The Cosmopolitan Vernacular

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THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN ASIA AT DIFFERENT TIMES starting around 1000, but in most places by 1500, writers turned to the use of local languages for literary expression in preference to the translocal language that had dominated literary expression for the previous thousand years. This development constitutes at the level of culture the single most significant transformation in the region between the creation of one cosmopolitan order at the beginning of the first millennium and another and far different one—through colonialism and globalization—at the end of the second.

The vernacularization of southern Asia is not only the most important cultural change in the late medieval world—or perhaps we should say, in the early modern world that it helps to inaugurate—but also the least studied. We have no coherent account of the matter for any region, let alone a connected history for southern Asia or for the larger Eurasia world where a development very similar in cultural form (if not in social or political content) appears to have occurred. We have no well-argued theoretical understanding of many of the basic problems at issue. And, what is especially disabling, we lack any reliable account of the political transformations in southern Asia to which these cultural changes are undoubtedly if obscurely related, or a theory of power and culture before modernity that would allow us to make sense of this relation.

What I aim to do in the space available here is try to sketch out, first, a few of the larger conceptual issues that impinge on an analysis of cosmopolitan and vernacular in literary culture, and the narrower questions that pertain to their historicization. The very idea of vernacularization depends upon understanding something of the world against which it defines itself, and this I provide with a brief account of the historical formation and ideational character of what I call the Sanskrit cosmopolis. For the former I look at the rise and spread of Sanskrit inscriptions, which serve as a synecdoche for a range of literary-cultural (and political-cultural) practices; for the latter, I consider as paradigmatic the space of cultural circulation as this structures the literary and literary-critical imagination. All this is preparatory to an analysis of one case of the formation of vernacular literary culture, that of early

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Kannada. Here the localization of the globalizing literary-cultural practices and representations of Sanskrit constitutes a model instance of cosmopolitan vernacularism. At the same time I hope to show, through one narrow but symptomatic example (the history of the literary-critical discourse on the "Way" of literature, *mārga*), not only how the vernacular reconfigures the cosmopolitan, but how the two produce each other in the course of their interaction. I end with a brief account of the failure of existing historical explanations (such as they are) to account for the vernacular turn, and flag some of the challenges for future inquiry, most crucially the relationship of literary culture to political culture in the non-West and the very problematic of premodern globalization.

Hypothesizing Vernacularization

The possibility of conceptualizing and historicizing the cosmopolitan/vernacular transformation requires a working hypothesis with a number of components that, although they may appear to attempt to settle through definition what can only be determined empirically, can all be demonstrated historically. These concern cultural choice, the relativity of "vernacular," the literary, the historical significance of writing, the meaning of beginnings, and the sociotextual community. I address these briefly in order.

Cultural Choice

A language-for-literature is chosen from among alternatives, not naturally given. Human linguistic diversity may be a fatality, in Benedict Anderson's melancholy formulation, but there is nothing fated, unselfconscious, or haphazard about literary-language diversity; it is willed. Vernacular literary languages thus do not "emerge" like buds or butterflies, they are made. Not many scholars acknowledge this fact or do much with it. One of the few was Bakhtin, who saw more clearly than anyone that "the actively literary linguistic·consciousness at all times and everywhere (that is, in all epochs of literature historically available to us) comes upon 'languages' and not language. Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*" (1981, 295). Yet so far as I can see what neither Bakhtin nor anyone else has spelled out in detailed historical terms for specific languages in the everyday sense (by "language" Bakhtin usually meant socioideological registers) is what is at stake in this choice, what else in the social and political world is being chosen when a language-for-literature is chosen. For it is one thing to recognize that literary-language diversity is willed, and another thing altogether to specify the historical reasons informing this will.

"Vernacular"/"Cosmopolitan"

To define vernacular over against cosmopolitan appears to submerge a number of relativities. Although not all cosmopolitan languages may initially be vernaculars— here the history of Sanskrit when Sanskrit literature (*kāvya*) is invented at the beginning of the common era differs sharply from that of, say, Latin in the third century B.C. when Latin literature is abruptly invented—many vernaculars themselves do become cosmopolitan for their regional worlds. This is true for Braj, which was rendered rootlessly cosmopolitan by the elimination—conscious elimination, according to some scholars—of local dialectal difference in the fifteenth to sixteenth

centuries.[1] Kannada, too, though often thought of as a regional literary code, has long been transregional for writers in yet smaller zones such as Tulu Nadu or the Konkan. But these relativities look less worrisome from within the subjective universes of the agents involved. Vernacular intellectuals define a literary culture in conscious opposition to something larger; they choose to write in a language that does not travel—and that they know does not travel—as easily as the well-traveled language of the cosmopolitan order. The new geocultural space they imagine, which I discuss in what follows, fully testifies to this. That this "local" in turn typically comes to be constructed as dominant and dominating for smaller cultural spaces is a further step in the cosmopolitan-vernacular transformation and unthinkable without it.

The Literary

However much contemporary thought wants to ignore, resist, blur, or trash definitions of "literature," the historical societies studied here made an unequivocal distinction, practically and often by explicit theorization, between a realm of textual production that is documentary and another that is something else—call it expressive, interpretative, "workly" (*das Werkhafte*, Heidegger 1960), literary, or whatever. Contemporary scholarship is certainly right to question these local distinctions, and to look for the expressive or workly in the documentary and constative, and the reverse (LaCapra 1983, 23–71). But that is a second-order enterprise and subsequent to gaining historical-anthropological knowledge of what poets in middle-period southern Asia thought they were doing and when and why. The distinction between restricted and elaborated codes, between the documentary and the literary, was often produced and reproduced precisely by means of language choice, as the history of inscriptions clearly shows. Facts of social or cultural power seem to have impinged upon this choice, suggesting that restriction and elaboration are potentialities permitted development in the one case and denied it in the other. When this denial is challenged in the vernacularization process, moreover, the challenge typically takes the form of domesticating the literary apparatus (themes, genres, metrics, lexicon) of the superposed cultural formation that set the rules of the literary game.

Writing

The literary in southern Asia comes increasingly in the middle period to be distinguished not just from the documentary but from the oral, and to be ever more intimately linked to writing, with respect to the authority conferred by it, the textuality associated with it, and the history produced through it. The authorization to write is not, like the ability to speak, a natural entitlement. It is typically related to social and political privileges, which mark literature in the restricted sense as a different mode of cultural production and communication from so-called oral literature.[2] Granted that literate literature in South Asia retains many text-immanent

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[1]Such processes have been noticed only by linguists, who discuss the matter in reference to "koinés" and typically ignore most of what interests cultural theory. Cf., e. g., Segal 1993. For Braj, cf. Snell 1991, 30–32, and, more generally, Masica 1991, 54.

[2]According to well-known legends, Tukārām, like Eknānth before him, was forced by outraged brahmans to "throw his poems into the river." When he defends his use of Marathi, he is thus clearly defending the right to write, not just to compose (cf. Pollock 1995, 121–22).

features of orality (what the late scholar of Old French Paul Zumthor called *vocalité*),[3] and that the principal mode of consumption was auditory, still, writing affected literary communication in profound ways. These await systematic analysis, but there is no doubt that to write literarily always meant rendering language both learned and learnéd, to endow it with new norms and constraints. Historically speaking, what counts in the history of vernacular literary culture, what makes history not only for us (by providing historical objects) but for the primary agents themselves (by marking a break in the continuum of history) is literization, the committing of literature to writing.

Beginnings

When therefore through an act of cultural choice the vernacular is deployed for the literary and the literary attains inscription, literature begins—that is, at particular times people begin to inscribe texts, or, what comes to the same thing as a historical issue, begin to consider texts inscribed in local languages worth preserving. In this sense the history of vernacular literary culture is not coextensive with the history of vernacular language. Such literary beginnings in South Asia are the object of ethnohistorical representation and, despite the many logical and ideological difficulties that beset the very idea of beginnings, are often susceptible to historical analysis (cf. Pollock 1995). I am especially interested in vernacular inaugurations, though of course the choice to be vernacular has a continuing history.

Community

The last, and least disputable of my contentions—though also the least historicized—is the mutually constitutive relationship of literature and community: literature addresses, sometimes calls into being, particular sociotextual communities. These define themselves in significant if variable ways on the basis of the literature they share, and they create new literatures in service of new self-definitions. To choose a language for literature, then—to commit to writing expressive texts as defined according to dominant-culture models—is at the same time to choose a community, though its precise meaning and the nature of the identity that literature constructs for it need to be investigated, and not imagined, for the world before modernity.

Absent this kind of conceptual framework, it is hard even to perceive the choices to be vernacular—or cosmopolitan—let alone recover their histories and social meanings.

The choice to be vernacular in South Asia at the beginning of the second millennium was made against the background of Sanskrit and deeply conditioned by the literary culture of Sanskrit. Without understanding the history of the literary world Sanskrit created and the work it did there, it is difficult to understand its supersession, what vernacular literary languages were called upon to do, when, and why. I hope to suggest something of the character of this culture by looking first in a perhaps unexpected quarter: the history of the Sanskrit inscriptional discourse. There are three things I concentrate on here: the history of the transregional cultural formation of Sanskrit, how it came to be and what it consisted of; the role of Sanskrit

[3]Cf. Zumthor 1987. Relevant here for Sanskrit and early Kannada texts are the literary-linguistic phenomena (*guṇas,* see below) or the modes of recitation (*pāṭha* or *paṭhiti*) described by literary scholars such as Rājaśekhara in the tenth century (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 7), and Bhoja in th eleventh (*Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 7, pp. 379 ff.).

as the vehicle of political expression; and, related to this, Sanskrit's highly marked status as the literary language over against local languages. This real-world formation provides the background for the brief account of geocultural representations to which I then turn.

Historicizing the Sanskrit Cosmopolis

As momentous as the vernacular transformation at the beginning of the second millennium was the creation, around the beginning of the first, of the cosmopolitan order to which it was the response.[4] Two new, related developments were fundamental to this order: the use of Sanskrit in inscriptions and the invention of "literature." Sanskrit inscriptions, typically issued from royal courts, are crucial both as expressions of the political, and for the wider trends they reveal in literary-language use and norms of literariness, which the history of Sanskrit literature confirms.

For its first 400 years, inscriptional culture in South Asia is almost exclusively non-Sanskrit (the languages used were instead the Middle-Indic dialects called Prakrit), but this situation changed dramatically at the beginning of the common era when we first begin to find expressive texts eulogizing royal elites composed in Sanskrit and inscribed on rock-faces, pillars, monuments, or copper-plates, a form that will later receive the genre name *praśati* (praise-poem). The most famous of these texts, produced for or by the Indo-Scythian (Śaka) overlord Rudradāman (ca. A.D. 150), has been known to scholars for more than a century, and nothing has been discovered since to alter the impression that it marks a profound cultural-historical break. Never before had Sanskrit spoken as it does in Rudradāman's text, out in the open, in written form, in reference to a historical king, and in aestheticized language. And yet almost immediately thereafter, and for the next thousand years, it is the voice of Sanskrit poetry that would be heard in polities from the mountains of Peshawar to Prambanam on the plains of central Java.

It is about this same time that what comes to be called *kāvya* ("[written] literature") in the emerging scholarly discourse of rhetoric (*alaṅkāraśāstra*) is crystallized, when the great genres such as *mahākāvya* (courtly epic) and *nāṭaka* (epic drama) come into existence along with the formal techniques, such as the system of figures of sound and sense and the complex quantitative-syllabic metrics, that were to define Sanskrit literature and have such resonance throughout Asia. Literary-cultural memory, as this may be discerned in literary criticism or in the *kavipraśamsās* (praises of poets) that conventionally introduce Sanskrit literary texts, has no reach beyond these beginnings in the early centuries of the common era, and it is difficult for historical scholarship to show that *kāvya* as it will henceforth be practiced is much earlier than this. Sanskrit inscriptions such as Rudradāman's should not therefore be viewed, as they usually are, as the latest date for the existence of literary Sanskrit (*kāvya*), but as the earliest. And the two together, *kāvya* and *praśati*, are evidence, not of a renaissance (or "resurgence," "re-assertion," or "revival") of Sanskrit culture after a Mauryan hiatus, but of its inauguration as a new cultural formation. Previous to this Sanskrit culture appears to have been restricted to the domain of liturgy and the knowledges required for its analysis; it can hardly be said to have existed in anything like the form it was soon to acquire.

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[4]This and the following section draw on the detailed discussion in Pollock 1996.

Whether or not I overdraw this discontinuity between a highly restricted social sphere of Sanskrit (liturgical and scholastic) and a new political use of Sanskrit accompanied by wholly new forms of written literature, the subsequent history of Sanskrit in inscriptional discourse is the history of an unprecedented and vast diffusion. Once it came to be used for inscriptional literature in North India in the second to third centuries, Sanskrit was adopted elsewhere with astonishing speed. Prakrit disappeared from the epigraphical record throughout India in the space of a century, never to be revived for inscriptions thereafter, and retained only a residual status in the literary-cultural order.

A crucially important dimension to the use of Sanskrit in epigraphs and the rise of *kāvya* is the division of linguistic labor in inscriptional discourse, and, relatedly, the literary silence of the vernaculars throughout the cosmopolitan formation. Once Sanskrit had become the language for the public literary expression of political will throughout much of southern Asia, it remained the only language used for that purpose. The vernacular was not prohibited from speaking in the inscriptional domain, but the permission was restricted. A typical inscription commences with a genealogy and praise-poem of the overlord who issues the document, followed by the details of the transaction the inscription is meant to record (the boundaries of the gifted land, the conditions of a temple endowment, and the like). When used at all vernacular language is restricted to the second or business portion of the grant, and thus to counting, measuring, and above all localizing. The literary function—whereby power constructed for itself its origins, grandeur, beauty, perdurance, and which can perhaps therefore be characterized as the function of interpreting the world and supplementing reality—was the work exclusively of Sanskrit poetry. The very contrast generated by this division of labor, a relation of superposition of unrelated languages that I have termed *hyperglossia*, serves to enhance the aestheticism in which one may locate Sanskrit's supreme attractions.

Related to the empirically observable division of labor in inscriptions is the discourse on literary language in the *alaṅkāra* tradition. From the seventh century on it became a commonplace of this tradition that *kāvya* was something that could be composed only in a highly restricted set of languages. Chief of these was of course Sanskrit; far behind both in theory and in actual literary production were Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa, two languages that under the influence of Sanskrit had been turned into cosmopolitan idioms, and which therefore could be and were used for literary composition anywhere in the Sanskrit cosmopolis.[5] *Kāvya* was not something made in the vernacular; thus a range of regional languages from Kannada to Marathi to Oriya were literarily silent.

As the turn to Sanskrit is taking place in the Indian subcontinent for the creation of inscriptions at once political, literary, and publicly displayed, precisely the same phenomenon makes its appearance in what are now the countries of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and with a simultaneity that is again striking. The first Sanskrit public poems appear in Khmer country, Champa, Java, and Kalimantan all at roughly the same time, the early fifth century at the latest, or not much more than a couple or three generations after their widespread appearance

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[5]The restriction on literary languages begins with Bhāmaha *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 1.16, 34–36. Only near the end of the cosmopolitan epoch do Sanskrit writers admit the possibility of producing *grāmya mahākāvya*, courtly epics in the "vulgar" language (cf. the twelfth-century *Kāvyānuśāsana* 8.6, p. 449). The linguistically "unlocalized" quality of Apabhraṃśa is noted by Shackle 1993, 266; cf. also Hardy 1994, 5.

in India itself. And they will continue to be produced in some places for centuries: the last dated Sanskrit inscription in Cambodia is around 1295, a little before the abandonment of Angkor.

Khmer country, in fact, from roughly 600–1300 provides a good example of the politics of literary culture noted above. Here the world of public poetry remained resolutely a world of Sanskrit. Inscriptions in Khmer, to be sure, are produced from virtually the same date as inscriptions in Sanskrit; in fact, nearly half of the extant inscriptions are solely in Khmer, while one-third are in Sanskrit alone, and a quarter utilize both languages. But one invariable feature of them all is the linguistic hyperglossia we find in India: Sanskrit, and never Khmer, makes expressive statements; Khmer (and rarely Sanskrit) makes constative statements. When the fame of the king is celebrated or his lineage or victories in battle proclaimed, the writer employs Sanskrit; when the slaves donated to a temple are enumerated, the catalogue is given in Khmer. Moreover, the two languages had a very unequal relationship with each other. Whereas Sanskrit is, linguistically, uninfluenced by Khmer—indeed, it retains an astonishing grammatical and orthographic regularity to the end of Angkor—Khmer is massively invaded by Sanskrit from the earliest period. For almost a thousand years—as the relationship between political inscription and literary literization mentioned above would lead us to expect—literate poetry in Cambodia is Sanskrit poetry, never Old Khmer; literate literary production in Khmer does not, in fact, seem to exist before the fifteenth century, or more than a century after Angkor is abandoned and the last representative of the Sanskrit cosmopolis in mainland Southeast Asia disappears (Khing 1990, 24–59). The character of Khmer language usage in texts that are preserved to us and the later historical development of Khmer literature together suggest that the latter could not come into existence, as a literized entity for expressive purposes, until Sanskrit literary culture waned.

The spread of political Sanskrit happens not only with extraordinary speed over vast space, but in a way that seems quite without parallel in world history. First, no organized political power such as the Roman imperium was involved. No colonization of South India or Southeast Asia can be shown to have occurred; there were no military conquests, and no demographically meaningful migrations. Nor were any ties of political subservience, of material dependency or exploitation ever established. Second, Sanskrit was not diffused by any single, unified, scripture-based religion impelled by religious revolution or new revelation, but by small numbers of literati who carried with them the very disparate, uncanonized texts of a wide variety of competing religious orders as well as texts of Sanskrit literature having no religious content whatever. Third, Sanskrit never functioned as a link language like other transregional codes such as Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, Chinese. In fact, nothing indicates that in this period Sanskrit was an everyday medium of communication anywhere, not in South let alone Southeast Asia, or even functioned as a chancery language for bureaucratic or administrative purposes.

What is created in the period that covers roughly the millennium between 200 or 300 and 1300 (when Angkor is abandoned) is a globalized cultural formation that seems anomalous in antiquity. It is characterized by a largely homogeneous political language of poetry in Sanskrit along with a range of comparable cultural-political practices (temple building, city planning, even geographical nomenclature); throughout it—to extend Oliver Wolters' words as they deserve to be, to the whole of this cosmopolitan world—elites in different realms shared "a broadly based communality of outlook" and could perceive "ubiquitous signs" of a common, a Sanskrit, culture (Wolters 1982, 43). But it is produced and sustained by none of the

forces that operate in the other translocal formations of antiquity; it is periphery without center, community without unity. One may well wonder what this globalized culture meant if none of the familiar material, governmental, or religious conditions of coherence pertained to it. What cultural work, for instance, was performed by the ubiquitous Sanskrit literary texts inscribed and displayed by ruling elites? Since they emerged from the very centers of authority throughout this world, it is natural to factor the political into any explanation, but it seems to be the political with an obscure, unfamiliar logic to it.

Even as we try grasp this logic, the predicament of theorizing the premodern from within a conceptual apparatus bequeathed by modernity looms before us. There has largely prevailed a single paradigm for understanding the social foundations of Sanskrit cosmopolitan culture, namely, legitimation theory and its logic of instrumental reason: Elites in command of new forms of social power deployed the mystifying symbols and codes of Sanskrit somehow to secure consent. But this functionalist explanation is not only anachronistic, but really is a mere assumption, and an intellectually mechanical, culturally homogenizing, and theoretically naive assumption at that.[6]

If we contemplate the Sanskrit ecumene at its height, from the middle to the last few centuries of the millennium, it appears to consist of a limited number of large-scale agrarian polities (and their smaller-scale imitators), "military-fiscal" states gathering tribute from large multiethnic populations, and defining their political aspirations as universalist. Although notoriously difficult to define in concrete terms, "empires"—the name usually given to the worlds of the Guptas, for example, or the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, or Angkor—seem to share certain systemic cultural features. One may even postulate an empire-system or empire-model of premodernity, a field as it were of the reproduction of empires and of the deployment of the empire form—in this like the system of nation-states of modernity, where the structure of the system itself produces a number of cultural effects (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 91)—with its own distinctive cultural repertory.

In this system imitation of an imperial form seems to be successively recreated, not only in South and Southeast Asia but elsewhere, both horizontally across space, perhaps through a process similar to what archaeologists call "peer polity interaction," and vertically in time through historical imagination. One could plot such a form, on both axes, among a range of embodiments: Achaemenid (and Sassanian, and Ghaznavid), Hellenic (and Byzantine), Roman (and Carolingian, and Ottonian), Kushan (and Gupta, and perhaps Angkor) (see also Duverger 1980, 21). In many of these cases, qualifying as empire, whether imperial governance was actually exercised or not, seems to have required a language of cosmopolitan character and transethnic attraction, transcending or arresting any ethnoidentity the ruling elites themselves might possess. It had to be a language capable of making the translocal claims—however imaginary these were—that defined the political imagination of this world. Moreover, it had to be a language whose power derived, not from sacral associations but from aesthetic capacities, its ability to make reality more real—more complex and more beautiful—as evinced by its literary idiom and style, and a literary history embodying successful exemplars of such linguistic alchemy. In the "Roma renovata" of Carolingian and Ottonian Europe this language was Latin, which, though in constant need of rehabilitation, was retained and reinforced as a crucial component in

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[6]The notion continues to shape work on state formation and culture in South and Southeast Asia, cf. e.g., Kulke 1993, and contrast Pollock 1996, 236ff.

the political and cultural-political understanding of polity. In West Asia from A.D. 1000 on, it was New Persian, whose first great literary production, the *Shahnāma*, sought to link the new political formations with an imagined Iranian imperial past, and along with other brilliant works of literary culture made it the language that ruling elites from Sistān to Delhi adopted perforce if they were to participate in "imperial" cultural politics, regardless of what they may have spoken in private. Similar in its cultural-political logic to Latin and Persian, as in its temporal and geographic spread, was Sanskrit.

More than just qualifying the polity for imperial status, however, Sanskrit mediated a set of complex aesthetic and moral values of imperial culture, while at the same time providing a code for the expression of key symbolic goods—the most important among these being fame—in a way no other language was apparently able (or permitted) to do. The source of such capabilities is to be located in the sophisticated and immensely influential Sanskrit disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, and metrics.

Imperial language typically presupposed the dignity and stability conferred by standardizing grammar. Only in a language constrained by such a grammar and therefore escaping the danger of degeneration could fame and distinction find enduring expression. But there is more to grammaticality than such quasi functionalism in the Sanskrit tradition, something deeper rooted. If the order of Sanskrit poetry was tied to the order of Sanskrit grammar, that order was itself a model or prototype of the moral, social, and political order. A just (*sādhu*) king was one who himself used and promoted the use of correct language (*sādhuśabda*). Not only was Sanskrit therefore the appropriate vehicle for the expression of royal will, but Sanskrit learning became a component of kingliness. This is demonstrated by the numerous overlords who—from our Rudradāman in south Gujarat in A.D. 150 to Sūryavarman II on Tonlé Sap a thousand years later—celebrated their Sanskrit learning, especially grammatical learning, in public poetry, and sought to confirm this learning by patronizing the production of almost every important grammatical work known to us.[7]

That the tradition of Sanskrit rhetoric and metrics was central to this whole process is evidenced by the inscriptional poetry itself. But the texts of these forms of knowledge also circulated as something like globalized cultural commodities, and were eventually to provide a general framework within which a number of vernacular poetries could themselves be theorized. Thus, for example, the late seventh-century rhetorical treatise of Daṇḍin, the "Mirror of Literature" (*Kāvyādarśa* [*KĀ*]), was studied and adapted during the period 900–1300 from Sri Lanka to Tamil country to Tibet. One could write an equally peripatetic account of metrical texts, such as Kedārabhaṭṭa's "Jewel Mine of Sanskrit Meters" (*Vṛttaratnākara*, ca. 1000). By way of its twelfth-century Pali translation *Vuttodaya*, it played a defining role in the creation of Thai poetry at the Ayutthaya court in the seventeenth century (Terwiel 1996). It is instances such as these that help us gauge the extraordinary importance that the instruments of Sanskrit cultural virtuosity possessed for intellectuals and their masters throughout Asia.

As a result of all this, Sanskrit literature in general (*kāvya*) and political poetry (*praśasti*) in particular possess a uniformity that gives a clear stylistic coherence to the cosmopolitan cultural form. For without denying some local coloring (though for

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[7]See Pollock 1996, 240 for references. Hartmut Scharfe was the first to perceive a pattern of royal patronage (1977, 187), but it is far denser than he knows and his examples are easily multiplied.

Angkor, for example, this has been exaggerated, cf. Wolters 1982, 91), to participate in the cosmopolitan order meant precisely to occlude local difference. The Sanskrit poet here—this is the insistent implication of the form, style, idiom, and even content of thousands of inscriptional as well as more strictly literary texts—participated both by theoretical training and literary practice in a transregional cultural sphere similar to that of his Latin (and, I would guess, Chinese) peers at the other ends of the ancient world.[8] It is this that makes it often virtually impossible to localize or date a work of Sanskrit literature—which, by my argument, is exactly what constituted one of its greatest attractions.

There is no doubt far greater complexity to the interactions of power and culture in the Sanskrit cosmopolis than I can capture in my brief account, or perhaps even know. Yet it is arguable that imperial-cultural associations and aesthetic style, especially as these shaped political vocabulary and culture, had at least as much to do with the making of the cosmopolitan dimension of this world and its attractions as persuasion, let alone misrecognition or mystification. Sanskrit gave voice to imperial politics not as an actual, material force but as an aesthetic practice, and it was especially this poetry of politics that gave presence to the Sanskrit cosmopolis.

At the ideational level, the Sanskrit cosmopolis found expression above all in certain representations of the space of cultural circulation. Two of these need to be introduced, given their role in the theory and practice of literary vernacularization: the epic space of political action, about which I will be very brief, and the spaces of literary style, which need some detail to make understandable.

Political Space in Cosmopolitan Vision

It is an insistent concern of a wide variety of *kāvya* and *praśasti* texts to project a meaningful supralocal space of political-cultural reference. The tenth-century poet Rājaśekhara, for example, court-poet to the kings of Tripura, was repeating a long-standing commonplace when describing his patrons as universal rulers "in the entire region from where the Gaṅgā empties into the eastern sea to where the Narmadā empties into the western, from the Tāmraparṇī in the south to the milk-ocean in the north" (*Viddhaśālabhañjikā* 4.21). So are the Kalachuri kings themselves when they repeat this in their epigraphs. The source, or at least most articulate forerunner, of this vision is in the *itihāsa* or "epic" *Mahābhārata*, where plotting the space of a large world, a zone within which its political action was held to be operative and meaningful, is a central project of the narrative (a pure example, thus, of a "chronotope," and with the chronotope's politics of space more clearly visible than Bakhtin himself understood, 1981, 84–258). This unmapped mapping, in a different but not unintelligible world of historical space, constitutes a number of the important narrative junctures in the text, from beginning to end. I describe several to give a sense of the practice.

> On his wanderings during his self-exile Arjuna charts a path from Indraprastha north to Gaṅgādvāra and into the eastern Himalayas, southeast to Naimiṣa, east to Kauśikī,

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[8]I stress literary practice; various Sanskrits were in use outside the domain of *kāvya*. But whereas traditional scholarship differentiated a wide variety of Prakrits divergent in phonology, morphology, and lexicon, no such distinctions (with the exception of *ārṣa* or archaic, Vedic) were perceived for Sanskrit in the post-Paninian period (cf., e.g., *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇālaṅkāra* 2.5ff.). The comparable world of early Latinity is well described by A. H. M. Jones 1964, 1008.

southeast to Gayā, and further to Vaṅga, south down the Kaliṅga, over to Gokarṇa on the west coast, north to Prabhāsa and Dvārakā, northeast to Puṣkara and thence back to Indraprastha (*MBh*. 1.200–10). Before his consecration as emperor Yudiṣṭhira sends out his brothers to conquer the four directions: Arjuna proceeds to the north (Ānarta, Kashmir, and Bactria); Bhīma to the east (Videha, Magadha, Aṅga, Vaṅga, Tāmralipi); Sahadeva to the south (Tripura, Potana, the lands of the Pāṇḍyas, Drāviḍas, Coladrakeralas, Andhras; Nakula to the west (Marubhūmi, Mālava, Pañcanada, as far as the land of the Pahlavas) (*MBh*. 2.23–29). After the war, when the Pāṇḍavas perform the Horse Sacrifice to affirm and confirm their universal dominion, the wanderings of the horse plot a map that runs from Trigarta to Prāgyotiṣa, Maṇipūra, Magadha, Vaṅga, Cedi, Kāśī, Kosala, Dravida, Andhra, Gokarṇa, Prabhāsa, Dvārakā, Pañcanada, and Gāndhāra (*MBh*. 15.73–85). Lastly, when they renounce their overlordship and begin their "Great Setting Forth," the Pāṇḍavas travel first to the Lauhityā river in the east, "by way of the northern [i.e., northeastern] coast of the ocean to the southwest quarter," then to Dvārakā and from there to Himavān, Vālukārṇava (the great "Ocean of Sand") and Mount Meru (*MBh*. 17), thus performing the last circumambulation of the world—the sort described and charted repeatedly before—for the control of which their family had been destroyed, and of which they fittingly take leave as they prepare to die.

Thus, from the opening chapters of the principal narrative, and at its key points—the royal consecration before the war, the reaffirmation of dominion after the war, the ritual death-march at the end of the story—the epic insists continually on concretely placing the action. It is the very fact of the existence of this spatial imagination in the *Mahābhārata* that interests me, not its precision (indeed, it is marked by uncertainty, confusion, and at times bizarre exoticism). There is a conceivable geosphere, the narrative suggests, where the epic's medium, the culture of Sanskrit, and its message, a kind of political power, have application.

The spatial imagination that is found in the Sanskrit epics achieves sharper and more concrete focus in the courtly literature that arises in the early centuries of the common era, as in the "conquest of the quarters" motif appearing in courtly epics. The most influential example, one studied as far as Khmer country, is that found in Kālidāsa's masterpiece, the "Dynasty of Raghu" (*Raghuvaṃśa* 4). Here, the reality effects, as it were, of the judicious choice of detail are quite apparent. The clearer image of the spatial domain both of power and, implicitly, of the poetry that fills this domain and gives voice to power no doubt has something to do with the fact that Kālidāsa borrowed from the Allahabad Pillar inscription of the Gupta king, Samudragupta (r. A.D. 335–76). It is not that there is something less literary, more documentary about the inscription than the poem (this would be so even if its author, one Hariṣeṇa, did not actually name it a *kāvya*, as he does) that somehow serves, as model, to render the account of Kālidāsa more historical or more "true." Rather, the point of juxtaposing inscription and text in their historical relatedness is simply to remind ourselves that the literary geography of power in Sanskrit culture sometimes achieved a kind of symmetry with the living aspirations of historical agents.

However this macrospace may be defined (and note that it did not always embrace the full cosmopolitan space as mapped by inscriptional and other cultural practices), and whatever may be the precise nature of the imperial dominion and form of culture it was imaginatively thought to comprise, it marks a wide range of epic and postepic texts. And it is against this macrospace that a range of vernacular spaces of culture and power were to be defined.

The Space of Sanskrit Literary Style

The Rājaśekhara who wrote of the universal sovereignty of the Tripura kings also wrote an allegorical account of the origin of literature, the story of the "Primal Being of Poetry," or "Poetry Man," Kāvyapuruṣa:

> Brahmā created a son for the Goddess of Speech, his mouth consisting of Sanskrit, his arm of Prakrit, his groin of Apabhraṃśa, his feet of Paiśāca, his chest of mixed language. Sāhityavidyā (Poetics Woman) was created to be his companion, and was told to follow Kāvyapuruṣa wherever he should go. They went first to the east, and as Sāhityavidyā tried to entice him Kāvyapuruṣa spoke to her in verses full of compounds, alliteration, and strings of etymologically complex words, which became known as the *gauḍa* Path (*rīti*). Next he went north to the country of Pañcāla, where he spoke in verses with partial compounds, alliteration, and metaphorical expressions, which became known as the *pāñcāla* Path. Eventually they reached the south where he spoke in verses with moderate alliteration, no compounds, and simple words, which became known as the *vaidarbha* Path.
>
> (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 4)

Rājaśekhara's allegory of literature, briefly summarized here, picks up several themes already noted, including the geocultural space present to the Sanskrit imagination and the restrictions on the possible codes in which the literary can be composed. I cite this passage, however, to introduce the question of the transregional geography of literary style. There was a prehistory to Rājaśekhara's account of *mārga/ rīti*—the "Way" or "Path" of literary culture—a somewhat confused and tangled history in its first manifestation, but reasonably straightforward in its development by the tenth century.

Mārga (the dominant and foundational term) carries two principal meanings. The first is that of a "way" others have gone before, and thus connotes a "custom" or "tradition" of writing. Like the Greek *odos* ("way"), *mārga* also comes to imply something of a method or a "following of a way" (*meth-odos*) in the creation of literature.[9] As a term in the Sanskrit literary-critical vocabulary it has a moment of primacy in the seventh to tenth centuries—the Kashmiri theoretician Vāmana announcing in the early ninth century that "the Path is to literature as the soul is [to the body]"—and though it was eventually to cede this position, it remains a crucial term in the theorization of both cosmopolitan and vernacular forms of writing. And although this may seem to be a narrow issue of philological inquiry given its formalist focus—for the Way concerns the language stuff of literature—we do well to bear in mind how seriously such questions were taken by intellectuals across the greater part of southern Asia for centuries.

As we see from the account of Rājaśekhara, the Way of Sanskrit literature is conceptualized as plural and regional: there is an "eastern" way (*gauḍa*, loosely, of Bengal), a "southern" way (*vaidarbha*, of Vidarbha), a northern way (*pāñcāla*, of Pañcāla, the north Gangetic plain), later a western way (*lāṭīya*, of Lāṭa or southern Gujarat), and still later others. What differentiates these nominally regionalized procedures of literature are certain qualities of language use (*guṇas*) at the level of phonology (e.g., phonemic texture), syntax (e.g., degree of nominalization), and

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[9]For the first connotation, cf., e.g., *Manu* 4.178; for the second, e.g. *SRK* 1729, 1733; Vākpatirāja (ca. A.D. 730), *Gaüḍavaho* 84–85.

lexicon (e.g., the relative prevalence of primary [*rūḍhi*] or derivative [*yoga*] words). Daṇḍin in the late seventh century defines *vaidarbha* as "endowed with all the qualities," whereas *gauḍa* is characterized by their inversion or absence (*viparyaya*).[10] The former thus shows a minimal degree of compounding and of complex lexical derivatives, the latter a maximal degree of both.

From the beginning the ontology of the Ways of writing is implicitly or explicitly queried, and the general understanding is that writers could freely adopt the one or the other. For Vāmana "the regional appellations mean only that these styles are found in [the poets of] those particular regions; the regions themselves contribute nothing." One could and should chose the *vaidarbha* style (*Kāvyālakārasūtra* 1.2.6–10; 14–18). Although his remarks (like much of his presentation) are more than a little confused— for they explain nothing about why regional styles should be found among the poets in given regions—there is no ambiguity that for him region was not destiny, as it was not, a few centuries later, for the critic Kuntaka:

> If differentiation of style were truly based on that of region, the former would be as numberless as the latter. Just because writing exhibits a certain *rīti* does not mean it can be classified as a regional custom, like cross-cousin marriage . . . Furthermore, it cannot be said to be a "natural" property in the same way that certain beautiful sounds, timbre, etc., are natural to the singing of a southerner.
>
> (*Vakroktijīvita* 1.24)

For most of Sanskrit history writers voluntarily could adopt one style or another. The eleventh-century poet Bilhaṇa, for example, another Kashmiri, tells of himself that he writes in *vaidarbha* ("a rain of nectar from a clear sky . . . guarantor of literary beauty—*vaidarbha* is granted to only the finest poets," *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* vs. 9). And, in fact, the freedom to choose from among regional styles grew into a requirement as the doctrine of the Ways was linked ever more closely to the discourse on literary emotions (*rasa*): As the affective state to be generated in a scene or passage varied, so would the Way. Thus for the ninth-century writer Rudraṭa, the *vaidarbha* and *pāñcāla* Paths are appropriate for the moods of "love," "pity," "fear," and "wonder"; the Ways themselves he classifies as *anubhāva* or the verbal reactions of a character in different emotional situations (Rudraṭa *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 15.20).

On the discursive plane what the category of the Ways most insistently communicates is in fact the very cosmopolitanism of Sanskrit literature. "Regional" differences are part of the repertory of a global Sanskrit, the sign precisely of Sanskrit's transregionality: They were local colorings that were produced translocally, and thus were an index of Sanskrit's pervasion of all local space. Eventually, as we will see, it is precisely this implicit sense of the Way of Sanskrit literature as a cosmopolitan (rather than truly regional) cultural form that would be made explicit by a new dichotomy central to vernacular poetries that arose in the late medieval period: Over against *mārga* or the global Way of well-traveled Sanskrit culture came to be constructed the *deśi* or Place, that which does not travel at all.

The Sanskrit cosmopolis, created in South and Southeast Asia in a more or less simultaneous historical process, possessed marked cultural similarities, such as the production of a code for political expression and of a literature where adherence to a

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[10]The evaluative judgment implicit here, and the very distinction, appear to have been resisted as early as Bhāmaha (*Kāvyālaṅkāra* 1.31ff.), though the eleventh-century Kannada writer Nāgavarman takes Bhāmaha to mean not that the north-south distinction is meaningless, but that the belief that the one is superior to the other is mistaken (*Kāvyāvalokanam*, *sūtra* 522).

sophisticated body of normative discourses on grammar, rhetoric, and metrics ensured a uniform character throughout the cosmopolitan formation. The monopolization of literary production in transregional codes was matched at the level of literary representation by the projection of a supralocal frame of political-cultural reference in epic and postepic narrative, and at the level of literary theory by a doctrine of modes of writing whose regionality connotes above all Sanskrit's transcendence of region. These are among the key components of literary culture that will be engaged in the vernacularization process.

Producing the Vernacular

Few local literary cultures of premodernity anywhere show quite the same self-consciousness and permit us to follow their development with the same precision as we can achieve in the case of Kannada, a language found in what is now the Indian state of Karnataka. I want briefly to sketch the history of Kannada in the inscriptional record, before going on to consider in more detail the intense and long-term negotiation between cosmopolitan and vernacular in Kannada literary production.

The status of Kannada in the domain of the publicly displayed inscribed texts offers a textbook case of the tendencies described above. The earliest known dynasty of northwestern Karnataka—the locus of what was to become the prestige literary dialect—the Kadambas (fourth century on), never used Kannada for public records. The Gaṅgas, the oldest attested dynasty in southwestern Karnataka (fourth to ninth centuries), did not use Kannada for the documentary portion of copper-plate grants until the time of Avinīta in the sixth century. We are able to follow the literary-cultural politics of Karnataka kingdoms more closely, however, with the Bādāmi Cālukyas, and especially with their successors, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. What we find among the latter, when we look at the matter statistically, is a slow but stunning decline in the production of Sanskrit public poetry commencing in the early ninth century. When the dynasty first begins issuing inscriptions starting around A.D. 750, Sanskrit is used in more than 80 percent of the extant records; by its end 200 years later, less than 5 percent are in Sanskrit (Gopal 1994, 429–65).

Besides the clear evidence of shifting language preference, all the early inscriptions in Kannada among the Bādāmi Cālukyas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas remain resolutely documentary. The first expressive or "workly" inscriptions in Kannada from within the royal court come to be produced only about the time of the reign of Krishna III (939, *EI* 19, 289), or nearly half a millennium after inscribed Kannada first appears (Halmidi ca. 450).

It is not many generations before Krishna III that evidence for textualized literary production in the language is first available, during the reign of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Nṛpatuṅga Amoghavarṣa (ca. 814–80). In terms of literary culture, this was a remarkable period and place in many respects, a site of what appears to be literary experimentation across languages. It was then, for example, that Jainas turn decisively to Sanskrit for the production of their great poetic histories (as in the *Ādipurāṇa* [A.D. 837] of Jinasena II, the spiritual preceptor of Nṛpatuṅga, or Asaga's *Vardhamānapurāṇa* [853], the first independent biography of Mahāvīra), and undertook their first grammatical analysis of Sanskrit in perhaps five centuries in the

Śabdānuśāsana of Śākaṭāyana.[11] Here, too, a little later an important new current in Apabhraṃśa, as we have seen the third cosmopolitan literary language along with Sanskrit and Prakrit, finds expression in the work of Puṣpadanta (fl. 950), who was probably the first to write a Jaina universal history in the language.[12] But the historically crucial innovation in literary culture concerns Kannada.

No doubt attempts to produce literary texts in Kannada preceded the period of Nṛpatuṅga. In the territorial imagination of Kannada literary culture throughout the medieval period, the "heartland of Kannada" ("the very zone (*nāḍu-e*) between Kisuvolal [Pattadakal], the renowned city of Kopana [Koppal], Puligere [Lakshmeshvar], and Omkunda [Okkunda in the Belgaum District] . . . is where the very essence [*tiruḷ*] of Kannada [is found]" [*KRM* 1.38]), in other words, the royally sanctioned prestige dialect, is placed not in northeast Karnataka where Govinda II and his son Nṛpatuṅga built their capital, but 250 km to the southwest, in the core region of the predecessor dynasty of the Cālukyas.[13] Yet even if this were because of the presence of a new Kannada literature in Bādāmi and Aihoḷe, this would take us back only a few generations—which, in fact, is about as far as the literary-historical memory of Kannada poets themselves reaches, as this is embedded in introductory *kavipraśaṃsās* (the earliest authors mentioned are Asaga and Guṇavarma of the early ninth century). The first extant text in Kannada describes how difficult a task it is for the author to identify literary models for the prescriptive project before him: he is forced to "hunt for scraps" of Kannada literature like a mendicant:

> Both Sanskrit and Prakrit are available according to one's wish (*bagedante*) for composing literature with refinement (*samari̠*), for to be sure there are already available both literary models and rules (*lakṣya, lakṣaṇa*) in great abundance for each of the two. But the discourse I present here [requires] begging scraps (*irikoṟegoṇḍu*) [sc., of Kannada literature] to make it intelligible. It is thus difficult for anyone to do in the case of Kannada the way the ancient teachers [of Sanskrit and Prakrit did].
>
> (*KRM* 1.41–42)

Kannada literature (in the sense I have been using the term throughout) was a recent invention, of perhaps the eighth century, and it is precisely the fact of its novelty in the face of Sanskrit that prompted the writer of this text to puzzle through, in a most detailed and subtle way, the complex dialectic between the local and global in medieval literary culture. This singular work in the history of literary vernacularization is the *Kavirājamārga* (ca. 875), "The Way of the King of Poets," a text to place beside Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (1307)—or, rather, before it; it may in fact be the first work in world culture to constitute a vernacular poetics in direct confrontation with a cosmopolitan language.[14] There are considerable cultural-

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[11]He styles himself Abhinavaśarvavaram in recognition of the earlier model (Śarvavarma's *Kātantra*), and names the autocommentary on his grammar *Amoghavṛtti* after his patron (mentioned in 4.3.208). The Jaina turn to Sanskrit for *kāvya*—and Jinasena II clearly regards his *Ādipurāṇa* as such—needs study, especially the early works of Raviṣena (678) and Jinasena I (783). For a general account, see Dundas 1996.

[12]Literary production in Prakrit has been thought oddly absent (cf. already Altekar 1960a, 412), but as noted above it had become a residual or even archaic cultural feature, as inscriptional discourse from the mid-fourth century on demonstrates.

[13]See *KRM* 1.37; Pampa *VAV* 14.45. Cf. Chidananda Murti 1978, 256.

[14]The Tamil *Tolkāppiyam* is no doubt earlier (its dating is much disputed; for one sober assessment see Swamy 1975), but the dichotomy operative there is not cosmopolitan/local but standard/nonstandard, *centamil* [*koṭuntamil*] (Zvelebil 1992, 134–36).

historical parallels between these works, but also some signal differences. At the micro level, unlike the *Eloquentia*, the *KRM* aims to produce not a unified language for the polity from among competing dialects, but a language qualified for literature. At the macro level, the *KRM* has a less transparent relationship than Dante's work to political theory and practice, but its social location and authorship are clear and important. It was written at the court of Nṛpatuṅga and under his guidance: the "Way of the King of Poets" is the Way of Nṛpatuṅga himself.[15]

Despite the importance of *KRM* for the cultural-political history of middle-period India, there exists no critical analysis or even descriptive account of the work in any language other than Kannada. Even Kannada-language scholarship has not always appreciated its larger historical significance. While Kannada in general is unjustly ignored everywhere in South Asian research, Old Kannada (*Haḷagannaḍa*), the language of this and all literature of the region before the Vīraśaiva cultural revolution at the end of the twelfth century, is understudied even in Karnataka—in large part because it is hardly accessible without knowledge of Sanskrit. This paradoxical fact, like the text's relationship to the tradition of Sanskrit poetics, especially Daṇḍin's "Mirror of Literature," are two important indicators of what vernacular intellectuals writing in Kannada were trying to do. We have seen that the circulation of texts on Sanskrit poetics was both a factor and a sign of the creation of the Sanskrit cosmopolis in Asia, and at the same time provided a framework within which local poetries could be conceptualized (in Siam, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and so on). The same process took place in the subcontinent itself, first and nowhere more profoundly than in Kannada country.

Making the Global Local: the *Kavirājamārga* and the Ways of Literature

The *KRM* fully recapitulates the structure of Daṇḍin's "Mirror" and in some important ways even functions as our oldest commentary on the text. It first defines literature, describes linguistic features that mar it (*doṣas*) and make it beautiful (*guṇas*) (chap. 1), and then catalogues figures of sound (chap. 2) and sense (chap. 3). In addition to similarity in structure, perhaps two hundred of the illustrative verses are closely adapted from Sanskrit antecedents. But the work is not a translation of the Sanskrit, as often assumed. Not only does "translation" as usually understood make no cultural sense for this world where literacy in Kannada presupposed literacy in Sanskrit, but the work has a quite different agenda from its Sanskrit model. What we are being offered in the *KRM* is an experiment in the localization of a universalistic Sanskrit poetics and an analysis of Kannada literary identity. Conversely, however, it has something of interest to reveal about the creation of this poetics, and about the real dynamics of local-global exchange. I want to illustrate both features by an analysis of something that has long confused students of the *KRM*: its appropriation of the Sanskrit discourse on the Way of literature.

The *KRM* first introduces the category *mārga* in its broader connotation, literary method, something coded in the very name of the work, *Kavirājamārga*, "The Way of the King of Poetry." "Way" becomes a covering term for "good literature," as such (contrasting with "corrupt" poetry, *duṣya*, 2.7–8, so Jinasena, *Ādipurāṇa* 1.31; 208–

[15]*KRM* 1.44, 147, etc. The actual redactor of the work was a poet named Śrīvijaya.

9); "literature of the Way" is the supreme use of language, in all its formal and aesthetic complexity:

> The man who understands language can communicate with others, disclosing his thoughts as he intended. Wiser than he is the man who can communicate large meaning in brief compass, and wiser still the man who knows how to make his words unite with meter. More learned than all is the man who can produce works of the great Way (*mahādhvakṛtigaḷ*).
>
> (*KRM* 1.15–16)

This is a perfectly intelligible usage. What has been found puzzling is the *KRM*'s next move of adopting the notion of the regional Ways—whereby Sanskrit demonstrated its pervasion of all literary space—for a differentiation of Kannada poetry itself.

> It is impossible fully to comprehend the procedures of the Way and reach a conclusion about the multiplicity of their options. Having considered the rules on words of the earlier *śāstras*, I will say a little with respect to Kannada so that the matter in general may be clear . . . Poets arise in a world without beginning and thus are infinite in number, their individualized expressions are of infinite kinds, and so the Way exists in infinite variety . . . But to the best of my ability I will discuss briefly the distinction—their differences perceived by the old [Sanskrit] writers who considered the matter—between the two excellent Ways, the northern and the southern, in the manner I understand it . . . Of these two the southern Way has ten varieties, according to the [ten language features, *guṇas*] . . .The northern Way has varieties differentiated by the presence of the inverse of these features.
>
> (*KRM* 2.46, 49–51, 54–55)

This is followed by exhaustive inventory and illustration of all the language qualities taken over from the Sanskrit tradition, which the author concludes is foundational to Kannada poetics: "Whatever the words employed in a poem they will enhance the virtues of Kannada if made subject to the different usages associated with the Ways described above" (2.101). The *KRM*, in short, appears to have completely grafted the discourse that makes Sanskrit cosmopolitan—the universal repertory of styles—onto the local world of Kannada.

Modern Kannada scholars have found this entire inquiry (of which there is a reprise in the second important medieval text on Kannada poetics, the *Kāvyāvalokanam* of Nāgarvarma ca. 1040, at the court of Jayasimha II of the Kalyāṇi Cālukyas to be not only irrelevant to actual Kannada poetry, but incoherent. No advance whatever has been made over R. Narasimhachar's impatient dismissal of the whole question: "Northern" and "southern" in Kannada poetics refer merely to the "schools or styles in Sanskrit," we are told, for there is no evidence that anything comparable existed in Kannada (1934, 121–22). Such a judgment of course explains nothing of what the *KRM* intends by using the discourse on the Way for its analysis of Kannada literature, yet there does seem to be every reason to interpret it as alien and even meaningless to a local literary culture. Designed to reaffirm the real transregionality of Sanskrit literature precisely by identifying quasi-regional varieties the *mārgas* appear to be incongruously if not ludicrously pasted onto a real regional world of Kannada. The category captures nothing whatever in the local character of the literature and fits only to the degree this literature mimics Sanskrit.

The *KRM* is a text emerging from the very center of one of the most powerful political formations in middle-period India (cf. Inden 1990, 228ff.), and this fact, if

no general principle of hermeneutic charity, should invite us to ponder seriously what it means by using the talk of cosmopolitan Sanskrit to represent a vernacular-language poetics. Metadiscursively one might argue that, faced with exclusion from the transregionality of Sanskrit and refusing to be caught in the brackets of the local, the *KRM* seeks to remap the cosmopolitan Way onto the local world of Karnataka. There must therefore be a northern and a southern style of Kannada poetry itself—the Kannaḍa Nāḍu must be shown to embrace a north and a south, to constitute a regional world—whether or not such a division corresponds to any really existing poetries.[16] If Kannada is to participate in the world of the literary (*kāvya*), a world defined by Sanskrit, it must show its characteristic features. In a word, the local must evince its translocal capacities.

An account of this sort may capture something of the cultural-political impulse at work in the *KRM*, and other evidence I look at below seems to corroborate it. But there is another and more significant, if somewhat more complicated, rationale underpinning it. We begin to grasp this when we consider how the *KRM* differs from and supplements its Sanskrit models. First, it renames the Ways as "north" and "south" (the categories *gauḍa* and *vaidarbha* being of course impossible for Kannada), and thereby moderates the narrowly spatial implications of the taxonomy.[17] More important is the distinction—which from the vantage point of standard Sanskrit poetics seems odd enough to constitute a category error—that the *KRM* introduces in distinguishing the Ways according to the two main divisions of Sanskrit rhetorical practice, indirect and direct ("natural") expression (*vakrokti* and *svabhāvokti*):

> Two Ways accordingly came into prominence, and with them two different forms of expression, the indirect (*vakra*) and the direct (*svabhāva*). Direct expression is an invariable characteristic of the southern Way. Indirect expression, of many varieties, is found in the celebrated northern Way.
>
> (2.52–53)

For the Sanskrit tradition, as we have seen, the Ways are differentiated by the presence or "inversion" or absence of certain language features (*guṇas*) at the level of phonology, syntax, and lexicon. Yet here another dichotomy is introduced that, though largely unspoken in that tradition, finally helps make the whole thing intelligible: Southern poetry is devoid of tropes and thus makes prominent the language of literary expression itself, whereas northern poetry relies more on figures of speech (the "many varieties" referred to above). Although there appears to be a faint awareness of this fundamental distinction earlier than the *KRM*, we find it clearly

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[16]The differentiation, it should be noted, reflects no dialect division between north and south in Old Kannada. Gaṅga poets in the south and Cāḷukya poets in the north used a homogenized literary idiom, producing and reproduced by the philological work discussed below. (The *Kannada Nighaṇṭu*, s.v. *uttaramārga*, therefore is mistaken to gloss "*uttarakan-naḍa*.")

[17]"North" and "south" are used preferentially by Daṇḍin's tenth-century commentator, Ratnaśrījñāna (so, occasionally, by Daṇḍin himself, *KĀ* 1.60, 80, 83). Ratna composed his commentary somewhere in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa world, his patron being one Sarvābhyunnatarāṣṭrakūṭatilaka named Śrīmattuṅganarādhipa. And it appears that the two other extant commentators on Daṇḍin worked in the Karnataka region (if the one, Vādijaṅghāla is the Vādighaṅghaḷa Bhaṭṭa mentioned in a tenth-century Gaṅga grant [*Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Dept.*, 1921] as *niravadyasāhityavidyāvyākhyānanipuṇa* (l. 168); and if the other is the Taruṇavācaspati who worked at the twelfth-century Hoysala court). Evidently it was a text that spoke to southern intellectuals with special forcefulness.

articulated only in a somewhat later work, the *Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* of King Bhoja (first quarter of the eleventh century): "There are three sources of beauty in poetry: Indirect expression (*vakrokti*), direct expression (*svabhāvokti*), and expression of emotion (*rasokti*). Indirect expression is when prominence is given to figures of speech, simile and the like; direct expression, when it is given to language features (*guṇas*)" (678).[18] How deviant from the Sanskrit tradition this correlation—of *guṇas* and thus *vaidarbha* style with *svabhāvokti*, and *vakrokti* with *gauḍa*—is thought to be appears from the words of Bhoja's editor, who found it altogether unintelligible (Raghavan 1963, 136–37; it is in fact unknown to Indological scholarship). In the light of *KRM* it becomes clear.

The logic of argument both in *KRM* and of the examples it adduces[19] produces a geography of Kannada styles that, stripped to its essentials, comprises a real dichotomy of practices for vernacular writers: (*a*) "southern" Kannada literature is that which focalizes language itself (literature as "speech-directed speech"), and accordingly employs figuratively unadorned description (the primary meaning of *svabhāvokti*), whereas "northern" Kannada literature focalizes rhetoric (*vakrokti*); (*b*) among the most distinctive linguistic features listed among the *guṇas* is degree of nominalization: "southern" Kannada literature is uncompounded; "northern" Kannada poetry is the reverse;[20] (*c*) "southern" Kannada literature is marked by the prevalence of local (*dēsi*) words (the analog of primary lexemes); northern poetry by the prevalence of unmodified Sanskrit loans (*samasamskṛta* [*tatsama* in other traditions], the analog of derivative lexemes).

The northern and southern types of Kannada literature thus prefigure what were eventually to be named literature of the Way and literature of the Place, *mārga* and *dēsi*. Far from analyzing Kannada against an irrelevant set of categories, the *KRM* is identifying the two modes of writing that constitute the fundamental identity choices for Kannada, and in fact for all South Asian regional literatures. But there is an additional and telling irony in the dialectic of cosmopolitan and vernacular: For the source of this organizing taxonomy of Sanskrit poetry would appear to lie not in anything to do with the nature of Sanskrit poetry as such, but rather in underlying inclinations of southern poets—such as Kannada poets like those at Nṛpatuṅga's court or Tamil-born poets like Daṇḍin himself—to write Sanskrit in conformity with the sensibilities of the southern languages that are finally made visible by the production of poetry and poetic theory in the vernacular.[21] In the process of full vernacularization

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[18]Bhāmaha regards *gauḍa* as *alaṅkāravad*, and *vaidarbha* as *avakrokti* as well as *prasanna*, *komala*, etc., i.e., endowed with *guṇas*, but he never elaborates (*Kāvyālaṅkara* 1.34–35), nor does Daṇḍin despite his explicit dichotomy (*KĀ* 2.360). Vāmana illustrates *vaidarbha* with *Śākuntala* 2.6, perfect *svabhāvokti*, and *gauḍa* with *Mahāvīracarita* 1.54, perfect *vakrokti*, but otherwise gives no hint that he understood the principles in play.

[19]Thus *KRM* vss 2.60 and 62 can be distinguished on the basis of *svabhāvokti* (southern) and *vakrokti* (northern, the *śleṣa ku*[-]*valayam* and other figures), as can the two halves of 2.110 (the first without trope, the second with metaphor compound). By contrast, in 2.109, the operative distinction is the play of *guṇas* in the first half of the verse indicating southern style, as opposed to the northern style, which shows nothing comparable.

[20]The status of *ojas* was ambiguous already to Daṇḍin, who while listing it as a quality of *vaidarbha* style makes it clear that it is a peculiar feature of northern poetry (1.80), of which southerners make only moderate (*anākulam*) use (83). Vāmana eliminated it as a quality of "pure" southern style (1.2.19), whereas for Bhoja *vaidarbha* is "wholly uncompounded" and *gauḍa* "compounded to the fullest extent possible" (*ŚP* 580).

[21]For Ratna *svabhāvokti* is "expression natural" to southern poets: "The *vaidarbha* Way—which consists of beauty-factors relating to words themselves [as words], i.e., the ten *guṇas*—is natural to southern poets (*dākṣiṇātyānāṃ svābhāvikaḥ*), whereas the 'eastern' course of poetry

that was engaged in ninth- and tenth-century Karnataka, the styles that southern writers had already theorized for Sanskrit were naturally retheorized as components of Kannada, of which noncompounding, initial alliteration [*prāsa*], direct description, and the like are real components, as any passage of Old Kannada poetry will testify.

The larger principle to extract from this apparently narrow case concerns the mutually constitutive interaction of the local and the global: As the cosmopolitan is constituted through cultural flows from the vernacular, so the vernacular constructs itself by appropriation from the cosmopolitan—a process that sometimes, as here, amounts to unwitting reappropriation.[22]

Philologization and the Production of Difference

The *KRM* has other cultural-political aims, which variously nuance the project of creating a cosmopolitan idiom while at the same time identifying Kannada difference. Kannada could not achieve its new rank unless it possessed both the epistemological status of Sanskrit and the dignity of its philological apparatus (i.e., *lakṣaṇagranthas* or rule-setting texts). The *KRM* achieves the former by the very fact of engaging in a discourse on Kannada at all, and the latter by the explicit analysis of literary-language norms with which the greater part of the work is concerned. The text itself is moreover a performance of its argument, for it constitutes Kannada as a language of science in the act of establishing Kannada as a language of literature (by contrast, the *Eloquentia* can only make its scholarly argument for the *volgare illustre* in Latin).

The precociously early philologization we find in the *KRM* will continue uninterruptedly for another four centuries. Dictionaries are found from the end of the tenth century. A number of these, like the first, that of the poet Ranna (ca. 990, fragmentarily preserved) are Kannada-Sanskrit, and glossing as they often do simple Kannada words with Sanskrit equivalents are aimed less at enhancing communication than achieving language parity (cf. Nagaraj 1996, 223ff.). From the same period we find the first in a long series of sophisticated analysis of Kannada metrics, the *Chandombudhi* or "Sea of Meters" of Nāgavarman I. Along with an elaborate domestication of the complex quantitative-syllabic metric of Sanskrit, this provides an account of the ten "native" meters, *karnātaviṣayabhāṣājāti*, "indigenous [meters] of the language of the Kannada world" (5. 1). The grammatical tradition begins with the *Karṇāṭakabhāṣābhūṣaṇa* or "Ornament of the Kannada Language," composed in Sanskrit *sūtras* by Nāgavarmam II (at the Kalyāni court in northeastern Karnataka around 1040), and culminates in one of the most important grammars of precolonial India, the *Śabdamaṇidarpaṇa* of Keśirāja (at the Hoysala court, 1260). This extraordinary work, which like the *KRM* remains virtually unread outside of Kannada-language scholarship, would have to occupy a central place in any serious account of the processes of vernacular language unification and standardization before modernity.

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takes note of semantic figures of speech and grandiloquence" (ad 1. 50). Accordingly, he sees the different Ways as "inborn," "native," "specific" (*tajja, sahaja, nija*) to the poets of the particular regions just like their regional language (on 1.40, p. 28).

[22]Compare the intertextual linkages that show the fifteenth-century Telugu poet Potana to be reappropriating and localizing in his *campū Bhāgavatamu* a Sanskrit courtly *purāṇa*, the tenth-century *Bhāgavatam*, which itself appropriated (as Potana was probably unaware) the songs of the Tamil Ālvars (seventh–ninth centuries). Cf. Shulman 1993.

Suffice it to say here that in the *ŚMD*, too, from the first verse to the last, Kannada difference is theorized within a Sanskrit cultural episteme; it is constructed as an object of study from the perspective of a Sanskrit that defined what language, especially literary language, is supposed to be.[23]

Every feature of the literary in Kannada, for its first half-millennium of life, seems to be marked by the kinds of negotiations of difference and calculations of vernacular-cosmopolitan predominance that we find in the *KRM*. This text defines virtually the whole range of literary themes that will be meditated over for the next four or five centuries, everything from the large questions of genre (*KRM* 1.33ff.) and the construction, if prematurely, of a canon of Kannada prose and verse poetry juxtaposed to and complementing that of Sanskrit (*KRM* 1.28–32), to the structure of compounds and the microanalysis of which Sanskrit and Kannada may and may not be joined in compound (e.g., *KRM* 1.51ff.). Such negotiations are not just theoretical, either. They inform the literary procedures of the poets themselves over a whole range of texts whose very titles—beginning with the earliest, the *Karṇāṭa Kumārasaṃbhava* (attributed to Asaga, A.D. 853)—bespeak the localization of the Sanskrit global, and suggest that a big part of what early Kannada literature is about is the very possibility of making literature in Kannada.

Vernacular Political Space

No text makes all this more explicit than the first literary work extant in Kannada, Pampa's *Vikramārjunavijaya* (*VAV*, ca. 950). Pampa was the court poet of Arikesari II, a Cālukya overlord in what is now western Andhra (Vemulavāda) who held actual power in the last decades of Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule. The *Vikramārjunavijaya*, conceived of as the first "complete" vernacular version of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, was solicited by the courtly literati and paid for by the king himself: "The learned felt that no great poet in the past had properly [re-]composed the *Complete Bhārata*—an unprecedented thing—without damaging the body of the tale and retaining its magnitude . . . and that this was something only Pampa could do. And so they gathered together and besought [me]; I [therefore] undertake to compose this work . . . Arikesari himself sent a messenger and gave [me] much wealth to have his fame established in the world, and in this fashion had [me] compose a historical narrative [*itihāsakathā*]."[24] The negotiation of cultural difference mentioned above is undoubtedly one of the work's main preoccupations, and is signaled at its very commencement: "A work of literature becomes beautiful if its imagination is new . . . if it enters into the poetry of Place (*dêsiyoḷ puguvudu*), and having done so, penetrates into the poetry of the Way (*mārgadoḷ taḷvudu*)" (*VAV* 1.8). But Pampa has additional purposes in mind, which come into clear relief only once we recall something about the model he sought to overcome.

As my brief remarks above tried to suggest, one of the things the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* is about is the production or organization of space and of a political

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[23]The last verse in fact frames nine points of Kannada difference ("the uniqueness of Kannada," *aridu . . . kannaḍan*) over against Sanskrit, in terms of phonology, *sandhi*, compounding, prosody, etc. (*Śabdamaṇidarpaṇa* 342).

[24]*VAV* 1.11; 14.51. In fact, Peruntevanar's (fragmentary?) Tamil adaptation, the *Pārat-venpā*, is about a century earlier (at the court of Nandivārman III Pallava, r. ca. 830–52).

vision that encompasses this space. As we saw, the heroes' travels in their exile, their conquest of the quarters prior to the declaration of universal sovereignty, the levying of troops for war when that sovereignty is challenged, the wanderings of the ritual horse whose compass marks the extent of their reacquisition of imperial status and whose ritual slaughter marks its confirmation, and the final funereal circuit before their deaths—when they renounce the world of political power in despair at the slaughter they engaged in to win it—reinforce the image of a vast yet bounded, if so hazily bounded culture-sphere of political reference, extending from Nepal to Assam (or the places now so called) to the southern peninsula, and thence to Sind, Qandahar, Kashmir. It is this epic space, and the politics that fill it, that Pampa seeks to redefine in his vernacularized version.

Pampa often refers to his work as the *samasta-bhārata*, where *samasta* has two important meanings: the author attempts to reproduce, as noted, the "whole" of the main story of the Sanskrit poem. But also he wants his epic to be seen as a "composite" narrative. That is, it explicitly identifies the poem's patron, his family, overlord, enemies, and his region with the heroes, allies, antagonists, and world of the Sanskrit epic. To be sure, the poet is not a simple allegorist, and his touch is light. But his directions to readers are clear enough (he is explicit about the identifications in 1.51), and the story of Cālukya political fortunes, as Arikesari assumes the mantle of primary vassal (*sāmanta*) amid the fraying structure of Rāṣṭrakūṭa power, is pushed through the veil of the myth-epic at critical points in the narrative. A good example of the double narrative is provided in the very center of the poem. When the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in anticipation of battle begin to describe the great deeds of their enemy, the epic hero Arjuna—the hero's pride in fighting with great god Śiva and acquiring magic weapons, the valor he showed in defeating demons, the grandeur of his sharing the throne of Indra, king of gods—at this very point, where "Indra" king of gods could just as well stand for Indra III Rāṣṭrakūṭa, Arikesari's maternal uncle (and "gods" could mean "kings"), the discourse glides seamlessly into a description of the poet's royal patron:

> The majesty of this Sea of Virtues . . . who held his ground, shielding and saving King Vijayāditya, Forehead Ornament of the Cālukya family, when Govindarāja [IV Rāṣṭrakūṭa] raged against him; . . . who attacked and conquered again the vassals who came in battalions on the order of the supreme Emperor Gojjega [Govindarāja] . . . and restored imperial power [*sakalasāmrājya*-] to King Baddega [= Amoghavarṣa III]—who had come to him trusting in him . . .
>
> (*VAV* 9.51 +)

Arikesari defeats the usurping Govindarāja and restores to power the rightful ruler, but in doing so constitutes himself as paramount overlord in the Deccan in the middle of the tenth century.

It is not the details of the historical case that draw attention, but rather the form of cultural communication Pampa has invented to present them. He has refashioned in the vernacular a Sanskrit epic discourse on the political and thereby revisioned the transregional political order for another and very different kind of world. And, accordingly, exactly like the poem's political discourse, its geographical imagination is adjusted to the primary narrative project. The "City of the Elephant," Hāstinapura, which is home to the Bharata clan in the Sanskrit epic, becomes Vemulavāda, the Cālukyan capital. The grand "circumambulation of the quarters" of the subcontinent that repeatedly organizes the action of the epic becomes a circuit of the central Deccan. Even the list of rivers from which the waters are collected for the hero's coronation

ritual at the end of the work includes a stream in the Kannada heartland of Banavāsi (*VAV* 1.51ff. with Narasimhachar's note ad loc.; 4.26ff; 14.31). In a word, what Pampa has done is shrink the continent of the Bhāratas (*bhāratavarṣa*) to a Kannada regional world, narrow the vision of political power to the space in which it actually worked, and endow this with comprehensible points of reference, narrative sense, and literary status. It is now the *kannadada nāḍu* of the *KRM*—"Between the Kaveri and Godavari rivers is that region in Kannaḍa (*nāḍaḍā kannaḍadoḷ*) [= the country also called Karnataka], a well-known people/region (*janapada*), an illustrious outstanding realm [*viṣaya*] within the circle of the earth" (*KRM* 1.36)—that becomes the all-important political and aesthetic framework. And it is for the moral and political instruction of this community that Pampa has written his *Bhārata*: "Having properly [re-]composed the celebrated work of Vyāsamuni . . . an expansive poem of Place, is it any wonder that [Pampa,] the Sea of Poetic Virtues, has become the teacher of the Nāḍu?" (14.62).

It is by such an array of texts and practices—the *KRM*'s asserting at once the regionality and supraregionality of Kannada, and its literary value, by retrofitting a Sanskrit taxonomy; Pampa's localization of an epic space and political vision to the world of Kannadanāḍu, and the range of other cultural practices I have examined— that the form of cultural communication I want to call the cosmopolitan vernacular comes to be produced. But if the *KRM*, the *Pampa Bhārata*, and other texts can give us a vivid sense of the discursive and literary strategies by which such a high-culture vernacular is produced, how can we make sense of the time and the place of this transformation? Why is it that vernacular intellectuals starting in the ninth to tenth centuries, from within the centers of power of dominant polities (Rāṣṭrakūṭa, Cālukya, Hoysala), turn to Kannada for literary and political communication? What is their interest then and there in constituting their language as a new epistemological object, an object of normative discourse, a vehicle for courtly expression? What is their interest in renouncing what was not only potentially but actually the translocal, near-global audience of Sanskrit and, for the first time, speaking locally?

Explaining Vernacularization

Similar processes to what we have found in the creation of a Kannada literary culture may be observed all over the Sanskrit ecumene from the beginning of the second millennium, from Assam, Andhra, and Orissa to Sri Lanka and Java, and from Kerala, Maharashtra, and Gujarat to Tibet. Vernacular writers transformed the inscriptional record, so that the expression of political will would henceforth take place in the vernacular; this happens most spectacularly in Tamil under the imperial Cōḷas, but can also be seen, nascently, in Marathi, Oriya, Telugu. They appropriated a Sanskrit aesthetic and a range of its literary models into their languages for both political and imaginative expression; Daṇḍin, for example, is reworked in Sinhala in the tenth century, Tamil in the twelfth, Tibetan in the thirteenth. They developed new notions of geocultural frameworks for their literary narrative representations, the same as those in which their texts would circulate. It was typically by way of a localization of the Sanskrit epics—often with the double-narrative that we find in Pampa—that all these goals were simultaneously achieved in a primal moment of vernacularization. Witness in this connection such Javanese texts the *Rāmāyaṇa* of the tenth century (representative of a genre where double-narrative is fundamental, cf.

Robson 1983) and the prose *Mahābhārata*; Nannaya's Telugu version of the *Mahābhārata* at the court of the Veṅgi Cālukyas in the mid-eleventh; Mādhava Kandalī's Assamese *Rāmāyaṇa*, composed at the request of the Barāhi king Mahāmāṇikya in the mid-fourteenth; Viṣṇudāsa's Braj *Mahābhārata* (*Pāṇḍavacarita*) and *Rāmāyaṇakathā* written at the court of the Gwalior Tomars in the mid-fifteenth century; the Oriya versions of the epics and *Bhāgavata* from the Gajapati court in the later fifteenth century. This vast transformation in the way people imagined and wrote their new regional worlds presents a complex of problems for historical analysis and cultural theory. We are nowhere near to unraveling any of these for any part of the newly vernacularized world, let alone constructing a unified theory of vernacularization. But I think we can identify some conceptual dead ends and some other avenues worth following, and formulate a few larger principles that South Asia vernacularization suggests.

In two recent essays a leading political and cultural theorist of South Asia, Sudipta Kaviraj, considers some central issues of writing and being on the eve of British colonialism (Kaviraj 1992a, 1992b). His reflections are invaluable for their insistence on the historicity and therefore variability of representations of community, ethnicity, identity, and their territorial localizations; even more so for their recognizing and charting the long-term trend to "incommunication" in South Asia, that is, the processes by which the multilingual capacities and enthusiasms of speakers and writers were eroded by the monolingualization effected by modernity. But at the same time a number of received views about the vernacularization of this world are reproduced that have gone uncontested too long. Like every other scholar who has written on the issue, Kaviraj ties the "gradual separation of [the] emerging literatures [of the vernacular languages] from the high Sanskrit tradition" to "religious developments," indeed, religious developments hostile to that tradition, against which the vernacular literatures make an "undeclared revolution." "The origin of vernacular languages appears to be intimately linked to an internal conceptual rebellion within classical Brahminical Hinduism."[25]

In fact, there is precious little evidence to support these generalizations, universally accepted though they are. There is of course no denying that some relationship may be found between language choice and religious practice in South Asian history; the resistance to redacting the Buddha's words in Sanskrit and the preference of Jainas for eastern Prakrit for their scriptures are familiar instances from an early period. But by the beginning of the second millennium this relationship is much etiolated. Sanskrit had long ceased to be a brahmanical preserve, just as brahmans had long taken to expressing themselves literarily in languages other than Sanskrit, such as Apabhraṃśa or indeed Kannada. The religious determinant in language choice in general has been vastly overdrawn for premodern South Asia; in the particular case of the so-called rebellion in religious consciousness termed devotionalism (*bhakti*), nothing suggests it can be isolated as a significant let alone primary dynamic in the history of South Asian vernacularization. Some northern Indian vernaculars came first to be employed for written literature altogether outside the brahmanical tradition: Hinduī in the west, for example, by Mas'ūd Sa'd Salman in Lahore ca. 1100, Avadhī in the east by Maulānā Dāūd in Jaunpur at the end of the fourteenth century. And many vernacular inaugurations show no concern with religious devotionalism whatever. Early Braj crystallized as a literary idiom in the

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[25]What is meant is the "origin" of vernacular literatures, not languages, a common slippage prompting my remarks above on writing and the beginning of literature.

writings of Viṣṇudās under the patronage of the Tomars in Gwalior, and as Stuart McGregor has carefully demonstrated, his vernacular epics have nothing to do with *bhakti* (McGregor n.d.). The same holds true for the western end of the Sanskrit cultural ecumene, where the earliest texts in Gujarati, of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, include Bhālan's courtly *Kādambarī* and the anonymous erotic *phāgu*, *Vasantavilāsa*, and for the eastern, the political-allegorical *kakawins* of Javanese.

In the case of Kannada, belief in the religious imperative of vernacularization is altogether unchallenged in the scholarly literature. Here, however, the putative impetus is not devotionalism but what one scholar a generation ago described as Jaina loyalty to "the precept of the founder of their faith that the vernacular should be used for preaching to the masses" (Altekar 1960b, 314). Why it took more than a thousand years for this loyalty to manifest itself in literary production in the language of Karnataka, where Jainas had lived since perhaps 300 B.C., is a mystery. Mysterious, too, is the fact that, at the very time and place when Kannada literary production finally does make history, the greatest of Jaina religious poets—those whose loyalty should be beyond doubt—Jinasena and Guṇabhadra (ca. 850–900), chose *Sanskrit* for the spiritual poetry of their *Mahāpurāṇa*, as many did also for *laukika* or this-worldly moral literature, such as Pampa's contemporary at the Vemulavāda court, the Jaina abbot Somadevasūri (author of *Yaśastilakacampū*, A.D. 959).

If a number of the earlier Kannada poets were Jainas, some were decidedly not. It is no anomaly that when a brahman minister of religious affairs (*dharmakāryeṣu niyukta*) under Vikramāditya VI of the western Cāḷukyas (end of the eleventh century) gifted land to a Mīmāṃsā college (a *prābhākarasya vyākhyānaśālā* —the most orthodox of all orthodoxies—the long *praśasti* he composed was equally divided between verses in Kannada and Sanskrit (*EI* 15, pp. 348ff.). As for Jaina authors, some were almost clearly Jaina brahmans (a category peculiar to the Digambara lay community of the Deccan), including Pampa (cf. *VAV* 14.49) and Nāgavarman II (*Kāvyāvalokanam* vs. 960). And much of their work has little or nothing to do with Jainism as such. Some may have composed theological histories, but they also composed, at least for the first three centuries of literary history, non-Jaina prose-verse courtly epics (*campūs*), typically for non-Jaina patrons (Ranna wrote his *Gadāyuddha* ca. 1000, for a Śaiva prince, cf. 1.21). Pampa's *Vikramārjunavijaya*—which he calls a *laukika* poem in contrast to his *jināgama* or theological text, the *Ādipurāṇa* (*VAV* 14.60), and is, as we saw, a work determined in its every important feature by political vision—not to speak of the *KRM* and such high-culture vernacularizations as *Karṇāṭa Kādambarī* (ca. 1030), provides evidence enough of an audience and a literary culture formed by values to which religious identity was subordinate. The one value that the *KRM* itself celebrates in describing the literary court is cultural virtuosity:

> Anyone who betakes himself to the great Nṛpatuṅga to become a member of his literary circle (*sabhā*) must be committed to the discriminating understanding of all this-worldly matters, as well as [Jaina] scriptural, and eminent vaidika questions (*laukikasāmāyikoruvaidikaviśeṣa*). He must be adorned with distinguished utterances, analysis, and arts relating to the knowledge of literature (*sāhita*); he must have exceptional insight, and highly skilled conduct, and be totally clear-thinking, fully analyzing each and every definition and example [of literature].
>
> (3.219–20)

Not only was Kannada vernacularization not driven by religious imperatives, it was not in any meaningful sense popular. Popular communication can hardly have been served by a literature so thoroughly presupposing Sanskrit training in lexicon,

syntax, metric, rhetoric; some texts explicitly state they were commissioned by and intended for a learned audience, as we saw in the case of Pampa.

The dominant explanations, therefore, derived ultimately from a disciplinary bias toward religious studies that can often deform thinking about precolonial India,[26] are of little help in understanding the primary moments of vernacularization that marked much of South Asia in the early second millennium. What is abundantly clear, however, in virtually every case we can historically capture—and again, Kannada is paradigmatic here—is the role of the court in the vernacular turn. It is cosmopolitan elites—men like Pampa fully in command of Sanskrit and enjoying rank and status, paid by the king for his work and rejoicing in his power and grandeur (*VAV* 13.49ff.)—writing courtly poetry for their peers, who first turned Kannada (and Telugu, Malayalam, Braj, Assamese) into an instrument for literary and political expressivity, and who for the next half-millennium will continue to produce the literary and philological texts in the language. What we need to understand, however, is what this courtly literature meant for the self-understanding of polity, and why it came into existence when it did.

The common-sense of contemporary social theory suggests that we should seek some instrumental fit between vernacular poetry and polity. The grammatical and literary-normative will-to-unification of the language, we may be led to assume by such theory, is intimately connected with the political will-to-unification, since the power over language is power over the users of that language—or more simply put, grammarians and politicians share the same delusions (Bourdieu 1991, 43–65; Fabian 1986, 8). This axiom invites us to look for something new politically happening in the world of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and western Cāḷukyas within which Kannada vernacularization is occurring. One may, it is true, discern a different kind of political paradigm arising in South Asia at the end of the first millennium. The old aspiration of transregional and trans-"ethnic" rule, the "imperial polity" that had marked the subcontinent for the previous thousand years, had begun to give way to something different, something perhaps to be called vernacular polity.[27] Enduring dominance was no longer to be sought outside the extended core area, which for its part came increasingly to coincide with a language or culture area—something that the polity, by its cultural-political practices, helped to create—vague though both areas undoubtedly were in conception and on the ground.

When in late middle-period India, one might be prone to suppose, kingdoms began to replace the earlier supraregional empires, or dreams of supraregional empires, with the reality of regional governance; when kings from Nṛpatuṅga in ninth-century Kannaḍanāḍu to Airlangga in eleventh-century Java became less the *cakravartins* of cosmic imperia and more the overlords of really existing regional polities, the cosmopolitan expressivity of Sanskrit ceded before a vernacular that could define a regional political space that actually worked as such. And thus choice of language for the making of literature—the inscription of new kinds of literary texts in the vernacular—whereby local culture is authorized and made available for diffusion and permanence, could be taken to constitute at the level of culture and communication a new sense of the permanence and diffusion of the polity as a form of community

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[26]This has brought us to the point where even the most careful students of the subject are prone to contrast "Sanskritization" as a process of "religious culture" with, say, Islamicization, which is said to inhabit the domain of the secular (Wagoner 1996, 872).

[27]Kulke understands these later kingdoms as "imperial polities," without, however, specifying what distinguishes them from the earlier imperial formations (1995, 242–62).

self-understanding and solidarity. And the specific character of this newly vernacularizing literature, as a cosmopolitan vernacular, suggests that it aimed to usurp the position of the superposed literary formation and to recreate the conditions of imperial culture at the level of the region.

The trouble with this approach, I earlier suggested, is that it rests upon a set of beliefs about the relation of culture and power (whether as instrumental reason, legitimation, or ideology) that have been formed in the age of capital in order to make sense of it (cf. Lefort 1986, 181–236; Scott 1990, 70–107). These encourage a conceptual style that typically reduces language to power and precludes even asking what may be different about their interaction in the past. It is no easy matter, to state the difficulty more generally, to theorize a premodern world without deploying the theoretical presuppositions—the only ones we have—forged by modernity; to read the precolonial from a location in the postcolonial, to displace let alone replace the notion of the nation form and the theory of culture it generates. It thus remains unclear to me what warrants such presuppositions in understanding a different— potentially radically different—world of the nonmodern non-West. As I suggested earlier to be the case in the Sanskrit cosmopolis, one might instead theorize the presence of some altogether different cultural logic, where the aesthetic, for example, was centrally in play, or some peculiar new self-fashioning through the vernacular distinction of persons and places. Only more empirical work, however, informed by a stubborn conceptual autonomy, is going to be able to test such hypotheses.[28]

Developing a historically and culturally sensitive account of the relationship of vernacular poetry and polity before western modernity is, however, only part of a bigger complex of questions, which in lieu of a premature historical conclusion about the cosmopolitan vernacular as such I want to try to characterize, with respect both to its historical and theoretical challenges.

This larger complex is the problematic of premodern globalization. What used to be called "Indianization" is one of the variety of historically important ways in the past (other crude but still necessary categories include Hellenization, Romanization, Sinicization) of being translocal, of participating in social and cultural networks in addition to material networks that transcended the immediate community, and against which a wide range of vernacular cultures defined themselves. Now, despite the justifiable fascination of the academy with the new globalization, the historical study of the cultural and social dynamics of premodern globalization processes— without which the newness of the present case can only be imagined and not known— has yet to begin in earnest for any part of the world. Consider for a moment only the scholarship on the Romanization of the western empire, a process of no little consequence, I think, in the creation and construction of "Western civilization." In 1990 a leading historian of the Roman empire could say, "There seems to have been no scholarly attention paid to anything but the symptoms" of Romanization; "Even in so richly informed a work as . . . there are only two or three lines devoted to the motives for cultural change; and I recall nothing more than that in all my reading" (MacMullen 1990, 60).

On the rare occasions when the global and local are analyzed as ways of being in interaction, both are typically thought of as pregiven, sharply defined cultural formations, the former as the exogenous, great tradition, the latter as the indigenous,

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[28] Theorizing vernacular polity comparatively in South Asia and Europe, and the currently dominant accounts of vernacularization and nationalism in Europe (Gellner, Anderson), are further addressed in Pollock 1998.

little tradition—the clichés of the introductory area-studies course. They have taken on the character of stable things that interact (or things that "clash," in the more cartoon-like version of civilizations) rather than being seen as a congeries of constantly changing repertories of practices; and if they change they are thought to do so not by human choice from among such practices but as things in nature change.

In an important recent essay on globalization and localization in the early nineteenth-century Pacific (East Asia, Polynesia, Pacific Northwest), Marshall Sahlins has argued that the world system is not "a physics of proportionate relationships between economic 'impacts' and cultural 'reactions.' Rather, the specific effects of the global-material forces depend on the various ways they are mediated in local cultural schemes." "Indigenous peoples," that is to say, variously "integrate their experience of the world system in . . . their own system of the world" (1988, 4–5). This is a welcome and necessary corrective to the common image of the local as inert wax for the developmental imprint of the global. It is, for example, just such local mediations in the premodern globalization process of "Indianization" that have interested students of early Southeast Asia for several decades (Wolters 1982 remains a stimulating example).

But implicit in Sahlins's account is a conception of local cultural schemes and a system of the world of indigenous peoples as things permanently given. Manchu emperors in the eighteenth century thus are said to share the same system as Ch'in Shih Huang-ti in the third century B.C. (Sahlins 1988, 22). But we know such local systems constantly changed, sometimes radically. Certain components of literary culture, for example, were long central to the Chinese system of the world: The ability to compose Recent Style poetry was required to pass the civil service examination from the Sung period onward. We now know that defining features of this poetry were invented in the T'ang by the importation of Sanskrit literary theory, such as Daṇḍin's "Mirror" (Mair and Mei 1991), one of the important cultural preciosities that circulated in an Asian system of premodern globalization.

Dehistoricization and the ideology of indigenism that depends upon it (the indigenous being nothing but the conceptual consequence of a deficiency of historicization), which usually govern the study of local mediations of global cultural forms, are even more prominent in the study of the forms themselves. Discussions of the impact of South Asian cultural flows on Southeast Asia rarely acknowledge the fact that no preternaturally unified Indian culture existed to produce Indianization; what existed was only a set of recently developed cultural codes and acts, some of which arose almost simultaneously (perhaps even "convergently," Kulke 1990) outside the subcontinent, and which only gradually coalesced into something like a cosmopolitan unity. In fact, much of India itself was being Indianized at the very same period as Java or Khmer country—and in a hardly different way—and it was Indian vernacular intellectuals, themselves Indianized, who drove the process forward.

Moreover, from the local perspective, we need to see that when Sanskrit comes to, say, early Java, it is not as a medium for the articulation of realities that are "properly Javanese" (Lombard 1990, 13–14), as if reality were constituted prior to rather than largely by language, and Javaneseness some preexistent thing over which Sanskrit is laid rather than a continuous process of becoming in which Sanskrit is one element. The role of the Sanskrit cosmopolitan in southeast, or southern, Asia was less to bring "ancient and persisting indigenous beliefs into sharper focus" (Wolters 1982, 9) in some "native" culture that itself retained a "distinctiveness both as a whole and in its parts" (Reid 1990, 1) than to participate in the very creation of these cultures, and to be itself changed in the process.

What needs to supplement Sahlins's important critique, then, and future research on premodern globalization, of which the cosmopolitan vernacular is an instance, is appreciation of the fact that "indigenous" cultures are produced in the course of long-term translocal interactions by the very same processes that produce the global itself. The local/global dualism, therefore, needs to be historicized out of existence, both because nothing is globally self-identical and because the local is always "newly different differences," while each becomes the other in constantly new ways (Pred 1995). But not only for these reasons. If the dualism contributes to people's "political disarming" by producing a false understanding of the larger forces at work in their lives, it may also contribute to their arming themselves—to recreate some "local" that never existed in the first place.

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