rather than the Southern Recension of the VR as regards either being influenced by or having exercised its influence on the VR.” [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Since the story of Rāma is included within the story of Vegavatī both in the *Vasudevahiṇḍi* and in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*Rāmāyaṇavṛttānta*, 107.12–26), there is some likelihood that this point of attachment is owed to their common source, the *Bṛhatkathā*; Kṣemendra’s *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* includes a *Rāmākhyāyikā*. Also, the name of Vegavatī and even some aspects of her story resemble the Vedavatī of the Uttarakāṇḍa — was perhaps the story of Vedavatī taken into the *Rāmāyaṇa* from the *Bṛhatkathā*, which then reversed the borrowing by absorbing a summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa*? [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. This work was long known only from a reference by Puṣpadanta (mid 10th century) and a few citations in Svayambhū’s work on Prakrit prosody, the *Svayambhūcchandas* (Bhayani 1958; cf. Bhayani 1983: 78-79 and Warder 1972-92: V.254-57) but *NCC* 25: 36 records one ms of this work. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. This seems possibly an attempt to reconcile the traditions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Dasaratha Jātaka*. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. H.C. Bhayani and R.M. Shah were stated to be planning to edit the work (Malvania 1983: 78) but this seems to have come to nothing, since there is no trace of a resulting publication. However, there is now an edition edited by Muni Kalyānakīrtivijaya (Bhadreśvara 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. This motif occurs first apparently in an allusion to the Rāma story in Haribhadrasūri’s 8th-century *Upadeśapada* (Kulkarni 1959-60: 297). Also in the 11th century, a brief treatment of the Rāma story occurs within the Sanskrit *Mahāpurāṇa* of Malliṣeṇa, completed in *śaka* 969 = 1047 A.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. A date is given within the work, at 14.187, where Dhaneśvara claims to have written it under one of the Śīlādityas in VS 477 (= 421 A.D.) but this date is most implausible and is probably included as a way of establishing the antiquity of Śatruñjaya as a pilgrimage site. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. However, Bruhn states, on the basis of a personal communication from F.-R. Hamm, that in contrast to the rest of his work Dhaneśvara does not follow Hemacandra in his Rāma narrative but the *Paümacariya* (Bruhn 1954: 38). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. In addition to the texts already listed, U.P. Shah records (Shah 1983: 61) that “Devi Prasada Mishra, in his unpublished Thesis on Cultural Study of some Jaina Purāṇas, has also noted some more Apabhramśa works, namely, Padma-purāṇa of Somadeva (V.S. 1650 = 1600 A.D.), Padma-purāṇa of Dharmakīrti (1612 A.D.), Padmapurāṇa of Bhaṭṭāraka Candrakīrti (c. 17th cent.), Padmapurāṇa of Candrasāgara (date not given), and Padmapurāṇa of Śrīcandra (date not given).” Shah further notes that Mishra also records the following undated texts in Sanskrit: “Padma-Mahākāvya of Śubhavardhana gaṇi, Rāmacarita of Padmanātha, Padma-Purāṇa-Pañjikā by Prabhācandra or Śrīcandra, a Sītā-Carita of unknown authorship, a Śītā Carita by Śānti sūri, another Sītā-Carita by Brahmanemidatta, and a fourth one by Amaradāsa”, to which should be added yet another *Padmacarita* in 10 sargas composed in 1595-6 A.D. by Devavijayagaṇin alias Vijayasena. The location of manuscripts of these works is recorded in Velankar 1944. Adrian Plau notes an undated Prakrit *Sītācaritra* by Bhuvanatuṅgasūri (Plau 2018c: 91-92). These further works serve to underline the continuing popularity of the Rāma story for Jain authors and so presumably among the Jain community as a whole. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Meghavijaya also composed in 1704 A.D. a *Saptasaṃdhānamahākāvya,* a Sanskrit poem in nine sections, where each verse simultaneously narrates the stories of five Jinas, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. It exists in a number of differing versions and there have been several attempts to reconstruct its original form from them,of which Edgerton’s has found most general acceptance among scholars (Edgerton 1924). Edgerton also discusses the spread of the *Pañcatantra* stories to the Middle East and Europe (Edgerton 1924: II; cf. Edgerton 1965: 11-20), while Norman Brown traces its prevalence in modern Indian folklore (Brown 1919). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. One such reference (to the folly of Rāma’s being deluded by the golden deer) is also found in the more or less contemporary *Śukasaptati,* a collection of stories supposedly narrated to a woman by her pet parrot — one story a night — in order to dissuade her from going out to meet her paramour while her husband is away. This forms another part of the *kathā* tradition of Sanskrit literature, again widely translated. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. These Upaniṣads will not be discussed further, therefore, nor will the *stotras*, mostly composed in the 16th and 17th centuries, which as part of their praise of Rāma sometimes summarise the story. Texts of the *Rāmatāpanīya Upaniṣad* (both *Pūrvatāpanīya* and *Uttaratāpanīya*) and the *Rāmarahasya Upaniṣad* are published in Mahadeva Sastri 1953; cf. also Weber 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. It must have been written before the final establishment of Muslim power in North India, since it is quoted extensively by Hemādri in his *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* (1260-70 A.D.), and is the earliest text to stress repeating the name of Rāma as a means to salvation; see Bakker 1985 and Bakker 1987. Hemādri’s work is the first to make *Rāmanavamī* celebrations obligatory. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. This has been being achieved through the work of the Mokṣopāya Project Research Group at the University of Halle-Wittenberg (Germany), under the leadership of Walter Slaje (see Slaje 1994 and 1996, Hanneder and Slaje 2002, Hanneder and Slaje 2005, Hanneder 2005 and 2006, and also Chenet 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Jürgen Hanneder has argued that its date can be limited to “only a very few years after the reign of Yaśaskaradeva, i.e. to the middle of the tenth century” on the basis that this ruler (whose name is mentioned in a prophecy at 4.32.11-16) is Yaśaskara of Kashmir, reigning 939-48 (Hanneder 2006: 55; more generally 35-55; cf. Divanji 1935: 21-23, Lo Turco 2002: 51, Slaje 2005a). The text itself claims to be by Vālmīki, while stating that it is now being recited for the twelfth time (having fallen into oblivion) and mentioning several Rāmāyaṇas composed by Vālmīki (YV 6a.22.22). The actual author may have followed the *abhāvabrahmavāda* school of thought (Slaje 2001: 780). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. This abstract, the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (also known as *Vāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa* and *Mokṣopāyasāra*), was known to the 14th-century philosopher Vidyāraṇya Mādhava as the *Vasiṣṭharāmasaṃvāda* (Slaje 1998b, Jurgen 2005:14-15). Its author Abhinanda has quite plausibly been identified with the author of a *Rāmacarita* under the Pālas (Raghavan 1972); if so, the *Mokṣopāya* must be earlier than the 10th century. Some form of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is quoted as early as the 13th century (Raghavan 1939: 128; cf. Lo Turco 2002: 55-57). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. These modifications — the elimination of Buddhist terminology in adapting the original text’s distinctive monism, which had more affinity with Gauḍapāda’s views, into one more in accord with the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara, and the turning of a public sermon into a private discourse — have left their traces in the process of adaptation (Slaje 2001). The text also seems to adapt verses from a range of poets from Kālidāsa onwards, as well as quoting Gauḍapāda (Lo Turco 2002: 46-52). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Against the earlier date is the fact that the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* mentions the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* itself however of uncertain date (cf. below), while in favour of it is the fact that the 16th-century *Torave Rāmāyaṇa* in Kannaḍa also seems to draw on the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* (Bulke 1971: 224). At one point (8.8.62-69) it gives a long list of thirty *Rāmāyaṇas* derived from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* ending with itself, which further suggests that the later date is the more probable one. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. One appreciable exception is that the first *sarga* of the *Manoharakāṇḍa,* named *Laghurāmāyaṇa* in its colophon, reproduces verbatim the first *sarga* of the *Bālakāṇḍa* (thus ĀR 8.1.1-100 = *VR* 1.1.1-79 plus several \* passages; preceded by a *maṅgalācaraṇa,* of which verses 7-15 correspond to *VR* 1.1.3\*-6\*, 20\*-23\* and 7\* in that order). On the other hand, the so-called *Sārarāmāyaṇa* at ĀR 8.17, though structured similarly to the *anukramaṇikā sarga* (*VR* 1.3), has very little verbal similarity and includes many different episodes, while the account of its contents (*anukramaṇikāvarṇana*) at ĀR 9.8 merely lists the main topic of each *sarga* in turn. The main purpose of the *Manoharakāṇḍa* is to inculcate various rituals directed towards Rāma and his associates. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. This particular episode is also found in the *Hanumannāṭaka* (5: 57), which could well be the source for its occurrence here in the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. The name of the teacher has given rise to unfounded speculation that he is identical with the 17th-century Marāṭhī religious figure of that name, who by tradition inspired the nationalist leader Śivājī and introduced the worship of Rāma to the area. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. This suggests that probably the *Rāmarakṣāstotra* was once an independent work, as its transmission in separate manuscripts further indicates (cf. Bühnemann 1983). Bühnemann also suggests (p. 123) that its popularity in Maharashtra “may be explained by the propagation of the cult of Rāma and Māruti (= Hanumat) in Mahārāṣṭra by Rāmdās (1608-1668)”. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Various other names are also used within the text: *Adhyātmarāmacarita, Adhyātmarāma, Rāmacarita* (in some internal colophons), *Adhyātmikarāma saṃhitā* and *Adhirāmasaṃhitā.* [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Such a dating for the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* does not exclude the possibility that both the *Rāmahṛdaya* (1.1.44(104)ff.) and the *Rāmagītā* (7.5), which are often transmitted and commented on separately, originated at an earlier period and were only later incorporated into the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.* The *Rāmagītā* was obviously composed in imitation of the *Bhagavadgītā*; it brings together the philosophical and theological teachings scattered through the rest of the work as Rāma expounds to Lakṣmaṇa a Vedāntin view of *mokṣa*, the performance of one’s duties in a spirit of devotion, meditation on the formula *tat tvam asi*, detachment of the senses and merging into the Absolute. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. This motif had undoubtedly originated earlier; it is known, for example, from Śākalya Malla’s *Udārarāghava* (5.18; cf. Shulman 2014: 642). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. In addition, Keislar identifies another text, the *Sītārāmayugalasahasranāma,* which claims to be part of the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa,* as differing from the published *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* and also almost certainly not the text supposedly used by Tulsīdās. He further suggests that a *Rāmāyaṇamahāmālā* (see Gauḍ 1938: 138-43) is identical with the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* used by Tulsīdās. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. It includes a *Rāmagītā* at two points (*Pūrva* 43-59 and *Uttara* 9-25) but, in contrast to the one in the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa,* they reveal a Viśiṣṭādvaitin standpoint. Another text showing a similarly erotic interpretation of the Rāma story is the *Satyopākhyāna,* variously ascribed in its manuscripts to the *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Brahmāṇḍā Purāṇa,* which narrates Rāma’s childhood in its *Pūrvārdha* and Sītā’s in its *Uttarārdha,* culminating in a detailed description of their marriage (Raghavan 2009: 37-38). Also apparently based on the *Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa* is a *Bṛhatkośalakhaṇḍa,* claiming to be part of either the *Brahma* or the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (Nagar 1999: I, 93-94). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Although the Rasik saṃpradāya of the Rāmānandīs, founded by Agradās, was first located at Raivasa and Galta in Rajasthan in the mid-16th century, its main centre subsequently moved to Ayodhyā with its particular associations with the Rāma story. It places great emphasis on aesthetic forms of worship, centred around the life of Rāma and Sītā as a couple; this is reflected in some of the alternative names for the sect: Jānakī, Janakavallabhī and Siyā saṃpradāya (another, Rahasya, reflects its later secretiveness). In this it was strongly influenced by the Kṛṣṇa worship centred in Braj. Its influence is also seen in two other late Rāmāyaṇas, the *Prema Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* and the *Mahā Rāmāyaṇa* (Singh 1980: 496-7). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. The name of the crow (*kāka*) Bhuśuṇḍa also occurs somewhat earlier as that of one of the Tamil *siddha* poets, Kākabhuṣuṇḍar, but the significance of this is unclear. He also appears as a *jīvanmukta* in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (*Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* 14-28) expounding a distinctive practice of yoga. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Mandodarī has in fact conceived by drinking the contents of a jar containing the blood of sages collected as tribute by Rāvaṇa, which she believes to be poison, and has done so because of Rāvaṇa’s neglect of her (8.27-29, cf. 6.23-26). It is therefore illogical that when Rāvaṇa gains the boon of invulnerability he adds a wish for his death if he lusts after his own daughter (8.11-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The author Rāmabrahmānanda states that he is the pupil of Svayaṃprakāśānanda, who is almost certainly identical with Svayaṃprakāśendra, a pupil of Vāsudevendra, along with the better known Upaniṣadbrahmayogin, while one of the sixteen extant manuscripts gives his name as Rāmacandrasarasvatī (Raghavan 1952-53). Rāmabrahmānanda also wrote a *Rāmāyaṇatattvadarpaṇa*, while Upaniṣadbrahmayogin was also the author of a number of works on Rāma worship, such as the *Rāmārcanacidvidyācandrikā* and *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇavyākhyā.* There is indeed some evidence that Rāmabrahmānanda and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin are the same person (Raghavan 1952-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. This title is also sometimes applied to separate manuscripts of the first *sarga* of the Bālakāṇḍa of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. The *New Catalogus Catalogorum* lists a series of titles for a work composed by Agniveśa, the disciple of Ātreyapunarvasu: *Rāmāyaṇasāra, Agniveśa Rāmāyaṇa, Agnidhararāmāyaṇasāra, Rāmacandracaritrasāra, Saptaślokīrāmāyaṇa, Rāmāyanasamayādarśa* and *Samayanirūpaṇarāmāyaṇa* (*NCC* 25. 53). Other texts belonging to the *kālanirṇaya* category include the *Rāmāyaṇakathāvimarśa* of Veṅkaṭārya, the *Rāmāyaṇasārasaṃgraha* of Veṅkaṭācārya and the anonymous *Rāmāyaṇakālanirṇayasūcikā.* [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Gorresio, who used a manuscript containing Lokanātha’s commentary then owned by H.H. Wilson, notes that Lokanātha refers to the earlier commentators Vimalabodha (date uncertain) and Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa (perhaps 12th or 13th century), who may also have lived in northern India. Two other commentators from northern India are Bhaṭṭa Devarāma and Kṛṣṇatīrtha. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. For some discussion and illustration of these aims and the ways in which they achieve them, see Rao 2015, Goldman 2006 and 2011, Lefeber 1994: 17-28 (= Goldman 1984-2017: IV) and, on their occasional resort to an interpretation by *śleṣa,* Bronner 2010: 182-3; for information on both extant and lost commentaries, see Bhatt 1964-65, updated in *Rāmāyaṇa* CE 1960-75: VII.655-64, where 45 commentaries in Sanskrit are listed, only a few of which have been printed, and there are also a number composed in the vernacular languages.. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Maheśvaratīrtha is usually placed in the middle of the 16th century but, since he quotes or paraphrases Katakayogīndra by name several times (Goldman 1984–2017: VI, 105-107), he cannot be earlier than the 18th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. There is also an earlier *maṇipravāla* work entitled *Taniśloki* by Kṛṣṇasūri, called Periyavāccāṉ Pillai. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. In the modern languages of North India the inherent short *a* of the Devanāgarī, Bengālī and similar scripts is no longer pronounced at the end of words and often also in unemphatic positions within a word but just when this development occurred varies between the different languages and at earlier periods this *a* was still present, as metrical patterns indicate; other sound changes also occurred that are not reflected in the script, of which the most obvious is the pronouncing of *v* as *b* in the eastern Indian languages. We shall use the forms of names which seem most usual in each language, while noting others when appropriate. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. As both Barua and Deva Goswami note, Mādhava Kandali states at the end of his *Laṅkākāṇḍa* (6709) that he composed his poem at the request of the Varāha king, called Mahāmāṇikya, who is identifiable as the Kacāri king Mahāmaṇikpha (1330-1370), whose kingdom was located in what is present-day Nagaon (Nowgong); the Barāhi are a branch of the Bodo-Kacāri tribe, which is of Mongoloid stock. Possibly a little earlier, in the first half of the fourteenth century, Harivara Vipra composed a *Lavakuśaryuddha,* but this is based partly on the *Jaiminīya Aśvamedha* and partly on folk elements (Deva Goswami 1994: 192-97). There is also another later work of the same name in Assamese (Rajkhowa 2011: 151-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. A similar blending of Maithilī with Bengālī was used by Vaiṣṇava poets in Bengal and called Brajabuli. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. This dating is based on the assumption that his patron was Rājā Gaṇeś. However, William Smith states that “The original poem was apparently composed in the last third of the 15th century” (Smith 1988: 30). The *Ātmabiraraṇ* also declares that he was a *kulīn* brāhman from Phuliya village, Nadiya district, West Bengal. The term *pāñcālī* denotes a genre comprising long narratives sung or chanted to instrumental music. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Adbhutācāryya’s *Adbhut Rāmāyaṇ* was composed at the end of the seventeenth century and draws on the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa,*the  *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Raghuvaṃśa* (Zbavitel 1976: 145; Smith 1988: 30) This massive work was once popular but now largely forgotten, apart from some episodes absorbed into Kṛttibāsa’s work. Another work, the *Śataskandharāvaṇavadha* is also attributed to him. Other Bengali versions include works by Saṣṭhivara and Gaṅgādās, a father and son (no later than the 17th century), Jagatrām and Rāmprasād, another father and son (completed in śaka 1712 or 1790 = 1634 or 1712 A.D.), and Rāmānanda, an avowed Buddhist (late 17th century). [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. The Śaiva affiliations of both Paraśurāma and Hanumān have of course purāṇic antecedents; what is interesting is the persistence of this feature so strongly in a Vaiṣṇava oriented work. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. This motif of Lakṣmaṇa’s abstention from food and sleep is obviously based on the vigil by Lakṣmaṇa and Guha over the sleeping Rāma and Sītā (Rm 2.45.1–9) on their first night in the forest, investing an essentially peripheral incident with deeper significance. It occurs also in the Telugu version by Raṅganātha and the Kannaḍa *Torave Rāmāyaṇa* of Narahari. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. The episode of Maiyārāb (≈ Mahī Rāvaṇa) is found in both the Malay *Ḥikayat Srī Rāma* and the Javanese *Serāt Kāṇḍa*. However, it should be noted that this same story was current at the opposite end of India, in the Tamil legends of Mayil Rāvaṇan and the Malayāḷam poem on Pātāla Rāvaṇa in the seventeenth century by Vīra Kerala Varma. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Even earlier possibly is the brief account of Rāma in the passage on the ten *avatāras* in Cand Bārdāī’s *Pṛthvīrājarāso,* the language of which can best be described as Maru-Gūrjar; the separation of Rājasthānī and Gujarātī into distinct languages begins around the middle of the fifteenth century and the earlier language is variously designated Old Western Rājasthānī, Old Rājasthānī, Old Gujarātī and Maru-Gūrjar (the last being preferable). The term Hindi is used to group a large number of distinct forms (which are usually regarded as different dialects of that language but can also be considered distinct languages, so great is the divergence between some of them). Viṣṇudās turned the local speech form, *gvāliyarī* (or *Madhyadeśī*) into a literary language, which later became Brajbhāṣā. However, his *Rāmāyaṇa* is preserved in only two, rather late manuscripts (1750 and 1863), which show considerable textual differences, indicating that the text was significantly reworked during its transmission (Bangha 2014: 375-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. At one point, in the story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (1,22-44), he even follows the *Mahābhārata* (3.100-113) rather than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (1.8-9), as Imre Bangha notes (Bangha 2014: 377). In his Uttarakāṇḍ he omits Sītā’s banishment and the Kuśa and Lava episode (as later does Tulsīdās) and concentrates on more warlike and genealogical themes, as well as Rāma’s ascent to heaven. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Another Hindi poet of this period, Īśvardās (c. 1450-1550) composed two short poems on parts of the Rāma story, the *Bharatvilāp* and *Aṅgadpaij* (dated 1502) which may be fragments of a fuller treatment (Stasik 2003: 88 and 2015). There are also many references to the Rāma story in the *Sūrsāgar* and something approaching a full narrative in its ninth *skandha.* Sūrdās, to whom this vast collection is attributed, traditionally was born in 1478 but most of the traditions about him, including his close association with the sect founded by Vallabha (1479-1531), are doubtful at best. What is certain is that the *Sūrsāgar* has been greatly expanded over time and the Rāma material probably forms part of this expansion. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Earlier in the 15th century Māṇḍaṇa, a dyer of Sirohi, was apparently the first to present the Rāma story in the area of Gujarat; however, his *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *ākhyāna* style only narrates events up to Rāma’s banishment and Bharata’s going to Citrakūṭa to seek his return. In 1451 Brahma Jinadāsa (or Brahm Jindās), the author of a *Padmapurāṇa* in Sanskrit, wrote his *Rām Rās* in Marugurjara (both already mentioned). In 1631 Samaysundar composed a *Sītārāmcopāī* in Merta. In addition, there are a number of *ākhyānas* on the Lava-Kuśa narrative found in the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*,composed in the 17th-18th centuries by Nākaradās (intended for singing and covering Sītā’s banishment and the birth of the twins in its first 17 *kaḍvās* and the war in the remaining 6), Mahīcandra (composed in 1663), Raghurām (composed in 1716 as part of his *Pāṇḍavāśvamedha*), a Jain monk Rājsāgar (1616), Viṣṇudās and Śambhurām (1739; the author was a Nāgar Brāhman, as was Viṣṇudās). For listings and brief details on the many little known Gujarātī versions see Jhaveri 1978: 28-33, U. Joshi 1980, D. Joshi 1989-90, 1995a, 1995b, 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Premānand wrote about 40 *ākhyānas*, including on episodes from the *Mahābhārata,* the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Jhaveri 1978: 40). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Śāraḷādās is also credited with the authorship of the *Bilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇa* (or *Bicitra Rāmāyaṇa*) of Siddheśbaradās, through conflation with Śāraḷadās’ early name of Siddheśvara Parida, but this work more probably dates from the late 16th or the 17th century. It was rediscovered and published by Satchidananda Mishra (Tripathy 2022: 77); it is based on the *Uttarakāṇḍa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. These temple reliefs are discussed in the later section on visual representations within India. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. In addition, there are at least thirty less well known Oriya versions, including an *Ārṣa Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛṣṇacandra Rājendra, *Rāmāyaṇas* by Kṛṣṇacaraṇa Paṭṭanāyaka and Puruṣottamadāsa, a *Pūrṇa Rāmāyaṇa* by Keśava Tripāthī, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇas* by Haladharadāsa (15th-16th century), Gopāla Telengā, Dāmodaradāsa and Gopīnāthadāsa, *Bilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇas* by Bārānidhidāsa (16th century) and Siddheśbaradās (probably 17th cent.), a *Saṃkṣipta Rāmāyaṇa* by Mukunda Paṭṭanāyaka, and the *Vicitra Rāmāyaṇa* of Viśvanātha Khuntiā (c. 1710 A.D.), as well as Upendra Bhañja’s *Vaidehīśavilāsa* of c. 1701 (an ornate poem with each line starting *va*). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Earlier, around 1595 A.D., Mādhodās Dadhavāḍiyā (1553-1621) composed a *Rāmrāsau* in 1034 verses, based mainly on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* but showing acquaintance with the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa,* and Surjandās Pūniyā (traditionally 1583-1691) composed a part narrative in 176 verses in the Ḍiṅgal dialect of Rājasthānī, also called *Rāmrāsau*, starting the narrative from Śūrpaṇakhā’s arrival (Maheshwari 1980: 81-82 and 84-85). The significance of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Rajasthani culture at all levels is illustrated by the fact that the main characters in the folk epic *Pābūjī* (its hero was a 14th-century Rajput prince cum brigand) are identified with the main figures of the Rāma story (Smith 1991: 91-93). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Fragments of a Koṅkaṇī prose telling apparently from the first half of the 16th century written in Roman script are preserved in a Portuguese archive (SarDessai 2000:30-31; Sardesai 2006: 66); this would predate Eknāth’s adaptation by half a century or more. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Eknāth, a Deśasth brāhman living in Paiṭhaṇ who deliberately preferred Marāṭhī to Sanskrit for his works, is best known for the *Eknāthī Bhāgavata,* his Marāṭhī commentary on the 9th *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and was by some accounts a prominent figure in the Vārkarī movement in Maharashtra, in which untouchables such as Cokhāmeḷa and Nāmdeva were major figures (both of whom Eknāth mentions in his short poems. He was also well acquainted with earlier works on the Rāma story and gives a list of other Rāmāyaṇas in Araṇyakāṇḍa 20.140-51, drawing his episodes not only from some of them but also from the *Hanumannāṭaka.* The section of the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Eknāth comprises around 25,000 verses and that by Gāvbā around 15,000. There is an illustrated manuscript of the text in the Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjavur (cf. Losty 1982: 141).

     An earlier work by Eknāth’s grandson Mukteśvar (17th century) is his *Saṃkṣeparāmāyaṇa,* “made up of renderings and adaptations of select relevant passages from different Sanskrit works like the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa and the Hanumantanāṭaka” (Tulpule 1979: 368). This is the same as the *Kautūhala Rāmāyaṇa* of which two manuscripts in the British Library are catalogued under that name (Blumhardt 1905: 16-17, nos. 29-30). But it is different from the *Saṃkṣeparāmāyaṇam,* a *kāvya* by Muddu Subba Kavi (Tanjore: Pūrṇacandrodaya Press, 1901). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Thomas de Bruijn further notes that “The story of Rama was also part of the repertoire of the sufi poets, as is evident from Muhammad Jayasi’s *Padmavat* (1540 AD), which depicts Rama’s exile and voyage to Lanka as an intertext for a Rajput king’s quest for the princess of Simhala Dvipa” (Bruijn 2005: 40). The extent of its circulation is also attested by the number of poems attributed to the great Kṛṣṇa poet Sūrdās which make effective use of allusions to the Rāma story in poems to Viṣṇu’s other *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa; Sūrdās himself was born by tradition in 1478, but his *Sūrsāgar,* as it came to be known, has grown enormously over the years and its ninth *skandha* is mainly devoted to the Rāma story (Stasik 2009: 61-66). [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Rāmlīlā performances may to have begun in the Vārāṇasī area not long after Tulsīdās’ lifetime, if not during it, and have become widespread across northern India. The best known Rāmlīlā, at least among scholars, is the Rāmnagar Rāmlīlā, started when Udit Narayan Singh (r. 1796-1835) took over a smaller local one and transformed it into the elaborate month-long performance performed over much of the Banaras mahārājas’ territories (Hess and Schechner 1977; Lutgendorf 1991c, Schechner 2015). Others have originated much more recently, such as the Lav-Kuś Rāmlīlā in Delhi, founded in 1979, originally performed near Old Delhi railway station, now performed over eleven days on the Lāl Qila Maidan (inside the Red Fort complex) and becoming increasingly politicised (Ganapathy 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Tulsīdās’ treatment of the Rāma story in these is quite varied — a point neatly encapsulated in the title Danuta Stasik gave to a lecture in Vienna: “One Poet – Many Rāmāyaṇas: Tulsīdās’ tellings of Rāmkathā” (18th January 2013, Institut für Südasien-, Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Apart from the few items revealed within his own work, virtually nothing is known for certain about Tulsīdās’ life, although much is recorded in hagiographic works, from the early-17th-century *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās onwards. Tulsīdās was most probably born in 1532 but there is considerable disagreement about the date. It seems from references in his *Kavitāvalī* that his family was poor and that his early life was not auspicious but that he studied, as a brāhman, under a teacher who was very probably a Rāmānandī. He hints that he lived in often difficult circumstances and he died, after suffering ill health, in VS 1680 (= 1623 A.D.), if a well known verse playing on the number 80 (as also his age and the place of his death, Āsī ghāṭ in Varanasi, which would place his birth in VS 1600 = 1543 A.D.) is to be believed. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Early manuscripts of the *Rāmcaritmānas* call its seven sub-divisions *sopān,* ‘stairway’, into the symbolic lake of its title, but later tradition gives them the *kāṇḍ* names used here. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Specifically, the story of Satī follows the *Rudrasaṃhitā* of the *Śiva Purāṇa* and the marriage of Pārvatī is based more loosely on the *Parvatīkhaṇḍa.* The latter episode forms the theme of another of Tulsī’s works, the *Pārvatīmaṅgal*, dated to 1585, which nonetheless appears to have formed the basis for the treatment of the episode in the *Rāmcaritmānas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Some editions of the *Rāmcaritmānas,* in order to include the omitted Uttarakāṇḍa material, add an obviously interpolated eighth book, the *Lavkuśkāṇḍ,* which covers the Śambūka episode, the banishment of Sītā, the birth of Lava and Kuśa in Vālmīki’s *āśrama,* their fight with Bharata’s army, Sītā’s vanishing into the earth and Rāma’s entering the river Sarayu (Stasik 2009: 86-87, cf. Stasik 2005: 119). [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Mataprasad Gupta discovered an old manuscript in which it comprises 26 couplets and he argued that it was the authentic text. However, Danuta Stasik has examined the literary quality of both texts and concluded that Tulsīdās’ poetic qualities are more evident in the printed text and that it portrays the social occasion better (Stasik 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. They start as usual with Gaṇeśa; then come invocations to Sūrya (in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva) as the light of heavenly knowledge banishing the darkness of ignorance, to Śiva as patron deity of Varanasi (verses 3-14) and to Umā (verses 15-16). The next eight verses are geographical, starting with two praising the Gaṅgā and Yamunā. In the third set of hymns in this prologue (25-64) the setting moves to Rāma’s court, ready for the delivery of the letter of petition, with verses 25-36 praising Hanumān, whom Tulsīdās asks to act as his intermediary (McGregor 1984: 115-16; *Vinaya Patrika* 1966). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. In some manuscripts and printed editions of the *Kavitāvalī* the *Hanumānbāhuk* (44 stanzas of appeal to Hanumān by the poet when ill) is added as an appendix and it does seem to have been originally part of the *Kavitāvalī* (Lutgendorf 2007: 97-99; Bangha, *Hindi through texts* 2 p. 44). [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. The editor of this work notes that the oldest known manuscript (dating from 1740) has only 41 couplets (Bangha forthcoming [Hindi through texts 2 fn. 37], citing Varma 1967: 24-26). [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Keśavdās also composed the *Vijñānagītā* (1610), modelled on Kṛṣṇamiśra’s 11th-century *Prabodhacandrodaya,* within later sections of which Vasiṣṭha appears as the teacher, as in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (a feature already seen in *prakāśa* 25 of his *Rāmacandracandrikā*). He also composed the *Vīrsiṃhdevcarit* (1607) in praise of his patron (in which he alludes to the harmony between Rāma and his brothers) and the *Jahāngīrjascandrikā* (1612) in praise of Jahāngīr, which even echoes his *Rāmacandracandrikā* (Busch 2005; Cavaliere 2018).

     A little later than Keśavdās, Senāpati’s *Kavittratnākar* of 1649 has a brief account of some Rāma episodes in its fourth chapter (*taraṅg*), the *Rāmāyaṇvarṇan,* and an exposition of *rāmbhakti* in the fifth, *Rāmrasāyanvarṇan* (Stasik 2009: 126-7). Later still come works such as the *Rāmāśvamedha* of Madhusūdandās (c. 1782, based on the *Padma Purāṇa* form of the Rāma story). [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Like Kṛttibās, Mādhavadeva states that Nārada narrated the outline of the entire Rāmāyaṇa to Vālmīki before Rāma was born. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. This was based on the *Rāmāyaṇacandrikā* of Kalāpacandra Dvija, a condensed Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* (Lekharu 1959: 225-26). [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Although her poem remained in the repertoire of local story-tellers and was sung by village women at marriages and similar ceremonies, it only came to scholarly attention through Dineshchandra Sen’s efforts to record the *Eastern Bengal Ballads,* as he called them in his major publication on this class of literature (Sen and De 1923-32; text of Candrāvatī’s *Rāmāyaṇa* vol. IV pt. II: 97-112; translation with preface vol. IV pt. I: 306-52; cf. Sen 1920: 185-204 and Candrāvatī 2013: 10-18). [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Several manuscripts of this work are known (though not nearly so many as of the *Razmnāmah*, the translation of the *Mahābhārata*). The original illustrated one made for Akbar was completed in November 1588 according to its colophon (Das 1983 and 1994); another illustrated copy was owned by Akbar’s mother Hamīda Bānū Begum and a third was made for ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān a particularly major figure at the Mughal court; these are all discussed further in the chapter on visual representations within India. Other manuscripts are located in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, the British Library (several) and Cambridge University Library (Truschke 2012: 281). But the actual text has never been published, which is the more regrettable since, although it was intended as a direct translation, the manuscripts appear to show at least minor variants (Truschke 2012: 283-4; Truschke 2016: 205). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. He makes these statements in a passage in his own highly critical history of Akbar’s reign, the Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh, kept secret and only circulated after Akbar’s death, where he also states that he finished the translation in March-April 1580 and it took him four years (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh,* 2: 366; Truschke 2016: 306 n.6). He also, in addition to objecting to translating it, completely refused to write a preface (Truschke 2016: 205-9). The claim that he rendered the translation into verse is probably a mis-statement by Badā’ūnī rather than evidence for a second translation. Abidi notes two manuscripts of an anonymous prose translation (BM ms OR 1248 and IO ms 1963) which also seem early (Abidi 1964). [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. One might speculate that the popularity in Kashmir of this Persian version is a reason for the late date of the first retelling in Kāśmīrī by Divākara Prakāśa Bhaṭṭa (noted below), since the Rāma story clearly was current in Kashmir long before, as shown in the work of Sanskrit authors from Kashmir such as Kṣemendra and Somadeva. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. One of these Persian translations of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* was then translated into English in 1784 by John Shore (taking up 3 ms volumes) but he never published it (Hanneder 2012) and indeed apparently destroyed it (Gandhi 2022: 251). The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* itself seems never to have been translated into Persian, only abridgements of it (Findiriskī 2006: 11-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Of the other *kāṇḍas*, Bāla contains 67 verses, Ayodhyā 150, Araṇya 83, Kiṣkindhā 94 and Sundara 73. Mādhavasvāmī also wrote an *Ovī Rāmāyaṇa* in *śaka* 1615 (= 1683 A.D.) and ten years later an *Ovī Bhārata*, as well as Marāṭhī adaptations of several *ākhyānas,* in-tales, from both Sanskrit epics (Mādhavasvāmī 1951: 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. According to verses 860-61 he composed it at Anandpur in *saṃvat* 1755/ 1698 A.D. near the temple of Nainādevī, close to the bank of the river Sutlej (Tulsi 1980: 518). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. It is presented as though spoken by Meharvān, the rival to Guru Hargohind and first leader of the breakaway Mīṇā group, but it was more probably written by his son Harjī in *saṃvat* 1703 (Syan 2013: 163). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Divākara Prakāśa Bhaṭṭa (also known as Prakāśa Rāma Kuryagrāmī) is thought to be a contemporary of Raja Sukhajīvana Siṃha, a ruler of Kashmir under the Afghans about 1760 (Grierson 1929: 285; Chatterjee 2000-01). However, in his translation Nagar places the author “in the early decades of the nineteenth century” without further details (Nagar 2001: x). His work is placed even later — again without details — in precisely 1846 by another scholar, who also claims that the first Kāśmīrī version is the *Śaṅkara* *Rāmāyaṇa,* written in 1843 (Pushp 1980: 541; cf. Kaul 1995: 363). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. The spelling Caṅkam follows the strict transliteration from Tamil but the pronunciation, and so often the popular spelling, is Sangam. Similarly, the poet Kampaṉ’s name is pronounced Kamban, since intervocalic stops are usually voiced in pronunciation, though written with the same signs as used otherwise for unvoiced sounds. The dating of the Caṇkam literature is that standard among most scholars; however, Herman Tieken argues for a later, 9th-century date (see Tieken 2001 and 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Nevertheless the major episodes in the story are mentioned in sequence: breaking Śiva’s bow to win Sītā (10.3), exile because of Kaikeyī’s words and Guha ferrying the exiles across the Gaṅgā (10.4), the killing of Virādha, receiving weapons from Agastya, mutilating the *rākṣasī* (i.e. Śūrpaṇakhā), killing Khara, Duṣaṇa and the deer (10.5), sorrow at separation from Vaidehī, Jaṭāyu’s going to Vaikuṇṭha, alliance with Sugrīva and killing of Vālin, Hanumān’s burning of Laṅkā (10.6), subduing of ocean, building the causeway, killing of Rāvaṇa and bestowing the kingdom on Vibhīṣaṇa (10.7), return to Ayodhyā and listening to the *Rāmāyaṇa* told by his sons (10.8), killing of Śambuka by Rāma, killing of Lavaṇa by his younger brother Śatrughna, parting with Lakṣmaṇa because of the sage’s demand (10.9), and ascent to Vaikuṇṭha (10.10). Also, for example, *Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi* 9.6 is in the form of a lament by Daśaratha over Rāma’s departure. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. A prefatory verse refers to *śaka* 807 (= 885 A.D.) as the year when it was presented to a distinguished audience, but some internal evidence, including a passing reference to Kulottuṅga Cōḻa (presumably Kulottuṅga I, 1070-1120 A.D.) in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, suggests that the 12th century is more probable (Zvelebil 1973: 208; Zvelebil 1974: 147). Certainly, since Periyavāccān Piḷḷai in the first half of the 13th century quotes from Kampaṉ, he must be earlier than that. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Zvelebil adds in a footnote: “A contemporary Tamil scholar-poet, KuḺantai PULAVAR, composed Irāvaṇaṉ kāppiyam, ‘The Epic of Rāvaṇa.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. This work is not to be confused with one of the same name by the modern writer Tanjai Subramaniya Mudaliar, published in 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. A Kannaḍa treatise on poetics, the *Kavirājamārga,* written in the middle of the 9th century, already refers to Kannaḍa versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Aithal 1987: 3-4). The oldest extant Kannaḍa work written in continuous prose, dating from the late 10th century, is Cāmuṇḍarāya’s *Triṣaṣṭilakṣaṇamahāpurāna,* which contains a narrative of the Rāma story based on Guṇabhadra’s, and a now lost *Bhuvanaikarāmābhyudaya* by Ponna, another Jain, can also be assigned to the 10th century. Nāgacandra himself also composed a work on the nineteenth Jain *tīrthaṃkara,* the *Mallināthapurāṇa.* The apparent popularity of Kampaṉ’s Tamil version in the Kannaḍa-speaking area is perhaps explained by the Jain emphasis of the *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa*. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* seems to have had limited appeal for vernacular authors, although a rather later Brajbhāṣā poet, Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī (a poet at the court of Shāh Jahān) composed a *Yogavāsiṣṭhasāra* (or *Jñānasāra*) in the early part of the 17th century and translations were made for Akbar (by Farmulī) and for later Mughal rulers. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. This Vīraśaiva-oriented work includes the Ahirāvaṇa and Mahirāvaṇa stories, as well as Rāma’s abduction to Pātāḷa Laṅkā from which Hanumān has to rescue him (Zvelebil 1987: xxxviii). The Yuddhakāṇḍa forms the larger part of its 44 sections. Its dating is uncertain and it may be as late as around 1770 (Aithal 1987: 6‑7). [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Further Kannaḍa retellings followed in the 18th century: the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* by Timmārya (c. 1708), the *Hanumadvilāsa* by Tippanārya, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Veṅkāmātya (around 1770, in *vardhaka ṣaṭpadī* metre and closely based on the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa*), the prose *Rāmakathāvatāra* by the Jain Devacandra around 1797, and another Jain telling by Candrasāgara Varṇī (1760-1835). There are also several Kannaḍa folk retellings (see Blackburn and Ramanujan 1986: 64-68). [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. One manuscript of the *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam* is apparently dated 1440 and so was possibly prepared in Rāma Paṇikkar’s lifetime. In the concluding verses of his work Rāma Paṇikkar gives a genealogy starting from his grandfather Karuṇēśan (deriving Kaṇṇaśśan, the name of the Kaṇṇaśśan parambu, from it). [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. He may have lived either some time between 1425 and 1625, probably in the first half of this period (Pillai 1986) or in the 16th century (Thampi 1996). Tuñcat is the name of a village near Tirur in Malappuram district (presumably his birthplace) and *eẓuttaccan,* “father of writing” is a common title for village teachers; he seems to have belonged to a line of teachers and was probably a Nayar. An *Irupatthinālu Vrittham* (“24 metres”) in 800 *ślokas* and an *Uttararāmāyaṇaṃ kiḷippāṭṭu* are also sometimes attributed to Eẓuttaccan but are almost certainly by lesser sixteenth-century poets. The tradition that he introduced the modern Malayāḷam script (a development of the Grantha script) into Kerala cannot be accurate but no doubt, like the supposed invention of the *śloka* by Vālmīki, reflects the substantial creativity that his work was recognised as representing. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. She is therefore not infrequently compared to her North Indian counterpart, Candrāvatī (most fully in Dev Sen 1997). A minor female poet, Abhirāmakāmākṣī, wrote at Vijayanagara in the 15th century the *Abhinavarāmābhyudaya* in Sanskrit. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. One point of interest about Varadarāja’s work is that some of the passages which accreted to the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* seem to have been taken from it, as its editor Venkata Rao indicates (Varadarāju 1950-53: I.x-xi). Versions in Telugu continued to be produced into the 18th century, such as the *Śaṅkara Rāmāyaṇa* of Timmanna, the *Mulabala Rāmāyaṇa* of Haridāsa, and the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* of Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. The upper half of this stone relief shows the birth of a human baby from a deer and the lower half an ascetic receiving the child from the deer’s womb. The Bālakāṇḍa says nothing about his birth. A scene on *stūpa* 6 at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, assignable to the third or fourth century A.D., has been identified as showing Hanumān and Rāma (Agrawala 1980-81) but in fact it represents a *Dasaratha Jātaka* scene, as do others there (Ray 2015: 205). [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Zwalf also suggests another connection with the Rāma story in a panel from Takht-i-Bāhī (BM OA 1900.-14.3): “The association of a monkey with the Bodhisattva in the context of drawing a bow, and perhaps to impress his prospective father-in-law, recalls Rāma, ... ... and may suggest, if not borrowing, common elements adopted in different ways into both stories” (Zwalf 1996: I, 160). [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. This is illustrated at Lal 2008: 36, fig 1.10. Fragments of figurines that may show a similar scene were also found at Kauśāmbī (Kala 1950: 44 and pl. XXXVIII A); the same scene occurs on a terracotta plaque from Chandraketugarh (Bengal), dated 1st century B.C. to 1st century A.D. (published in Christie’s sale catalogue 2271, *Indian and Southeast Asian art,* 20 March 2009, lot 1263). A round Śuṅga-period plaque from Bhīṭā seems to show Rāvaṇa approaching Sītā in the hut (Kala 1982-83: 235-36), while from Sugh in Haryana come Śiṅga-period images of bowmen and heads of monkeys identified rather tenuously as Rāma and Hanumān respectively (Handa 2006: 105-6, 112). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. One panel showing Daśaratha with Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā below and their departure above was already identified by Longhurst as illustrating the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (Longhurst 1938: 49-51 and pl. XLVa), another is claimed to show the meeting of Rāma and Bharata (Banerjee 1986: 24 and Lal 2008: 41) and a third Hanumān carrying Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and a third male, possibly Vibhīṣaṇa, despite there being no textual equivalent (Agrawala 1980-81). [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Thomas Donaldson has made a thorough study of the *Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti* in the context of images of Śiva and Umā (Donaldson 2007: I, 171-95 and II, 18-21 [colour pl. 26-29] and 187-211 [figs 95-134]). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Vashishtha even asserts that cult images of Rāma only occur from the 18th century onwards, apart from one in a Śaiva templa at Nimāj, Jodhpur district, dating to the 10th century (Vashishtha 1992: 217). But a number of Cōḻa bronzes from the 10th century onwards attest to an incipient Rāma cult (see below), while, for example, Rāma is found as one of the ten *avatāras* on the 16th-century Mādhavasvāmī temple at Mañcalakatta (Mahbubnagar dist., Andhra Pradesh). Earlier still, in the 6th century Varāhamihira lays down details for Rāma’s iconometry at *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 57.30.

     Hanumān also later develops a cult of his own, particularly in Maharashtra, where he is often called Māruti, with bronze statues and placques of him known there and in neighbouring Karnataka from the 16th century; interestingly many of the circular placques show him grasping the healing herb in his left hand (e.g. BM 1940,0716.323), affirming the continuing connection with the Rāma story of a figure who otherwise has become largely independent. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. This panel, sized 52 × 32 cm., shows Hanumān with left arm outstretched on the right and a large-breasted and pot-bellied Siṃhikā with both hands raised above her head on the left. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Despite occasional statements to the contrary, there seem not to be any Rāma-related terracottas from Ahicchatrā (none are listed in Agrawala 1947-48). However, several unprovenanced Gupta-period terracottas are in various museum collections. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. As can be seen, a considerable proportion of the terracottas listed have identifying captions or labels; this is a feature of this early period but for reasons that are unclear is then not common again until the Vijayanagara period. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (1.47.11-48.22), followed in this by Kṣemendra and Bhoja, Ahalyā is cursed to remain in the *āśrama* invisible but in other versions from Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa* (11.34) onwards mostly she is cursed to become a stone until released by Rāma. Ahalyā turned to stone is universal in visual representations but the earliest examples, here at Deogaṛh and a terracotta from Saheṭh-Maheṭh, are roughly contemporary with Kālidāsa. So did visual requirements prompt this innovation, as logic perhaps suggests? But would it have been intelligible to viewers without some basis in a verbal narration? [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Prabhāvatīguptā’s second son, Pravarasena II, issued a grant in her name, the so-called “Ṛddhapur plates”, in his 19th regnal year which records that it was issued *rāmagirisvāminaḥ pādamūlāt* ‘from the feet of Rāmagirisvāmin’ (i.e., Rāma on the hill of Rāmagiri, the modern Rāmṭek, where a number of Vākāṭaka-period Vaiṣṇava temples are located). Significantly, Pravarasena is also the reputed author of the *Setubandha*. Similarly, as noted above, an inscription dated 467-8 A.D. on the pavement of the Daśāvatāra temple at Gaḍhvā mentions the divine Citrakūṭasvāmin (*bhaga<v>cchitra<k>ūṭasvāmi*), by which Rāma must be intended.

     Much later, during the period of Yādava rule in the area, three large temples on the hilltop were dedicated to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān. The stone inscription of king Rāmacandra (A.D. 1271-1310) lists temples at Rāmṭek linked with the Rāma story, including one to Śambūka, killed by the sword Candrahāsā wielded by Rāmacandra who became known as Dhūmrākṣa (verse 86), no doubt the present Dhūmreśvara temple or a precursor (Bakker 1989: 493, Bakker 2019: 337-40 and Sherraden 2019a: 211-15). Rāmṭek was also a major ritual centre for the Mārāṭhī Bhosle rulers in the 18th century, with large-scale renovation of Vākāṭaka temples and construction of new ones by Raghujī Bhosle (1743-55). [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Bādāmi lies at the southern entrance to a relatively enclosed section of the Malaprabha valley flowing northeastwards to Aihoḷe at the opposite entrance to the valley, while Paṭṭadakal is located in the middle of the valley and Mahākūṭa is nearer to Bādāmi. All are in Bagalkot District.

     The Mahākūṭa Pillar Inscription of Maṅgaleśa, dated 12th April 602, contains both wording reminiscent of *VR* (*samudra iva gambhīraḥ kṣamayā pṛthivīsamaḥ* at l. 11 [≈ *VR* 1.1.17-18] and *jyeṣṭha<ḥ> śreṣṭhaguṇasamudayodatapururaṇaparākramāṅkapriyaḥ* at l. 6 [≈ *VR* 1.1.20]) and a reference to Rāma in a list of comparisons for Maṅgaleśa (... *mahendra iva durddharṣaḥ rāma ivāparājitaḥ ...* at l. 10 (Fleet 1890). [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. A list of the Rāmāyaṇa scenes can be found at Loizeau 2017: 183-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Nevertheless, what would be one of the earliest images of Rāma, if the identification and dating is correct, is from the early Rāṣṭrakūṭa period (late 8th to early 9th century) and is located in the Dharmarāya temple at Bannikopp (Dharwad dist., Karnataka) but misidentified as Arjuna (Sundara 1997: 389-90). [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. The dating for the excavation of the main temple is confirmed by a copper plate grant from the period of Karka II (c. 812-13 A.D.) which speaks about the greatness of this temple, declaring that even the architect who planned it was wonder struck that he could make it. However, there is evidence of several styles, suggesting an extended period of construction, and in particular the caves in the walls of the courtyard were constructed later, probably in Dantidurga’s reign. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Gail 1985 and Markel 2000 both provide full but sometimes differing identifications of all the episodes shown. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. A few instances of single panels or reliefs from other sites in Rajasthan — Kheda (Jodhpur dist.), Mauhari (Dholpur dist.), Mirpur (Sirohi dist. (mentioned without dating in Margabandhu 1983: 138-40) — may also be from the Pratīhāra period. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. This is undoubtedly the oldest known colossal Hanumān image (of which there has been a resurgence in recent years) and remains in active worship (as we have seen), meaning that the inscription is again obscured by the vermilion with which it is covered. The wording of the inscription suggests that the dedicator, Gollāka son of Gāhīla, was a devotee of Rāma. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Though first erected under the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāna, this temple is close to the Hoysaḷa idiom in style and much of it was probably built for the Hoysaḷa ruler Vīraballāḷa after 1193 A.D. (Cousens 1926: 80). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. P. Banerjee regards this panel as “Rāvaṇa fighting a diggaja” and claims that “The theme seems to have been based on Bhoja’s *Rāmāyaṇa Champū*” (Banerjee 1986: 27). [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. The basic episode is one of the most frequently represented episodes of any (and obligatory in vernacular versions from Kampaṉ onwards); by contrast, the immediately preceding episode of Rāma kicking Dundubhi’s corpse features on only three Vijayanagara-period temples. Further visual developments of this episode are Rāma stamping on the snake’s tail to bring the trees into line and his arrow then also piercing the snake’s neck or Vālin. Are these in some sense a visual equivalent for the arrow piercing the top of Mt Ṛśyamūka and the earth before returning to Rāma’s quiver (*VR* 4.12.3-4)? [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. A number of locations around Hampi came to be linked with the Rāma story from at least the 11th century and are mentioned in the local *sthalapurāṇas.* [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Interestingly, this temple is mentioned by the contempory Tamil Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* poet, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, who also alludes in his poetry to the Rāma story (Hudson 2008: 3-40). Further north, at Chilamakuru in Andhra Pradesh, the Ayastyeśvara temple built under a feudatory Cōḻa dynasty has a small relief of Rāma breaking the bow carved on a pillar of the probably late 9th-century *mukhamaṇḍapa* (Kamalakar 2004: 50-51, 211). [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Other Cōḻa temples dedicated to Rāma are listed in Raman and Padmaja 1995. In the case of the Kodaṇḍarāma temple at Madhurānta (Chingleput dist.) that this dedication is the original one is confirmed by an inscription of Parāntaka I (907-55 A.D.) recording his gift of land to the deity of the temple, Ayodhyāperumāḷ (Le Sauce–Carnis 2016: 18). Parāntaka also erected a memorial temple to his father, Āditya I, at Tondaimanād, called the Kodaṇḍarāmeśvara or Ādityeśvara. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. This view involves assigning the building of the temple rather earlier than is usually thought, since Śrīmāra Śrīvallabha’s regnal dates are 815-62 A.D. and has been challenged on other grounds (Lefèvre 2006: 270). [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. South Indian metal sculptures from this and subsequent periods are generally solid-cast and the majority are true bronzes (i.e. alloys of copper and tin, often with some lead content) rather than brass (copper and zinc); for convenience, the term ‘bronzes’ is here used for all. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. By its style this temple, exceptionally built of granite, seems to date from the mid 13th century but may be earlier (Mysore Arch. Dept 1938: 11-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. However, restoration work on the temple early in the 20th century (following its systematic dismantling in the later part of the 19th century) incorporated panels and fragments from other ruined temples around Haḷebīḍ, making conjectures about the scheme as a whole more difficult, while five sculptures from this temple are now in the National Museum, Copenhagen. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Temples dedicated to Rāma are also found from the Hoysaḷa period, e.g. the Kodaṇḍarāma temples at Hiremagalur (Chikmagalur dist.) and Malur (Kolar dist.). It was also under the Hoysaḷas that the first *rāmataṅkas* (religious tokens bearing images of Rāma and Sītā) were made, spreading from their kingdom to the Yādava kingdom and then the Vijayanagara state (Mitchiner 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. The stone inscription of king Rāmacandra (A.D. 1271-1310) lists temples at Rāmṭek (Rāmagiri) linked with the Rāma story, including one to Śambūka, killed by the sword Candrahāsā wielded by Rāmacandra who became known as Dhūmrākṣa (verse 86), no doubt the present Dhūmreśvara temple or a precursor (Bakker 1989: 493, Bakker 2019: 337-40 and Sherraden 2019a: 211-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. The Vijayanagara empire lasted for roughly three centuries under four successive dynasties: Saṅgama (c. 1336-1485), Sāḷuva (1485-1505), Tuluva (1505-65) and Āravīḍu (1565-1646). The modern name for part of the site of its capital, Hampi, derives from Pampā, the local name for the Tuṅgabhadra river, the city on its southern bank and its tutelary goddess (as seen in the *Pampāmāhātmya*). [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Thus Hanumān’s birthplace is believed to be the Añjanādri hill to the north of Hampi, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa met the Śabarī here, Rāma killed Vālin at Cintāmaṇi (in Anegondi) and installed Sugrīva on the site of the Kodaṇḍarāma temple, and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa spent the rainy season on Mālyanta hill. These *Rāmāyaṇa* associations pre-date Vijayanagara rule, as shown by earlier inscriptional references to Kiṣkindhā as located here. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Whereas Bālakāṇḍa episodes are well represented among reliefs at all periods, Uttarakāṇḍa episodes are virtually unknown before the Vijayanagara period and even then are not frequent. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. The temple is clearly a Śrīvaiṣṇava one and the available evidence strongly suggests a dedication to Rāmānuja (Dallapiccola and Verghese 2001: 113-16). [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Descriptions of all 33 *Rāmāyana* panels and their captions can be found at Choudary and Udayalakshmi 2006: 99-106 (cf. Le Sauce–Carnis 2016: I, 231-34). [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. These panels include unique representations of Rāma presenting Lakṣmaṇa with a bow following his mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā, for which there seems to be no verbal parallel, of Sītā dropping her ornaments as she is abducted, an episode which is quite elaborately treated in the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa,* of the leaders of the search parties, named in the Telugu captions as in the *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa,* and of the dying Vālin addressing Sugrīva. While the Veṅkaṭaramana temple is dedicated to Viṣṇu, Tāḍapatri also has the slightly earlier Rāmaliṅgeśvara temple, which has images of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa enshrined in one of its two sanctuaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Also in a non-religious context and in another medium, an inscription on a slab set up at the Candrāpuri entrance to Bāgūr village in Hosadurga district records a grant of a village made in 1543 to a certain Rāmayya by Kṛṣṇappa Nāyaka for the performance of a puppet show of the Rāma story (Mysore 1942: 136-7 [= *AR for 1941*]). [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. These paintings cover the story up to the waking of Kumbhakarṇa and are dated to the beginning of the eighteenth century (Vijayavenugopal 1987: 413-4). The artists have mainly followed Kampaṉ but some episodes are closer to the Telugu *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa.* [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Occasional instances are found into the eighteenth century and later. For example, a small granite temple to Nīlakaṇṭheśvara within Jambitige Agrahara (Chikmagalur dist., Karnataka) built in 1733 has two series of *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes carved on its wall panels (a *Śeṣaśāyin* up to the *Sundarakāṇḍa* on the western panel of the south wall and episodes from the *Sītākalyāṇa* to the death of Rāvaṇa on the west wall) and on the lintel of the door into the sanctuary a frieze depicting the story of Vālmīki as a robber and then converted and the story of Kuśa and Lava from the *Uttarakāṇḍa* (Verghese 2011: 49 and 52-53). [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. At Panaphuza (Kannur dist.) there is a painting of Rāma and Sītā and another of Rāma alone but these seem not to be part of a narrative series (Frenz and Marar 2004: 86-99). [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Ramachandran distinguishes an earlier phase from the sixteenth century, which includes the *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings and a later eighteenth-century phase (Ramachandran 2005: 104 and 208-47), whereas Heston provides evidence for an eighteenth-century date for all the paintings (Heston 2010 and 2013). At Bodinayakanu, just across the border from Kerala into Tamilnad, there are similar 18th-century *Rāmāyaṇa* murals in the zamindar’s palace (personal communication from Anna Dallapiccola, 5-6 February 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. There is also a panel on the Kumbhasvāmī temple erected in his reign showing the churning of the ocean and fragmentary images of Rāma and Lakṣmana, while about two centuries later on his successor Mahārāṇā Rājasiṃha’s Rājsamudra a stone plaque includes the killing of Mārīca. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Under Madhukar Shāh and his son Bir (Vīr) Singh, the Bundelā dynasty of Orcha made their court a flourishing centre of literature, painting and architecture with a definite Vaiṣṇava and specifically Rāma orientation (Sinha and Valderrama 2014; Zaweed 2008). Orchā’s peripheral location at this period in relation to the Mughal centres of power no doubt contributed to this relative freedom, as Bir Singh’s standing at Jahangir’s court perhaps did even more. He built a separate palace for Jahangir’s visit in 1605. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Also from Nepal, at the slightly earlier dating of the 15th-16th century, comes a temple panel of embroidered cotton with silks showing the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (acc. no. IM.24-1936; Crill 1989). Parallel examples to this textile noted by Rosemary Crill are a mid-15th-century page of sketched Rāmāyaṇa scenes (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.82.169.1) and a folio from a picture-book (*kalāpustaka*) dated around 1600 in Cambridge University Library (MS Add. 864). [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. However, there clearly was an earlier tradition of illustrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* for Mughal artists to imitate, since many details in the first imperial Mughal version such as the crowns and dress of Rāma and his brothers are derived from earlier Indian exemplars.Indeed, occasional earlier paintings of incidents from the Rāma story are found as illustrations to other texts, for example manuscripts of Bilvamaṅgala’s *Bālagopālastuti,* in the Western Indian style from the middle of the 15th century onwards. There are also literary references to mural paintings of the Rāma story in the palaces of the Delhi Sultāns, in Mullā Dā’ūd’s 14th-century *Candāyan* and Qut̤ban’s *Mṛgāvatī* of 1503 (Banerjee 1986: 258).

     Also in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum in Jaipur is the imperial copy of the *Razmnāma,* the Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata* made for Akbar, which includes 12 miniatures on the Rāma story. Other illustrated *Razmnāma* manuscripts often contain a few Rāma-narrative miniatures; for example the British Library *Razmnāma* (Or. 12076, dated AH 1007 = AD 1598) includes a painting by Da‘ud of Rāma’s servant hearing the *dhobi* quarrelling with his wife over Sītā’s chastity (f. 48r). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. However, John Seyller states that one of the paintings is dated AH 1000 (= 1591-92 A.D.) which would mean that in fact the paintings were not completed for at least three years after the date in the colophon recording the completion of the writing (Seyller 1994: 87 and 100). The manuscript remained in the imperial library at least until 1661 but had reached Jaipur by 1750 in unknown circumstances. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. L’al, Keśava Kalan, Miskīn and Basavana are prominent among those named, while among others of the fifty to sixty artists who worked on it are Keśava Khurd, Bhura, Dhanu, Maheṣa, Tulsī Kalan, Bhagavana, Banwali, Sanvala, Narayan, Śravaṇa, Mādhava Kalan, Chitrabhuj, Paras, Jagana and Tulsī Khurd (Rice 2017: 58-62). A full listing of the paintings and their artistscan be found at Seyller 1999: 323-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Another notation on the flyleaves designates it as a second-class manuscript with a valuation of 550 *muhrs*. Leach noted that there were two folios in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection, London, two in the David Collection, Copenhagen, two in the Museum Rietberg, Zürich, one in the Musée Guimet, Paris, and others in private collections; the Museum Rietberg now has four folios. Five leaves were sold at Christie’s in 2000 (sale no 6373: *Islamic Art and Manuscripts*, London,10 October 2000, lots 58-62), one of which, now in the Museum of Islamic Art, is signed by the painter Nūr Muhammad (who not long afterwards moved to Bikaner), the only one so far known to be signed. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. The bound volume in the Freer Gallery contains 130 paintings on its 346 leaves; they are by several artists, of whom 14 are named (some seem also to have worked on the *rāgamālā* paintings in the Laud *Rāgamālā* Album, which are linked with the Bikaner court with which ‛Abd al-Raḥīm had connections; Aitken 2013: 33-34). The translation seems closest to the NE recension of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* (Freer curatorial notes). A leaf by the painter Asi from the collection of Gerald Reitlinger (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, acc. no. EA1978.2591), is also catalogued as probably commissioned by ‛Abd al-Raḥīm. Akbar had ordered that his leading nobles make copies of both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* translations and some folios from another manuscript assigned to around 1595 are widely dispersed. The Laud Rāgamālā (Bodleian, MS. Laud. Or. 149), an album with 30 paintings, can also be linked stylistically with the Freer Rāmāyaṇa and so with the atelier of ‛Abd al-Raḥīm. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. That the repairs were made at an early date was suggested by Terence McInerney on the basis that “the restored areas, filling the irregular edges of some of them, are fairly close in style to the original work” (McInerney 1982: 26) [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. There are 19 miniatures in the National Museum, New Delhi (Parlier 1985); most come from a group of 24 offered for sale in 1956, of which two were bought by the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai and five by the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan (Chandra 1957-59). Others were acquired at various times by the Metropolitan Museum, New York (four; acc. nos 2002.503-506), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (two; Pal 1993: 289-91), the Cleveland Museum of Art (2013.306), the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (2010.6.2), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2004-149-15). the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (two; 2003.3-4), the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (68.8.56), the National Gallery of Canada (23553), Howard Hodgkin (Topsfield and Beach 1991: 26-27 and Filippi 1997: 54), the Edwin Binney III collection, the Ehrenfeld collection, the Ducrot collection (Ducrot 2009: 248, MG 1), the Polsky collection, the Fischer collection ((Britschgi and Fischer 2008, no. 80), the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, the State Museum, Lucknow, the J.P. Goenka collection, Mumbai (Goswamy 1999: 46-47), the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, the Pan-Asian collection (Seyller 1999: 34) and other private collections. Several of these have stamped impressions on the verso of the seal of the Datia Palace collection, where they remained until 1947. The damage has meant that the text on the verso has suffered the loss of 2-3 *akṣaras* at either end of each line.

     More on the Bīr Singh Rāmāyaṇa and the text on the versos of many folios can be found in JLB2019 and 2024 and the updated notes for them in “Notes towards publications” in “Publications and lectures” within “D. Ancillary material”. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. It has been suggested by Jerry Losty that the text was added later, in the 18th century (Poovaya-Smith and others 1989: 28). However, the text has suffered the same losses as the paintings and it is generally thought that the fire damage occurred quite soon after the series was completed; this was first suggested by Terence McInerney on the basis that “the restored areas, filling the irregular edges of some of them, are fairly close in style to the original work” (McInerney 1982a: 26). So, if not contemporary with the paintings, the text is not much later. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. There is one instance of consecutive text across two versos – indeed, of a slight overlap – since the text on the verso of Nat. Mus. 56.114/7 contains 6.948\* (insert of all N manuscripts, G1 and M5), 6.47.4-6 and 951\*1-4 (insert after 47.6 of all N manuscripts, M3 and T2) and San Francisco 2003.4v contains 6.951\* 4 (with an unrecorded reading in its fragmentary prior *pāda*) and 6 App.30.1-2,13-16,26-27,30-38,30 (App.30 is an insert of Ñ2 V B1-4 D3.4.9.13 T2-3); however, they are written by distinctively different hands. In addition, the verso of the next folio (Met. Mus. 2002.504) 6.48.16-86 with N \* passages and variants but some gaps and so follows closely. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Four leaves are now in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum, Hyderabad (76.111-4); another leaf (location now unknown), which Jagdish Mittal saw many years previously, apparently contained a colophon giving date and place as 1646 and Vārāṇasī (Seyller and Mittal 2013: 30-39). That date, if accurately noted (it is remarkably close to that of the well-known 1647, *samvat* 1704, manuscript now in the royal collection in Ramnagar), is surprisingly early, placing it among the oldest *Ramcharitmanas* manuscripts extant.

     Other similar leaves, most probably from the same manuscript, are in the Museum Rietberg, Zūrich (RVI 833 and RVI 1522), the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (RP-T-1993-365), the La Salle University Art Museum (08-O-207), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.85.228), the San Diego Museum of Art (1990.341), the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (1982.2.71), the National Museum, New Delhi (75.511 and 80.228), the La Salle University Art Museum (08-O-207), the Salar Jung Museum (ACQ-80-25, ACQ-73-57, ACQ-78-10, ACQ-72-39) and the Edwin Binney 3rd collection. The dates assigned by the various museums range from 1620 to the 18th century. A much later (19th century) but broadly similar leaf from a Hindi Rāmāyaṇa manuscript attributed to Nagpur has paintings either side of a central panel of text (BM 2000,1003,0.1). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Three paintings from the Eva and Konrad Seitz collection are now on permanent loan to the Museum Rietberg, Zūrich (2019.473-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Paintings from this manuscript are in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (BKB 6756–6815), the Sackler Museum of Harvard University (1995.69-70), Brooklyn Museum of Art (80.277.2) the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.71.1.13) and the Kanoria collection, Patna. Anand Krishna suggests that this and similar texts “seem to have been added about a century later” and adds an image of it (Krishna 1963: 17 fn.3 and Appendix B). [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Two folios in the Lalit Kala Akademi (Khanchi cat. 49a+b) may well also belong to this set. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. The manuscripts of most of the Mewar *Rāmāyaṇa* now in London were given by Rāṇā Bhīm Siṅgh of Mewar (r. 1778–1828) to Colonel James Tod (1782–1835, from 1818 the first British Political Agent to the Western Rajput courts) and by him some time after his return to England in 1823 to the Duke of Sussex (1773–1843), from whom they were purchased by the British Museum in 1844 (BL, Add. MS. 15296–97). It is not clear how the remains of the *Sundarakāṇḍa* (IO San 3621) left India, or what has happened to the rest of it, but it was acquired by the then India Office Library in 1912 in the form of a bound volume of 18 paintings. Nor is it known when the *Bālakāṇḍa* (now mostly in Mumbai) left the Royal Library in Udaipur; its history is obscure before it was offered for sale in Mumbai in the early 1950s. The *Araṇyakāṇḍa* remained in the Royal Library in Udaipur (and is recorded in the catalogue of that collection published in 1943) until the contents of the Saraswati Bhandar were transferred to the custody of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. The artistic aspects of this manuscript have been well covered in various publications (especially Losty 2008) and in the material on the British Library website “The Mewar Ramayana: a digital reunification” (http://www.bl.uk/ramayana), so will not be discussed further here; the text copied by Mahātmā Hīrāṇanda, taken from different and sometimes defective manuscripts, is described in detail in JLB’s contribution on that website (cf. JLB 2018d). A painting of a wedding scene, dated 1649 and stated to be possibly by Manohar, which is now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.71.49.10), seems wrongly to be identified as a folio from a *Rāmāyaṇa.*

     For his pioneering but incomplete edition of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* A.W. von Schlegel used the volumes of the Jagat Singh *Rāmāyaṇa* (in which he included the 1712 *Bālakāṇḍā*), yet all he had to say about the miniatures was that it had so many that there is one on nearly every other verso (*ornatus picturis miniatis, tam magno numero, ut alternis fere vicibus folii partem aversam pictura occupet,* Schlegel 1829: XLI). It follows an exemplar of mixed affiliation (Schlegel 1829: XLII). [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Specifically the Śiśodiyas claimed descent from Lava, Rāma’s elder son. Their patronage of manuscripts and monuments would have helped to foster the image of the Śiśodiyas in the eyes not only of their subjects and the Mughal rulers but also of other Rajput houses then flourishing under Mughal rule. Rāma is seen with the sun on his banner, reinforcing these political implications. But the fact that Rāvaṇa’s facial features resemble Akbar’s is probably intended to stress his splendour and power rather than to express overt anti-Mughal sentiment (cf. Losty 2008; Aitken 2010: 64-68). [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. These include the Cincinatti Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M86.345.3), Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena (ten) and the Ducrot collection. The number of these paintings – well over eighty – might suggest that they comprise more than one set but the numbering in the captions above them shows no duplications. Two paintings from a *Rāmāyaṇa* set in Mewar style with captions and the numbers 21 and 191 on a yellow panel above the paintings, which are dated around 1640 by the auctioneers, seem much nearer in style to this set and should perhaps be placed at the same sort of date (Christie’s 2724: 370-1). Parts at least of the series have also been copied by artists in the 19th and 20th centuries; for example one painting (Tennants 18.01.20: 143) is a close copy, including being given the same number, as the original in the Ducrot collection (ME 28), differing only in details of clothing and the caption. The Michigan University School of Art also possesses several examples, produced around 1975. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. A single painting of the birth of Rāma in a more refined style — possibly that of Wajid — was produced earlier, around 1680, at Isarda (Sotheby’s catalogue, *Indian & Southeast Asian Works of Art,* 19 Sept 2008: lot 236). [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. There are leaves in the Cleveland Museum of Art (1968.108), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1968-12-2) and the San Diego Museum of Art (1990.753); the colophon states that the manuscript was written in *saṃvat* 1802 (= 1744–45) in Kishangarh for five patrons named Rikhaji, Karamchandji, Mahataji, Shri Jagamalaji, and his son Motichandji, and the scribe was a monk Udayasagar in the Bijai (or Vijay) *gaccha* of the Śvetāmbara Jains. Rikhaji himself was apparently a Marwar artist. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. They were offered by Pundole’s of Mumbai in *The Fine Art Sale including classical painting* (M0029) on 21st January 2021, lots 2-5 and *The Summer Paintings Sale* (T0036) on 5th to 10th June 2022, lots 1-4 (each lot in both sales comprising two folios). The text on their versos was clearly planned to be continuous (and on two consecutively numbered folios continues without any break). The scribe’s exemplar for the *Bālakāṇḍa* basically aligns with the N recension and in particular specifically with the NE, whereas the \*passages included in the text on the few folios from the *Ayodhyā* and *Araṇya kāṇḍas* are clearly aligned with the S Recension. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Further examples of illustrated *Rāmcaritmānas* manuscripts, as well as of other vernacular versions, are noted in JLB 2018d, to which should be added a Jaipur-school manuscript of the Ayodhyākāṇḍ of the *Rāmcaritmānas*, signed by Rāmcaraṇ Kāyasth and dated VS 1853 = 1796-97 A.D., which was reputedly the only survivor of a complete *Rāmcaritmānas* once owned by Lakṣmībāī, rāṇī of Jhansi (Christie’s sale 15504, lot 76), and also a leaf from a painting with some text from a *Rāmrāso,* a version of the Rāma narrative in the Diṅgal dialect of Rājasthānī (Sardar 2016: 89). [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. In particular, at least 56 folios are extant from a 19th-century manuscript of an unidentified Hindi version elaborately illustrated in Kishangarh or Mewar style and several folios from a manuscript, again of an unidentified Hindi version, from Marwar c. 1820-40 are also known. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. These would have been among the large number of paintings from the Mandi collection sold in the 1940s through R.K. Bharany of Amritsar, about half of which went to Lahore. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. It was in the private collection of Raja Raghubir Singh of Shangri (which only became independent from Kulu in the mid 19th century) that 270 folios were found by M.S. Randhawa in travels in the Panjab Hills from 1950 to 1955, although some folios must have been dispersed before then (Randhawa 1959: 12). Family tradition asserts that the series was painted in Kulu by Kashmir brāhman artists. It was dispersed in 1961.ḍ Of the 349 adequately known folios 172 are in the National Museum, New Delhi, 16 in the Museum Rietberg, and smaller numbers in the Bharat Kala Bhava, British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Jagdish and Kamala Mittal Museum (Hyderabad), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Portland Museum of Art, San Diego Museum of Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and various private collections. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Some paintings that can firmly be attributed to the “Shangri Rāmāyaṇa” continue to come to light via sales catalogues, for example a folio showing Sītā asking Rāma to catch the golden deer numbered 68 and so coming between two now in the National Museum, New Delhi (62. 2517 and 2526, = Bagri 189-90; see Losty and Kwiatkowski 2016: 70-71, item 27). [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Jutta Jain-Neubauer has listed 35 folios – out of perhaps forty or more originally – with their subjects and locations (Jain-Neubauer 1981: 29-36); its folios, like those of the *Siege of Laṅkā* series, are now spread among several different collections. The majority, once all acquired by the Lahore Museum in 1933, were divided at partition in 1947, with 15 remaining in Lahore and 12 going to the Chandigarh Museum. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. These nine are the only folios known, although over forty were at least planned, since the highest certain folio number is 39, which is followed by a further folio (possibly folio 41). We are most grateful to Jorrit Britschgi for providing digital photographs not only of the versos of these nine folios but also of one of the folios from the “Siege of Laṅkā” series to be discussed shortly. For a fuller description of the paintings and comments on the present location of other paintings in the series see Goswamy 1981. They were acquired from a dealer who is reported to have bought them in Kabul (Jain-Neubauer 1981: 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. As well as the attribution to Mankoṭ, the series has also been linked to Nurpur and even to the sons of Devīdāsa during the reign of rājā Daya Dhata (Seyller and Mittal 2014: 36-38). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Some thirty – out of probably 48 paintings originally – survive but are widely dispersed in both museums and private collections; the largest single number is the 6 folios in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich, 2 of which were formerly in the Archer collection (Archer 1976: 122-5, nos 65-66). [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Out of these forty folios, the first eight are finished paintings, four more are part finished, and the rest are just drawings. The largest number (19, acquired in 1934, many of which show appreciable insect damage) is in the CSMVS, Mumbai, with 12 in the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, and others in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the British Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Rietberg Museum and the Howard Hodgkin collection. The reason for its incompleteness is unknown; the best suggestion that we have seen is that Mānaku abandoned it in favour of a new commission, to paint a *Gītagovinda* series, around 1730 (Goswamy and Fischer 1992: 243).

     B.N. Goswamy has suggested that some drawings, usually included within the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* series which Mānaku produced around 1740, in fact form a separate series (Goswamy 2017: 494-99) but, if so, these 15 drawings were evidently based on Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa* or a derivative. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. From being worshippers of Śiva and the goddess as Cāmuṇḍā, the Chambā rājās had become devotees of Viṣṇu, and specifically Rāma, in the 17th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. A large number of folios from this now widely dispersed series (of which more than a hundred survive) are in the Museum Rietberg, Zürich; others are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Baltimore Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the San Diego Museum, the Fondation Custodia, the Jñāna-Pravāha, Varanasi, the J. and K. Mittal Museum, and the Goenka collection. Vishwa Chander Ohri (1998: 101) argues for a specific attribution to Gauḍhu, the second of Nainsukh's four sons but Darielle Mason (2001: 190-91) doubts the reason given (similarity to a Rāmāyaṇa set in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chambā), as well as the “romantic claim” of its creation for Sansar Chand’s wedding in 1781, first suggested by W.G. Archer (Archer 1976: 72) but for which there is no concrete evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. In addition, the Narbadeśvara temple, Sujanpur, was built by Sansar Chand’s queen (the Kāṅgṛā style murals with scenes from both the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are later, probably late 19th century). Nadaun, Sujanpur and Alampur all served as capitals for Sansar Chand after his defeat by the Sikhs in 1809. Sansar Chand’s large painting collection was divided after his death among various members of his family, gradually coming onto the art market (Randhawa 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Even quite small states emulated their larger neighbours; for example, somewhat enigmatic but extensive series of double-sided folios in a rather naïve folk style has been variously assigned to Kulu, Nurpur or Mankoṭ and dated anywhere in the 18th century; they began appearing at various auction houses from 2007 onwards, share unusual dimensions (around 11.5 × 28 cm.) and normally have both an indication of *kāṇḍa* and a number. Again, Hindur/Nālāgaṛh, ruled by an offshoot of the Candella dynasty, produced a Bālakāṇḍa series in the mid 19th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Udit Narayan Singh is probably better known as the initiator of the month-long Rāmnagar Rāmlīlā performance, continued under his successors, including Vibhuti Narain Singh (1927-2000), when it attracted the attention of several scholars (Schechner and Hess 1977, Hess 1983, Kapur 1985 and 1990, Sax 1990-91, Lutgendorf 1991, Lothspeich 2020); he also commissioned the *Mānasdīpikā* of Raghunāth Sindhī. Artists from Jaipur and Banaras, as well as provincial Mughal artists from Delhi, Avadh and Murshidabad, worked on the paintings, which are therefore variable in style. In the 1970s, while still a bound volume in the maharaja’s possession, Richard Schechner photographed the entire manuscript (in black and white, available in the archives of the Center for Art and Archaeology, American Insti­tute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon); single unbound folios began to come onto the art market from the mid 2010s. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Somewhat earlier, in the Nāyak period, a *citrarāmāyaṇa* in the form of 3 painted sheets, 1 each to the Bāla, Ayodhyā and Araṇya kāṇḍas, with captions in Telugu following Mādhavasvāmī’s text, was produced (Krishna 1994): this is therefore somewhere between a true manuscript and a set of paintings. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. For example, no. 101 shows Tārā mourning for Vālin and 102 shows Rāma aiming at Vālin, the order having been reversed presumably at some point ((Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Indien 745; Colas and others 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Also in the Bibliothèque Nationale is a set painted in company style from Tamilnadu or SE Karnataka of 89 illustrations to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* of which ten show Bālakāṇḍa episodes (Bib.Nat. 303.61-70; Hurel 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. This ms (ms As 4673; Mittal 1985; Srinivas 2005) is significant both because it is datable and because it reveals a previously unknown Rajahmundry school of painting as a regional style entirely distinct from work done at the courts of the Deccani sultans. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. An illuminated manuscript of Mādhavasvāmi’s Marāṭhī version was produced at Tanjore in the middle of the 19th century (BL Or.MS.13535; Losty 1982: 141). Somewhat earlier, in the Nāyak period, a *citrarāmāyaṇa* in the form of 3 painted sheets, 1 each to the Bāla, Ayodhyā and Araṇya kāṇḍas, with captions in Telugu following Mādhavasvāmī’s text, was produced (Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal library; Krishna 1994): this is therefore somewhere between a true manuscript and a set of paintings. Mādhavasvāmī, 1676-1713, was a descendant of Rāmdās. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Moor had been attached to the Marāṭhā army in the wars against Tipu Sultān and later was stationed at Poona and Bombay, during which time he collected extensively (Shaffer 2022: 131-75); he also wrote *The Hindu Pantheon* (London: J. Johnson, 1810) with many illustrations and various other works. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Examples can be found, for example, in the Museum Rietberg (RVI 1039 and 1040), the San Diego Museum of Art (1990.430 and 433), the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS 105-1955) and the British Library (IOL.J47.5), as well as appearing in auction catalogues. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. 44 folios were sold at Sotheby’s sale, 26 Nov 1968, and at one time three were in the collection of Edwin Binney 3rd (of which one is now San Diego 1990.433). Other pages are now in the British Library (Add.Or.5725; cf. Losty 2013: 15), the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (2011.22), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.72.88.3). [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. The painting style is similar to contemporary Orissan mss, with some Mughal features, but is broadly in a folk style; no artist is named. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. An *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* illustrated in Patna style was commissioned by Charles Boddam at Chapra in Bihar in 1803-04 (BL Mss Eur C116/1-2 and C215/1-2). Illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (or related texts, such as an Orissan translation of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*) were produced in Orissa in the 19th to early 20th centuries by several scribes, including Satrughna, Sarathi Madala Patknaik, Raghunatha Prusti and Miccha Patajoshi; a characteristic feature of these is that the deer which decoys Rāma away is shown as two-headed (Williams 1996). However, this motif is not unique to Orissa, since it is first known from an illustrated *Bālagopālastuti* manuscript of 1425 from Gujarat (Gadon 1996) and also occurs in 19th-century paintings from Gujarat (e.g. LACMA, M.79.191.7), as well as on a portable shrine to Veṅkaṭeśvara from Tirupati, c. 1800 (Ashmolean Museum, EAX.264), so it must have had a wide distribution. An 18th-century illustrated *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* manuscript in scroll form, written in Vārāṇasī by the Kashmiri Paṇḍit Ghāsirāma, is now in the Bodleian Library (MS Sansk.e.13(R)/Or.long.D.49; illustrated in Formigatti 2019: 34 and 97) and an illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscript also in scroll form (of the type in vogue for various manuscripts during the later 19th century) is known from around 1860 (Bonhams sale 20020, lot 203); its text is in Sanskrit and is apparently that of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. One 19th-century example from Tamilnad shows scenes from the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (V&A, IM 25-1911); a 19th-century example probably from the Madurai area depicts *Bālakāṇḍa* events from the arrival of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga in Ayodhyā to Rāma breaking Śiva’s bow in Mithilā (V&A, IM 24-1911); another *kalāṃkari* from Sri Kalahasti, dating from around 1885, is a *saṃpūrṇa rāmāyaṇa,* with the narrative scenes surrounding a central tableau depicting the *Rāmapaṭṭābhiṣeka* (V&A, IS 75-1886). Of the 19 *kalāṃkaris* in the Victoria and Albert Museum eight illustrate the Rāma story. A broadly similar example, probably dating from the early 19th century, is in the Musée du Cinquantenaire, Brussels (Inv. EO.1848) and another from Kalahasti (Chennai dist.), assigned to 1880-90, is in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (EAX.2067). The same pattern of narrative scenes around the central tableau is found in canopies from coastal Andhra, examples of which are one from Chirala, near Guntur, dated 1881-82 (V&A, IS 2103-1883) and one probably from the Macchilipatnam area made in the second half of the 19th century (V&A, IS 5457(A); Dallapiccola 2015b). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. However, the only example recorded by Mittal is a fragment of a *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Yayāticaritra* *Purāṇa* scroll, probably produced in the Karimnagar district as late as c. 1890-1900 (Mittal 2014: 184). [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. The V & A Museum has several Bengali *paṭs* (IS.105.1 to 3–1955, IS. 107:1 to 7-1955), as does the British Museum, and there are occasional specimens in other museum collections; “Paiṭhān” paintings are also found in the British Museum and several other museums, while a number have come on the market in recent years. Use in this manner is not so definitely attested for some sections of a scroll painting painted probably around Madras in the second half of the 19th century (V & A Museum IS.35 to 37-1968) but seems likely. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Furthermore, there is evidence that Aśvaghoṣa (see below) was well acquainted with the story as found in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* but not in the *Dasaratha Jātaka* (Sircar 1976-77: 52-53). [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. These three are the Mon *Loik Samoing Ram*, the *Rama Vatthu* from Myanmar and the *Lanka Xihe* from Yunnan (Ohno 1995a: 3; Ohno 1999: 98-99; Ohno 1999: 36 respectively). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. There is a much shorter Pali verse version in the canonical *Cariyāpiṭaka* (Cone 1977: xxix-xxx; Collins 1998: 498). Versions in Sanskrit are a *Viśvantarajātaka* in Āryasūra’s *Jatakamālā,* one in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya,* and *Viśvantarāvadānas* among the Gilgit manuscripts, in Kṣemendra’s *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā,* among the palm-leaf fragments from Qizil and an unpublished text from Nepal; there are also Chinese and Tibetan translations. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. The similarity of name between king Okkaka, the traditional founder of the Sakya clan, and Ikṣvāku, Rāma’s traditional ancestor, may be yet another instance of Buddhist awareness of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. An interesting sidelight on the familiarity of Buddhist texts with both epics is thrown by the Spitzer manuscript, a unique but fragmentary Sarvāstivādin philosophical treatise found among Kuṣāṇa-period manuscripts from Qizil and probably datable to the second half of the third century A.D. (Franco 2004: I, 32-33; cf. Franco 2005: 109-111). This contains both a list of *parvans* in the *Mahābhārata* (cf. Schlingloff 1969 and JLB 2010c) and a summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Franco 2004) which, though fragmentary, includes Sītā following Rāma into exile in the forest, her abduction by Rāvaṇa ruler of Laṅkā, alliance with the king of the *vānaras,* and the *ṛākṣasas* (Schlingloff 1969: 334) — in effect all the essential elements of the narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Buddhaghosa can be dated to the 5th century. The second of these is found in the later 12th-13th-century section of the *Mahāvaṃsa,* the *Cūlavamsa,* in which some other dismissive references to the narrative are found (Godakumbura 1980: 435-6), but the earlier *Dīpavaṃsa* (3rd-4th century) has nothing. It was this negativity of the Pali chronicles which led Ananda Guruge to assert too sweepingly that in Sri Lanka “the Ramaya neither has been nor is a part of the living cultural tradition” (Guruge 1993-94: 131; cf. Gombrich 1985). Later still, however, the *Rājāvaliya,* a Sinhalese chronicle of about the 15th century, mentions Rāvaṇa and even dates him around 2300 B.C. (Godakumbura 1980: 434). [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. There are several idiosyncratic features of this telling, the most notable being that Malaya is the first of three sons of Sītā, the other two being Kit-śri (created from a blade of sacrificial grass) and San̆dalin̆du. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Justin Henry provides a translation based on available manuscripts of the *Rāvaṇa Katāva* in the appendix to his book (Henry 2023: 207-47). Though absent from that text, the *svayaṃvara* and Rāma Jāmadagnya bow stories were known in some Sinhala folk rituals (Kariyawasam 1990). Hanumān’s exploits when he is captured by Rāvaṇa’s guards and dragged off into the underground Kālī temple below Rāvaṇa’s holdout resembles in many respects the Tamil “Peacock Rāvaṇa story, from which it is loosely derived (Henry 2023: 64-67). [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. ḷ Its incidental mention of Kaniṣka shows that, at least in this form, it cannot be earlier than the 2nd century A.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Most of the parallels adduced in studies on this (cf. Dudbridge 1970; Mair 1989, surveying and assessing previous studies; Walker 1998; Subbaraman 2002; Toh 2004) are in reality the stock-in-trade of folk narrative universally, as even a cursory glance at a motif-index (e.g. T = Thompson 1955-58, TB = Thompson and Balys 1958, or TR = Thompson and Roberts 1960) will show. An abridged translation of this Buddhist-inspired novelascribed to Wu Cheng’en(a fictionalised account of the pilgrimage to India of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang) was published by Arthur Waley in 1942 under the title *Monkey.* There is now a complete translation, with the title *The Journey to the West* in four volumes, by Anthony C. Yu (1977-83). The existence of occasional Chinese monkey figurines (see Lee 2009; Zhang Xing 2010: 41; Krishnan 2010: 42) do not materially increase the plausibility of the connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Four of the mss are in the India Office Library (now part of the British Library) and were first studied by F.W. Thomas, who labelled them A–D (Thomas 1929), and two are in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and are identified as mss E and F (Lalou 1936, cf. Balbir 1963). The mss are: IOL Tib J 737.1 (A), IOL Tib J 737.2 (B & C), IOL Tib J 737.3 (D), Pelliot tibétain 981 (E) and Pelliot tibétain 983 (F). Dunhuang lies at the eastern junction of the northern and southern silk routes. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Recension I is found in mss D+A (actually one ms), C and F and recension II in E and B (de Jong 1989: 85). [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Ronald Emmerick was preparing a new translation, evidently still incomplete at the time of his death in 2001 (Emmerick 1992: 41; Emmerick 1997: 25). Regrettably, apart from the studies by Bailey and Emmerick, the only other work on the Khotanese version seems to consist of articles in Japanese by Kazuo Enoki (Emmerick 1992: 41), who died in 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. This “Crystal Mirror” is the *Bolor Toli* of Jimbadorji, a compendium of geographical information and observations about various countries, produced in 1833; the Rāma story here forms part of the genealogy of the Śākya clan. The somewhat earlier “Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems” in Tibetan by the Mongolian Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (1737-1802) contains no reference to the Rāma story. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Golstunsky’s manuscript study, including the text of this work, is preserved in the Buryat Research Institute of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The Kalmyk translation “was then published in Ehlista, the capital of Kalmykia: Ramayana / in the Kalmuck language / translated from the Oirat version of Ancient Indian epic by P.Ts. Bitkeyev. Ehlista: Kalmykian publishing house, 1982.” (personal communication from Y.V. Vassilkov, 30th January 2013, citing Yuri Roerich). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Probably meaning Ikṣvāku, as the equivalent Sanskrit genealogies of the Buddha render it; a king Okkāka also occurs in the *Kusa Jātaka* (531). E.J. Thomas discussed the relationship of this *Dīgha Nikāya* passage to the *Dasaratha Jātaka* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1927: 5–16). It has beenplausibly suggested that this view of Sītā’s parentage arose through confusion of Daśaratha and Daśakaṇṭha , i.e. Rāvaṇa (cf. de Jong 1954: 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. This trade between India and Southeast Asia also linked up in the early centuries A.D. with the trade from the Roman empire reaching India (for which the best evidence comes from the port of Arikamedu, at its peak in the 1st century A.D. and from the Περίπλους τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης

     or *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, which also vaguely refers to somewhere in SE Asia, perhaps Sumatra, as Χρυσῆ “the golden region”); this is shown, for example, by the finding at Oc‑èo (in southern Vietnam near the border with Cambodia, which was the main port of the kingdom of Funan, linked by canal with Angkor Borei), of an embossed pendant imitating a Roman coin type of Antoninus Pius issued in 152 A.D. (Borell 2014), and by Chinese silks reaching the Roman market. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Tradition links the founding of the kingdom of Funan to the marriage of the brāhman Kauṇḍinya to Soma, the daughter of a local *nāga* chief. In reality Funan was probably not so much a unitary state (which is the way it is presented in Chinese sources) as a group of chiefdoms. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Inscriptions date Śaiva temples on the Dieng Plateau (north of Yogyakarta, Java) to the late 7th and early 8th centuries (Chapman 2013: 38). [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Its main known sites are Nakhon Pathom and U Thong. However, there is no evidence for the Rāma story among the Mons, even in Lopburi, which was a port and a source of copper in the Dvāravatī period. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. The Thai apparently captured Angkor itself twice in the 14th century, in 1369 and 1389, but were unable to hold it for any length of time. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. After an earlier sacking in 1569 the Burmese king Bayinnaung installed Dhammarāja, a member of the dynasty which formerly ruled Sukhodaya, as his vassal but in 1593 that dynasty under Naresuan (Nareśvara) broke free from Burmese rule and in the next year captured the then Khmer capital of Lovek. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. The ancient coastline was probably not far south of Ayutthayā, with the Bangkok region still under sea water; at the least this area seems to have been swampy and so not habitable. The use of the Pallava script suggests greater contact with S. India than with Bengal. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. The large size of the sea-going ships built in SE Asia in the first millennium A.D. (revealed by recent excavations) makes clear that it was mariners from this region who were the leaders in developing this trade between China, SE Asia and India (Manguin and others 2011); images of boats from the first half of the millenium in India show river boats not sea-going vessels. Equally, it was the opening of this trade in the twelfth century to Chinese vessels (the great junks developed in the tenth and eleventh centuries) by the Chinese dynasty of the Southern Sung that led to Śrīvijajaya’s commercial and political decline. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. It is likely that Tamali, mentioned as a destination of Indian merchants in the *Mahānidesa* (second to third century A.D.), is Tāmbraliṅga and so that it was a trading settlement much earlier. Tāmbraliṅga itself adopted Theravāda Buddhism but further south many communities later converted to Islam; by the 15th century a clear religious boundary had been established on the isthmus between Buddhist mainland SE Asia and Muslim Malaya. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Inscriptions in Old Malay and southern Brāhmī script from South Sumatra and Jambi, which are dated between 683 and 686, often refer to Śrīvijaya. Similarly further inscriptions found at Palembang indicate its central role in the history of Śrīvijaya. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. The mention of *Yavadvīpa* with its seven kingdoms in the account of the eastern search party at *VR* 4.39.28-29, even if this can identified with Java, would be little earlier. Also mentioned here are <an island> rich in gold and silver and the islands of the sea, which may be vague allusions to parts of Indonesia. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. The Sañjaya dynasty (its rulers incompletely listed in king Balituṅ’s Mantyāsih I inscription of *śaka* 829/907 A.D. and fully in his Wanua Tĕngah III inscription of *śaka* 830/908 A.D., both in Old Javanese; cf. Christie 2001) was indigenous to Java. The first known Śailendra inscription in Java is the Kalasan inscription (D. 147) which is dated *śaka* 700/778 A.D and perhaps significantly, like all but one of their inscriptions, is in Sanskrit in *siddhamātṛkā* script, while their art shows signs of influence from Pāla art. The precise nature and extent of the so-called Śrīvijaya “empire” is a matter of debate, too complex to be entered into here. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. In 1365 the Majapahit ruler Hayam Wuruk commissioned the Buddhist cleric Prapañca to compose a poem extolling his rule, the *Nagarakertāgama,* which claims numerous realms on the islands of Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo, Sulawesi, Bali, Sumbawa and many smaller islands as tributaries of Majapahit. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. An exception more apparent than real is the 11th-13th-century Vat Phu temple complex (Champasak Province) in the southwestern tip of Laos, which is essentially an outlier of the Khmer empire and, though originating as a Śaiva temple (later converted to Buddhist), has some Rāmāyaṇa reliefs, including one of Rāvaṇa, Sītā and Hanumān. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Possibly even earlier epigraphic evidence can be found at two other locations: the 5th-century *yūpa* inscriptions of king Mūlavarman from Kutei, East Kalimantan, Borneo, if one verse does indeed echo *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* 5.41.6 (Chhabra 1945: 14-15), and the Canggal inscription from Central Java (dated *śaka* 654 = 732 A.D.), if the Kuñjara (*kuñjarakuñjadeśa*) mentioned in it can be identified with the location of Ayastya’s *āśrama* visited by the exiles (Chihara 1996: 132), to which the comparison of king Sañjaya’s *digvijaya* with that of Raghu gives support (Levin 1999: 264). Jean Filliozat suggests that there is a reminiscence of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* in a 3rd-century inscription C.40 from Võ Cạnh (central Vietnam in Cam territory) in the words *lokasyāsya gatāgatim* (Filliozat 1969) but these seem to me quite likely to be aphoristic.

     Somewhat later, in the 9th century, a stele in situ at Pre Rup, in the Angkor area, mentions Rāma’s banishment and the abduction of Sītā by an enemy (Cœdès 1937: I, 83, 296; K. 806.51), a 9th-century inscription found to the northeast of Thnal Baray at Angkor, states that Vālmīki is the narrator of the Rāmāyaṇa and also taught Rāma’s son(s) the story of Rāma as described in the Uttarakāṇḍa and the Bālakāṇḍa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, and an inscription on a stele from Phnom Bayang (now at Phnom Penh) declares that Rāvaṇa has 10 heads, was hurt by Śiva’s foot while moving Kailāsa and roared (Cœdès 1937: I, 256-58, 300, K.853; Giteau 1967-68: 594-95). Further allusions of this type are found in inscriptions from the 10th century onwards (mentioned below). [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Similarly, in Java an early-10th-century copper-plate grant, the ‘Copper-plates of Sangsang’, refers to an individual reciting the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Also in Cambodia, other 11th-century inscriptions which mention the *Rāmāyaṇa* are one at Prāsāt Barmei (K. 744) of around 1078 and one erected by a paṇḍita of Jayavarman VI(Filliozat 1983: 194-96). [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Tran identifies the 4 scenes as Rāma stringing the bow, messengers sent by Janaka to inform Daśaratha, preparations for the wedding, and apsarases and gandharvas dancing and singing in celebration. From other Campā sites comes a less direct attestation of the Rāma story in the form of representations of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa, e.g. on a tympanum at temple F1, Mỹ Sơn (Guy 2014: 72) and on the temple of Ky Thach Phu Nan (Levin, 2008: 95 + fig 7.17). Further evidence of ancient Cam acquaintance with the Rāma story is found at Khuong My, in the same general area but dating to the early tenth century (see further below). In Cambodia, a 9th-century inscription (K. 281) found northeast of Thnal Baray mentions Vālmīki as narrator of the Rāma story and a fragmentary 10th-century inscription at Angkor Thom mentions a Bhārgava guru, Vālmīki (K. 491). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Certainly, there are references in later sections to dated inscriptions of the 9th century and to Rakai Pikatan who died in 855 A.D. (Aichele 1969), which tend to support both the dating of the poem and its political dimensions (Worsley 2006/2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Its precise dating rests on the issue of whether an inscription (D28 in the Nasional Museum, Jakarta, sometimes called the Śivagṛha inscription) dated *śaka* 778 (= 856 A.D.) records, as seems very probable, its consecration by Rakai Pikatan to celebrate his victory over his enemy Bālaputra, after possibly a lengthy period of construction (Jordaan 1996: 23-25; Worsley 2006; cf. Christie 2015: 52-53; Restiyadi 2020); the OJ part of this inscription (the Sanskrit part is illegible) is the first example of OJ poetry influenced by Sanskrit *kāvya* poetics, while Rakai Pikatan himself is referred to in the later parts of the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin*. The ancient name of the Prambanan complex is uncertain but Arlo Griffiths has suggested that it was Laṅkā(pura) and *sarga* 8 of the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* mentions a Śaiva temple at Laṅkā (Griffiths 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. It is interesting to note that one of the reliefs at Caṇḍi Borobudur (8th-9th century), that of Siddhārtha winning his bride, uses the motif of the hero shooting an arrow through 7 sāl trees from the *Lalitavistara* (an account of the Buddha’s life) which seems to be taken from the Rāma tradition. It shows Siddhārtha competing with other young men for the hand of Yaśodharā; he stands in the centre of the group, balancing an arrow and shaded by *a parasol*. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Another rather later example is the Knaud *kris* (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, TM-6046-1, dated Śaka 1264 = AD 1342), of which the blade is decorated on both sides with scenes and motifs from the Rāma story; it is said to be a treasured royal heirloom, presented at the royal palace, Yogyakarta, in 1884 or 1885 to Charles Knaud (hence its name). [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. He was not alone in this; there is considerable evidence of the deliberate cultivation of Sanskrit literary learning in Java at this period, for example, Kumāradāsa’s *Jānakīharaṇa* is another *kāvya* known to have been studied by students there (Lokesh Chandra 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Its author is clearly indebted to Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa.* There is also at one point a borrowing (though much transposed and with many verses fragmented) from *Bhagavadgītā* 10.20-38 at 21.129-47, where the sages praise Viṣṇu while Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the *vānaras* lie ensnared in the *nāgapāśa* (van Nooten 1973-74). So too 24.52-60 are derived from the *Manusmṛti* 9.303-11, dealing with the eight deities embodied in a king, and there is some evidence of influence from Kālidāsa’s *Meghadūta* (Khanna and Saran 1993) and the *Kāmandakīyanītiśāstra* (Andō 1996: 14-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Part of the second (24.52-60) forms the basis for the later *Aṣṭabrata,* “Eight rules of life”, which has remained popular in Java up to the present, coming to be seen as a genuinely Javanese theory of leadership (Wieringa 2018). When the text was integrated into the Islamic court culture of central Java, the eight deities embodied in the king of the OJ *Rāmāyaṇa* (and of its source in the *Manusmṛti*) were replaced by the virtues represented by these gods (Wieringa 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Since its author mentions king Dharmawangśa (r. 990-1016 A.D.) as his patron, the work can be dated fairly precisely (Phalgunadi 1999: 5); Tom Hunter dates it precisely to 996 A.D. (Hunter 2018). He also shows that its thorough treatment of the story of Nimi found at *VR* 7 App.I.8.83-103 provides a dating *ante quem* for that well-attested episode. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. The conflict had probably been handled about a century earlier on the basis of the *Mahābhārata* version of the story in the *Rāmawijaya* (or *Arjunāntaka*), probably composed in the later 13th century in East Java (Creese 2011: 111-13). Mpu Monaguṇa's *Sumanasāntaka* in the 12th or early 13th century is based on the story of king Aja (Rāma’s grandfather) and queen Indumatī from Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṃśa* (Hunter 2013); this was subsequently lost from Java but its popularity was maintained in Bali, since its highly erotic and explicit account of their wedding night probably made it unacceptable in Java during the Islamic period. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Large numbers of mainly 19th-century Javanese *wayang kulit* leather puppets can be found in many museum collections, most notably the Wereld Museum, Rotterdam [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Other 14th-15th century reliefs from Trowulan, the capital of the Majapahit kingdom, also illustrate the Rāma story (Fontein 1973; Saran and Khanna 2004: 116-7), including one which shows the earliest known version of the Benjakai episode (MB 2012c). The nearby 15th-century terraced sanctuary of Caṇḍi Yudha (site LX) on Mt Penanggungan once had reliefs on its second terrace showing Yuddhakāṇḍa scenes (Kinney 2003: 285; Saran and Khanna 2004: 130; Kieven 2013: 313-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. A frieze of vānaras carrying musical instruments is carved below these narratives. Levin also notes sculptures from this period of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa, for example from the temple of Kỳ Thạch Phu Nhân (Levin 2008: 95 + fig 7.17). [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. For earlier inscription see above. Later allusions to the Rāma story are made in the Sanskrit inscription on the Preah Khan stele (K. 908) of 1191, which also likens Jayavarman VII to Rāma, and on the Prāsāt Cruṅ stele (NE of Aṅkor Thom; K. 287; end 12th century). [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Vālin wrestling with Dundubhi is also found several times at Angkor Vat but seems never to be represented in Indian sculpture (Loizeau 2021: 89-90). Jean Filliozat (1983: 201-2) cogently identifies the monkey at the right of the Churning of the Ocean frieze at Angkor Wat as Vālin. Sophearith Siyonn also identifies a seduction of Rṣyaśṛṅga at Banteay Samre (Siyonn 2005: 105, fig. 2) but this is doubtful, as are his identifications of reliefs at Thommanon (Siyonn 2005: 115, 121-22). [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Vittorio Roveda has challenged the dating for these reliefs assigning them to rebuildings in sandstone around a century later of an original brick-built temple (Roveda 2002b: 49). He also implausibly suggests that a relief of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa on a pediment at Banteay Srei (presumably this one) may have been copied at Angkor Vat (Roveda 2002a: 244) but differences in the representation rule this out. The purpose of these ‘library’ buildings is not altogether clear (cf. the discussion in Kapoor and others 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Scenes from the Ayodhyākāṇḍa intrigues and the Uttarakāṇḍa problems, which are notably absent, would have been inappropriate on his funerary monument, especially given the way he acceded to the throne by killing his uncle Dharaṇīndravarman I. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. These are two internal pediments showing Rāmāyaṇa scenes – a seated Rāvaṇa flanked by two small figures (but claimed to be Hevajra in Sharrock 2015) and Rāma decapitating Śambūka – as well as other reliefs showing Vālmīki receiving the Rāmāyaṇa from Brahmā and the hunter killing the *krauñca,* Rāma killing Rāvaṇa, and perhaps Rāma, Sītā and the golden deer (Green 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Another item no longer in situ is a military standard in monkey form, perhaps Hanumān, from Prāsāt Phnom Bayang, Takeo, of the late 12th or early 13th century (National Museum of Cambodia, Ga 5472; illustrated at Jessup and others 2006: 96 no. 71). [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. The Phimai National Museum contains further Rāma story reliefs from the site itself and other nearby sites of the same period, including Prang Ku (Si Sa Ket Province). We are very grateful to Dr Amara Srisuchat and her colleagues in the National Museum Service of Thailand for all their planning and assistance in our visits to these and other historical sites in February 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. It must always be borne in mind that each published text represents only one version, not the totality of the tradition current in any particular area; because a feature occurs (or is absent) in one published text, we must not assume that it was or was not known in the same area or language group at the same date. The versions known collectively as the *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* are especially complex (Barrett 1963). The narratives of both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* have continued to be significant in Indonesian political life into modern times (cf. Resink 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. The copy of the Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma acquired by Archbishop Laud and donated to the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Laud Or. 291; Jones 1986), is one of the oldest Malay manuscripts in Britain and probably the oldest known decorated Malay manuscript. The manuscript which Roorda used cannot now be traced (Brakel 1980: 147). L.F. Brakel provides a listing of the 15 or so manuscripts known outside Jakarta (Brakel 1980: 147-48). [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. The motif of Sītā as Mandodarī’s daughter has spread very widely; for example, it also occurs in the Tibetan version from Dunhuang (9th-11th centuries; cf. Roesler 2016: 51-52) and in various other SE Asian versions, including the Javanese *Serāt Kāṇḍa* and the Old Sundanese version (see below). Other episodes that can be traced back to the *Vāsudevahiṇḍī* include Lakṣmaṇa’s killing of her son as Śūrpaṇakhā’s motivation and Khara and Dūṣaṇa as one individual (Raghavan 1975: 121). [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Very few of its narrative elements are original; almost all can be traced to other tellings (Sanskrit or SE Asian), re-arranged and transferred to other characters in a kaleidoscopic effect to an extent not appreciated by Juan Francisco. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. The Rāma story has also been part of the repertory of the Sundanese *wayang golek,* the rod puppet theatre of West Java, ever since the form was developed in the 18th century in the highland areas of Pasundan. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. On the other hand, more direct influence from the *kakawin* is visible in the modern retelling (late 18th or early 19th century), the *Serāt Rām* by Radèn Ngabèhi Yasadipura. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. This manuscript (part of B.39.4 in the *Inventaire provisoire des manuscrits khmers de la Société Asiatique*) is a copy made on European paper in the 1880s for Etienne Aymonier from an older, poorly written manuscript and preserved unnoticed, though bound up with other *Rāmakerti* parts, among his collection in the Société Asiatique (Khing 1995: 7-9, 77). Other parts of B.39.4 include Lakṣmaṇa struck by a blow from a lance. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. This incident is paralleled by that of Mūlamatāni in the Malay *Ḥikāyat Serī Rāma* and Mūlaphalam in the Thai version. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. It is likely that the woman who appears on relief panels 2 and 16 of the mid-9th century *Rāmayaṇa* frieze on the Caṇḍi Brahmā at Prambanan (with Daśaratha’s 4 young sons, and involved in the scene when Rāma listens to gossip), is Kikewī, Kaikeyī’s malicious daughter of who persuades Sītā to draw Rāvaṇa’s portrait (Kats 1925; Fontein 1997: 196; Saran and Khanna 2004: 38-39 and 70). [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Other images were removed during the colonial period and went first to Berlin and then to the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Phetleik pagoda in Pagan, probably also from Anawratha’s reign, has a terracotta plaque with a *Dasaratha Jātaka* scene. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Also from Kyanzittha’s reign paintings in the *tondi* of the Abeyadana temple, close to Bagān, include a figure of Rāma carried by Hanumān (Thaw Kaung 2002: 137). [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. An enlarged prose version, the *Mahā Yama Vatthu,* was probably written late in the 18th century (text published by U Thaw Kaung in 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. A royal commission (Commission of Eight) was set up in 1789 by the Crown Prince to translate stories from “the Gyum (Krom) capital of the kingdom of Ayuthia and the Yan capital of the kingdom of Haripunja” (Thein Han 1973: 76; Thaw Kaung in Rooney 2017: 4-5), from which came the Rāma-play tradition. In the 19th century stage performances and marionette shows of the Rāma story were presented in the Myanmar palace by royal troupes of professional artists, a tradition that continued well into the 20th century. The most popular form of the Rāma story in Burma is one composed for dramatic performance, the *Rāma Pya-zat taw-gyi* or *Thiri Yama,* written by Nemyo Nataka Kya Khaung in the late 18th or early 19th century (Thaw Kaung 2002: 138-9). Its precise relationship to a work compiled by the Nataka Kyaw Gaung (official in charge of royal dramatic performances) from the first half of the 19th century is unclear; the latter work has been translated (by Tin Maung Kyi from *parabaiks* in Mandalay University Library; Rooney 2017). The Rāma story (*Yama Zatdaw*) is often the subject matter of 19th-century illustrated folding books (*parabaik*) and hangings (*kalaga*). [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. At the Shwedagon pagoda a western hall, erected in 1900, was decorated with Rāmāyaṇa scenes but was destroyed by fire even sooner, in 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. These are the first king Rāmāthibodi (Rāmādhipati), the second Rāmesuan (Rāmeśvara) and the fifth Rāmrachathirat (Rāmādhirāja). Prince Dhani Nivat Kromamun Bidyalabh also notes that the *Yuan Phai,* “the defeat of the Yuan”, makes frequent reference to the story of Rāma (Dhani Nivat 1943: 71); this heroic poem celebrates the victory of king Boromma Trailokanat of Ayutthaya (formerly prince Rāmesuan, r. 1448-88) over the Yuan, the people of the rival kingdom of Lanna, in 1474-5 A.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Multiple references to the Rāma story are found in one of the few surviving Thai literary works from before 1767, the *Yuan Phai*, which celebrates the victory of King Boromma Trailokanat of Ayutthaya (r. 1448-1488) over the Yuan (the people of Lanna, then an independent kingdom.

     Satya Vrat Shastri lists three texts composed in the Ayutthayā period, each covering only part of the Rāma narrative: a *Rāchāphilābkhamchan* or *Nirāt Sīdā* (referred to in a *Cindāmanī* by Horāthibody), a *Khamphāk Rāmakien,* and a *Bot Lakhon Rāmakien* (Shastri 2021: 21). A work with the second title was printed as the cremation volume for Thǭngyū Suwannaphāt, Krungthēp [Bangkok], 1918, but the others seem completely untraceable. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. However, their artistic style with Chinese-type clouds is against this (Ling Achirat Chaiyapotpanit, personal communication, 28th January 2013). Also from this period come an album of 63 paintings of scenes from the Rāmakīen, c. 1800-40 (Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2006.27.9) and a similar volume in the Thai royal collection in the Bangkok National Museum. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. For example, nearly half the cabinets from the early Ratnakosin period with narrative scenes in the collection of the National Library, Bangkok, show a scene related to the Rāma story and could be interpreted as Rāma symbolically protecting the Buddhist scriptures contained within (Goss 2016: 5-6). The continuing popularity of the story is further shown by the large number of theatrical masks for the main characters and also shadow puppets for use in that form of presenting the story that are preserved from this period. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. In its relatively sympathetic portrayal of Rāvaṇa and in the form of some names (e.g. Kalaikōṭ from Tam. name for Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, Kukhan from Tam. form of Guha) the *Ramakīen* seems to be nearer to Tamil version(s) than to the *Vālmīki* *Rāmāyaṇa* (cf. Prapandvidya 2021). The episode of Rāmāsur’s attempt to rob Maṇīmekhalā of a jewel, found also in some Khmer versions, is presumably based on a South Indian tradition (cf. Lévi 1931). [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Hanumān’s sexual activity is not entirely unprecedented within the Indian tradition. Whereas he merely defeats the guardian goddess of Laṅkā in later additions to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and in the *Narasiṃha Purāṇa,* in the Jain tellings by Vimalasūri (*Paümacariya* 52) and Hemacandra (*Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* 6.182-280) he both fights and makes love to Laṅkāsundarī.

     The interchange of names/roles between Vālin (Siamese P’ālī) and Sugrīva (Siamese Sukrib) in the *Rāmakīen* has a parallel in the Lao version, *Rāma Jātaka* (Dhani Nivat 1948: 51-52). [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Pierre-Bernard Lafont’s edition is based mainly on the second of two mss, one in the Vat Xieng Chay monastery in Muang Sing, the other in the private possession of Chānsly Khongām, a resident of Muang Sing. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Sachchidanand Sahai’s edition is based on 6 mss (A-F) from Roi Et (NE Thailand), Vat Pra Keo (Vientiane) Vat Kang Tha (Ban Bo O), Ban Naxon Tai, Ban Hom and Vat Nong Bon, but basically it follows ms D (from Ban Naxon Tai, 40 km from Vientiane) copied in 1934 A.D. according to the colophons of parts 1 and 2; the final, 4th colophon states that the *Phra Lamma Muman* was written by Phutthaphochan on a date equivalent to 22nd May 1850 A.D. giving presumably the author and the date when the original composition was completed. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. This was published in 1971 by the Bibliothèque Nationale à Vientiane from several recent mss (Vo 1971: 11); the published text contains 1823 verses. There is a brief summary in Vo 1971: 76-86. Paintings of this version from the 19th and 20th centuries are found at Vat Pe Ke and Vat Mai in Luang Prabang (Ratnam 1974) and Vat Up Mong in Vientiane. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. The only manuscript known is in the Yuan script and dialect, spoken in Xieng-Mai and northern Laos; Sahai’s edition (Sahai 1976) includes the text and an English translation of this palm-leaf manuscript preserved in the Royal Palace, Luang Prabang, Laos, as well as the photographs of the 33 murals in the Vat Up Mung monastery in Vientiane already reproduced in Vo 1971 and 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. A similar tradition is recorded in the Việt chronicles, which however include the building of the *setu*, thus placing Rāvaṇa’s kingdom across the sea and to the south of the country of the people of Campā (Dhar 2019b: 360, citing Maspero 2002: 24-25). Moussay suggests that the story may have been introduced from Khmer sources at the time of king Prakāśadharman (r. 653-86), the erector of the Trà-kiẹ̆u inscription (C. 173) noted above, who was the son of a Khmer princess (Moussay 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. This is known only from a paper copy of a palm-leaf manuscript in the National Library of Thailand, Bangkok, and it seems that the Rāma story has not the same status among the Mons as it has in Thailand and Cambodia (personal communication from Christian Bauer, 29 July 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Another telling of this version than the one known to Francisco was noted down at a slightly earlier date and shows some differences in its story-line but it is only known in a Malay translation entitled *Radia Mangandiri* (Lahiri 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. The Wereld Museum has at least a dozen, with ten in the Amsterdam branch (the former Tropen Museum) having the VOC stamp (H-68, H-69, 292-1, 411-1, 430-1, 680-1, 1583-1, 3250-4, 3250-5, 3952-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Examples can be found in the British Museum (1995,1110,0.1; Dallapiccola 2010: 240-42), the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.23-1996), the Museum of Fine Art, Boston (2019.1972), the Royal Ontario Museum (2016.42.2), the National Gallery of Australia (NGA 80.1636, NGA 91.631), the National Gallery of Victoria (AS50-1985) and the New South Wales Art Gallery (122.1998). Trade in Indian textiles of various sorts to Southeast Asia started much earlier, of course, for example from Gujarat to Sumatra probably during the Śrīvijaya period and from South India to Indonesia from at least the 9th century onwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)