
South Asian Texts in History

Critical Engagements with
Sheldon Pollock

Edited by

Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and
Lawrence McCrea



Published by the Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
Asia Past & Present: New Research from AAS, Number 7

Asia Past & Present: New Research from AAS

"Asia Past & Present: New Research from AAS," published by the Association for Asian Studies, Inc. (AAS), features scholarly work from all areas of Asian studies. In addition to scholarly monographs, translations, essay collections, and other forms of scholarly research are welcome for consideration. AAS particularly aims to support work in emerging or under-represented fields.

Formed in 1941, the Association for Asian Studies (AAS)—the largest society of its kind, with approximately 8,000 members worldwide—is a scholarly, non-political, non-profit professional association open to all persons interested in Asia.

For further information, please visit www.asian-studies.org.

© 2011 by the Association for Asian Studies, Inc.

All Rights Reserved. Written permission must be secured to use or reproduce any part of this book.

Published by:

Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
825 Victors Way, Suite 310
Ann Arbor, MI 48108 USA
www.asian-studies.org

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free, archival quality paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

South Asian texts in history : critical engagements with Sheldon Pollock /
edited by Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and Lawrence McCrea.

p. cm. — (Asia past & present: new research from AAS; no. 7)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-924304-63-7 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Sanskrit literature—
History and criticism. 2. Indic literature—History and criticism. 3.
Literature and society—India—History. 4. India—Civilization. 5. Pollock,
Sheldon I.—Influence. I. Bronner, Yigal. II. Cox, Whitney. III. McCrea,
Lawrence J. IV. Association for Asian Studies.

PK2903.S725 2011

891'.209—dc23

2011029412

Front cover photo: a hero stone commemorating the death of the Hoysala warrior
Bereyadanāyaka (southern Karnataka, second half of the 13th century).

Back cover photo: a nāga stone (southern Karnataka, 12th–13th century).

Cover photos by John Lee. Courtesy of and copyright the National Museum of
Denmark, Ethnographic Collections.

For Shelly, with gratitude.

*O de li altri poeti onore e lume
vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore
che m' ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume.*

*Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore
tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi
lo bello stilo che m' ha fatto honore.*

The glory and light are yours,

That poets follow—may the love that made me search
Your book in patient study avail me, Master!
You are my guide and author, whose verses teach
The graceful style whose model has done me honor.

— Dante speaking of Virgil, *Inferno* 1.83–88, translation by Robert Pinsky

*yaṃ vidma iti yadgranthān abhyāsyāmo 'khilān iti /
yasya śiṣyāḥ sma iti ca ślāghante svaṃ vipaścitaḥ //*

"I know him."

"I read every letter in his books."

"I was his student."

See how scholars promote themselves.

— Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita speaking of Appayya Dīkṣita, *Gaṅgāvataraṇa*, 1.45

Hindi Literary Beginnings

Allison Busch

Theorizing Beginnings in Culture

Sheldon Pollock has challenged many reigning ideas about language, politics, and culture with implications far beyond the field of Sanskrit. In this essay I explore how some of his models may or may not apply to Hindi literature. One important lesson to take from Pollock is that written literary culture—*kāvya*—can and should be dated and the conditions attending its invention tracked. Literary cultures are not autochthonous. They have beginnings.¹ This is a beautifully simple idea, and yet developing a historically coherent statement about literary beginnings is far from straightforward. What if a beginning, for all its apparent self-evidence, is merely an accident of historical preservation? How do literary historians know that a beginning point was not masked, reset by subsequent culture formations? What continuities are elided when we give methodological primacy to rupture?

Literary history is only an imperfect science, one whose methodology favors a telescopic over a fine-tuned lens. Whatever the potential drawbacks, there are undeniable benefits to examining a broad swath of literary activity, reading it for larger trends, and being willing to question received wisdom. Here I propose to examine a large canvas of Hindi literary history to determine when Hindi *kāvya* “entered the world” and the conditions that made it possible. Of course, there need not be just one beginning. Indeed, arguments can be made for various beginning points, depending on what kind of a yardstick we hold up. It seems only fair, then, to warn readers that the very enterprise of searching for Hindi literary beginnings (at least a single beginning) may be doomed. The Hindi language—what to say of Hindi *kāvya*—is a very slippery unit of analysis. Whereas the domain of Sanskrit (its very name—“perfectly made”—a testament to one of its core values of linguistic precision) was carefully controlled through an elaborate grammatical science (*vyākaraṇa*), few people cared to regulate Hindi during the first centuries of its existence. Grammatically systematizing impulses in Hindi emerged only very late and

generally from outside the core tradition, first by a member of the Persian literati, second by an eighteenth-century Gujarati, and later, with much greater force, under colonialism.²

It does not help matters that Hindi has a vast geographical domain in comparison to other Indian vernaculars. Uses of Hindi can be tracked from the northernmost reaches of Hindustan to the Deccan, from Gujarat to Bengal. Absent formal standardizing initiatives, each place Hindi went it was marked by regional touches, a fact reflected in the bewildering array of names that accrued to the language (if indeed it can be unproblematically seen as one language). Avadhi, Brajbhasha, Bhasha, Gvaliyari, Madhyadesh ki boli, Gujri, Rajasthani, Pingal, Dingal, Sadhukkari, Hindavi, Hindustani, Dihlavi, Purbi zaban, Dakani and Rekhta are a nonexhaustive list of terms referring to some kind of proto-Hindi (or Urdu) textual culture, and it is far from easy to sort through what particular names meant to the people who used them over the last half millennium or more.³ If some poets saw their vernacular in terms of a very local perspective, naming it after their town or region, others appear to have been completely unconcerned with labels, and when they did bother with naming they used only generic expressions such as *hindavī* (Indian) or simply *bhāṣā* (language).

Under nationalism, diverse oral traditions, religious poetry, and refined *kāvya* were swept up into the voluminous net of “Hindi” and newly constituted as the literary heritage of the Indian people. The mystical poetry of Sants, vernacular *pad*s (devotional songs) performed in Vaishnava communities, narrative poetry by Sufis in the East and Jains in the West, and martial lore in the *rāso* genre, as well as courtly compositions of stunning complexity, were now to be viewed as part of a single tradition. As we shall explore below, some signs from precolonial writers confirm that the linking of this motley assortment of textual culture is a suspiciously modern phenomenon. Nationalist historiography was conveniently adept at overlooking literary and linguistic disjunctures. The more Hindi the merrier, and the older it was the better.

While recognizing “Hindi literature” to be a constructed category of recent minting, I do not wish to get waylaid by deconstructing it—a theater of operations to which many scholarly forces have in any case already been marshaled. Let us grant the category for heuristic purposes and proceed on our quest for Hindi literary beginnings. I propose to search from four different frames of reference. The first place to look is to the nationalist period and the writings of Ramchandra Shukla, to whom the now dominant mode of conceptualizing Hindi literary history can be traced. How were beginnings

understood at the moment of inception of the modern category of Hindi literature? A second way of measuring is to search for the first major work of Hindi literature. The most convincing case, we will discover, can be made for a text in Avadhi produced by Sufis in the fourteenth century. Is the first known example of Hindi literature (what an embarrassment for Hindi wallahs!) actually by a Muslim? By the late sixteenth century the Avadhi *kāvya* tradition would begin to give way to that of Brajbhasha, a different literary dialect that rose to prominence under conditions of Mughal power. This is our third case study, and here we do not measure absolute beginnings but instead observe a major act of resetting the dial on the clock of literary history. A last phase of our thought experiment will be to examine precolonial perspectives: where did traditional Hindi scholars think their literature began?

While mapping Hindi literary beginnings we will be touching on critical issues in the theorization of premodern textual culture, including indexes of literary change, what Indian tradition has counted as *kāvya*, and the milieu(s) in which it was produced. We will also pause to reflect on that favorite of Pollock topics, vernacularization, and what proves to be complicated about the case of Hindi.

Case Study 1. Nationalism and the Mysterious Case of Hindi's Nonbeginning

Hindi, unlike Sanskrit, possesses no ethno-historical account of a single universally recognized *ādikavi* (first poet), which means there is no consensus about where to begin the beginning.⁴ Ramchandra Shukla, the first to write a self-consciously modern history of Hindi literature in Hindi, began his account by trying to trace—reasonably enough—an *ādikāl* (beginning period), which he dated to 993–1318 CE (Vikram Samvat, 1050–1375).⁵ Less reasonable is his category of “Hindi,” which seems altogether too capacious and undefined, as evident from remarks such as “the language of the credible surviving material is Apabhramsha, i.e. Prakrit-inflected ... Hindi,” and he devotes nearly half of his discussion of Hindi literary beginnings to Apabhramsha poetry, mobilizing various fragmentary scraps of Middle Indic language that in some cases even he hesitates to call literature.⁶ I would hesitate to call many of them Hindi.

This study of Hindi literary beginnings has just begun, and already it is beset by obstacles. We can hardly expect to find the origins of Hindi literature if our lens is not even focused on Hindi. Much ink has been spilled since Shukla's day in debates over early Hindi literature; no fewer than three books bear the title *Hindī sāhitya kā ādikāl* (The Beginning Period of Hindi Literature),⁷ and virtually every historian of Hindi since Shukla seems to feel the need

to include a chapter on the *ādikāl*. But all this attention to beginnings has failed to generate much thinking about what Hindi literature is, why it should suddenly begin, and who the agents of this process might have been. In the typical nationalist formulation, Hindi literary history has been constructed as an unremarkable sequence of vernacularizing iterations as the language came down the pipeline from Sanskrit, making various stopovers in Apabhramsha. At a certain point, it is felt, the literary language of the plains of North India ceased being Apabhramsha and started to be *purānī hindī* (Old Hindi). A few scholars seemingly dub as Hindi whatever non-Sanskrit North Indian poetry they can get their hands on. Thus, the works of Apabhramsha poets such as Svayambhu (700–950?) and Pushpadant (tenth century) are presented as Hindi *kāvya*.⁸ My point is not to dismiss the idea that Apabhramsha was a significant storehouse of literary models for early Hindi poets, which it demonstrably was, especially in western India, but to highlight that the languages are different, and that the transition from Apabhramsha needs to be marked as a moment of vernacularization.⁹

Another problem with scholarship on the *ādikāl* is that even when Apabhramsha poetry is not being smuggled in, scholars do not always feel the need to furnish evidence of an actually existing text. Hazari Prasad Dvivedi, one of the leading Hindi critics in the generation after Shukla, was more honest than most about the fact that no major Hindi works produced in the Gangetic Plain survive before the fourteenth century.¹⁰ Perhaps the most acute problem with the modern tradition of Hindi historiography is, however, the nationalist presumption that Hindi literature should exist and that it more or less always has.

A question begged by the above discussion but not yet addressed is, what is Hindi *kāvya*? Does any surviving text in Middle Indic get to count as Hindi literature? Even for Shukla, apparently not. Regarding the sayings attributed to early Siddhas and Yogis, Shukla proclaimed, “These are only sectarian teachings, therefore they cannot be considered in the category of pure literature.”¹¹ Here he raises the vexing question of what to do with religious texts. Are they *kāvya* or not? Sheldon Pollock would be perfectly in agreement with Shukla in excluding religious teachings from the category of *kāvya*, by which he (and in his reading, the Indian tradition itself) meant a self-consciously aesthetic, and often political, project. Hazari Prasad Dvivedi would vehemently disagree. Stating that “the dominant ethos of medieval literature was religious,”¹² he criticized Shukla for drawing the line between religion and literature arbitrarily. Shukla was indeed inconsistent in according the status of *kavi* to religious poets. Still, he can hardly be said to have

ignored religious texts, even if he preferred some poets (Sur, Tulsi) to others (Kabir).¹³ After all, in his pioneering history he devoted an entire period—the *bhaktikāl*—to religious trends in Hindi literature, a rubric that carries much weight to this day.

If Shukla was hesitant about counting some religious poetry as *kāvya*, the Hindi scholarly community, particularly in the West, often seems to have operated from the premise that *only* religious verses have ever counted as literature. Most of Hindi’s premodern courtly legacy remains untranslated, and untheorized.¹⁴ Here we enter the orbit of Pollock’s well-known if controversial concern that too much of Indian cultural history has been unreflectively tied to religious currents, without considering the role played by courts and political formations.¹⁵ Let us keep in mind these debates about the relationship between religion and *kāvya* as we continue on our search for Hindi literary beginnings.

The name “Hindi” (often “Hindavi” in premodernity) is well known to be of Persian origin, and it is worth asking what bearing, if any, this “outsider” label has on the early history of Hindi *kāvya*. Highly suggestive are some signs of Hindi literary beginnings from Indo-Muslim circles of the Ghaznavid and Sultanate periods. Although he was predominantly a Persian poet, some spectacularly early Hindi writings are attributed to Masud Sad Salman (1046–1121), active at the court of Mahmud of Ghazni. Unfortunately, his viability as a candidate for Hindi’s *ādikavi* is seriously compromised by the failure of his Hindi corpus to survive. All we have to go by is Muhammad Aufi’s less than trustworthy reference to Masud Sad Salman’s putative Hindi *divān* a full century later in *Lubāb al-albāb* (Essence of Wisdom).¹⁶ More famous—but, it should be stressed, no more reliably attested—are the Hindavi songs attributed to Amir Khusrau (1253–1325), who was active at the court of Delhi in the early fourteenth century. Visitors to the Chishti tomb of Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi can still hear *qawwali* performances featuring Hindi compositions by Amir Khusrau. But quite apart from their ghostly historical presence, the songs of Khusrau may not pass the entrance exam for anything that can be called *kāvya*—defined as written literary culture. Khusrau himself evidently did not consider his Hindavi compositions very important if he never bothered to record them: his only surviving poetry is in Persian.¹⁷

Similarly elusive are other striking memories of early Indo-Muslim engagement with vernacular poetry in Sufi circles. The renditions of Nizami attributed to Shaikh Hamiduddin (ca. 1192–1274) of Nagaur, if authentic, would be “almost the first explicit textual record of Hindi poetry,” but they did not survive in any form that would be consistent with a thirteenth-century provenance.¹⁸ Early compositions are also traced to Baba Farid (1175–1265),

but we have only questionable evidence for them prior to their inclusion in the early Sikh canon several centuries later. Christopher Shackle sums up his skepticism about a thirteenth-century date by wondering why the Sufi *malfūzāt* literature, otherwise so keen to attest Farid's accomplishments, "should have failed to mention the existence of the *Farid-bānī* (Sayings of Farid) if it were authentic."¹⁹

We need to take serious cognizance of the sheer amount of anecdotal evidence we have about Muslim courts and Sufi centers at the very dawn of North India's vernacular literary inauguration. Why would there be so many attributions if there were no Muslim Hindi poets? Why did so many biographers consider it a mark of distinction for great literati and Sufis to write vernacular poetry if they did not actually do so? Nonetheless, in looking for the beginnings of Hindi *kāvya* there need to be some ground rules. We are seeking a text that is actually extant, *written* literary culture, not songs, a text that in some sense can be seen to have helped to constitute a major tradition. By "major" I stipulate that we are not looking for a few fragments of poetry from the oral tradition; nor should we count just any obscure early work that might be rustled up out of a Jain *bhaṇḍār* after having been forgotten for centuries.²⁰ The criterion is not that the work survives but that it be consequential. *Kāvya* is not *kāvya* unless a literary community reads it and constitutes it as such.

Case Study 2. Avadhi: the Noncosmopolitan Vernacular

The inauguration of the Avadhi literary tradition is far less speculative and more amenable to theorization than any of the possible beginning points we have considered so far. Although not recognized as innovators by modern Hindi critics (or their premodern counterparts, as we shall observe in our fourth case study below), if the aim is to locate the first major extant Hindi text, as opposed to putative Hindi texts, instances of fragmentary poetry, insecurely dated texts, or songs, the *Candāyan* (Story of Cāndā, 1379) of Maulana Daud is an excellent candidate for Hindi's *ādikāvya*. It is hard to argue against either the earliness or importance of the work, which relayed in lengthy narrative form the story of legendary lovers Lorik and Cāndā in an unprecedented idiom, in the process helping to constitute an Avadhi literary tradition.²¹ (A cautionary note: since Daud refers to other tales of love, we must recognize that the *Candāyan* is a beginning point only in the sense that related earlier beginning points do not survive, but my preference here is to treat only the historical record and not to factor in lost texts.) Furthermore, the *Candāyan* was by every measure a literary success: it was read, copied, performed, and illustrated by posterity. Another measure of the work's status is that it gave

rise to important successors in the Avadhi language, including not only other Sufi works but also the *Rāmcāritmānas* of Tulsidas, the most widely circulated Hindi text in premodernity.²²

Now that we have marked a point of Hindi literary beginning with an actually surviving major text, let us outline the patronage conditions that gave rise to it and its literary and lexical profile. Maulana Daud, who was patronized by Juna Shah, a minister of Firoz Shah Tughlaq,²³ presented his pioneering Avadhi work to the nobility at Dalmau. This makes him courtly. But Daud also belonged to the Chishti community, and this dual Sufi-courtly identity generally characterizes Muslim authors of the genre.²⁴ The Avadhi *premākhyāns* (love stories), as these works came to be known, had multiple uses. To courtly patrons they were a vehicle for aesthetic pleasure, but to the initiated the very same texts encoded subtle mystical meanings. When it comes to literary patronage and reception, the role of religion and courts, it turns out, cannot be so easily separated.

Another matter to consider in assessing Avadhi's vernacularization profile is the relevance of superposition, the process by which a dominant cosmopolitan language—Sanskrit in the examples studied by Sheldon Pollock—exerts a defining influence on a fledgling vernacular literary tradition. One clear model for the Sufi *premākhyāns* is the Persian *maṣnavī* (narrative poem).²⁵ Such poems begin, as all *maṣnavīs* do, with praises to Allah and the prophet, followed by eulogies to kings and spiritual leaders. But aside from the introductions, the *maṣnavī* origin of these Avadhi works is less clear. The texts' characteristic *dohā-caupai* (couplet and quatrain) metrical structure, for instance, has roots in Apabhramsha. And when it comes to expressing the dominant theme of love, the poets use an idiom of mixed heritage. Sanskrit aesthetic principles such as *rasa* are prominent, but this attention to literary emotion is repurposed to facilitate a distinctly Sufi religiosity.²⁶ Additionally, the lexical profile of the Sufi *premākhyāns*, far from exhibiting evidence of superposition, is notable for being *neither* Sanskritized nor Persianized in any meaningful way. Avadhi Sufi *kāvya* is thus a departure from the more common profile of a "cosmopolitan vernacular" that Pollock has tracked elsewhere in the region.²⁷

Case Study 3. Brajhasha Literary Origins

So far we have looked for Hindi literary beginnings in two ways. We have rejected the suggestion that Hindi literature was actually Apabhramsha literature until it one day ceased to be that and mysteriously became Hindi instead. The second way of marking Hindi literary beginnings was to seek

out the first major surviving work of *kāvya*, which was written by a Sufi in Dalmāu. Whereas the Avadhi *kāvya* tradition flourished under the regional sultanates that controlled eastern India from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, a new Mughal political system would now help to underwrite the rise of Brajbhasha literary culture.

Brajbhasha literature, like Avadhi before it, entered the world due to both courtly and religious circumstances. Some preliminary signs of Braj literariness can be traced to Vishnudas, who a full century before the Braj efflorescence of the Mughal period wrote vernacular reworkings of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* for the Tomar kings of Gwalior: the *Pāṇḍav-carit* (1435) and *Rāmāyaṇ-kathā* (1442). Although these efforts failed to generate a sustained tradition or to imprint themselves in literary memory—the name Vishnudas was virtually unknown to the Braj community in the precolonial period—his epics are arresting as precocious instances of courtly Braj that to some degree imitated cosmopolitan style.²⁸

A stream of Brajbhasha literature of far greater consequence originates from Mathura and Vrindavan by the mid-sixteenth century, where newly crystallizing religious communities, especially the Vallabhans and Gaudiyas, were engaged in establishing constituencies of Krishna worshippers with their spiritual center the place they believed Krishna to have spent his youth during his sojourn on earth. Bhakti poets, the most famous being Surdas, cultivated a devotional genre—the Brajbhasha *pad*—the singing of which became a crucial part of congregational worship in Vaishnava settings.

The Braj efflorescence of the Mughal period is not only linked to the activities of Krishna devotees, however. Just forty miles away from Mathura was the Mughal capital at Agra, making the Braj region a site of direct imperial concern. The development of Braj as a religious site had the support of the Mughal emperor, as well as the Rajput kings who served the cause of empire. A spate of temple building in the region was backed by imperial edicts, the costs underwritten by Rajput rulers who were jostling for positions of power in the evolving Mughal state system.²⁹

This nexus of religious and courtly developments is a crucial backdrop for understanding the cultural positioning of Keshavdas (ca. 1555–1617) and Orchha, the court from which he hailed. Keshavdas is considered the founder of Hindi's *rīti* (courtly) tradition and is thus a promising figure when it comes to reconnoitering for the beginnings of Hindi *kāvya*. As it turns out, many types of beginning can be traced to Orchha in the sixteenth century. There are courtly beginnings: the site was founded by the Bundela king Rudra Pratap in 1531. We can identify the religious beginnings that attended the dynasty's

conversion from Shaivism to Vaishnavism.³⁰ Political and literary conversions are also in evidence. When Madhukar Shah proved unable to withstand Akbar's armies, Orchha was absorbed by the Mughal state, and the princes, like so many rulers of the day, would now be forced to take up positions in the imperial system. At the very same time (ca. 1580) Keshavdas, who was descended from a long line of Sanskrit scholars, gave up his family tradition to become a Brajbhasha poet.³¹

While some of Keshavdas's poems can certainly be located in the ambit of a bhakti worldview, his oeuvre as a whole marks a major departure from the Braj *pads* that were circulating in his day, and it is for this reason that it can be evaluated as an instance of Hindi literary beginnings. In striking contrast to the hybrid texts of earlier Avadhi poets, Keshavdas's writings are a classic example of the types of vernacular appropriations from Sanskrit theorized by Pollock. The poet's choice of genres, style, and lexicon all exhibit dramatic degrees of Sanskrit superposition. Although Keshavdas preferred to write his *kāvya* in Brajbhasha, he was well versed in Sanskrit and thus ideally situated to be the kind of classicizing poet that characterizes so much of vernacular literarization in South Asia. He is most famous for his *Rasikpriyā* (Handbook for Poetry Connoisseurs, 1591), which alongside the companion volume *Kavipriyā* (Handbook for Poets, 1601) drew heavily on Sanskrit sources (particularly Rudrabhatta and Dandin), and served as the foundation for a whole new field of Hindi *alāṅkāraśāstra* (literary theory). With the *Rāmcandracandrikā* (The Moonlight of Lord Rām, 1601), a sophisticated retelling of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Vīrśimhdevcarit* (Deeds of King Vīrśimh, 1607), an elaborate biography of his patron Bir Singh Deo, Keshavdas transplanted both Sanskrit *mahākāvya* and its close cousin *praśasti kāvya* (political poetry) into Brajbhasha, inventing a new, elevated form of vernacular royal expression. Similarly elegant and unprecedented in Brajbhasha is Keshavdas's last work, *Jahāṅgīrjascandrikā* (Moonlight of the Fame of Jahāṅgīr, 1612), a *praśasti* in honor of the Mughal emperor Jahangir.

Working in a distinct milieu from poets like Surdas, whose songs were expressions of piety and whose early manuscript heritage is closely linked to performance traditions, Keshavdas created a self-consciously literary corpus of *kāvya* works for an elite courtly audience.³² He drew on a rich array of Sanskrit themes and classical figures (*alāṅkāras*). His *kāvya* register, with its heavy infusion of *tatsama* (unmodified loanwords) vocabulary, is in places so Sanskritized that one can barely tell the poet—a Brahmin pandit by birth and literary temperament—is using vernacular language at all.³³ Adopting such a register could not be more dissimilar from the studious avoidance of

cosmopolitan lexical style by Sufi authors. Nobody before Keshavdas had ever employed Hindi for such an array of elevated literary, scholarly, and political purposes. The courtly literary trends he helped to initiate were also an instant success: for close to 250 years, Braj *kāvya* would find an enthusiastic reception at both Mughal and Rajput courts.

Although much about Brajbhasha literary culture substantiates Pollock's vision of vernacularization, a few complicating factors should be noted. Brajbhasha, like Avadhi, is closely tied to *both* courts and religious contexts, accommodating the cultural needs of diverse constituencies. Another difference stems from the high status of Persian in Mughal India. If Sufi poets of the Avadhi tradition mostly avoided Persian words in their works, quite the opposite holds for many (though by no means all) Brajbhasha writers, some of whom had Mughal patrons. The last work of even a conservative and highly Sanskritizing Brahmin poet such as Keshavdas was set in a Mughal court context and contains a few striking examples of Persianized *praśasti* style.³⁴ Titles and other ways of expressing kingly grandeur had long been superposed from Sanskrit, but new possibilities would now open up for Brajbhasha writers, who in some cases drew freely from both Persian and Sanskrit. When it came to literary genres and emphases, however, Braj poets did not generally stray very far from earlier Sanskrit codes. In fact, despite the close contact of at least some Braj writers with Indo-Muslim court culture, ultimately not much from Persian literature made it into the Braj repertoire.³⁵ The Indic norms of bhakti, *śṛṅgāra* (love), and *praśasti kāvya* remained dominant. This was true even for Muslim poets such as Rahim, Raskhan, and Raslin. Thus, Persian cosmopolitanism did have its limits.

Case Study 4. Precolonial Visions of Literary Beginnings

We have now outlined some key points about both the Avadhi and Braj streams of Hindi literature and considered how each marks a moment of vernacular inauguration with different relationships to the superposed languages of Sanskrit and Persian. Another way to look for Hindi *kāvya*'s beginning point is to consider evidence of such thematizations by premodern poets and scholars. Modern literary historians should not be the only ones who get to decide where the important beginnings are. Since so much changed during the colonial period in the domain of Indian literary habits and cultural memory, a particular value accrues to canvassing earlier authors.

An unambiguous articulation of Hindi literary beginnings can be found in the *Satkavirāvilās* (Play of the Language of True Poets, ca. 1750), a poetry anthology compiled by Baldev Mishra at the court of Vikram Shah in

Baghelkhand (in eastern Madhya Pradesh). The author states:

Taking definitions and example poems from the first poets Keshavdas, Cintamani, Matiram and Sukhdev, and those who are discriminating literateurs when it comes to *rasa*, I have composed this work of *rasa* and *nāyikābheda*, bringer of aesthetic delight.³⁶

Note how Keshavdas heads the list of first poets, a mark of his chronological antecedence, no doubt, but also evidently his status as a founder of the tradition. To my knowledge, Baldev Mishra's explicit discussion of *ādikavis* is unique, but other writers do hint at their views on when their literature began. The poet Sudan, Baldev's approximate contemporary, introduces his *Sujāncaritra* (Deeds of Sujan Singh) with a traditional *kavi-praśamsā* (salute to past poets) that tellingly commences with Keshavdas.³⁷ Other important evidence of conscious reflection about the Hindi past is found in the *Kāvyanirṇay* (Verdict on Literature, 1746) of Bhikharidas.

Sur, Keshav, Mandan, Bihari, Kalidas [Trivedi], Brahma [Birbal],
Cintamani, Matiram and Bhushan are recognized,
Liladhar, Senapati, Nipat [Niranji] Newaj and Nidhi,
Nilkanth Mishra, Sukhdev and Dev are respected
Alam, Rahim, Raskhan, Sundar, etc.

So many insightful poets! They cannot all be listed here.
One need not live in Braj to write in Braj,
for one can learn the language from these poets of the past.
Tulsi and Gang, whose works are varied in language,
became the master poets (*sukabina ke sardāra*).³⁸

Bhikharidas's enumeration of poets does not follow a strictly chronological order (nor can the logic behind every aspect of the sequencing of names be easily parsed),³⁹ but to begin with the sixteenth-century poet Surdas, followed closely by Keshavdas, would appear to signal literary beginnings.

This triad of contemporary Braj authors from disparate eighteenth-century courts can reasonably be considered a quorum for rendering a verdict about precolonial literary canons. Several points are of note. Briefly revisiting Baldev Mishra's comments about the *ādikavis*, it is worth highlighting that all four of them are Brahmin court poets. So are most of the other thirty-one figures to make it into his anthology. The lists of Sudan and Bhikharidas, however, also contain bhakti poets. Bhikharidas, for his part, provides more clues about his understanding of literature in his telling revision of a famous verse from Mammata's *Kāvya-prakāśa* on the subject of the purpose of poetry.

Some acquire religious merit, such as the spiritual masters Tulsi and Sur.
 Others seek wealth, in the manner of Keshavdas, Bhushan, and Birbal.
 A few concern themselves with fame alone, like Raskhan and Rahim.
 Says [Bhikhari] Das, discussing poetry is in every case pleasing to scholars.⁴⁰

It is beyond doubt that here and elsewhere in his *Kāvyanirṇay* Bhikharidas is drawing on Mammata.⁴¹ But whereas for Mammata *kāvya* is an entirely secular pursuit (his reasons include fame, wealth, instruction, practical knowledge, warding off illness, and aesthetic rapture), Bhikharidas considers spiritual gain one of three primary rationales.⁴² That he took the trouble to rewrite Mammata's verse dramatically underscores this crucial shift in conceptions of the literary between Sanskrit and Hindi.

Also note who is missing from these eighteenth-century canons. None of the low-caste Sant poets like Ravidas or Kabir made it onto any of the lists. We never hear of the Rajasthani poetess Mira Bai, now one of the most famous figures of the precolonial Hindi tradition. The Sufi writers are ignored. No Khusrau is mentioned, nor is any other early Indo-Muslim vernacular poet from the Ghaznavid or Sultanate period. Clearly no attempt was made to exclude Muslim poets, given the presence of Raskhan and Rahim. A pattern does emerge, however. All the poets listed here wrote in Braj, and all are from the Mughal period.⁴³ Earlier poets, or those using other Hindi dialects, were either unknown or somehow irrelevant, not considered part of the same community. When poets like Bhikharidas, heir to the Sanskrit literary system (albeit owing a few debts to Persian, as well), delivered their verdict on *kāvya*, they evidently did not view it as an open category in the manner of modern Hindi critics.

There are of course different types of memory from those recorded by court poets of the eighteenth century. Although Avadhi writers did not leave us with any major statement of their literary self-understanding, Vaishnavas were avid canonizers, giving rise to an entire genre—the *bhaktamālā* (garland of devotees)—that memorialized the most illustrious members of their tradition. Still, for Nabhadās, author of the most popular example (early seventeenth century), or his famous commentator Priyadas (fl. 1712), the point was to praise lovers of god, not to compile a canon of Hindi poets. The same holds true for the texts of the Dadupanthis (followers of the Sant poet Dadu), who were prolific hagiographers and anthologizers.⁴⁴ While the evidence of Bhikharidas makes clear that religious poetry was not excluded from literary theorization—indeed, traditional Sanskrit *alanākāraśāstra* had to be updated in order to make the point—the fact is that many bhakti texts were organized

as song repertoires for worshipful performance and were thus distinct from *kāvya* in their use and production context.

Conclusion

Much in today's scholarly milieu would militate against the restrictions on admission to the category of *kāvya* that were once so central to the Sanskrit thought world. Should the *vāṇī* (sayings) of an oral poet like Kabir be considered literature? Are bhaktas to be considered *kavis*? They already are, so the point seems moot. What remains far from moot, however, is the task of evaluating the histories and self-conceptions of the various communities in South Asia that entered the domain of vernacular literariness, in the process creating powerful new aesthetic, religious, and political spaces.

Here we have surveyed a range of contenders for (and pretenders to) the throne of Hindi literary beginnings. It is not clear that a single candidate emerges as worthy of the crown, and no doubt other beginning points could be suggested than the ones considered here.⁴⁵ Beginnings are inevitably contestable, but some have more credence than others. In the case of Hindi, perhaps the most dramatic and significant beginning point, or at least the one remembered as such, is the spectacular rise of Brajbhasha literary culture during the sixteenth century. Still, this beginning may be overly exclusionary. It stems from within the Brahminical thought world that created Sanskrit *kāvya*, of which Brajbhasha can be considered an early modern incarnation.

One blind spot in the literary culture's own emic representation obscures the role of Indo-Muslims in fostering some of the earliest vernacularizing ambitions in North India. Although the surviving textual evidence is less than satisfactory, cultural memory about select Ghaznavid and Sultanate period writers suggests a close connection between Muslim literati and inaugural vernacularity early in the second millennium.⁴⁶ And it was a Muslim writer, Maulana Daud, who put pen to paper in Dalmau in 1379, in the process giving shape to a new Avadhi literary tradition that would prove to have tremendous prestige far beyond the realm of Sufi *khānqāhs* (residences) and Sultanate courts. Muslim agency can even be seen to have played a pivotal role in the inauguration of Braj *kāvya* since the *rīti* tradition spearheaded by Keshavdas began during the exact period when his patrons at the Orchha court first entered the sphere of Mughal politics. The new political and cultural positioning of his court was almost certainly a factor in Keshavdas's openness to literary newness, and his ability to break with previous Sanskrit tradition. Brajbhasha, even if largely a Brahminical enterprise in terms of its sociohistorical profile and textual orientation, was consolidated as a literary tradition only from

Mughal times, and this was a process facilitated not just by Hindu temple communities but by the patronage of the imperial court, Indo-Muslim elites, and Rajput noblemen who were closely tied to Mughal ways.⁴⁷

Language and literary practices undergo real caesuras and participate in the cultural articulations of new power formations. This is not to suggest a purely instrumental relationship between aesthetics and power. The connection is often far from straightforward. But it exists nonetheless, and when we survey the various possible beginning points for Hindi literature, we find that inaugurations are generated precisely by the types of people who would not have been overly attached to the older Sanskritic ways of being literary, whether by a Sufi in Dalmu or a poet like Keshavdas, whose patrons ruled from an arriviste court at Orchha in Bundelkhand.⁴⁸ We can track a similar rupture much earlier in South Asian history. Sanskrit political inscription was invented by Shaka and Kushana immigrants of the Northwest who were not wedded to *vaidika* culture, and when Rudradaman wrote the elaborate Junagarh rock inscription of ca. 150 CE he carved out a new domain of usage for Sanskrit that was wholly unlike what existed before.⁴⁹

Cultural memory can be forgetful. In the Sanskrit world Valmiki was remembered as the *ādikavi*, but Rudradaman, the first recorded writer of *prasaṣti*, was forgotten by posterity. In the case of precolonial Hindi writers, Brajbhasha was enshrined as the carrier of *kāvya*, with the poets Surdas and Keshavdas celebrated as inaugurators by their successors. The Avadhi *premākhyāns*, which in hindsight can be seen, with good reason, as the Hindi tradition's first major surviving expressive texts, were completely ignored in the canons forged by the eighteenth-century Brahmin literati of North India. In another iteration of canon formation in the early twentieth century exemplified by Shukla, we see further acts of forgetfulness in the positing of an exclusively pre-Muslim Apabhramsha origin for Hindi. Aside from the nationalist imperative to antiquate, when Hindi and Urdu had been fully communalized as Hindu and Muslim, it must have seemed unthinkable that the first signs of Hindi literary activity could be by Muslims.

Another concern of this essay has been to probe the role of political formations and cultural superposition in vernacular literary beginnings. Much in the foregoing would underscore the importance of courts in the shaping of early Hindi *kāvya*, although they were not the sole determinants in the case of either Avadhi or Braj, where Sufi religiosity and Vaishnavism also had critical roles to play. In the case of Avadhi poets, who gave Persian *maṣnavīs* and Sufi tenets a new local flavor by drawing on Indic ingredients, we saw something that looked less like superposition and more like hybridity. It is

usual to think of vernacularization as operating across a single frontier zone (thus French poets emulated the high language of Latin and Kannada writers turned to Sanskrit classics). In medieval and early modern North India, however, the status of Sanskrit was counterbalanced by Persian, and in some cases Apabhramsha, which is to say that superposition needs to be seen as a multipolar phenomenon. Avadhi and Brajbhasha writers responded differently to the cultural choices before them, particularly in their ways of engaging with Persian and Sanskrit literary models. Ironically, it was the Braj poets—mostly Brahmins—who chose on occasion a style marked by superposed Persian vocabulary. The Muslim Sufi writers of Avadh by and large avoided it.

What other aspects of the North Indian case complicate Pollock's magisterial theories of vernacularization? His detailed study of Kannada vernacularization gave rise to the useful concept of a "cosmopolitan vernacular" that takes many of its literary cues from the superposed language and in so doing lends prestige and dignity to an emergent regional system of culture-power.⁵⁰ The breakdown of the cosmopolitan order in the "vernacular millennium" was triggered by the rise of new regional ways, in new regional polities. Quite distinct from the Sanskrit *ecumene*, being cosmopolitan in a vernacular sense did not mean being *spatially* cosmopolitan. Brajbhasha was different. While it never traveled to Southeast Asia or enveloped the entire subcontinent, the Braj literary system (and this is true of Hindi broadly) was transregional, serving the needs of various political and religious formations across enormous expanses of territory. These transregional aspirations suggest, among other things, that Hindi's claims for the status of official language in the modern period are not solely based on nationalist mythologizing but stem from a much earlier cultural pattern. One thing is clear: whether or not we can agree on its moment of entry into culture, Hindi literature not only began but thrived in multiple communities during the vernacular millennium, superseding the powerful cosmopolitan formations that helped to shape it.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Imre Bangha, Aditya Behl, Nalini Delvoye, Pika Ghosh, Jack Hawley, and Frances Pritchett for their perceptive comments on earlier drafts. Fellow conference participants, particularly Muzaffar Alam and Philip Lutgendorf, also helped to sharpen my thinking on the topic of Hindi literary beginnings. Thanks are due to Arthur Dudney for editorial assistance.

Notes

- ¹ Pollock 2006: 283–98.
- ² The *Tuhfat al-hind*, a Persian treatise on Brajbhasha, was produced ca. 1675 for a Mughal readership (Ziauddin 1935); on Indo-Persian philology more generally, see the essay by Kinra in this volume. Françoise Mallison (2011) records the existence of a Braj grammar from Bhuj dating to 1717. Fort William College's interventions in the case of Hindi and Hindustani are too well known to need rehearsing here.
- ³ For a useful attempt to sift through some of this nomenclatural morass in a quest for Urdu's literary antecedents, see Faruqi 2003: 806ff.
- ⁴ On Sanskrit's *ādikavi* and the tradition's self-consciousness about literary beginnings, see Pollock 2006: 77ff.
- ⁵ Shukla's *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās* (History of Hindi Literature), first published in 1929 remains authoritative today for its four-part division of the tradition into *ādi* (beginning), *bhakti* (devotional), *rīti* (courtly), and *ādhunika* (modern) periods (1994: 1).
- ⁶ "Asandigdha sāmgri jo kuch prāpt hai, uski bhāṣā apabhraṁś arthāt prākṛtābhāṣa ... hindī hai" (ibid., 3). Shukla discusses Apabhramsha *kāvya* on pages 5–16.
- ⁷ Dvivedi 1994; Saksena 1997; Varma 1988.
- ⁸ For the tendency of Hindi scholars to elide the boundary between Hindi and Apabhramsha, see Dvivedi 1994: 11–18; and Gupta 1994: 53–55. Pollock, for his part, is clear that Apabhramsha was never treated in the same manner as vernaculars such as Kannada or Gujarati. The classical thought world theorized it as one of a "closed set" (including Prakrit and Sanskrit) of literary languages (2006: 89–105).
- ⁹ Apabhramsha influence on Hindi (particularly in terms of meter and genre) is stressed by McGregor (2001; 1984: chap. 2). Cf. de Bruijn 2005: 45–46.
- ¹⁰ Dvivedi 1994: 21, 40.
- ¹¹ Shukla 1994: 12.
- ¹² *Madhyayug ke sāhitya ki pradhān prernā dharmśādhnā hī rahī hai* (Dvivedi 1994: 24).
- ¹³ A discussion of Shukla's dismissive approach to Kabir and later interventions by scholars such as Hazari Prasad Dvivedi and the Dalit critic Dharmvir is Wakankar 2006.

¹⁴ It is telling that until less than a decade ago the only regular scholarly venue in the West for discussing precolonial Hindi literature was known by the nickname "the bhakti conference."

¹⁵ Pollock 1998: 29–31.

¹⁶ Faruqi (2003: 819–21) and McGregor (1984: 8) consider Masud Sad Salman's Hindi *divān* an important moment of vernacular literary beginnings. However, Mirza Muhammad Qazwini (1905: 700–701) long ago discredited the idea that Masud Sad Salman could have written a Hindi *divān*. I am grateful to Rebecca Gould for the reference and for sharing her insights about this early Ghaznavid poet. On his Persian oeuvre, see Sharma 2000.

¹⁷ Whether or not modern scholars would agree, the Sanskrit tradition considered *kāvya* a separate domain from song (Pollock 1998: 8–9; 2006: 299–303). Doubts about Khusrau's Hindi oeuvre as extant today, and about whether he considered Hindi a serious literary medium, are outlined in Faruqi 2003: 820–21; and McGregor 1984: 24–26.

¹⁸ McGregor 1984: 23.

¹⁹ Shackle 1993: 269.

²⁰ For two lists of obscure early manuscripts unearthed from *bhaṇḍārs* in the last century, see Gupta 1976; and Singh 1964: 8. On the grounds of their apparently not being read by or otherwise known to Hindi posterity over the centuries, I skip over texts such as the *Bharateśvar bāhubalī rās* of Muni Shalibhadra Suri (1148), the *Pradyumnacarit* of Sadharu (1354?), and the *Haricand Purāṇa* of Jakhu Maniyar (1396). By the same logic it is difficult to include early authors such as Vishnudas from the Tomar court of Gwalior who were given more weight by McGregor (1984: 35–38, 103, 122) and, following him, Pollock (2006: 393–95).

²¹ As noted by McGregor (2003: 915).

²² Behl 2007. On motifs shared between the Sufi *kāvya*s and the *Rāmcaritmānas*, see de Bruijn 2005.

²³ Sreenivasan 2007: 34 (referencing Badauni).

²⁴ On Daud and Manjhan, see Behl and Weightman 2000: xiv–v. The latter, author of *Madhumālātī*, was a Shattari Sufi employed by Islam Shah Sur (r. 1545–54). Other *premākhyāns* written by Sufis have a similar courtly provenance. Qutuban, a member of the Suhrawardi order, presented his *Mirigāvatī* (Story of the Doe-Eyed Woman, 1503) at the court of Shah Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur. Jayasi, author of *Padmāvat* (Story of Padmāvatī, 1540) and a Chishtī, wrote praise poems to Islam Shah's father Sher Shah Sur (r. 1540–45).

²⁵ Behl and Weightman 2000: xv.

²⁶ Behl and Weightman also argue for the importance of *dhvani*, another Sanskrit literary concept (ibid., xxxviii).

²⁷ Pollock 1998; 2006: chaps. 8–10. De-Persianization in the Avadhi tradition is discussed further in Busch 2010b: 115–18.

²⁸ The fourth case study outlined below shows that Vishnudas did not figure in the literary self-understanding of the Braj community. Only the final portion of Vishnudas's version of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Swargārohaṇa*, had much currency in early modern manuscripts. Garcin de Tassy (1852) first drew attention to Vishnudas in the mid-nineteenth century after the poet had apparently languished in obscurity for centuries (I am grateful to Imre Bangha for the reference). In recent decades his oeuvre came to attract far more notice than it had garnered in the premodern period. See Dvivedi 1973; and McGregor 1999, 2000, 2003: 917–19.

²⁹ Man Singh Kachhwaha, Akbar's close ally, sponsored the building of the magnificent Govindadeva temple in Vrindavan in 1590 (Case 1996). Bir Singh Deo Bundela of Orchha, a patron of Keshavdas who had the ear of Jahangir (r. 1605–27), built a temple considered “the wonder of Mathura for the next half century.” See Entwistle, who here references the observations of Tavernier (1987: 176–77). Also see Asher 1995: 161–64.

³⁰ On the larger political stakes of the Orchha court's new types of self-fashioning in this period, see Kolff 2002: 121–34. The exemplary bhakti of King Madhukar Shah (r. 1554–92) is much admired in Vaishnava hagiographies, including *Do sau bāvan vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* (Tales of 252 Vaishnavas, 348–49) and *Śrībhaktamālā* (Auspicious Garland of Devotees, p. 731). The poet Hariram Vyas, one of the founding members of the Vaishnava community in Vrindavan and a contemporary of Hit Harivamsh and Swami Haridas, can also be connected to Madhukar Shah. These links are discussed from different angles in Pauwels 2002.

³¹ Keshavdas's ancestors were from the Tomar court at Gwalior, and although the poet never mentions Vishnudas or otherwise signals a debt to him, it is possible that some latent sense of the potential for high vernacular writing had traveled with the family when it migrated from Gwalior to Orchha in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, helping to create the conditions for Keshavdas's new ventures in Brajbhasha *kāvya*.

³² The likelihood that Sur was an oral poet (but a highly sophisticated one, exhibiting great literary finesse) is discussed by Hawley (1984: 42–44). Still, even oral compositions were quickly committed to writing in this period. Many Hindi bhakti songs do have a written heritage, complicating the categorical distinction (emphasized by Pollock, see note 17) between songs and *kāvya* in earlier Sanskrit tradition.

³³ Sanskritized vocabulary is a common feature of incipient vernacular *kāvya* (Pollock 2006: 322–38). For an example of heavily Sanskritized Braj style, see Busch 2005: 48.

³⁴ Busch 2005: 48–51.

³⁵ The eighteenth-century Braj poet Raja Savant Singh of Kishangarh, writing under

the pen name Nagridas, is one exception. He did experiment with Persianized (quasi-Urdu) styles in a Rekhta work known as *Ishk caman* (Garden of Love). See Pauwels 2006.

³⁶ *Kesava mani matirāma kabi, sukhadevādi anekā/inhaī ādi kabi aura je rasa mai sahita viveka /tinake lakṣana lakṣya lai āpani ukuti milāi/barno nava rasa nāyikā nāyaka mati sarasāi. Satkavigirāvilās* (v. 46).

³⁷ Sudan, it should be pointed out, uses alphabetical order, but when five lines are devoted to poets whose names begin with the first Devanagari consonant, *ka*, opening with Keshavdas in particular must be seen as a choice, a seeming indicator of his *ādikavi* status. *Sujāncaritra*, 4–9.

³⁸ *Kāvyanirṇay*, 1.16–17. With the expression “varied language” (*bhāṣā bibidha prakāra*) Bhikharidas may intend to point out that Tulsidas used both Avadhi and Braj. Gang, of whom only scattered Braj verses survive, wrote in Braj and Khari Boli. Some macaronic poetry mixing Hindi and Persian has also been attributed to him. See Krishna, 1960: 17–18).

³⁹ The three poets in line 2 are brothers. Note how the three Muslim names in line 5 are linked. Sundar, who follows directly, was a Mughal poet under Shah Jahan (in other manuscripts the Muslim poets Raslin and Mubarak substitute for or augment Sundar). I am grateful to Jack Hawley for drawing my attention to these manuscript variants and for helping me try to make sense of the vision of the Hindi canon that underlies this passage.

⁴⁰ (*Ekai lahaiṃ tapapuñjani ke phala jyom tulasī aru sūra gosāiṃ/ Ekai lahaiṃ bahusampati kesava bhūṣaṇa jyom barabīra barai/ Ekani koṃ jasa hī soṃ prayojana hai rasakhāni rahīma kī naīṃ/ dāsa kabittani kī caracā budhivantani koṃ sukhadai saba ihaīm*) (*Kāvyanirṇay*, 1.10)

⁴¹ Adapting Sanskrit literary theory to the Braj context was a typical pursuit of *rīti* writers. In this case Bhikharidas specifically mentions Mammata's *Kāvya prakāśa* as a source in *Kāvyanirṇay*, 1.5.

⁴² *Kāvyaṃ yaśasēthakṛte vyavahāravide śivetarakṣataye/ sadyahparanirvṛtaye kāntāsammitatayopadeśayuje* (*Kāvya prakāśa*, 1.2). (I am grateful to the editors of this volume for bringing the Mammata reference to my notice.) It is instructive to contrast Mammata's remarks with the perception of the modern Hindi critic Hazari Prasad Dvivedi that the premodern Hindi tradition was fundamentally religious.

⁴³ Chand Bardai, legendary author of the *Prthvīrāj rāso*, mentioned only by Sudan, has been considered earlier, and Rajasthani, by some scholars. Although once thought to be a contemporary account of the twelfth-century Delhi ruler Prithvi Raj Chauhan, the text in its current form is a product of the Mughal period, and it has many Braj features. Rahim, like Tulsi, wrote in Braj and Avadhi.

⁴⁴ Dadupanthi cultural memory has been studied by Callewaert (1993, 2000). Only

an occasional courtly writer, such as the Mughal poet Gang, makes it into the Dadupanthi repertoire.

⁴⁵ I have not treated Jain *kāvya* in Hindi for reasons of space but also owing to the comparatively limited circulation of the corpus. On this tradition as a claimant to Hindi beginnings, see Gupta 1976.

⁴⁶ McGregor (1984: 1–28) and Shackle (1993: 281–82) have already drawn attention to the compelling connection between Muslims and vernacular literary beginnings in North India. Pollock also intuited a similar point: “it was precisely those in the north who did not swim in the Indic sea—that is, Muslim literati ... who seem to have been the first to literize and literarize the languages of the Midlands” (2006: 392–93).

⁴⁷ The importance of Mughal patronage for the development of Brajbhasha as a court language is the subject of Busch 2010a.

⁴⁸ The case of premodern Sant poets would be another instance, even if their work was not allowed entry into the official domain of *kāvya* until relatively recently.

⁴⁹ Pollock 2006: 67–68.

⁵⁰ Pollock 1998; 2006: 330–79.

References

Primary Sources

- Do sau bāvan vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*. 1965. Edited by N. Sharma. Mathura: Shri Bajrang Pustakalay.
- Kāvyanirṇay* of Bhikharidas. 1957. *Bhikhārīdāsgranthāvalī*, Edited by V. Mishra. Vol. 2. Varanasi: Nagari Pracarini Sabha.
- Kāvyaṇṇakāśa* of Mammata. 2003. Edited by B. Bhattacharya and J. S. L. Tripathi. Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University.
- Keśavgranthāvalī*. 1954–59. Edited by V. Mishra. 3 vols. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.
- Rāmcandracandrikā* of Keshavdas. In *Keśavgranthāvalī*, edited by V. Mishra. Vol. 2. 229–430. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.
- Satkavirāvilās* of Baldev Mishra. 2001. Edited by Shivgopal Mishra. Allahabad: Hindustani Academy.
- Śrībhaktamāl* of Nabhasdas. 2001. Edited by Bhagvan Prasad Rupkala. 8th ed. Lucknow: Tejkumar Book Depot.

Sujāncaritra of Sudan. 1902. Edited by R. Das. Allahabad: Indian Press.

Secondary Sources

- Asher, C. 1995. *Architecture of Mughal India*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
- Behl, A. 2007. “Presence and Absence in Bhakti: An Afterword.” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11.3: 319–24.
- Behl, A., and S. Weightman. 2000, trans. Madhumālatī: An Indian Sufi Romance. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Busch, A. 2005. “Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Keśavdas.” *South Asia Research* 25.1: 31–54.
- . 2010a. “Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court.” *Modern Asian Studies* 44.2: 267–309.
- . 2010b. “Riti and Register: Lexical Variation in Courtly Braj Bhasha Texts.” In *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, edited by F. Orsini, 84–120. Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Callewaert, W. 1993. *The Sārvāṅgī of Gopāldās*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- . 2000. *The Hagiographies of Anantadās: The Bhakti Poets of North India*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- Case, M., ed. 1996. *Govindadeva: A Dialogue in Stone*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

- de Bruijn, T. 2005. "Many Roads Lead to Lanka: The Intercultural Semantics of Rama's Quest." *Contemporary South Asia* 14.1: 39–53.
- Dvivedi, H. H. N., ed. 1973. *Mahābhārata (Pāṇḍav-carit)*. Gwalior: Vidya Mandir Prakashan.
- Dvivedi, H. P. 1994. *Hindī sāhitya kā ādikāl*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan.
- Entwistle, A. W. 1987. *Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*. Groningen: E. Forsten.
- Faruqi, S. R. 2003. "A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part I." In *Literary Cultures in History*, 805–63. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Garcin de Tassy, M. 1852. "Tableau du Kali yug ou de l'âge de fer." *Journal Asiatique* 1.6: 551–61.
- Gupta, G. 1976. *Ādikāl kī prāmāṇik racnāē*. New Delhi: National Publishing House.
- . 1994. *Hindī sāhitya ka vājñāṇik itihās*. 5th ed. Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan.
- Hawley, J. S. 1984. *Sūrdās: Poet, Singer, Saint*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Kolff, D. H. A. 2002. *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krishna, B., ed. 1960. *Gaṅg-kabīr*. Varanasi: Nagari Pracarini Sabha.
- Mallison, F. 2011. "The Teaching of Braj, Gujarati, and Bardic Poetry at the Court of Kutch: The Bhuj Brajbhāṣā Pāthśālā (1749–1948)." In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800*, 170–82. Durham: Duke University Press.
- McGregor, R. S. 1984. *Hindī Literature from Its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- . 1999. "Viṣṇudās and His Rāmāyan-Kathā." In *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages, Literature, and Culture*, edited by A. W. Entwistle and C. Salomon, 239–47. Delhi: Manohar.
- . 2000. "A Narrative Poet's View of His Material: Viṣṇudās's Introduction to His Brajbhāṣā Pāṇḍav-carit (AD 1435)." In *The Banyan Tree*, edited by M. Offredi, vol. 2, 335–42. Delhi: Manohar.
- . 2001. "On the Evolution of Hindī as a Language of Literature." *South Asia Research* 21.2: 203–17.
- . 2003. "The Progress of Hindi, Part I." In *Literary Cultures in History*, edited by S. Pollock, 912–57. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pauwels, H. 2002. *In Praise of Holy Men: Hagiographic Poems by and about Harirām Vyās*. Groningen: E. Forsten.
- . 2006. "Culture in Circulation in Eighteenth-Century North India: Urdu Poetry by a Rajput Krishna Devotee." Paper presented at the nineteenth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Leiden, the Netherlands.
- Pollock, S. 1998. "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57.1: 6–37.
- . 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pollock, S., ed. 2003. *Literary Cultures in History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Qazwini M. M. 1905. "Mas'ud-i-Sa'd-i-Salman." Translated by E. G. Browne. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (October): 693–740.
- Saksena, S. 1997. *Hindī sāhitya kā ādikāl*. Jaipur: Punit Prakashan.
- Shackle, C. 1993. "Early Vernacular Poetry in the Indus Valley: Its Contexts and Its Character." In *Islam and Indian Regions*, edited by A. L. Dallapiccola and S. Z. A. Lallamant, vol. 1, 259–89. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Sharma, S. 2000. *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ud Sa'd Salman of Lahore*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Shukla, R. 1994. *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās*. 29th ed. Varanasi: Nagari Pracarini Sabha.
- Singh, S. P. 1964. *Sūr-pūrv brajbhāṣā aur uskā sāhitya*. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Hindi Pracarak Pustakalaya.
- Sreenivasan, R. 2007. *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India c. 1500–1900*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Varma, H. 1988. *Hindī sāhitya kā ādikāl*. Chandigarh: Haryana Sahitya Academy.
- Wakankar, M. 2006. "The Anomaly of Kabir: Caste and Canonicity in Indian Modernity." In *Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History*, edited by Shail Mayaram, M. S. S. Pandian, and Ajay Skaria, 987–1014. London: Seagull Books.
- Ziauddin, M. 1935. *A Grammar of the Braj Bhakha by Mīrzā Khān*. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Bookshop.