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<th>Title</th>
<th>A Newly Discovered Fragment of the Śrīkrṣṇaṣṭakīrtan</th>
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A Newly Discovered Fragment
of the Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan

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Keywords: Middle Bengali, Newar, Kathmandu

Abstract

Baru Candidas’ Sūryakṛṣṇakīrtan (ŚKK), a collection of songs on Kṛṣṇa, is considered the earliest text in Middle Bengali. For a long time, only one manuscript has been available to scholars. Recently, however, a fragment which contains several songs parallel to the ŚKK was discovered in Kathmandu.

The Caryāpada, a collection of Tantric Buddhist hymns written in the old forms of the Eastern NIA dialects, is considered the oldest specimen of Old Bengali by Bengali scholars, while Baru Can̄ciḍāś’s Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan1 (abbr. ŚKK), which is the second oldest document in Bengali, represents the beginning of the linguistic stage of Middle Bengali. Also from the point of view of the history of Bengali literature, the Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan is a very important work, in that, being composed in the 14th century, it is a forerunner of the Bengali Vaishnava poems which have never ceased to enjoy general popularity in the Bengali-speaking areas up to modern times. In spite of being such an important document, only one manuscript has so far been available to us.

Recently, however, a possible fragment of the ŚKK was discovered in Kathmandu valley. The details of the discovery are as follows. When Makoto Kitada visited the Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu, in March 2011, Kashinath Tamot told him that he had found a manuscript of songs in Bengali language, and that Candidas was mentioned as the author. He expressed his conjecture that these songs could be from the ŚKK. In August 2012, we worked together on this manuscript. As a result of that, this manuscript in fact turned out to be a genuine fragment of the ŚKK, although only a very small part of it. This article was written by Kitada with the permission of Tamot, and published under both of our names.2

The information about this manuscript (abbr. MS) is: Manuscript No. 1-1696, Real No. B287/2, titled merely as ‘Rāga’, written in Newārī script3. It contains 13 folios, but those which concern us are the first six-and-a-half folios (Fol. 1r-7r). The rest (Fol. 7v-13v) deals with a collection of fables in Newārī based on the Pañcatantra, which has nothing to do with the former part of the manuscript.

1 For general information on Baru Can̄ciḍāś’ Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan, see Amitrasūdan Bhaṭṭacārya 2011, Bidbadballabh 2007/2008 and Das 1988.
2 I would like to express my cordial thanks to Prof. Rahul Peter Das for his helpful suggestions.
3 In Prof. Tamot’s opinion, the style of letters is that of about the 16th to 17th centuries.
Folios 1r-7r consist of two parts:

1. Thirteen songs numbered from 14 to 27. They contain many linguistic features and expressions common to the ŠKK. At the top of each song, the name of the rāga and the name of the tāla are mentioned.

2. Songs Nos. 28 to 34 seem to originate from the opening scene of a drama in Bengali, in which the characters appear on the stage one after another, introducing themselves to the audience in song. The name of a king, Govindacanda who is mentioned suggests that this drama is a version of the Gopicandranātaka which used to be one of the very popular dramas performed in the Kathmandu valley. Expressions such as bangesvara rājā, bangero bhuvapati (meaning ‘the king of Vanga/Bengal’) etc. hint at a certain connection of this drama with Bengal. The text breaks off abruptly.

Accurate deciphering of the manuscript is difficult. Newāri script is in many cases not completely free from obscurity and ambiguity. In Classical Newāri spelling, the distinction between dental and retroflex as well as the distinction between L and R in the NIA languages is not perfectly retained and is very often confused. I have the impression that the Newāri transcriber[s] was/were not able to understand the original language (an earlier stage of Middle Bengali) any more. All these make the text extremely hard to understand. Therefore, in this short article, I will confine myself to a few brief remarks.

Song No. 16 in its bhanitā verse mentions Baru Caṇḍidās as the author:

\[
\text{vāsariya rāṇa śīre vamdiya gāyiro vadu caṇḍidāśa} \quad /16,7d
\]

"Thus sang Baru Caṇḍidās, [holding] Goddess Bāsali on his head [and] praising [her]." 5

This is parallel to the bhanitā verse of, e.g., ŠKK 131 4:

\[
\text{bāsali śīre bandī gāīlo caṇḍidāśa} \quad /ŠKK 131,4d
\]

"[Thus] sang Caṇḍidās, [holding] Goddess Bāsali on his head [and] praising [her]."

Song No. 15 contains parallels of ŠKK 105 7. I first give the whole text of No. 15 below, then Amitrasūdan Bhattācarya’s version.

No. 15
Rāga Pahariyā // Parimāna //

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4 Song No. 14 (Bhatyāri, Jati), No. 15 (Pahariyā, Parimāna), No. 16 (Korāba, Parimāna), No. 17 (Bhathali, Paritāra), No. 18 (Śrī, Ekatāla), No. 19 (Śrīrāga, Ekatāli), No. 20 (Śrī, Rāmga (?) Jati), No. 21 (Rāga Varāri, Ekatāli), No. 22 (Rāga Patamanjali, Paritāla), No. 23 (Śrīrāga, Tāra Mātha Jati), No. 24 (Savali, Mātha Jati), No. 25 (Nāta, Rūpkaka), No. 26 (Nāta, Rūpkaka).

5 The term rāṇa is unclear.


8 Words are not separately written in the manuscript, but here, separations are given according to our own provisional interpretation.
The corresponding song, ŠKK 105 in Bhattacarya’s edition, runs as follows:

Desagaragah //
ati rūpasī padumini jāfī dekhi thīra nahi mane /
tora birāhe cītta beākula moerī nā jiβorīkenamanē //105,1
henaka bacana nā bola kāhānānīrī tora bāpe nāhiṁī lājā /
sodara māūlānīta bhole parilāhā dekhiṁī rūpasa kājā //2
madanabā̆ye cītta beākula kibā ghosasi māmī māmī /
mīchā kāje moke bhāṅdītērī cāhō sakale jānī āhmī //3
chāoīyāla kāhānānī bolā na būahasī būjhīla tohmāra matī /
moṁī je gōālīnī ābālī rādhā na jānu rāṅga sūratī //4
āhmē se kāhānānī gōāla nāgara tohmāra būrā bāriśe /
nahuli yauembā ātī sūsobhāna surati deha hariśe //5
prathuma yauembā madītā bhāṅḍārā tātā nā sambācī curī /
āhmāra yauembā kāla bhujāngama chuierīn khāiānī mari //6
āhmē se kāhānānī tohme candrābaṅī maraṇe tohmā nā chāfī /
tohmāra yauembā kāla bhujāngama āhmēho bhāla gāruṇī //7
nāgara kāhānānī moke bigute aśeṣa neāa jūrī /
koṇa bibudhi e hena pathe ānile dāruṇī burhī //8

---

11 Or: caise?
12 Or: kācapū?
13 Or: supū?
This is a dialogue about a quarrel between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. For convenience, I quote the translation by Klaiman:14

“You’re so alluring, a natural seductress. My heart quickens pace when I see you. / With your aloofness, my thoughts are untranquil. Oh, how can I go on surviving?”

“Krishna, don’t say things like this. You don’t have any modesty. Where are your parents? / You’ve merely spotted a juicy affair; you’re entranced by the wife of your uncle.”

“Why must you say, ‘I’m your aunt, I’m your aunt’? I’ve been driven insane by love’s goading. / Radha, you’re trying to use unfair means to elude me; I know all about it.”

“You’re a child, Krishna; you can’t understand what I’m saying. I see your intentions. / I am just Radha, a dairymaid; I’m very small. I know nothing of passion.”

“I’m dashing Krishna, your cowherd pursuer, and you are a twelve year old lady. / This is most lovely, your blossoming youth; you should gladly bestow it upon me.”

“My blooming youth is a treasure that’s sealed. There’s no possible way you could rob it. / I have a poisonous snake in this youth; if you touch and are bitten, you’ll perish!”

“I am your Krishna and you’re my Candravali. Till I am dead I can’t leave you. / You say your youth is a poisonous snake – I’m an excellent venomist, Radha!”

“There is no end to these intricate arguments! Krishna’s too smart, he unnerves me. / What sort of folly induced that cruel Granny to have me approach by this pathway?”

“Look at your lover, bestow an embrace on me. Why are you overexcited? / How is your Granny at fault? It’s because of my merits that you have been brought here.”

“Milk that is hot can’t be drunk through a straw; when it is cooled, it is tasty for drinking. / Breasts which are starting to bud are like marmelos; no one enjoys them unripened!”

“When someone’s hungry for something, he couldn’t care less if it’s ripe or it isn’t. / He’ll eat it as he encounters it till all his hunger is gone, clever Radha!”

“Krishna, I’m looking you square in the eye and I’m warning you: better avoid me. / Even a tiger will not

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14 Klaiman 1984, p. 91. I do not necessarily agree with her interpretation in every single detail, but this will suffice for the moment, for a minute examination of the SKK is not the purpose of this article.

15 *Padminī*, i.e. women with the ideal beauty as mentioned in the Kāmasūtra.

16 Klaiman (ibid.) notes that the literal meaning is: “you have no shame from your parents”.

-296-
A Newly Discovered Fragment of the Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana

eat a creature he meets face to face in the forest.”

“Beautiful Radha, discard your misgivings. Be pleased to agree to my wishes.”

It is obvious that MS song No. 15 is closely connected with ŠKK 105, but, containing many variants, fails to agree with it word for word.

It must be noted that the ŠKK was originally orally recited. This fact raises the question, to what degree the written sources are reliable, while the texts orally handed down vary. It may be whether a collection of components of various origins, or the enlargement and alteration of a single kernel.

MS Song No. 27 again has a bhanita verse in which the name Caṇḍīḍās (cāṇḍīḍāse) appears, and contains many lines parallel to ŠKK 291. The text runs as follows:

rādhā // tīni kitana dadhi, torā hoyiveka kata nā vudhi //27,1
kahnāyī, haivo muiyī govārīni jātī, morā ghṛta duḍha utapati //2
rādhā, o torā do rājavaisya maī uti dayā curase //3
kahnāyī, kācaraṇā pākerokali, mai nahi jāne <su>17 rati muṛāri18 //4
rādhā, kata vaśāna19 se sati, paṁca puruse pohāyī rāti //5
kahnāyī, uceta paṁṭhera nālī, yibe vāṁchita tuyī he muṛāri //6
rādhā, sargga maṅīca pāṭāre mu jānī, yibe aṁmāke sati vaśānī //7
kahnāyī, kaṁśasaura vada duruvāre, tehī sunīre nahi uciāre //8
rādhā, kaṁsa vadhire ahme vāne, tave sādhivo māḥādāni lo //9
kahnāyī, muiyī reki putanā mārī, khāyīre aje tiri vadhīya muṛāri //10
rādhā, māyī reki jānahi mālī, tathi pāpa je nahi sundari //11
kahnāyī, khāyīreki tanera khūra, īve vola <vāra>20 ha vacana vīra //12
rādhā, piyara mai jānani rakṣāṁ līre, mora tejā vasīra šārīre //13
kahnāyī, tohara mukha nahi cāhī, ati pāpeta kāla kahnāyī he //14
rādhāya, aṁmāke na patīśi dhamādhā, moke vudhi thāyīyo jāha vaṃḍhā //15
kahnāyī, reho mora sāta sarihār21, moke vaḍāyī deho ekovāra //16
rādhā, deho moke surati simghāre, tave vaḍāyī dī[śa?] tuhmāke //17
kahnāyī, dvādaśa varīse ahme nahi jāna, surati dhammāri he //18
rādhāya, māṭhāya guri phure tora khyā23, raḷaṅkāka mulelo //19
kahnāyī, yituṁ cchāda paṭīyāse, kavi gīta gāyīla caṇḍīḍāse he //20

The corresponding verse, ŠKK 29124, runs as follows:

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17 This syllable is marked with a sign of deletion.
18 Or: suṛārī
19 I.e. bakhāna < Skt. vyākhyaṇa.
20 Marked with a sign of deletion.
21 Here is a virāma sign.
22 Extremely obscure.
23 Or: khopā
I quote Klaiman’s translation:

“Most of time you spend selling your produce. / How much intelligence you must have Radha!”

“Krishna, although I was born among cowherds, / I have my sense, while you’re addle-minded!”

“One hundred thousand’s the worth of your head with its blossoms of basil. / You haven’t the money!”

“You may address me with flattering comments; Still I’m not taken in by them, Krishna.”

“You’re completely intractable, Radha. / Even though you’re a dairyman’s daughter.”

“I’m not the one who’s intractable. Krishna. / You’re extremely audacious, Murari.”

“You’re impulsive in temperament, Radha; / This is the reason I call you unworthy.”

“Kansa is very implacable, Krishna. / Since I’m afraid of him, I must resist you.”

“I am about to assassinate Kansa; / Then I’ll be able to salvage my honour.”

“Only a day ago, milk was your diet. / Now you proclaim you’re a hero, you midget!”

“While I imbibed Lady Pūtana’s milk, I / Extracted the life from her body, my Radha.”

“Did you destroy Lady Pūtana, Krishna? / Why, you have murdered a woman, Murari!”

“Forefathers don’t accept votive oblations / From those who avoid killing murderous people.”

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25 Corresponding to MS 27,19: rādhya, māthāya guri phure tora khoyā ralakṣaka mulelo.
26 Cf. MS 27,8, although its second half is different.
27 Corresponding to MS 27,9: rādhe, kamsa vadhihre aume vāne. tave sādhivo māhādāmi lo.
28 Corresponding to MS 27,12: kāhnāyi, khāyirekti tanera khīra, iye vola vāra>ha vacana vāra.
29 Corresponding to MS 27,10: kāhnāyi, moyi rekti putanā mārī, khāyire aje tīri vadhiyā murārī.
30 Corresponding to MS 27,14: kāhnāyi, tohara mukha nahi cāhi, ait pāpeta kāla kāhnāyi he.
31 Klaiman 1984, p.223f.
“I cannot look at your face any longer. / You are extremely unprincipled, Krishna.”
“This very day, I’ll discharge these five arrows / and snatch you away from the world of existence!”
“Don’t take way my serenity, Krishna!”

These are all the portions that have been elucidated so far. Although the language shows many linguistic features common to the ŠKK, many lines remain unclear because of the above mentioned difficulties. Nevertheless, many parallel expressions and lines are found, which suggest that these songs are from the ŠKK.

Song No.18, although not identified in the ŠKK, is one whose meaning is relatively clear:

Ṡṛī // ekaṭāli //
antare antare gopi antare amgaṇā / rāṣa mandara kṣere devakīnandane //dhru
kāhu deya āriṃgana kāhu deya cuṃbāne / stane nakha ghāṭa deya adhara daṃsane //dhru
nivi visarccana kare kṛṣṇa rasa vase gagane apasaraṇana sayatnikhase //
rāṣa mandare kṛdā dekhe thira candra rāti bāḍhe kṛṣṇa rame candra kāma dhandhā //18

The gist would be:
“Inside, inside, cowgirls, [come] inside the court! / In the circle of the dance party (rāṣa) plays (kṣere = khele) the son of Devakī (= Kṛṣṇa). He gives someone an embrace, gives someone a kiss, / [and] gives [someone] a scratch of nail in the breast, and [someone] a bite in the lips. // In the excess of desire (rasa-vase), he unites someone’s waist string. / In the sky, apsarās [???]. // Seeing the play (kṛdā = krāḍā) in the circle of the dance party, the moon is motionless, / Kṛṣṇa enjoys the night [???]. //”

As for MS Song Nos. 28 to 34, i.e. the second subdivision dealing with a drama scene, a question remains about what relation this drama has with the preceding Kṛṣṇa songs. Does it indicate that the Kṛṣṇa songs were sung before the drama began on the stage? Or, were the two texts without any connection put together in one manuscript? As pointed out in the beginning of this article, expressions like “the king of Bengal/Vāṅga” shows that this drama has a certain connection with Bengal. At the moment we are not able to give an adequate answer to this question without comparing this fragment with other manuscripts of the Gopicandranāṭaka preserved in the Kathmandu Valley. Whatever it may be, we will continue further investigations into this matter and our results will be published in the future.

Abbreviations
MS = manuscript NIA = New Indo Aryan ŠKK = Śrīkṛṣṇaśaṅkīrtan

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『クリシュナ讃歌』の新発見の写本断片
カーシーナート・タモート
北田 信

キーワード：中期ベンガル語、ネワール、カトマンドゥ

ポル・チョンディダッシュ (Baru Candidas) 作『クリシュナ讃歌』 (Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtan) は中期ベンガル語最初の作品である。今まで、写本はベンガル地方で一個しか見つかっていなかった。ところが最近になって、ネパール・カトマンドゥでこの作品の写本断片が発見された。本論文では、この写本断片を簡潔に記述し、そこに記載された歌詞のうち、二つを『クリシュナ讃歌』のものと同定した。