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# Navigating the Ocean of Dharma: The Composition of Sanskrit Scriptural Digests in the Dharmaśāstra and Śaiva Siddhānta Traditions

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## Abstract

Scholars of Sanskrit literature in the second millennium CE had to deal with sizeable collections of sources claiming authority on different branches of knowledge and human experience. The need for ordering such sources went hand in hand with the establishment of “canons” of authoritative texts. This article will explore the topic of the composition of digests in two main traditions — the Dharmaśāstra and the Śaiva Siddhānta — to illustrate the breadth of this phenomenon, both in terms of its popularity and of its chronological range.

## Keywords

Dharmaśāstra – Śaiva Siddhānta – Sanskrit digests – Purāṇas

## Introduction

This article provides an overview of the practice of composing digests of scriptural sources in the second millennium CE, as a strategy to navigate and tame the vast corpora of Sanskrit prescriptive texts. The focus will be on two main cultural domains: the Dharmanibandhas, “Digests of [the sources of] Dharma,” which chiefly consist in selections of texts from traditional Dharma sources such as the Sanskrit Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstra, “scholastic literature on Dharma,” and the digests of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, collecting the scriptures of one of the currents of worshippers of the god Śiva. The emergence

of this genre, at a specific time in history, offers a possible comparison with the “encyclopaedism” of tenth-century CE Arabic culture, the topic of this Special Issue, whose development is chronologically parallel to the spread of the digests that will be discussed in the following pages. By illustrating some of the features of such scriptural corpora, and giving references to the main authors who have attempted to anthologize them, my purpose is to supply the readers of this Special Issue, mostly coming from the field of Arabic studies, with some terms of comparison regarding one of the ways in which Indian exegetes dealt with the complication of having “too much to know” about aspects of their lives and doctrines. As will become clearer in this article, the topic is tightly connected to the notions of scriptural authority, which led to a burgeoning production of texts claiming divine authorship; at the same time, we can also surmise, albeit in the absence of hard evidence, that the rise in the composition of digests in the second millennium is a sign of the increased availability of collections of such scriptures in institutional libraries.

### The Ocean of Dharma

Indian intellectuals were faced early on with the task of ordering and selecting from the polymorphous wealth of ever-growing textual corpora that claimed the status of authoritative scriptures. Several factors that are peculiar to the cultures and religions that originated in South Asia have contributed to the formation of a very creative landscape in which, on the one hand, new scriptures kept being composed over the course of history and, on the other, texts could be modified, to the point where different works were at times known by the same title, or that scriptural texts were variously adapted to the different regional and cultural contexts in which they were transmitted. By identifying borrowings, rewritings, adaptations and recensions, and by studying the complex hermeneutical tradition that developed around such texts, philological research provides a crucial aid in historicizing the composition and transmission of these works.<sup>1</sup>

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the case of Purāṇic literature, which emerged in the first centuries of the first millennium CE and enjoyed such popularity that composition in this genre was protracted up to modern

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1 For general considerations concerning the contribution of textual criticism to the historical understanding of Indian scriptures and the communities that produced them, see Bakker, *Methodological Considerations* (for the Purāṇic sources), and Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism* (for Tantric texts).

times and came to encompass several regional languages.<sup>2</sup> Traditional lists mention eighteen “major Purāṇas” (*mahāpurāṇas*) and as many “ancillary Purāṇas” (*upapurāṇas*).<sup>3</sup> However, we know that such lists — not always consistent with one another — do not cover the entirety of the Sanskrit production, and that this division into major and secondary Purāṇas was fictitious and not necessarily reflective of their importance. As tenuous as it may be to give a univocal definition to such a multifarious phenomenon, we might broadly describe the Sanskrit Purāṇas as encyclopaedic works, collecting prescriptions on the cult of “Hindu” deities, religious beliefs and the practice of specific rituals, descriptions of icons, as well as several aspects of society and law, cosmogonies, mythical narratives, stories about the origins of early dynasties, eulogistic accounts of specific holy places, and more.<sup>4</sup> The Sanskrit term *purāṇa* literally means “ancient,” i.e., “traditional,” and therefore “timeless,” but not necessarily chronologically old. Such works, along with the epics, are conceived as reinforcements of the Vedas; they derive their authority from attributing their teachings to divine revelations, which have been variously redacted into proper works by ancient seers for the welfare of humankind.<sup>5</sup> Purāṇas are thus, strictly speaking, anonymous, although the tradition attributes their redaction to Vyāsa, the same a-historical figure to whom also the entire *Mahābhārata*, one of the major Sanskrit epics, is attributed. The name

2 For an overview of Purāṇic literature, see Rocher, *Purāṇas*.

3 For lists of Mahāpurāṇas, see *Matsyapurāṇa* 53.11-57, *Varāhapurāṇa* 112.69cd, and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 3.6.20-23. This *Viṣṇupurāṇa* list is of special importance because the polymath al-Bīrūnī (d. ca. 440/1048) mentions it in his *Kitāb al-Hind*, and gives a list of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas that is coherent with the one extant in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (Rocher, *Purāṇas*, 31; on the importance of al-Bīrūnī’s knowledge of the Purāṇas as a source for his knowledge of Indian geography, see Verdon, Cartography). A popular list of Upapurāṇas, often quoted in medieval digests, is that of *Kūrmapurāṇa* 1.1.17-20.

4 A tradition going back to the Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakośa* (ca. sixth century) defines the Purāṇas as “containing five characteristics” (*purāṇaṃ pañcalakṣaṇam*, see *Amarakośa* 1.6.5). Such five characteristics are interpreted as topics and exemplified in the Purāṇas themselves (see, for instance, *Śivapurāṇa* 7.1.41) as being: emanation of the universe (*sarga*); secondary creation and reabsorption of the universe (*pratisarga*); genealogies (*vaṃśa*, in this case denoting the genealogies of gods and ancestors); the ages of Manu (*manvantara*, a sequence of fourteen eras that make up a *kalpa*, extremely long time-divisions that mark the creation and reabsorption of the universe); and genealogies of dynasties (*vaṃśyānucarita*). See Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa*, for the use of this thematic criterion in the study of the textual history of the Purāṇas; and Rocher, *Purāṇas*, 24ff, for a history of the interpretation of this and alternative notions.

5 This is not true for Purāṇas in regional languages, such as the Tamil Purāṇas, attested from the twelfth century, which are attributed to historical authors (see Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, 170ff).

Vyāsa, after all, literally means “compiler,” coherently with the function that the tradition ascribes to him.

It is not surprising, then, that none of the many Sanskrit Purāṇas or Purāṇa-like works has a simple and straightforward composition history. On the contrary, their texts were expanded over time to include diachronically stratified layers. Exemplary in this regard is the case of the *Skandapurāṇa*, one of the major scriptures of the devotees of the god Śiva, which is the object of an ongoing editorial project and illuminates several aspects of religious landscape of early medieval India, while also offering important insights into Purāṇic composition.<sup>6</sup> This Purāṇa was probably first redacted in the sixth-seventh century CE in Northern India and transmitted very soon to Nepal, where the text is preserved in a manuscript as old as the ninth century.<sup>7</sup> Philological research has shown that before the twelfth century, a major redaction, now referred to in the critical edition as the “RA recension,” made thorough changes to the early text of this Purāṇa from chapter 162 onwards.<sup>8</sup> This redaction, with further modifications and omissions, gave rise to a so-called *Ambikākhaṇḍa* recension and a *Revākhaṇḍa* recension; these in turn were the starting point of a long and complex transmission that led to the emergence of different “sections” (*khaṇḍa*) claiming to belong to the *Skandapurāṇa*.

Besides being expanded with the composition of new sections, Purāṇas could also come to incorporate text from other works. One of the most extreme cases in this sense is that of the *Agnipurāṇa*, the “Purāṇa of Fire,” a late work that contains several chapters extracted from works of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra scriptures,<sup>9</sup> while also deriving materials from Śaiva ritual manuals,<sup>10</sup> from other Purāṇas and from works of the Dharmasāstra genre, as well as abridgements of the epics and various treatises.<sup>11</sup>

In other cases, philological analysis allows us to detect that the same text or portion of text, sometimes very long, was reused in different sectarian contexts, sometimes with minor adjustments, such as changing the names of the gods or skipping problematic contents, other times through thorough rewritings.

6 This is the project of editing the original *Skandapurāṇa*, initiated by Hans Bakker at the University of Groningen in 1994, and since 2016 continued at the Universities of Leiden and Kyoto.

7 On this, see Adriaensen, Bakker and Isaacson, *Skandapurāṇa*, Prolegomena.

8 On these early recensions of the *Skandapurāṇa*, see Harimoto, Some Observations.

9 See Rastelli, Pāñcarātra Passages.

10 Brunner-Lachaux, *Somaśambhupaddhati*, LIX fn. 81, attributing the information to Sanderson.

11 On the composition of the *Agnipurāṇa* and the works abridged and borrowed in this text, see Hazra, Purāṇic Records, 136-137.

Examples of these practices can be found in the various re-adaptations of an early scripture of the devotees of the god Śiva, the *Śivadharmottara*, whose composition might be placed in the sixth-seventh century.<sup>12</sup> This text — which does not describe itself as a Purāṇa, but was received as such in the Purāṇic tradition — and the topics it covers were broad enough to be easily translated into different contexts; as a consequence, large portions of it were reused in other Purāṇas of the Śaivas (i.e., the worshippers of the god Śiva), such as the *Līṅgapurāṇa* and the *Śivapurāṇa*, as well as in scriptures of their “competitors.” For instance, materials from at least three chapters of the *Śivadharmottara* are subsumed into the *Devīpurāṇa*, “The Purāṇa of the Goddess,” a scripture for the devotees of the Goddess that was most likely composed in Bengal in the eighth-ninth century.<sup>13</sup> The usual methods that the author of the *Devīpurāṇa* uses to transform the text of the *Śivadharmottara* into a scripture supporting Goddess worship involve the selection of specific parts of the text, as well as the replacement of the name and references to the god Śiva with that of Devī.<sup>14</sup> The result is that, to anyone who reads both works, the text is at times clearly recognizable as a textual borrowing, even prior to an in-depth philological study; but to readers of the *Devīpurāṇa*, the text of the *Śivadharmottara* was perfectly embedded within an original composition on the worship of the Goddess.

Even more striking examples of adaptations of the *Śivadharmottara* are presented in a section of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, the “Purāṇa of the Future.” This is another very complex work, whose first section, the *Brāhmaparvan*, collects “Saura” materials, namely materials on the cult of the Sun god (Sūra/Sūrya in Sanskrit). In recent years, the work of Bisschop has attracted attention to the strategies through which this section of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* appropriated materials from early scriptures of the worshippers of Viṣṇu and Śiva, called *Viṣṇudharma* and *Śivadharmasāstra*, respectively.<sup>15</sup> Bisschop observes that the *Brāhmaparvan* of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* has parallels from chapters 1-28 of the *Viṣṇudharma*, and that almost the entire *Śivadharmasāstra* was borrowed into chapters 1.175-180 of the same *Brāhmaparvan*; however, both the *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Śivadharmasāstra* were not just merely copied into the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, but rewritten and transformed into a Saura scripture.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this, we observe that the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* also reworks chapters

12 For an introduction on the *Śivadharmottara*, see De Simini, *Gods and Books*, 46ff.

13 On the *Devīpurāṇa*, see Hazra, *Upapurāṇas*, 35-194.

14 For more details about these cases of textual borrowings, see De Simini, *Gods and Books*, 73ff.

15 See Bisschop, *Universal Śaivism*, and idem, Vyāsa’s Palimpsest, 21ff.

16 Bisschop, Vyāsa’s Palimpsest, 168.

1 and 4-7 of the *Śivadharmottara* into chapters 1.187-192 and, similarly to its treatment of the *Viṣṇudharma* and the *Śivadharmasāstra*, openly rewrites the text as a scripture supporting the cult of the Sun god. For instance, two verses from *Śivadharmottara*'s chapter 1 praising the work of the authentic Śaiva teacher are aptly transformed into a eulogy of the Saura teacher instead:

*Śivadharmottara* 1<sup>17</sup>

The king should worship the teacher who expounds the teachings of Śiva as if he were Śiva [himself], for the welfare of the other beings and to the advantage of his own power. (47) / [...]

Which ancestor is comparable to this [teacher] who saves a person drowning in the mud of transmigration by the hand of the Śaiva knowledge? (60) / Who would not worship this one, who gently anoints the king, burnt by the fire of ignorance, with the nectar of knowledge? (61)

*Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 1.187<sup>18</sup>

One should worship, as if he were the Sun god [himself], the teacher who expounds the teachings of the Sun, who saves the people drowning into the ocean of transmigration. (30) /

Which teacher can be compared to this one, who, using the water of the Saura teachings, gently anoints a person who is burnt by the fire of ignorance, [and anoints] devotees with the nectar of knowledge? Who would not worship him? (31)

While the most basic strategy adopted by the authors of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* is to change the references to Śiva and the knowledge derived from him into references to the god Sūrya and the Saura teachings (*śivavat*, "like Śiva," becomes *sūryavat*, "like the Sun"; *śivavākya*, the "teachings of Śiva," becomes *sauravākya*, the "teachings of the Sun," and so on), we also notice that the structure of the verses has changed. The *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* joins together, by slightly altering the lexical choice and the syntactic structure, two sets of stanzas from two different points of the chapter and omits twelve stanzas of the *Śivadharmottara*. The most striking consequence of this operation, which is clearly discernible by simply comparing *Śivadharmottara* 1.47 with *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 1.187.30, is

17 *Śivadharmottara* 1.47 and 1.60-61: *śivavākyappravaktāraṃ śivavat pūjayed gurum | nṛpaḥ paropakārāya ātmanāś ca vibhūṭaye || 47; saṃsārapaṅkanīrṃmagṇaṃ yaḥ samuddharate janam | śivajñānātmahastena kaś tena sadṛśaḥ pitā || 60 || ajñānavahnīsantaptaṃ nīrvāpayati yaḥ śanaiḥ | jñānāmṛtena nṛpatim kaś tan na pratipūjayet || 61.*

18 *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 1.187.30-31: *sauravākyappravaktāraṃ sūravat pūjayed gurum | saṃsārārṇavanīrṃmagṇaṃ yaḥ samuddharate janam || 30 sauradharmāmbuhastena kaś tena sadṛśo guruḥ | ajñānavahnīsantaptaṃ nīrvāpayati yaḥ śanaiḥ | jñānāmṛtena vai bhaktān kaś taṃ na pratipūjayet || 31.*

that the latter gets rid of the main subject of this and the following stanzas in the early Śaiva scripture, namely the king. This is not a minor change, if we consider that the stanzas of the *Śivadharmottara* that do not make it into the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* were entirely devoted to the importance of converting the king to the religion of Śiva, setting an important manifesto for the whole work, which often addresses its instructions to kings and ruling elites.<sup>19</sup> This political scenario is removed from the parallel section of the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, because it did not fit the agenda of its authors; at the same time, extensive portions from five chapters of the *Śivadharmottara* were easily subsumed into the text, which creatively rewrites this and other earlier scriptures.

Even these few examples and — deliberately generic — considerations might suffice to give an idea of how lively, albeit confusing, the situation could have been for the primary readers and users of these texts. At the same time, given the role played by such scriptures in establishing orthopraxy and thinking about macrocosmic scenarios and individual destinies, it soon became crucial to find strategies to ascertain a reliable canon of scriptures and tame this imposing quantity of prescriptions and instructions. In addition to this, we should note that Purāṇas were only one among the possible traditional sources of Dharma, which include the so-called Dharmasūtras and the Smṛtis, anonymous treatises on Dharma attributed to mythical sages of the past,<sup>20</sup> as well as the epics.

The emergence of a literary genre styled as “Compendia of the [sources of] Dharma” (Dharmanibandha) is one of the main characteristics of second-millennium production in the field of Dharmaśāstra, and also qualifies as a response to the bewildering state of the primary materials that has been sketched above. Brick has brought attention to what he calls a “crisis of scriptural authority,” originating from a proliferation of scriptures in this and other rival traditions, as one of the keys to understanding the emergence of the Dharmanibandhas.<sup>21</sup> Such compendia structured their corpora of knowledge using different criteria. As one of the most basic examples, we can mention Lakṣmīdhara’s *Kṛtyakalpataru*, which is also among the earliest digests that has reached us complete.<sup>22</sup> Composed at the onset of the twelfth century

19 On this aspect of the *Śivadharmottara* see De Simini, *Gods and Books*, especially 46ff.

20 Introductions to this literature can be found, among others, in Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra*, which also contains observations on the Dharmanibandhas (see below), and Olivelle, *Dharmaśāstra*.

21 Brick, *Brahmanical Theories*, p. 19.

22 Regarding Lakṣmīdhara, see the introduction to Aiyangar, *Kṛtyakalpataru*; Bakker and Isaacson, *Skandapurāṇa*; and Brick, *Brahmanical Theories*. On the subgenre of the digests on gifting (*dāna*), see De Simini, *Observations*; and *Gods and Books* (chapter 3), where

in Varanasi by a minister of the Gāhaḍavāla king Govindacandra (r. ca. 1109-1168 CE), as Lakṣmīdhara himself declares in the introduction to his work, the *Kṛtyakalpataru* is a collection of scriptural quotations divided into fourteen books, each of them corresponding to a main general topic. Such books/topics are subsequently divided into chapters/subtopics that consist of a list of texts extracted from the traditional sources of Dharma, on which the author rarely comments. When he does so, he adopts a very terse style, often just explaining the meaning of rare words and compounds; the excerpts are all introduced by the title of the source or the name of its mythical author. In the introduction, Lakṣmīdhara mentions a few of his predecessors, whose works are mostly lost except for the section on *śrāddha* from Gopāla's *Kṛtyakāmadhenu*, whose manuscript has been recently discovered and published by Kouda.<sup>23</sup>

The structure of Lakṣmīdhara's digest, a comprehensive work in which excerpts from scriptures are structured according to fixed thematic categories and interspersed with (at times also very extensive) commentarial observations by the digest-writer, became popular in the following centuries. Notable examples are the *Smṛticandrikā* by Devaṇṇa, a South-Indian author usually dated to mid-twelfth century;<sup>24</sup> the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* by Hemādri, a minister of the Yādava kings Mānadeva (r. ca. 1260-1270) and Rāmacandra (r. ca. 1271-1311), whose digest is also referred to in local inscriptions as a source-book of norms;<sup>25</sup> and the *Bhagavantabhāskara* by Nīlakaṇṭha, who named his digest, divided into various sections called *Mayūkhas*, after the Rajput king Bhagavantadeva (seventeenth century).<sup>26</sup> These works are very diverse insofar as their choice of topics, as well as the selection, organization, and interpretation of sources is concerned. However, they approach their sources in a similar way. In the incipit to his *Smṛticandrikā*, Devaṇṇa declares:<sup>27</sup> "I have not written anything here that conforms to my own interpretation, but rather everything is based directly upon scriptural statements; therefore, [this *Smṛticandrikā*] can be accepted without risks."

It may seem counterintuitive that, after this statement, Devaṇṇa proceeds to comment extensively on some texts from his selection of sources. Derrett suggests that authors such as Devaṇṇa, who almost turn their digests (or, at

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I collect historical information about the authors of digests or digest-sections on *dāna*, offering a broader picture of their style and their method in dealing with this subject.

23 Kouda, Gopāla (Kami); Gopāla (Shito).

24 Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* 5.2, 721-23.

25 Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* 1.2, 751-753 and Talbot, *Precolonial India*, 83-93.

26 Shastri, *Preliminary Report*, 23; Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* 1.2, 938-941.

27 *Smṛticandrikā* 1.2: *svābhiprāyeṇa hi mayā na kiñcid iha likhyate | kintu vācanikaṃ sarvaṃ ato grāhyaiva nirbhayaḥ ||*



least, parts of them) into proper treatises, should be considered as belonging to a category of their own.<sup>28</sup> Beside Devaṅṅa, these would include Caṇḍeśvara (a thirteenth century Nibandha-author who served king Bhaveśa Mithilā), Mādhavācārya (1330-1385, a minister of the first Vijayanagara kings and author of a digest-commentary on the *Parāśarasmr̥ti*) and others. Regardless of the taxonomy we want to adopt, what is relevant in their approach to primary sources is that these authors regarded the assemblage of primary materials from different authoritative sources as the real essence of their works, and their observations, however long they could be at times, as subservient to the scriptural excerpts.

Other Nibandha-authors composed digests on specific topics; among these, we can count Ballāla Sena, king of the Sena dynasty of Bengal (r. ca. 1158-1179), to whom four digests are attributed on the topics of gifting, ritual installations, extraordinary events, and customs respectively (*Dānasāgara*, *Pratiṣṭhāsāgara*, *Adbhūtasāgara*, *Ācārasāgara*).<sup>29</sup> This author stands out because, in the introduction to his *Dānasāgara*, he states very clearly the reasons that prompted him to choose some sources over others, and consequently his purposes in composing his digest. In listing the Purāṇas that he has not accepted in his work,<sup>30</sup> Ballāla Sena mentions criteria such as coherence with the general topic of the work, conciseness, the avoidance of redundancy, and the perfect orthodoxy of a work, as the main principles to establish whether a Purāṇa can or cannot be accepted as a source for his digest. In doing so, this author shows awareness of the complex transmission history of Purāṇas and of the existence of works that went under such names but should in fact be considered “spurious,” while also expressly attributing to his digest the function of discerning between rightful and illegitimate scriptures.

Other Nibandha-authors choose to organize their corpus of scriptures in the form of a commentary. The most exemplary work of this kind is attributed to Aparārka, an author who is identified with one of the twelfth-century homonymous Śīlāhāra kings of Konkan.<sup>31</sup> His digest qualifies as a commentary on the important “Smṛti of Yājñavalkya” (*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*), a treatise on Dharmaśāstra composed approximately in the fifth century. The genre of the Nibandha does indeed overlap in several aspects with that of the commentary on authoritative sources, which in ancient and medieval South Asia is, par excellence, the genre in which “scholarship” on various subjects is composed.

28 Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra*, 54-55.

29 Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* 1.2, 730 ff., and Majumdar *Ancient Bengal*, 228-230.

30 See text and translation in De Simini, *Observations*, 616 ff.

31 Mirashi, *Inscriptions*, LXXV.

However, even just a cursory look at his work shows that the commentarial sections are overwhelmed by the long excerpts of scriptural passages on a given topic; the connections between the latter and the text that is commented upon are at times very weak.<sup>32</sup>

As opposed to their primary sources, which are anonymous and intentionally composed as a-temporal, and thus also very difficult to place in time and space, Dharma-digests are associated with historical authors who sometimes give information about themselves or can be otherwise identified with specific figures of scholars or kings. The chronological limits of this phenomenon, broadly speaking, are the eleventh and the eighteenth centuries, when the latest Dharmanibandhas were composed at the behest of the British rulers.<sup>33</sup> This clear collocation in time and the straightforward connection with political power, in the form of the attribution of these works to kings or ministers of kings, has prompted a reflection on whether we can establish a political factor as one of the reasons that stimulated the emergence and growth of this genre. This hypothesis was originally advanced by Pollock, who suggested a connection between the advance of a Mamluk sultanate in India and the composition of Nibandhas, which he saw as part of a reactionary project conceived under the threat of a prevailing foreign culture.<sup>34</sup> While it has been remarked that this explanation is not sufficient on its own to cover the phenomenon of the emergence of the Dharmanibandhas — some of the earliest compositions, such as the above-mentioned *Smṛticandrikā*, were composed in areas where contact with foreign cultures was still not part of the political agenda — we can still hypothesize that in some areas this factor might have played a role. Indeed, authors such as Lakṣmīdhara, Ballāla Sena, Aparārka or Hemādri lived in areas that were facing (or were soon to face) what Pollock describes as a “juxtaposition with alternative lifeworlds.”<sup>35</sup>

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32 This hybrid form of digest-commentary is also attested in other domains of South Asian textual production. For instance, Francesco Sferra has recently brought to my attention the case of the *Vajrapadaśārasaṅgraha*, a commentary on the Buddhist scripture *Hevajratantra* written by Yaśobhadra, also known as Nāropā (d. 1040-41). The text is currently only available in a Tibetan translation (Tōh. no. 1186) from Sanskrit, and is *de facto* a collection of long excerpts from other Tantric Buddhist scriptures, from the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras and, rarely, from the works of famous Mahāyāna authors. As in the case of Aparārka's commentary, the anthological section often prevails on the proper commentarial portions.

33 Derrett, Administration.

34 Pollock, Deep Orientalism.

35 *Ibid.*, 106.

Another aspect connected with the role of “public figures” of the Nibandha-authors is that, as Derrett notes,<sup>36</sup> the composition of such works required an institution that would collect, produce and preserve the primary sources, often very extensive in size, upon which they depend. In other words, monarchic patronage was an indispensable prerequisite of the work of the Nibandha-authors, as it provided the level of cultural “institutionalization” that such an enterprise required.

The manuscript of the *Kṛtyakāmadhenu*, already mentioned above, is one of the works that Lakṣmīdhara mentions as predating his digest. It seems to portray exactly this situation: in the final colophon, the copyist states that the manuscript was copied “during the year 1209, in the dark half of the month Āṣāḍha, on a Saturday, in the glorious Varanasi, during the auspicious reign of the glorious king Govindacandra.”<sup>37</sup> This date has been calculated by Kouda as corresponding to June 20, 1153.<sup>38</sup> What is especially relevant to our discussion here is that the manuscript of this digest must have been produced in the same center where Lakṣmīdhara, minister of the king Govindacandra, was active. It thus belongs to a collection of texts that were copied with royal support at the request and/or to the benefit of the local scholars, and this same collection was probably available to Lakṣmīdhara allowing him to compose his digest.

### Digests from the Śaiva Siddhānta Tradition

The situation described in the previous paragraph is not at all unique in the vast field of Sanskrit literary production. On the contrary, it reflects a trend that we can observe in several fields of knowledge. A family of texts that seems to follow a similar development — using digests as a way of navigating a vast, at times confusing body of anonymous scriptural knowledge, and establishing the canonical sources of such knowledge — is the very productive branch of religious literature belonging to the so-called Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. This religious current revolving around the cult of the god Śiva originally developed within the tantric Śaiva traditions from at least the fifth century CE,<sup>39</sup>

36 Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra*, 52.

37 Kouda, Gopāla (Kami), 228: *saṃvat 1209 āṣāḍha vadi 12 śanau śrīmadvārāṇasyām śrīmad govīṃdacamdradevakalyāṇavijayarājye*. The facsimile of this folio is published in Kouda, Gopāla (Shimo), 94; the above-mentioned line corresponds to fol. 49r, line 5.

38 Kouda, Gopāla (Shimo), 146. I thank Kenji Takahashi for helping me select the relevant information from this article in Japanese.

39 The fifth century is when we can approximately date the composition of the earliest layer of the *Niśvāsa*, which in turn is the earliest surviving scripture of this tradition (see the

producing scriptures that mainly addressed the fundamental beliefs of this school and the ritual practice of its initiates. From the earliest surviving scriptures on, we find lists of twenty-eight Tantras considered “canonical,” accompanied by other texts that are conceived of as deriving from one of them.<sup>40</sup> All of these scriptures — variously designated as Tantras or Āgamas — were considered authoritative because their authorship could be traced back to Śiva himself.<sup>41</sup>

Research conducted in recent decades has shown that, in its early history, the Śaiva Siddhānta was a pan-Indian phenomenon, as can be deduced both on the basis of what is left of its early canon and of the epigraphical attestations of its royal sponsorship.<sup>42</sup> However, the historical trajectory followed

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introduction to Goodall, *Niśvāsātattvasamhitā* for considerations concerning its absolute dating, as well as the relative chronology of the different parts of the text).

40 For an overview of the contents of such lists, see the table attached to J. Filliozat's introduction in Bhattacharya, *Rauravāgama*, as well as Appendix 3 in Goodall, *Kiraṇatantra*, 402-417. Here, besides giving a brand-new table and correcting a few imprecisions from the earlier list, Goodall also provides transcriptions of the unpublished texts from which some of these lists are extracted.

41 See, on this, the discussion in chapter 3 of an early Śaiva Siddhānta scripture, the *Parākhya* (Goodall, *Parākhyatantra*, 37-46 (text) and 205-225 (translation)), where they refute the tenets of the Mīmāṃsā philosophical school, according to which it is exactly the existence of an author, human or divine, that is the cause for a cognition — and, thus, for teachings — to be unreliable. Śaivas and other currents maintain the opposite, namely that the teachings of their scriptures came from the mouth(s) of Śiva as a manifestation of his power and will to save his devotees, and this divine authorship makes them reliable. At the same time, the words of the scriptures are not a literal reflection of those of Śiva: as it is also evoked in the beginning of *Parākhya*'s chapter 3 (see especially verses 2-6) and is commonplace in scriptural texts from different traditions, the god is supposed to have transmitted his teachings to some divine beings at the moment of creation, thus activating a chain of transmission that also reached the other gods, who transmitted such knowledge to human seers from whom the “best of men” (*narasattamāḥ*) learned it. Furthermore, in the course of this transmission, the teachings are stripped down to their essence (*sāra*), in order to make Śiva's power understandable for other gods and finite human beings. On the notion of the “shrinking” of scriptures, see *Parākhya* 3.15-16, as well as Goodall's discussion in fn. 228 (*Parākhyatantra*, 207), with references to more Tantras dealing with this subject.

42 For examples of seventh-century inscriptions mentioning the Śaiva Siddhānta initiation being imparted on kings, see Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism*, 8-10, fn. 2. The earliest mention of the expression “Śaiva Siddhānta” is found in a Sanskrit inscription from the Kailāsanātha temple in Kañchipuram; here the Pallava ruler Narasiṃha II, who reigned in the last twenty-seven years of the seventh century, is said to be “on the path of the Śaiva Siddhānta” (*śaivasiddhāntamārgē*; see Hultzsch, *South-Indian Inscriptions* 12, v. 5cd). More tenth-eleventh-century attestations in Madhya Pradesh and the North-West are given in Goodall, *Parākhyatantra*, xx, fn. 17. Considerations on the criteria for establishing that a Śaiva Siddhānta scripture is early, including the existence of manuscript

by the Śaiva Siddhānta brought it to become progressively more rooted in the Tamil-speaking regions of the South of India, to which this tradition has been strongly associated especially from the twelfth century onwards, and where local variants are still alive today.<sup>43</sup> This association with a specific area and the parallel weakening of its presence in other regions were accompanied by major changes within the tradition. In the Tamil South, the Śaiva Siddhānta became an integral part of the temple-based religious life that flourished under the Coḷa emperors (eighth to thirteenth century), and therefore developed a whole set of public (*parārtha*) rituals that were absent in the earlier scriptures, centered on the practice of private individuals. This and other major developments, like those concerning the theological speculation of this school, were supported by new texts that claimed the status of scripture;<sup>44</sup> most of these bear the same titles as texts that are attested in the early pan-Indian lists, a strategy adopted in order for them to be recognized as canonical. However, on the basis of their contents as well as their transmission, scholars have established that these are more recent compositions from the South and that they owe their popularity to the loss of the earlier homonymous texts, of which sometimes only quotations survive in earlier exegetical literature. The composition of such new Tantras is then flanked by the development of a Śaiva Siddhānta devotional and exegetical literature both in Tamil and Sanskrit.

To add to the complexity of this brief sketch, the Śaiva Siddhānta coexisted with other Śaiva and non-Śaiva traditions, all of them relying on scriptures attributed to the same or another god, in one case even producing a whole canon of scriptures that once again bore the same titles as those of the early Śaiva Siddhānta canon.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it comes as no surprise that digests and summaries of Śaiva Siddhānta teachings are attested, at least from the eleventh century onwards, as a way to organize scriptural knowledge around certain topics — ritual practice being one of the most important drivers — or to condense doctrines that were explained in conflicting ways in the scriptures. In this complex transmission history, digests also help us to fill some of the gaps

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attestations outside of Nepal and the production of early commentaries, are in Goodall, *Kiraṇatantra*, XL ff.

43 Goodall, *Kiraṇatantra*, XL fn. 91, and idem, *Parākhyatantra*, XXVII.

44 Besides the publications I already referred to (such as Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism*, Goodall, *Kiraṇatantra*; *Parākhyatantra*), the reader will find a clear exposition of this and related developments also in Sanderson, *Śaiva Literature*, 13 ff.

45 This is the case of the Vīraśaiva school, which is attested in the Deccan especially from the thirteenth century onwards, and which, just like the Śaiva Siddhānta in Tamil Nadu, is still a living local Śaiva tradition in Karnataka. For some introductory considerations on its canon of Sanskrit scriptures, see Sanderson, *Śaiva Literature*, 85.

in our knowledge of the early history of Śaiva scriptures, as they quote the text that they knew at a specific moment in history. At the same time, digests that are based on Śaiva Siddhānta sources are often not limited to the Tantras of this school, but branch out into the scriptural literature of other Śaiva currents, while also drawing from ritual manuals or works from other recognized teachers. The insertion of excerpts from texts by historical authors is, perhaps, the most important conceptual difference in the selection of sources operated by the authors of this school in comparison to those of the Dharmaśāstra tradition, who were, on the contrary, exclusively relying on the anonymous scriptures handed down by tradition.

The *Nityādisaṃgrahapaddhati* of Rājānaka Takṣakavarta from Kashmir (ca. twelfth century), for instance, is a ritual manual in the form of a digest in which the author covers different types of Śaiva worship by quoting scriptures from the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, but also from those based on the *Netratantra* and the *Svacchandatantra*, alongside a number of other local ritual manuals.<sup>46</sup> Another early example is that of Hṛdayaśiva of Mālava, a Śaiva Siddhānta initiate whose work can be placed within the twelfth century.<sup>47</sup> He is the author of the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, a digest (*samuccaya*, which literally means “collection”) on the topic of ritual atonement (*prāyaścitta*). The array of scriptures he quotes comprises a broad range of Tantras of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, but also includes some that are traced back to the so-called Mantrapīṭha and Vidyāpīṭha.<sup>48</sup> The specific technique used by Hṛdayaśiva qualifies his work as a sourcebook on the topic of ritual atonement: each chapter of the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* corresponds to a chapter on *prāyaścitta* from a Śaiva work, with the title of this source being stated both at the beginning of the chapter and in its final colophon.<sup>49</sup> Different is the style of another almost contemporary *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, composed by Trilocanaśiva, a Southern author of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, pupil of the famous exegete Aghoraśiva and thus also active in the twelfth century.<sup>50</sup>

46 On this author, see Sanderson, *Śaiva Exegesis*, 420-21.

47 On the basis of the available evidence, Sanderson established that Hṛdayaśiva must have been active between 863 and 1158, which is the date of the Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript transmitting the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* (*History through Textual Criticism*, 3, fn.1).

48 As observed by Sanderson (*History through Textual Criticism*, 4, fn. 1), the work of Hṛdayaśiva transmits titles and quoted texts from Saiddhāntika scriptures that are not known from Kashmirian sources, and thus contributes to enlarge the range of sources we know.

49 For a list of the texts that compose his digest and their identification, see Goodall, *Introduction*, 22-23.

50 On Trilocanaśiva and his relationship to Aghoraśiva and Jñānaśiva, another relevant Śaiva Siddhānta author of that time, see Goodall, *Problems*. Trilocanaśiva's

His digest on ritual atonement is composed in the style of an independent treatise, where stanzas written by the author are interspersed with short selections of scriptural texts and ritual manuals on the same topic, tightly intertwined and unattributed by the author. While Hṛdayaśiva kept the texts of his sources well separated, and gave his authorial contribution mainly in the general introduction (as well as in his work of selecting sources), Trilocanaśiva uses the texts of his authorities in order to create an independent treatise in which his authorial contribution is not distinct from the sources that he organizes and quotes. As observed by Goodall in his introduction to the 2015 critical edition of Trilocanaśiva's *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, which also gives the text of Hṛdayaśiva's digest as an appendix, the latter allows us better to understand the broader context of Trilocanaśiva's selection of sources, when these come from texts that have not survived in their entirety, and also to assess the difference between the two in their use of primary materials. An important difference lies for instance in Trilocanaśiva's choice of contaminating the Śaiva scriptures not only with excerpts from a famous Śaiva Siddhānta ritual manual, the *Kriyākāṇḍakramāvalī* by Somaśambhu (eleventh century), but also with scriptures from the Dharmaśāstra tradition. Unlike Takṣakavarta and Hṛdayaśiva before him, Trilocanaśiva quotes frequently from ancient Smṛtis such as the *Manusmṛti*, the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, the *Parāśarasṁṛti*, and others, that had in fact a lot to say on the topic of ritual atonement. The use of Dharmaśāstra scriptures in a Śaiva Siddhānta context might certainly be read as a reflection of that increased "coherence with Brahmanical orthopraxy" that has always characterized the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition as opposed to other less orthodox Tantric currents, and which will become especially relevant for the later neo-Siddhānta in the South.<sup>51</sup> At the same time and in connection with the popularity that the genre of the digest will enjoy in the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition from roughly the same time that saw their expansion in the Dharmaśāstra, this raises the still unanswered question of the direct influence that the latter might have had on the former. As suggested by Goodall,<sup>52</sup>

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*Prāyaścittasamuccaya* has recently been edited by R. Sathyanarayana (*Śaiva Rites of Expiation*).

- 51 On later developments see Goodall, *Parākhyatantra*, xxvi ff., and Sanderson, *Śaiva Literature*, 85 ff. As for the Śaiva Siddhānta being the least esoteric among the Tantric traditions, one can refer to Sanderson, *Śaivism*, 668-669.
- 52 See Goodall, Introduction, 18, in which he briefly considers the possibility that the digest was "a genre newly popular in Śaiva circles in its [scil.: the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*'s] time, perhaps because of a growth in Śaiva monastic libraries, and perhaps under the influence of Dharmaśāstra, where this genre seems to have emerged around the same period or earlier."

a possible shared presupposition for the composition of digests in both traditions might also be their high level of institutionalization, and thus, again, the availability of libraries: while the composition of digests of Dharmasāstra usually fell into the domain of royal administrators, that of digests of Śaiva sources was often connected to the abbots of Śaiva Siddhānta monasteries.

A further source that is used in Trilocanaśiva's *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* and not by Hṛdayaśiva is the *Vāyavyasamhitā*, an early section of the *Śivapurāṇa*. The earliest author to quote from this text was one of Trilocanaśiva's teachers, known under the initiatic names of Jñānaśiva or Jñānaśambhu, in his ritual manual *Jñānaratnāvalī*, also written in the style of a digest.<sup>53</sup> According to the colophon of his work, this author composed the text in Varanasi, and since we know that he was a contemporary of Aghoraśiva, it is likely that he was active there at the same time as Lakṣmīdhara. This specific section of the *Śivapurāṇa*, along with the *Śivadharmottara* — which is used in all the early digests by Takṣakavarta, Hṛdayaśiva, Jñānaśiva and Trilocanaśiva — will become popular in the Southern Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, even though neither the *Śivapurāṇa* nor the *Śivadharmottara* are originally Śaiva Siddhānta works. In light of this continued popularity, we might therefore read the inclusion of these and other sources into the early digests not just as a reflection, but as the setting in motion of a process of integration into the local culture that culminated with their translation into Tamil in the sixteenth century, a period of great transformation of this tradition and profound rooting in the Tamil-speaking South.<sup>54</sup>

While the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition attests to the composition of digests or digest-like works quite consistently,<sup>55</sup> the sixteenth century marks an important point in this development thanks to the work of Vedajñāna II (Tamil:

53 Information on Jñānaśiva and the *Jñānaratnāvalī* can be found in Goodall, Problems, especially 208–214. As regards Jñānaśiva being the earliest author to quote from the *Vāyavyasamhitā*, see Barois, *Doctrine et rituels*, 103.

54 On the Tamil translation of the *Vāyavyasamhitā*, see Raghavan, Tamil Versions; on the Tamil translation of the *Śivadharmottara*, see Ganesan, *Two Śaiva Teachers*, 36.

55 Besides proper digests of scriptures, such as the *Śataratnasamgraha* by Umāpati (fourteenth century), one should also consider the several compendia of Śaiva Siddhānta doctrines, such as for instance the two that are possibly attributed to the same Trilocanaśiva who authored the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, titled *Siddhāntasamuccaya* and *Siddhāntasārāvalī*, as well as the *Siddhāntadīpikā* by Rāmanātha (ca. twelfth century), as tools that authors of this tradition created in order to navigate its vast corpus of authorities and knowledge (on Rāmanātha, mostly with reference to his manual *Naṭarājapaddhati*, see Goodall, *Saiddhāntika Paddhatis* 1). Moreover, the several ritual manuals (*paddhati*) that make extensive use of quotations from the authoritative literature, along with commentaries on such *paddhatis*, heavily loaded in scriptural quotations, also partly fulfil this function. For a list of such *paddhatis* and their commentaries, with considerations on their authors and transmission, see Sanderson, *Śaiva Literature*, 20–25.



Maṛaiṇāṇa Tēcikar). This was a Śaiva Siddhānta author usually dated to the sixteenth century and associated, along with his teacher and uncle, Vedajñāna I (Tamil: Maṛaiṇāṇa Campantaṅ), with the rich Śaiva centre of Cidamabaram.<sup>56</sup> The works produced by these two authors, though abundant and important, still needs to be properly edited and studied. Current academic projects promise to achieve a better understanding of their oeuvre and its historical and cultural function in the near future.<sup>57</sup> A glance at their surviving works reveals that, while Vedajñāna I only wrote in Tamil, and also translated Sanskrit works into Tamil, the surviving works of Vedajñāna II are both in Tamil and in Sanskrit. In Tamil he was the author, among other things, of a commentary on the *Civatarumōttaram*, his teacher's Tamil translation of the *Śivadharmottara*, as well as a commentary on the *Civañānacittiyār*, the Tamil adaptation of the *Śivajñānasiddhi*. Vedajñāna's works in Sanskrit are mostly written in the style of digests, both of Śaiva scriptures and of authored texts, selected and arranged into thematic units. More specifically, he wrote two imposing ritual manuals, the *Dikṣādarśa* ("Illustration of Initiations") and the *Ātmārthapūjāpaddhati* ("Ritual Manual on Private Worship"), in the style of a digest in which the sources are all clearly identified, and to which a few commentarial sections are added; at times, it is possible to show that even these sections are not original and drawn from other sources, which in this case is not acknowledged. While not proper digests, the author's other works such as the *Āśaucadīpikā* ("Light on Impurity") or the *Kālaviveka* ("Examinations of the [Suitable] Times") are still deeply indebted to the digest-style. Moreover, Vedajñāna II is also the author of a treatise titled *Śaivāgamaparibhāṣāmañjarī* ("The Anthology of Rules from the Śaiva Scriptures"). Here, like in Trilocanaśiva's *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, excerpts from scriptures and other authoritative texts are strung together in order to form a single, continuous text, in which sources are not acknowledged. However, in this case the author finds another way to navigate his body of sources, as he divides the subject matter according to numbers from one to twelve: in each chapter, the author deals with notions

56 There are still very few contributions on the work of these two important Śaiva authors. The reader might want to refer to Dagens, *Śaivāgamaparibhāṣāmañjarī*, Ganesan, *Two Śaiva Teachers*, and Sanderson, *Śaiva Literature*, 24-25 and 88 ff., for introductions.

57 The study of these two authors, with special reference to their contribution to the translation of the *Śivadharmottara* from Sanskrit to Tamil and the composition of its commentary in Tamil, along with the production of Sanskrit digests, is one of the main research foci of the ERC-Starting Grant Project "Śivadharma." Especially on this topic, the project receives contributions not just from its main host institution, the University of Naples "L'Orientale," but also from researchers active at one partner institution, the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Pondicherry (India).

classified according to that number. Chapter one thus deals with things that are undivided (such as Śiva), chapter two with categories that are divided into two groups (like the two types of knowledge, of actions, of bodies), chapter three with threefold objects (the three topics, the three kinds of defilement, the three types of actions), and so on. This criterion might sound bizarre to a reader unacquainted with the strong taxonomic tendency that often characterizes South Asian technical literature. However, even so, the adoption of numbers as a way to structure the contents of a work of this kind is rare, and might in fact find parallels in local lexica and dictionaries rather than in other collections of scriptural sources.<sup>58</sup> The other example that comes to mind from religious literature is that of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, one of the main divisions of the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Buddhist canon, in which the compositions (Suttas/Sūtras) are arranged in categories according to the progressive number of the topics that are mentioned in them. Also, in this case, the redactors were not dealing with original compositions, but rather devising strategies to collect and transmit a preexisting body of authoritative knowledge.

The work of the two Vedajñānas, in the cultural environment of sixteenth-century South India, seems thus to aim at strengthening the connections existing between the formerly pan-Indian Śaiva Siddhānta tradition and the Tamil state, an objective that is pursued both by means of the composition of new works in Tamil (among which is the remarkable translation of the *Śivadharmottara*, a work that earlier digests had started to integrate into the Śaiva Siddhānta canon), and by composing digests of works in Sanskrit. The importance of Vedajñāna's digests in the history of the Śaiva Siddhānta also lies in the fact that they confirm that his scriptural horizon, though also including some earlier texts, was however firmly rooted in the new canon of scriptures that had been composed in the South to support Śaiva Siddhānta's latest developments, and which in his digests are arranged to give structure to the ritual life of the local Śaiva communities.

## Conclusions

This article reflects my own attempt at navigating an overwhelming body of texts, many of which are still unedited and/or inadequately studied. While very far from being exhaustive, I have tried to give the reader a sense of the dimensions of this important cultural phenomenon in South Asian societies, whose

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58 I am grateful to Margherita Trento for this suggestion, which I will try to verify in my study of the Sanskrit digests composed by this author.

study tackles a number of issues — from the notions of orthodoxy and scripturality, to that of authorship and the creation of tradition — that lie at the heart of the production and transmission of texts. Furthermore, the connection drawn between the composition of these anthological works and public institutions, such as the court or the monastery, should not only be explained in terms of the practical presuppositions required for the composition of such works, but also of the function that digests and anthologies might have played in the process of knowledge preservation and transmission within such institutions, about which we still know little.

The perspective offered in this Special Issue can be particularly fruitful when dealing with the Sanskrit “thematic encyclopaedias,” since the phenomenon of selecting and structuring vast bodies of knowledge within thematically organized works is a common feature of textual cultures that have reached a certain level of development and spread of their writing culture, and can thus be very productively addressed through a comparative perspective. Among the ideas mentioned in other contributions to this Special Issue, I see the following as potentially thought-provoking fields for scholars of the Sanskrit digests: the focus on the systematic classification of materials as a culturally relevant phenomenon *per se* (Toral); the creation of archives and of an archival culture (Bray, Van Berkel); and the growth of the figure of the administrator-scholar and the stress on the technological developments that made the composition and transmission of such large works conceivable (Van Berkel). The latter highlights, among other things, how the spread of paper from the eighth century CE impacted both the composition of books and the production of state documents at all levels of administration, further linking the production and use of documents with their shape and contents.

These sorts of considerations can be very fruitful when addressing the debated category of “encyclopaedism,” not just in the Arabic but also in the Sanskrit writing communities, by grounding the study of digests on that of the environments that conceived and made use of them. Too often these works, for reasons also related to our still incomplete knowledge, are mainly seen and used by scholars of Sanskrit and the Indian traditions for their philological value, as important sources of texts that are otherwise lost, or as testimonies of parallel recensions of known texts; still rarely we raise questions concerning their significance in the local environment of their production or in the supra-local context of their reception. Looking at digests of Dharma through this lens might help us better frame the emergence and success of a genre that handed down to us some of the best tools to understand which texts intellectuals of different regions and historical backgrounds were reading and choosing to transmit to future generations.

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