

*Steiner – Highland Philology.
Results of a Text-Related Kashmir Panel at the 31st DOT, Marburg 2010*

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Walter Slaje, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

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Katrin Einicke und Andreas Pohlus

Roland Steiner (ed.)

Highland Philology

Results of a Text-Related Kashmir Panel
at the 31st DOT, Marburg 2010

Dr. Roland Steiner, the editor of the present volume, is a member of the Mokṣopāya Research Group of the Seminar für Indologie, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The present volume is a collection of textual studies on various features of the history and culture of Kashmir. It is mainly based on revised versions of lectures delivered at a “Kashmir panel” held on the 22nd of September 2010 at the 31st German Oriental Conference (Deutscher Orientalistentag = DOT) in Marburg.

It deals with the transfer of India's sacred geography to the highlands of Kashmir in a miniaturized form (Walter Slaje), a previously unnoticed recording of an appearance of Halley's Comet in Kashmir by the poet-historian Śrīvara (Walter Slaje), the historical traces of vocal and instrumental music (*saṅgīta*) in Kashmir (Advaitavadini Kaul), as well as with the poetical figure *bhāṣāśleṣa* (simultaneous expression of different meanings in two or more languages) as a peculiarity of Kashmiri writers and critics (Michael Hahn). Further subjects are the formation of a specifically Kashmiri literary genre—the Kashmiri *kathā*—and the development of a special style connected to it (Luther Obrock), and the question, when, where and why did Bhaṭṭa Jayanta write his *Nyāyamañjarī* (Walter Slaje).

The last four contributions are about different aspects of the *Mokṣopāya / Yogavāsiṣṭha* literature: John Shore's lost translation of a Persian version of the so-called *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* which he already wrote in 1784 (Jürgen Hanneder), the special character of the fourth book (*Sthitiprakaraṇa*) of the *Mokṣopāya* (Roland Steiner), and the meaning of single words (*araghaṭṭa*, *saṃsārakakra*, *kośakāra*) used in the *Mokṣopāya* (Martin Straube). A reply to a review of a partial edition of Bhāskaraṇṭha's *Mokṣopāyaṭīkā* along with general remarks on the “indological culture of debate” (Jürgen Hanneder and Walter Slaje) completes the volume.

Last but not least I would like to thank the editors of the *Studia Indologica Universitatis Halensis* for accepting this volume into their series and Dr. Katrin Einicke for her careful supervision of the publishing process.

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Kashmir Minimundus India's Sacred Geography *en miniature*

Walter Slaje

Among the oldest sources for sacred sites in pre-Islamic Kashmir the *Nīlamatapurāṇa* ranks first. Of Kashmiri origin,¹ it devotes a long passage of nearly 400 stanzas (989–1356) to temples and places of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*) as they existed in approximately the 7th century.²

Then there exists the considerable number of 51 still unpublished *Māhātmyas* of Kashmiri Tīrthas collected by AUREL STEIN³ detailing many of the myths connected with sanctified places.

Another unpublished mine of information, which even contains coloured maps and drawings, is Pandit GOVIND KAUL's compilation of extracts taken from various *Māhātmyas*.⁴ It depicts the sites which form part of the physical geography of the country as consecrated by myth and tradition. The realistic character of these locations keeps them naturally apart from cosmographic conceptions in the *Purāṇas* with their seven-islands and allied theories lacking recognizable counterparts in the physical world. *Purāṇic* world conceptions are also notably insignificant for the naturalistic geography of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇīs*, where down-to-earth knowledge about geographical facts prevails. It is worthy of note that their geographical horizon extends even to remote countries beyond the rather narrow limits of the valley, stretching as far as Iran, Iraq, Mecca and Egypt,⁵ and that the authors of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇīs* seem to have taken it for granted that their readers would share their familiarity with names of such distant countries.

1 ROCHER 1986: 204.

2 TOKUNAGA 1994: 411 ff.

3 STEIN 1900, 2: 491 f. Deposited in the Bodleian Library, cp. CLAUSON 1912: 608–622.

4 APOR 2007: 39, Catalogue entry no. 69: "Sanskrit manuscript. Kashmirian Tirthas – Mahatmya collection: MS collected by Pandit GOVIND KAUL." When, in 2009, I consulted this ms of 222 folios bound in red leather, its importance emerged also from another angle: it is physically patched together from single folios taken from different mss. It contains many coloured illustrations (drawings in traditional Indian perspective) identifying districts (*pargaṇas*), villages (*grāmas*) and sacred sites (*tīrthas*) by giving their respective ancient and modern names (*grāmya-jana-bhāṣā—vṛddha-saṅskṛta-bhāṣā*), and has been provided with an index by GOVIND KAUL. I am very grateful to Dr. ÁGNES KELECSÉNYI and Professor GYULA WOJTILLA for providing me with access to this unique manuscript on the stylish premises of the Oriental Collection Library in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.—I feel indebted to JÜRGEN HANNEDER (Marburg) and ROLAND STEINER (Halle) for their critical reviews of the present paper.

5 Ḥurāsān (Khorasan, a province in north eastern Iran) ŚRT 1.4.32; 1.6.22; 1.7.28; Irāka (Iraq) ŚRT 1.7.29; Makkadeśa (Mecca) JRT 841; ŚRT 1.6.26; Mesra (Egypt; cp. also SCHMIDT 1893: 18) ŚRT 1.6.26.

Apart from the extremes of purely mythological cosmographic conceptions in the *Purāṇas* and realistic knowledge about the physical geography in *Māhātmyas* and the *Rājatarāṅgiṇīs*, there is another interesting category of places in Kashmir. It differs from the common types of sanctified Tirthas or secular place names in that sacred place names *from outside* were assigned to already existing names of places, rivers and mountains *inside* the valley.⁶

My following comments will focus on a set of selected, clearly verifiable toponyms with a view to illustrating the fact that a sacralising of space by means of toponymic recreations—or identifications—of the last mentioned sort had indeed taken place in Kashmir.⁷

Until the end of the 19th century Kashmir was secluded from the plains of India to a degree now almost inconceivable. Al-Bīrūnī, writing in AD 1030 and having excellent information about Kashmir at his disposal, gives the following account of the situation at that time:

6 That “the same names are found to be borne by more localities than one” is certainly not peculiar to Kashmir, cp. SIRCAR 1971: 210f. In general, it is also not uncommon at all that in India “[...] some of the identical names are accidental cases while some of the places were deliberately named after other well-known localities.” (SIRCAR 1971: 318).

7 Instances of sacred geography such as temples and Tirthas referred to in local *Purāṇas* and *Māhātmyas*—the latter in the majority of cases known only by their mss titles—had to be excluded from the present investigation. My present focus is also not on the sacralization of Kashmir as it may assume form in *Purāṇic* textual bodies (such as in the *Nilamata*). A recent study by ALEXANDER von ROSPATT dealing with Nepal and the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* may however serve as a starting point and as a promising model, should one intend to take the matter up from also the textual perspective. The Nepal parallel—if anticipation is permitted—invites comparison. I quote from von ROSPATT’s summary: “Rather, it” [= the identification of the Cakrasaṃvaramaṇḍala with the Nepal Valley, W.S.] “is expressive of the tendency to recreate a particularly configured sacred pan-Indian landscape within the confines of a certain region or locale, so that it mirrors the sacred landscape of larger India and becomes imbued with its sacredness. [...] The *Svayambhūpurāṇa* does not ignore the sacralization of Nepal in terms of the Cakrasaṃvaramaṇḍala, but this is clearly not a major concern. Rather, it is motivated by the agenda to center Buddhism in Nepal independently of India, and for this it employs the Svayambhū myth as its principal device.” (von ROSPATT 2009: 73).—“The *Svayambhūpurāṇa*’s approach of sacralizing space by transcending the *nirmāṇa* level is in marked contrast to the strategies identified by Koichi Shinohara” [= SHINOHARA 1999, W.S.] “in his important work on the creation of sacred space in Buddhist cultures beyond the Buddhist motherland in India. Whether it is by expanding the life story of Śākyamuni or by localizing events of his previous lives or of the lives of particular monks, or whether it is by bringing corporeal or other ‘relics’ such as the Buddha’s alms bowl, in all cases the creation of sacred space outside the confines of Northern India hinges, in the literature examined by Shinohara, upon the historical Śākyamuni or a human follower. For the *Svayambhūpurāṇa*, by contrast, the point of reference is not Śākyamuni but the principle of buddhahood itself, of which the historical Śākyamuni is but a reflection. It localises the manifestation of absolute buddhahood in Nepal and thereby expresses that the ontological center of Buddhism is located in the Nepal Valley and not on the Gangetic plain. Thus the Svayambhū myth does not only account for the sacred rock enshrined by the *caitya* in Buddhist terms, but it also serves the broader agenda of centering Buddhism in Nepal, independently from the lost Indian Buddhist homeland.” (von ROSPATT 2009: 62).

They [i.e. the Kashmiris, W.S.] are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country, and therefore take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present [i.e. in the 11th century, W.S.] they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people.⁸

The fact that Kashmir was almost hermetically sealed off for considerably more than 1000 years by a system of frontier watch-stations and fortified posts (*dvāra*, *draṅga*), is also confirmed by Chinese pilgrims.⁹ Small forts “closed all regularly used passes leading into the Valley [...]”.¹⁰ The local *Rājatarāṅgiṇīs* corroborate the reports of the foreign travellers. Special permits, sometimes even in written form (*mokṣākṣara*),¹¹ were required to pass the country gates. Four main gates are known to have existed:¹² at Vārāhamūla (mod. Bara-mulla), on the way to the Toṣ^ṣmaidān pass (mod. Drang), at Śūrapura (mod. Hirpur) and on the route to Śāradāsthāna. Apart from guarding the country against intruders and the obvious purposes of defence and customs, the system inversely served “as an important check on unauthorized emigration.”¹³

In pre-Islamic times, all frontier stations were under the supreme command of one high officer holding the title of a Gates Commander (*dvārapati*). Later, the organization changed slightly under Muslim rule by allocating the command of routes and watch-stations to a number of feudal chiefs (Maliks). The system as such was essentially maintained under the Persian name of *rāhdārī* [‘permit’, W.S.] until the Kashmiri famine of 1877–79, which no more than two-fifths of the local population survived.¹⁴ It was only at the end of 1878 that “the old system, *Rahdārī*, under which no man could leave the valley without permission, was given up, and the weak survivors tottered over the passes to the Punjab, many dying on the way”.¹⁵ In the words of AUREL STEIN, “I have never been able to visit the sites of the old watch-stations at the several passes without thinking of the scenes of human suffering they must have witnessed for centuries”.¹⁶ The restricted accessibility of the Kashmir valley during a millenary seclusion resulting from the prac-

8 SACHAU 1910, 1: 206; cp. also STEIN 1900, 2: 361.

9 Xuanzang, who stayed in the Jayendravihāra in Śrīnagara from 631 to 633 during Durlabhavardhana’s reign (ca. 625–661), speaks—according to STEIN (1900, 2: 355)—specifically of the Vārāhamūla gate as of stone.

10 STEIN 1900, 2: 391.

11 JRT 656.

12 The same number was already given by Wukong, who received his ordination in the year 759 in Kashmir during Muktāpīḍa Lalitāditya’s reign (STEIN 1900, 2: 355; 358; FUNAYAMA 1994: 371).

13 STEIN 1900, 2: 391.

14 LAWRENCE 1895: 213 ff.; STEIN, loc. cit.

15 LAWRENCE 1895: 215.

16 STEIN 1900, 2: 391, n. 27.

tice of sealing off the country may have favoured the development of what in retrospect may be looked upon as characteristic of Kashmiri culture.¹⁷

This background deserves to be borne in mind, for it might give us another clue¹⁸ as to just why a necessity may have been felt to recreate India's sacred space in parts in Kashmir. In this regard, it is worth considering that despite the learned contacts with savants of the plains maintained by some Kashmiri literati concerning literature, poetics and philosophy in particular, the great majority of ordinary people would have been faced with literally insurmountable obstacles, had they set out to go on an ordinary pilgrimage to the original locations, e.g., to Vārāṇasī, even if it was a singular visit with the intention of dying there. From such a practical point of view, too, it becomes understandable that nominal surrogates developed in the valley, which in the course of their sanctification became suitable for serving the same sacred purpose as the remote original locality.

GODFREY THOMAS VIGNE, who explored the region of Greater Kashmir between 1835 and 1839 and who was certainly outstandingly well acquainted with the area, not only deemed Kashmir "not to be India"¹⁹ but also remarked perspicaciously that

The Kashmiri is somewhat of the spirit of the people of ancient Rome²⁰—
The Pontiffs' Books,—the tomes of hoary eld,
Wherein our whole soothsaying lore is held,
To them are poems of the first account,
Caught from the Muses' lips on Alba's Mount²¹

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- 17 Compare von ROSPATT's remarks on the seclusion of Nepal: "Nepal's relative inaccessibility, lack of natural resources and peripheral location at the edge of the subcontinent have protected it from lasting conquests by Muslim and British rulers. Hence the culture and civilisation of the Newars did not undergo the deep social, religious, political and cultural changes that accompanied Muslim and British rule in Northern India. Also, until 1950 Nepal was largely closed to westerners and hence sealed effectively from western influence. As a consequence, forms of religious practice can be found in Nepal that long since have vanished in India. This includes tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism, which has, in its original South Asian setting with Sanskrit as its sacred language, survived uninterruptedly in the Nepal Valley alone." (von ROSPATT 2009: 34).
- 18 As remarked above in footnote 6 with reference to SIRCAR (1971: 318–325), "creating a new India" (SIRCAR 1971: 319) in different parts of South Asia by means of a transfer of sacred place and river names is not uncommon at all. Early Indo-Aryan tribes taking river names of their native soil along with them to the Punjab are a case in point. There is however a marked difference in that the pan-Indian sacred space recreated in, and the toponymy transferred to, Kashmir is not the result of a migration, cp. also footnote 112.
- 19 "Kashmir is not India." VIGNE 1842, 1: 289; VIGNE 1842, 2: 65.
- 20 VIGNE uses this partial quote of Horace to attribute a sense of realism to the Kashmiris, who, in his interpretation, would show greater appreciation of their environment than of time-honoured writings.
- 21 "Sic fautor veterum ut tabulas peccare vetantis," [...] "Pontificum libros annosa volumina vatam, Dictitet Albano Musas in monte locutas" [...]. (VIGNE 1842, 2: 55. Hor. Ep. lib. ii., Ep. 1, v. 23; transl. by MARTIN 1881: 343). "These had grown to an enormous bulk by the time Augustus assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus. They were, as the text implies, prophetic in their character, and in a semi-metrical form. Niebuhr, on the strength of the very few fragments which are still extant, says they were extremely poetical, and declines to adopt Horace as a judge in the matter. Poetical or not, Augustus made short work with them;

—[and] has created the source of an imaginary Ganges in the Gunga Bul. The scene of the abduction of Sita by Ravana, is laid in the forests beneath the peaks of Sita Sar, and the bursting forth of the fountains of Venemal and Kamul²² at Martund, are attributed to the finding and breaking of a miniature mundane egg upon the plains of the valley after its desiccation.

Entering the valley from the west by crossing the Būdil Pass, the pilgrim finds himself treading the ancient Siddhapatha connecting Śrīnagar with Siālkot in the Pañjāb.²³ Hardly has he scaled the heights of this pass (4,303 m) leading over the Pīr Pantsāl Range, which separates the valley from the plains, when he is reminded of the Deluge story in the form of Mount Naubandhana. The legend of Manu's ark having gone ashore at a mountain in the Himālayas is known from references in the *Atharvaveda*, the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (1.8.1.6) and post-Vedic variations thereof.²⁴ The old story relates that Manu tied his boat to the highest peak, when the fish (in post-Vedic literature an Avatāra of Viṣṇu) drawing it reached the summit of the Himālayas. The peak came thus to be called Naubandhana-Śṛṅga or -Śikhara ("the peak to which the boat was tied"). The Kashmir Naubandhana forms the westernmost and highest of three snowy peaks²⁵ (over 4,500 m) in the Brahma Sakal group of the Pīr Pantsāl range in the west, and was—in accordance with the Kashmir variation of the legend—considered to be Viṣṇu's seat:²⁶ Viṣṇu as his fish Avatāra would have bound (*bandhana*) the ship (*nau*) into which the goddess Satī had converted herself in order to save the seeds of the beings from destruction to this peak.

for, according to Suetonius, he burned them all, with the exception of those known as the Sibylline Books, which were in Greek." (MARTIN 1881: 343, n.). I am grateful to the Latin scholar ERICH ZIELINSKI for a German translation of this passage, which runs as follows (quoted from a letter of ZIELINSKI to his brother-in-law ALBRECHT WEZLER, dt. October 12, 2010): "So mag nun der Claqueur der verstaubten uralten Geschichten sich den Mund fusselig reden (dictitet, v. 27) (von) verstaubten Tafeln, die das Vergehen verbieten, [...] (von) Pontifikalbüchern, (von) hochbetagten Buchrollen der Seher, (von) den Musen auf dem Albanerberg, die gesprochen haben sollen."

- 22 "Venemal is a name of Vishnu or Narayun, *i.e.*, moving on the waters; and Kamul or Kawul is the lotus." VIGNE 1842, 2: 55, n.
- 23 GKL 242; STEIN 1900, 2: 393; PARMU 1969: 42.
- 24 "[...] the mount where the ark landed" (MBh 3.185.46f.) HOPKINS 1915: 9; cp. WITZEL 1994: 240.—"Doch von Naubandhana geblieben ist der Namen, Den andre Völker auch in ihre Sprachen nahmen." (RÜCKERT 1839, Nr. 51: 263).
- 25 Kashmir tradition locates the seats on these peaks from which Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā fought the demon Jalodbhava and desiccated the Satisaras (= Kashmir) as Acyutagiri, Īśāgiri, Brahmāgiri (mod. Brama Sakal); cp. ŚRT 1.5.97 and STEIN 1900, 2: 388f.; 393. There is another Brahmāgiri, situated near Tryambakajyotirliṅga of Nasik district in South India, from which the Godāvarī river springs (MANI 1975: 292).
- 26 NM 41–43; HCM 4.27; 1.5.88; 105; etc. Hence also the name Acyutagiri (ŚRT 1.5.97). "Viṣṇupada and the next three are inserted here with other sacred places outside Kashmir to show the route of Śiva's journey from Vārāṇasī to Kashmir" (TOKUNAGA 1994: 407; 413).

The Naubandhana-Tirtha is formed by Lake Kramasaras or Konsarnāg,²⁷ a mountain tarn at the foot of the peak, supposed to mark Viṣṇu's footprint (*krama*).²⁸ This celebrated lake is at the same time the westernmost Tirtha in Kashmir, as far as the compass is concerned, lying as it does opposite the far-famed Uttaramānasa or Gangabal Lake in the East at approximately the same elevation. In the fifteenth century, Paṇḍit Śrīvara accompanied Sulṭān Zayn on a pilgrimage to the Kramasaras. The Sulṭān was so impressed that he modelled Lake Jainasaras on it,²⁹ laid out artificially by him in Pampore (Padmapura) as a representative of the tarn.

The elegant manner in which Śrīvara relates the Sulṭān's personality and his visit to the Tirtha with the legends connected to it is worth quoting (ŚRT 1.5.95–105):

[95]After that the Sulṭān left Vijayeśa in the company of his two sons,³⁰ crossed a difficult path on foot, [and] reached [his destination] after three days. [96]Subsequent to the Sulṭān's visit to the footprint of Viṣṇu in the shape of Lake Kramasaras, he came under [the sway of] the magnificence of devotion [and] experienced the joy caused by worshipping [Viṣṇu's] feet. [97]Under the guise of the thunder of their falls, [the three] peaks Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva [seemed] to enquire after the welfare of the Sulṭān, [who was born from a] part of Śiva. [98]On beholding the enclosed mountain area, dark-blue from Kastūri flowers,³¹ this best of [all] rulers became satisfied like a Yogin [on perceiving the] longed-for [dark-blue] body of Viṣṇu. [99]He then embarked on a boat surrounded by five or six boatswains and sailed out to Lake [Kramasaras], taking Bhaṭṭa Siṃha and me along with him. [100]When I sang the Sulṭān songs from the Gītagovinda [there], he became immersed in love for Kṛṣṇa on listening to them, overcome with the particular sentiment [corresponding to my recital]. [101]The soft tune struck up by both our voices resounded from the greenery [on the shore]³² as if repeated by celestial singers staying there, driven on by the dignity of the Sulṭān. [102]In an instant, gods showered flowers in the semblance of snow-fall upon the Sulṭān, skimming across the lake, as if pleased at his devotion. [103]The white snowflakes dancing around on the lake gave the impression of being the shattered [snow-capped] peak of Mount Kailāsa, which had come to take a bath in [this] sacred ford. [104]Surely the [Sulṭān must be] an incarnation of Viṣṇu, for when he

27 Mod. Konsār Nāg, (Lat. 33°31' Long. 74°50'). GKL 511f.; STEIN 1900, 2: 393. VIGNE 1842, 1: 292 ff.; MAK 42. The lake is the incipient Veshau River.

28 Cp. VaiDhŚ 85.44 (*Viṣṇupada*).

29 'Zayn's Lake' (Lat. 34°0'57,07" Long. 74°58'36,71"). The lake was dried up by the local people in the 1970s, who use the expanse of ground for drying their chillis now. In 2009, old people still recalled the existence of this artificial lake.

30 Most likely Hāgḡi Hān and Bahrām Hān.

31 The plant *Hibiscus Abelmoschus* L.

32 This was also observed by VIGNE: "There is verdure on this [eastern end, W.S.], and the western bank or dam, which is steeper." (VIGNE 1842, 1: 293).

drove three times devotedly around [the lake]³³ it was, no doubt, to find out the vastness of his step. ^[105]The meaning [of the name] of Mount 'Naubandhana', which was evident [only] from tradition, was made visible by the Sulṭān when he left after mooring [his] boat [there].

Descending from the Lake eastwards down to the valley, one reaches another famous though somewhat eerie place, the Ahrabal Falls. This is a celebrated waterfall³⁴ formed by a small tributary of the Veśau River³⁵ in a rocky gorge near Śūrāpura and Sidau.

"It ... drops over a ledge of rock about 4.5 meters high, in a series of cascades, which are caught in a large pool ... the waters falling some 7.5 meters in a sheet of white foam. The rocks on the left bank of the river are bare and precipitous. ... during the melting of the snows the rush of water is tremendous. Arabul is a place of peculiar sanctity among the Hindus ... the precipice overhanging the flood has been upon several occasions the last resting-place for the feed of Hindu suicide", as keenly observed by VIGNE.³⁶

In fact, next to the Kashmiri Prayāga, this place seems to have been the most famous site for religious suicide committed by members of the Hindu community, and was already mentioned by Kalhaṇa under the mythic river name of Vaitaraṇī.³⁷ The epic-purāṇic tradition associates this name with the horrible (*raudra*, *ghora*) river of Yama, filled with *vaitaraṇas*, passengers, considering it a sacred stream removing the sins of those who bathed in it, but also as having another aspect as the river of torture in hell, or leading to it, filled with human excreta, urine, blood, hair, bones, nails, flesh, fat and all kinds of dirty substances.³⁸

Kalhaṇa's Vaitaraṇī river (RT 7.1355) refers in fact to the Veśau river in the shape of its falls "[...] at Śūrāpura. Many were those who were drowned, and found their end in the waters of the Vaitaraṇī."³⁹

Jonarāja speaks of drowning and jumping from precipices as two characteristic modes of numerous Paṇḍit suicides under Muslim suppression. He, too, may have had the same sacred site in mind, when he relates that

33 Reference is to the pious circumambulation from left to right.

34 Lat. 33°38'56,16" Long. 74°47'1,50". In the *Nilamatapurāṇa* (NM 292) = *ākhora bila* ("mouse-hole"), cp. STEIN 1900, 2: 415; VIGNE 1842, 1: 297; GKL 171.

35 The Viśokā (mod. Veśau river) is otherwise seen as a form of Lakṣmī. STEIN 1900, 2: 415; TOKUNAGA 1994: 414; MAK 40 (ŚRT 1.3.13; 15).

36 VIGNE 1842, 1: 297.

37 RT 7.1355 (note). Identification not recognised by STEIN.

38 HOPKINS 1915: 110; MANI 1975: 24 (s.v. *Alakanada*); 369.

39 STEIN 1900, 2: 375. It is strange that STEIN failed to see the connection and assumed that the name Vaitaraṇī would designate the river Ramaṇyāṭavī ("the only river near Śūrāpura"). In all likelihood, Kalhaṇa uses Vaitaraṇī in a metaphorical sense for a stream of the river Veśau, as indeed it is this river which is crossed to reach the world of the god of death.