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**THE MOKṢOPĀYA, YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA
AND RELATED TEXTS**

EDITED BY
JÜRGEN HANNEDER

Editor's Preface

The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* or – as it is called in its oldest version – *Mokṣopāya* is a monument of Sanskrit literature, not merely by its epic size – it is larger than the *Rāmāyaṇa* – but especially through its unique style and contents. Most scholars agreed that it can not be categorized easily, especially since its blend of narrative, poetry and philosophy escapes the traditional boundaries of the genres of Classical Sanskrit, but the work's philosophy has puzzled many. From its oldest version ("*Mokṣopāya*"), which is without the thin but persuasive layer of Advaita Vedānta, it now appears that the work propounds an idiosyncratic philosophy that is almost unique in the Indian sphere – by its contents, but also because it rejects the authority of any scripture or given philosophical framework. The fact that it nevertheless uses other doctrines in an inclusivistic way has tricked scholars into reading the most diverse philosophies into the text. In fact, the author of the *Mokṣopāya* seems to have conceived a non-dualistic system of his own – and elaborated it on an enormous scale. This is, however, only one aspect of the *Mokṣopāya*. Some readers more interested in Indian poetical theories have found it to be equally unique and interesting,¹ especially for its integration of philosophy and poetry.

The *Mokṣopāya Research Group* is a coordinated effort of several academic projects at a comprehensive investigation of the *Mokṣopāya*, ranging from a critical edition of the text as well as the fragments of the commentary of Bhāskaraṅṭha, an assessment of the abridged versions, to translations and topical studies. Two projects, funded by the *German Research Foundation*, are located in the Indological Institute at the University of Halle-Wittenberg,² the complete critical edition is under the patronage of the *Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*. A critical edition of the

¹ "The philosophical stories are replete with lyric descriptions of great beauty, and the very language itself gives evidence of a highly literary mind." (MASSON and PATWARDHAN (1985), p. 30) "There is no finer example in world literature of a profound philosophical mind with a genius for artistic description, even though many of the verses betray a certain lack of traditional literary education (odd syntax, unorthodox similes etc.). There is a fullness and an overflowing of the creative spirit in this work such as we have never come across in any other Sanskrit text." (MASSON and PATWARDHAN (1985), p. 30, fn. 3.)

² "Kritische Edition des *Utpattiṅprakaraṇa*" (PETER STEPHAN and JÜRGEN HANNEDER) and "Indo-Persische Übersetzungsliteratur aus der Mogulzeit (16./17. Jhd)" (HEIKE FRANKE and SUSANNE STINNER), the latter being a collaboration of the Indological and the Oriental Institute (Prof. WALTER SLAJE and Prof. JÜRGEN PAUL).

fragment of Bhāskaraṅṭha's commentary on the *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* is being prepared by BRUNO LO TURCO at the University of Rome, a translation of the *Utpattiprakaraṇa* has been recently started by MARTIN GANSTEN at the University of Lund and is funded by the *Swedish Research Council*.

The present volume is a collection of articles resulting from a panel on the *Mokṣopāya*, *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and related texts, which was held on the 24th of September at the 29th *Deutscher Orientalistentag* in Halle, where the international *Mokṣopāya Research Group* took the opportunity to present results of recent research as well as ongoing editorial and other projects to a wider Indological public. The publication has been made possible through a generous grant by the *Helmuth von Glasenapp-Stiftung*.

An introduction by the editor is followed by four articles that deal with the text of the *Mokṣopāya* and its philology. First WALTER SLAJE analyses the evidence for a localization of the text in Kashmir, then he presents a preliminary description of Delhi and Śrīnagar manuscripts, which have only recently become accessible. Another tour in search of manuscripts in Maharashtra and Gujarat has resulted in a further survey by PETER STEPHAN and SUSANNE STINNER, which has been included in this volume almost in the last minute. Next PETER STEPHAN introduces the critical edition of the third book of the *Mokṣopāya*, the *Utpattiprakaraṇa*, which will be completed in the near future. In the following three articles the focus is on abridged versions of the *Mokṣopāya* and *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. SUSANNE STINNER presents results of her studies on the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* as well as previous unknown versions, JÜRGEN HANNEDER presents a brief analysis of the *Mokṣopāyasaṃgraha*, whereas HEIKE FRANKE traces the history of the earliest Persian translations of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* produced at the Mogul court. The volume is completed by BRUNO LO TURCO's study of the deep structure of the *Mokṣopāya*, namely its use of *ākhyānas* as an integral part of philosophical instruction.

At present the publications by the *Mokṣopāya Research Group* are often based on materials, mostly preliminary editions, that are shared among the group, but have not yet appeared in print. In quoting from the *Mokṣopāya* we therefore resort to the following guidelines: Where available, quotations from the *Mokṣopāya* are based on the preliminary version of the forthcoming critical edition, which applies only to the *Utpattiprakaraṇa*. In that case all readings are given in the apparatus. In the case of the *Vairāgya-*, *Mumukṣu-* and *Sthitiprakaraṇa* the text as contained in Bhāskaraṅṭha's com-

mentary³ is quoted. In all other cases, notably that of the *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* the text is cited according to the manuscripts, which are then identified.⁴ Quotations from other versions, i.e. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* and (*Yoga-*)*Vāsiṣṭhasāra* are based on the printed editions,⁵ the other abridged versions remain unedited and are therefore quoted from manuscript.

³ Published in HANNEDER and SLAJE (2002), SLAJE (1993) and SLAJE (2002).

⁴ See below, p. 139f., for a brief list of sources.

⁵ For this and other primary texts, see the bibliography on page 144.

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The Mokṣopāya: An Introduction

JÜRGEN HANNEDER

The research activities on the *Mokṣopāya* (MU) and related texts in the last decade have produced interesting results: a large number of manuscripts could be examined through which the history of the transmission became more transparent; new versions were found and the date and localization of the earliest text, the *Mokṣopāya*, could be settled. Some of these results are for the first time presented in the subsequent articles. But also for those not directly involved in the field, these results when placed in a wider context can be of value, since the processes involved are not untypical for the development of research in historiography of Indian literature.

In the case of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (YV) scholarly research commenced soon after the *editio princeps* of the text in 1880. With minor alterations and in various reprints¹ this edition has become the received text, a sort of vulgate version accompanied by the commentary *Vāsiṣṭhatātṭparyaprakāśa* composed by Anandabodhendra in 1710.² Few years later a shorter version of the text appeared, the so-called *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (LYV).³ It contained complementary halves of two commentaries by Ātmasukha and Mummaḍideva. Both editions were based only on very few manuscripts, a fraction of the surviving sources. The criteria for the selection of sources were not implausible; in both instances it was attempted to provide the reader with a complete commentary, and in the case of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* to produce the most complete version of the conclusion of the text.

It may have to do with the high esteem of the printed word in our culture that with the publication of a text the investigation of further sources suddenly comes to a halt. Once in printed form, the text, although it may be hardly more than the transcript of a single manuscript, acquires an undeserved persuasiveness. But being content with an edition based on two or three manuscripts, while dozens of unchecked mss. are lying in various libraries, is as absurd as if archaeologists had limited their excavation of a suspected site of a town to the suburbs without trying to find the old town.

¹ The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* of Vālmīki with the Commentary *Vāsiṣṭhamahārāmāyaṇatātṭparyaprakāśa*, ed. Wāsudeva Laxmaṇa Śāstrī Paṅsīkar, Bombay 1911, ²1918, ³1937.

² See KARL-HEINZ GOLZIO's calculation of the date given in the text in GOLZIO (*2005).

³ Bombay 1888, no copy of this edition could be located.

In the case of the *Mokṣopāya* literature it was for a long time only P.C. DIVANJI, who tried to return to the sources; no other scholar seemed inclined to go beyond the printed version. But his analysis of only a few more manuscripts was sufficient to question the basis of all previous secondary studies. For DIVANJI had concluded in 1939 that the LYV could not have been based on the YV, but on a different version.⁴ Returning to our analogy: we find evidence that the old town was in the north-east of the suburb, but the archaeologists would not try to investigate the suspected new site, but argue that this will be in vain. MAINKAR writes in 1955 that any attempt to produce a critical edition “is not likely to give any satisfactory results”.⁵ The next attempt to tackle the history of this unwieldy text was made by PETER THOMI, which for reasons explained elsewhere,⁶ was unsuccessful.

Further manuscript sightings as well as the discovery of large fragments of the commentary of Bhāskaraṅṭha by WALTER SLAJE marked a breakthrough. In 1994 he could show that, as DIVANJI had postulated, the LYV was an abstract not of the YV, but of its older Kashmirian recension. The YV, on the contrary, was a redacted version that presupposes both the MU and the LYV. This Kashmirian recension was then called *Mokṣopāya*, which is the original title of the text.

The YV differs from the MU, apart from a large number of variant readings, in that it has added a set of further frame stories in the first and last *Sarga*, and that it substitutes a number of *Sargas* from the MU with their counterpart from the LYV. Thus DIVANJI’s thesis proved correct. The retrospective analysis shows that in some cases the inclusion of one or few further manuscripts can devalue the printed edition of a text to such an extent that the majority of secondary literature including the description of its religious and literary history has to be fundamentally revised. While this may seem obvious to the philologist, the reaction of the scientific community may not only be favorable.

⁴ DIVANJI (1939).

⁵ His argumentation runs as follows: “The manuscript material is scanty and is not likely to throw any light on the evaluation of the text. Further the present Nirṇaya Sāgara text in two volumes appears to have a certain unified character about it. The same excessively poetical style is to be met with in all the six *Prakaraṇas*. Similarly the same diction saturated with the Bhagavadgītā and Gauḍapāda is to be met with throughout. Finally, the same metaphysical and ethical views are taught with a remarkable consistency. [...] Thus, whatever may be the phases through which the text has passed, the text as it is now, is a homogenous one and an attempt to have a critical edition of the same is not likely to give any satisfactory results.” MAINKAR (1977), p. 247f.

⁶ See HANNEDER and SLAJE (*2005).

Although it is certainly wise not to reject established knowledge prematurely, the evidence in the case of the MU is overwhelming and the consequences for previous secondary literature are considerable.

As an example, we may mention two articles published in 1951, one by BHATTACHARYA,⁷ the other by DIVANJI,⁸ both of which diagnose a proximity of the YV to the monistic Śaivism of Kashmir. Other scholars since followed this thesis, as for instance most recently FRANCOIS CHENET.⁹ It is indeed possible to demonstrate that the author of the MU was aware of “Kashmir Śaivism”, but in view of his provenance and times this is not too astonishing.¹⁰ But the author quite obviously quotes or adapts what he later chooses to dismiss or reinterpret inclusivistically. What matters most are that in those passages where he describes his own philosophy we do not find him influenced by the philosophy of monistic Kashmir-Śaivism. For instance, he uses words like *cit* and *prakāśa* which coincide with the terminology of this philosophy, but not its distinctive elements as the concept of *vimarśa*. The only exception, much quoted in secondary literature, are a few verses in YV 6.128, where we read about the “threefold impurity” (*malatraya*), the “grace of Śiva” and the “fall of the Śakti”. These verses, and the presence of a so-called “*Śivākhyāna*”, were taken as collective evidence for an influence of Śaivism.

However, in reviewing this evidence we find that chapter 6.128 is not part of the MU, but among those chapters inserted from the LYV, whereas the MU has nothing to correspond with this. Also the next argument, the *Śivākhyāna*, if read together with its subsequent interpretation in the text, does not support an influence of Śaivism, because there the Śaiva elements are reduced to the author’s acosmistic philosophy: Śiva appears in the form of Ākāśabhairava, which from the background of the MU means that he is no more than an unreal appearance within empty space.¹¹

The two results of this observation are that we have to study the older version of the text and that we cannot rely on compilations of philosophical

⁷ BHATTACHARYYA (1967).

⁸ DIVANJI (1951).

⁹ CHENET (1998-99).

¹⁰ See below, p. 21ff. We may add that he quotes the *Spandakārikās* and the *Vijñānabhairava*, quotations which remained undetected by the truly astonishing efforts to find references to Indian literature by ATREYA, RAGHAVAN and MAINKAR, but this only shows that standard quotations from Kashmirian works were not as much on the mind of these Pandits as, for instance, Advaita Vedānta.

¹¹ Compare HANNEDER (2003).

passages¹² – truly tempting in view of the length of this text – but have to read in context. As an example why only a critical edition of the MU grants access to the thought world of the author we may introduce verse 3.66.14, which runs as follows in the YV:

*cidghanaiikaprapātasya rūḍhasya parama pade
nairātmyaśūnyavedyādyaiḥ paryāyaiḥ kathanam bhavet (3.66.14)*

The commentator Ānandabodhendra explains that the genitives refer to the mind (*citta*), which when concentrating only on the “*cidghana*” attains to the highest state and that one may describe “such a mind with synonyms as ‘emptiness from an own-being’ (*nairātmyam* = *svarūpaśūnyatā*) or ‘free from objects’ (*śūnyavedya* = *nirviśayatā*)”.¹³ However, when reading the passage in context, one is at a loss to see why the commentator suddenly introduces the “mind”. The two preceding verses read as follows:

*cidghanenaikatām etya yadā tiṣṭhasi niścalah
śāmyan vyavaharan vāpi tadā saṁśānta ucyase (3.66.12)*

*tanvī cetayate cetyam ghanā cin nāṅga cetati
alpakṣṭvah kṣobham eti ghanakṣṭvo hi śāmyati (3.66.13)*

12a naikatām Ś₁Ś₃Ś₇Ś_{S_am}] na katām Ś₉ 12b tiṣṭhasi Ś₁Ś₃Ś₇Ś_{S_am}] tiṣṭhati Ś₉
12d ucyase Ś₁Ś₃Ś₇Ś_{S_am}] ucyate Ś₉

If you, having become one with the mass of consciousness, remain motionless whether you are pacified or even active, then you [may be] called ‘completely pacified’.

Consciousness causes the cognition of objects [only when] subtle; [when] dense, it does not cognize – for when half-drunk, [a person] becomes agitated, fully drunk he becomes silent.

Here the topics are the pacified person (*saṁśānta*) and consciousness in a dense state, but not the mind. The problem for Ānandabodhendra seems to be that the description as *nairātmya* and *śūnyavedya* does neither fit natural persons, nor consciousness, which for the Vedāntin is hardly ‘*nirātman*’. Another oddity in his interpretation is that as synonyms for the description of

¹² As for instance the *Vāsiṣṭhadarśana* by ATREYA (1936).

¹³ *tathāvidhasya cittasya nairātmyam svarūpaśūnyatā śūnyavedyam nirviśayatetyādiparyāyaiḥ.*

the mind, we have an abstract noun *nairātmya* compounded with the adjective *śūnyaveda*. The mind may be called *śūnyavedya*, which is however not a synonym (*paryāya*), but a description of its state; the case of *nairātmya* is different, for surely the mind is not referred to with the synonym *nairātmya*, what the commentator means is that it is inactive and in this sense *nirātman*.

The problems can be solved by a glance at the *Mokṣopāya*, where the verse appears – in the mss. available at present – without any variant readings in the following form:

*cidghanaikyaṃ prayātasya rūḍhasya parama pade
nairātmyaśūnyavādādyaiḥ paryāyairiḥ kathanam bhavet (3.66.14)*

We may now interpret the first part of the sentence in connection with verse 12: “For a person [as yourself],¹⁴ who has attained to the unity of the mass of consciousness and is [thus] grounded in the highest state [...]”. The minimal difference in readings permits a plausible contextual interpretation.

In the next line the variant readings seem again inconspicuous, but have more far-reaching consequences: we merely have to read *vāda* for *vedya*. Then the compound in *pāda* c has to be understood as “through *nairātmyavāda*, *śūnyavāda* and other [doctrines]”. Since we seem to be talking about a person, *kathanam* with the genitive may denote either a description, or an instruction of a person. The doctrines mentioned suggest a Buddhist context, thus the following *paryāya* may also be interpreted as “[mode of] instruction” in a doctrine, as in *dharmaparyāya*.¹⁵ The main question, which can not be solved in the narrow context, is whether a person is more likely to be described, or taught, with the help of the *nairātmyavāda*. In general one would expect the latter, but then it would imply that someone who has already attained the highest state, in which he has become one with pure consciousness, is still in need of instruction. We shall return to this question at the end of this article.

By extent the variants between the two versions are quite unspectacular, but especially when taken together with the tendentious interpretation by Ānandabodhendra the difference in meaning is hardly trivial – a constellation not untypical for the *Mokṣopāya*. When editing portions of the text, one is often curious to see how the commentator manages to defuse too obviously heterodox passages and expressions. Of course, Sanskrit being a flexible language,

¹⁴ Rāma is addressed in verse 12 and again in vss. 18–19.

¹⁵ Compare FRANKLIN EDGERTON: *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. Vol. 2, New Haven 1953, sub voce.

he may explain to the astonished reader that a 'bhikṣu' in a 'vihāra'¹⁶ is not a Buddhist monk in a monastery, but a *parivrāj*, i.e. a *saṃnyāsīn* in a garden.¹⁷ We can infer a strong motivation on the part of the redactors to reinterpret passages like the one just described, perhaps not even consciously, because it was surely unthinkable that the Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha could have taught heterodox doctrines in a text that was already quoted by Vidyāraṇya as authoritative. But, to be exact, Vidyāraṇya quoted merely the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*, in which many of the problematic passages had not been included.

After this excursus we return to the history of the text and its versions. The *Mokṣopāya* was composed in Kashmir near 950 A.D., apparently in the Kṣatriya rather than the Brahminical milieu, since its professed aim was to provide a secret lore for kings (*rājavidyā*) that would enable them to attain a liberation in life (*jīvanmukti*) amidst their duties. There are some testimonies of such an instruction of Indian royals, both "Hindu" and Muslim, with the help of the *Mokṣopāya*.¹⁸

The further transmission and reception of the text is subject to several tendencies. Firstly a variety of abridged versions were produced, some that retain the original structure and character of the work with its blend of narratives and philosophical discourses, as for instance the LYV, and others that are extracts mainly of the philosophical portions. Of the latter there is the *Mokṣopāyasamgraha*,¹⁹ which transmits the philosophical discourses almost completely, but leaves out almost all narratives. One extreme case is the brief *Vāsiṣṭhasāra*,²⁰ of slightly more than 200 verses, which one regularly encounters in mss. catalogues. During the search for manuscripts of the MU a few other versions were accidentally uncovered.

¹⁶ *bhikṣuḥ vihārasthaḥ* (6.67.37).

¹⁷ Here Ānandabodhendra's interpretation is simply ahistorical: While for a Vedāntin of the 18th century the title "bhikṣu" usually referred to *saṃnyāsīns* – and this preconceived interpretation excluded the possibility that the word *vihāra* could refer to a Buddhist monastery – in tenth century Kashmir the combination of the two words obviously referred to a Buddhist monk. These interpretations can of course only be gained by ignoring both the narrow and the wider context. Any careful reader not sharing the same preconceptions, or subscribing to the Vedāntic method of reinterpretation, cannot fail to note that even the YV-version does not fit well with Vedānta. For instance ARJUNWADKAR has noted with amazement that the author "never once utters the word *saṃnyāsa*, renunciation, in the vast expanse of the work, although the concept is inseparable from Upaniṣadic thought." ARJUNWADKAR (2001), p. 217.

¹⁸ See HANNEDER (2003).

¹⁹ Only a single manuscript (Göttingen Ms. Sanscr. Vish. 126) is known, see below, p. 105ff.

²⁰ Edition: THOMI (1999). For the title, see below, p. 39.

Two charts in the appendix (p.141f) give a chronological overview and depict the relationship between the versions according to the present state of knowledge. We can see that the YV presupposes the MU and the LYV, but many details concerning the minor abstracts, as the *Vāsiṣṭhasaṃgraha*²¹ or the *Mokṣopāyaśāra*²² still need to be determined;²³ the voluminous *Vāsiṣṭhacandrikā*²⁴ still needs to be analysed in detail.²⁵ The later history of the *Mokṣopāya* literature²⁶ is therefore more varied and complex than was previously known. In addition to this, the history of the early Persian translations opens up a new area of research.²⁷

Furthermore the ascetic tradition of the Advaita-Vedānta incorporated the LYV by quoting it as a source: In the fourteenth century Vidyāraṇya utilizes the text as a crucial source for the idea of a liberation in life in his *Jīvanmuktiviveka*,²⁸ but with the considerable change in the concept of *jīvanmukti* from an active to an ascetic one.²⁹ Placed within this context the LYV seemed to be Vedāntic and also the longer version was reworked partly along these lines: Put into the ‘right’ perspective through an additional set of frame stories, which lift the initial problem of how a Kṣatriya, who has insight into the futility and even inexistence of the world, can still do his duty and fight the enemy, into a Brahminical discourse of knowledge versus (ritual) action, the text then seemed to address the Brahmin householder. In this process Buddhist associations were removed, references to Śruti or Vedānta carefully added, and difficult passages simplified. The end result is a sometimes so-called *Yogavāsiṣṭha-Mahārāmāyaṇa* accompanied by a Vedāntic commentary.

The selection of this version for publication at the close of the 19th century has conserved this stage in the development of the text. The printed version circulated through the subcontinent, into the text’s homeland Kashmir and

²¹ This text survives in one manuscript (Bodleian Library, CSS d559) of 165 fols., and is divided into *Sargas*.

²² There are two known manuscripts of this text, which is divided into *adhyāyas*. The more complete manuscript has 116 fols.

²³ See also below, p. 91ff.

²⁴ Described in MITRA (1871ff), p. 268f.

²⁵ With Ātmasukha’s commentary on the LYV (“*Vāsiṣṭhacandrikā*”) and another text, called here *Śrīvāsiṣṭhacandrikā* (see below, p. 92), there are apparently three texts of the same name.

²⁶ See the article by SUSANNE STINNER in this volume.

²⁷ Compare the article by HEIKE FRANKE below (p. 113ff).

²⁸ Compare RAGHAVAN (1939b).

²⁹ SLAJE (1998).

was there even transcribed into Śāradā script.³⁰ With the triumphant progress of the YV with Ānandabodhendra's commentary the text was perceived as Vedāntic – naturally the more critical readers remained puzzled about the absence of Vedāntic terminology.³¹

In Kashmir, where the MU is still transmitted intact, although sometimes with readings added from the YV version, the well-known Śaiva author Bhāskaraṅṅha wrote a commentary on the MU, of which large fragments survive.³² This commentary is neither Vedāntic, nor Śaiva, as PANDEY thought,³³ but testifies to a Kashmirian tradition, which considered the work written by a human author. This, together with the data collected during the editorial work, opened a new view on the text.

WALTER SLAJE will deal with the localization of the MU below, here it may suffice to summarize the present state of knowledge on the date of the text.³⁴ Many arguments based on the printed edition that were previously brought into play by various scholars have turned out to be irrelevant, because they were not contained, or not in the form necessary for the argument, in the MU. For instance RAGHAVAN's deliberations on the type of recension of the *Bhagavadgītā* used in the YV turned out to be inapplicable to the MU, because there almost all relevant passages read with the Kashmirian recension of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Furthermore, early references to the text as "*Mokṣopāya*" had to remain undetected as long as this was not considered the name of the text.

If one leaves out the irrelevant arguments, the following picture ensues: The *terminus post quem* can be determined by the reference to king Yaśaskara, who ruled Kashmir from 939 to 948.³⁵ Even if we regard, if only for testing the argument, this episode as a later insertion, we cannot place the *terminus post quem* much lower, since the MU quotes Ānandavardhana and the *Span-dakārikās*.

³⁰ See ms. Ś₁₇ described below, p. 46, in the article of WALTER SLAJE.

³¹ This, by the way, has hardly changed. In 2001 ARJUNWADKAR is formulating a critique of the YV, which to his mind as a Vedāntic work has failed to remain in the right track: "He has equated concepts from odd sources, e.g. Śūnya from Buddhist philosophy with Brahman from the Upaniṣads, so that protagonists of these concepts would shudder if they knew whom they are bracketted with." ARJUNWADKAR (2001), p. 217.

³² See bibliography and page 5 (fn. 2) for publications of these fragments.

³³ See PANDEY (1963), p. 265.

³⁴ For details, see HANNEDER (2003).

³⁵ See below, p. 24.

The determination of the *terminus ante quem* is based on quotations and references that were not yet discussed in secondary literature. The first occurs in Kṣemendra's (ca. 980–1060)³⁶ *Kavikaṇṭhābharaṇa*, where he enumerates works and topics a good poet should be acquainted with. Here the *Mokṣopāya* follows upon the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. One might assume that this refers to the “ways to liberation” in general, but the example verse is in accordance with the MU and the placement after the epic from which it derives its frame story suggestive.

An even more narrow time span for the composition results from a quotation of verses from the MU in Rāmakaṇṭha's *Sarvatobhadra*, a commentary to the *Bhagavadgītā*.³⁷ There are at least three Kashmirian authors of that name before the eleventh century, two in a well-known family of Śaiva Siddhāntins; then the author of the *Spandavivṛti*,³⁸ also called Rājānaka Rāma, as well as the author of the *Sarvatobhadra*. The last two are according to the editors identical because of parallels in the two texts.³⁹

If we now try to interpret the biographical data contained in the two works, we arrive at the following: Rāmakaṇṭha mentions Utpaladeva as his teacher and the poet Mukṭākaṇa as his older brother. Assuming that Utpaladeva lived between 900 and 970,⁴⁰ Rāmakaṇṭha's reference to him should not have been made too early in his suspected life-span, perhaps not before 940. The date of Mukṭākaṇa, who is associated with the Kashmirian king Avantivarman (855-883) can be brought into agreement, although with some difficulties. If the *Sarvatobhadra* was a work written by Rāmakaṇṭha at an advanced age of sixty in 940, and if his brother was twenty years older – he would have been born in 860 – then Mukṭākaṇa would have been 23 at the end of Avantivarman's time. The alternative to this model calculation, which is perhaps unusual but not impossible, would be to lower the date of Utpaladeva, or deny the identity of the author of the *Spandavivṛti* and the *Sarvatobhadra*.

For the date of the MU the difference is only slight. The testimony of Kṣemendra brings us to a *terminus ante quem* of around 980, unless we assume that the work was written during Kṣemendra's lifetime, whereas

³⁶ See KANE (1987), p. 265f.

³⁷ The *Bhagavadgītā* with the commentary called *Sarvatobhadra* by Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha. Ed. MADHUSŪDAN KAUL. Bombay 1943 (KSTS 64).

³⁸ The *Spanda Kārikās* with the *Vivṛti* of Rāmakaṇṭha. Ed. J.C. CHATTERJI. Srinagar 1911 (KSTS 6).

³⁹ Introduction to the edition of the *Sarvatobhadra*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ See TORELLA (1994), p. xx.

Rāmakaṇṭha's quotation pushes down the *terminus ante quem* even nearer to Yaśaskara. In this case the episode in the *Sthitiprakaraṇa*, in which Yaśaskara's minister Narasiṃha is mentioned as reciting one episode from the text, becomes crucial for determining the localization and authorship of the work.⁴¹

The implications for a general view of this text are interesting: Before these findings the length of the text – the MU is larger than the *Rāmāyaṇa* – its repetitiousness, and the double end did not favour the assumption of a single authorship. As VON GLASENAPP said:

“Am Ende des ersten Teils des VI. Buches, Kap. 127, hat Rāma aus den ‘den Vedānta zusammenfassenden’ (*vedāntasaṃgraha* VIa.127.3) Vorträgen Vasiṣṭhas so viel gelernt, daß er in tiefer Meditation der Wonne der All-Einheit teilhaftig wird. [...] Man sollte erwarten, daß damit die Unterweisungen Vasiṣṭhas ein Ende gefunden hätten und nur noch der Abschluß der Rahmenerzählung bevorstehe. Dies ist aber keineswegs der Fall. Der redselige Vasiṣṭha setzt vielmehr seine Darlegungen in derselben Weise noch die 214 Kapitel des 2. Teils des VI. Buches hindurch fort ...”⁴²

With the new data the picture has changed. The end of the *pūrvārdha* of the *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* in the YV is an addition, whereas in the MU the last *Prakaraṇa* forms one continuous text. But when VON GLASENAPP notes that Rāma has already reached his religious goal this is also wrong in another respect: Rāma's awakening takes place, undetected by previous studies, at the beginning of the *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa*, which is approximately the middle of the whole MU. And this is clearly intended. According to the author this awakening is the prerequisite and marks the “time of the Siddhānta” (*siddhāntakala*), where Rāma is able to understand his philosophical instructions and is thereby liberated. Before this point in the text Vasiṣṭha even postpones questions, because the disciple is not yet able to understand their answer. In one case this didactic structure could be verified by tracing the rephrased repetition of the question again later in the text.⁴³ The reference to the earlier passage, removed by many thousand verses, suggests that the didactic plan involved in this work

⁴¹ See below, p. 24.

⁴² GLASENAPP (1951), p. 263f.

⁴³ See HANNEDER (2003).

is elaborate and is more likely caused by a single author than in a long phase of textual growth.⁴⁴

This observation may also explain the verse analysed above. It is now clear that a person who has attained to the supreme state, still needs to be taught through a final doctrine, there called *nairātmya-* or *śūnyavāda*.

In the end not much remains from the wide-spread picture of a “philosophical Rāmāyaṇa”, containing a hotchpotch of ideas. The plan of the work and its use of others’ ideas seem well calculated and this tight construction and the narrow time frame for its production suggests that it was written or at least substantially redacted by a single author. His ideas were so unusual that he was received only in the garb of Advaita Vedānta, but this makes him all the more interesting for research in the history of Indian philosophy.

⁴⁴ Pending further studies this cannot be applied to the first two *Prakaraṇas*, which are – at least in some parts – introductions that were composed after the completion of the main work, i.e. *Prakaraṇas* 3–6.