History from the Margins: Literary Culture and Manuscript Production in Western India in the Vernacular Millennium

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Recommended Citation
Chanchani, Jahnabi Barooah (2022) "History from the Margins: Literary Culture and Manuscript Production in Western India in the Vernacular Millennium," Manuscript Studies: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 1. Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/mss_sims/vol6/iss2/1

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Abstract
Scholars of South Asia have long known of praśastis, eulogistic verses often composed in the transregional Sanskrit language on copperplates, stone slabs, and temple walls, from the early centuries of the Common Era. They have traditionally sieved these documents to recover dynastic histories and have supposed that as a genre, it faded away in the second millennium CE when Islamic polities were established across the subcontinent and new genres of history writing were popularized. In making this supposition they have overlooked the fact that praśastis continued to be frequently composed and written. Yet, their appearance was neither in public spaces nor in public documents, but frequently at the ends of palm-leaf and paper manuscripts. In this paper, I carefully analyze a corpus of hitherto untranslated praśastis and other scribal remarks written at the end of oft illustrated sumptuous Jaina manuscripts prepared between c. 1000 –1600 in western India. This was a period during which manuscript culture and literary production burgeoned in the region. Through my close reading of these genealogical micro histories, I shed new light on the emergence of new power elites, literati associations, centers of manuscript production, the rise of professional authors and scribes, and formation of kinship. I also consider the aesthetics and poetics of patronage in the region and ask why patrons in the early centuries of the second millennium CE sought to legitimize their family histories using an archaic genre.

Keywords
Jaina, monasticism, representation, memory, genealogy, mercantilism, patronage, kinship, manuscript culture, South Asia, India, Sanskrit

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I advance an understanding of literary culture and manuscript production based on an analysis of about 120 colophons appended to manuscripts containing recensions of diverse texts prepared in western India between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries CE. For a list of manuscripts whose colophons I have examined, see Appendix A. These manuscripts are inscribed both on palm leaf and on paper. Paper was first used in the fourteenth century and soon after eclipsed palm leaf in popularity. The manuscripts are written mostly in Sanskrit and in various Prakrits, transregional literary languages of classical and medieval India. A

This essay would not have taken its present form without the kind mentoring and keen interest of Madhav Deshpande, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, and Ambarish Khare, Professor of Sanskrit Literature at Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth in Pune, India. I thank them both. I am also indebted to comments that I received from Gillian Feeley-Harnik, Professor Emerita in the Department of Anthropology, and Thomas Trautmann, Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Anthropology and History, both of the University of Michigan. I thank Nachiket Chanchani for reading multiple drafts of this essay.

few are also written in an emerging vernacular language that modern scholars have described as Old Gujarati. Some are richly illustrated with narrative paintings and illuminated with gold leaf. These manuscripts are currently housed in public and private collections in India and the United Kingdom. In this essay I use “western India” to refer to areas corresponding to modern provinces of Gujarat and contiguous parts of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. My study commences in the twelfth century because informative colophons start to appear in manuscripts from western India in this period. My study ends in the seventeenth century when significant shifts occurred in the realm of manuscript culture leading to a gradual decline in the appearance of colophons.

My central argument is that literary culture and manuscript production helped create a new social order in western India. From the twelfth century onwards, a variegated group of new elites—merchants, Jain laity, landholding nobles, and others, all of whom aspired to Rajput aristocratic status—rose to prominence. These non-courtly groups patronized flourishing literary and manuscript cultures. Based on an examination of hitherto unstudied archival materials, I contend that learned monks, scribes, and versifiers played a key role in shaping and reflecting regional and historical identity. I also argue that in western India, classical languages continued to remain prestigious idioms for many communities well into the colonial period, despite a move toward vernacularization. In this respect, my work is aligned with Aparna Kapadia’s thesis on the prominence of Sanskrit in fifteenth-century Gujarat and long after, and with the work of Samira Sheikh, who has advanced scholarly understanding of the role of pilgrims and traders in constituting western India as a distinct region in the medieval period.

3 For the locations of the manuscripts whose colophons I have studied, see Appendix A.
The corpus of manuscript colophons that I have examined is diverse. Many texts in my corpus are ancient scriptures revered by Śvetāmbara Jains, a wealthy and powerful religious community. These texts include the *Kalpasūtra* and *Uttarādhyāyanasūtra*, which are biographies of exemplary Jain men and women and encapsulations of their sermons. Copies of these texts often included commentaries by medieval theologians. Other manuscripts that I have examined contain anthologies of didactic stories that promote Śvetāmbara Jain values of charity, nonviolence, and non-stealing. A few other texts are Sanskrit literary and scholastic classics composed in the first millennium. They include Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyadarśa*, an influential treatise on poetics, and Bhāskarācārya’s *Līlāvatī*, a mathematical tract.

The manuscript colophons under consideration for this essay are production notes resembling the front matter of a book printed in the modern West, in which the book’s title, author, publisher, and other bibliographically pertinent information are included. In the manuscripts I examined, colophons range from a few words to a hundred verses. The most basic types furnish the text’s name, the date when the copying of the manuscript was completed, and a benediction. Longer colophons provide more information, such as the town where the text was copied, and names and abbreviated genealogies of the scribe, his collaborators, the patron, and the manuscript’s owner. Colophons may also contain verse compositions that eulogize the patron(s) and several generations of his or her family and elaborate upon the circumstances surrounding the manuscript’s production.

Usually of unknown authorship, these compositions are a literary genre akin to the Prakrit and Sanskrit eulogies or *praśasti* authored from the early centuries of the first millennium CE in many parts of South and Southeast Asia. Indeed, their composers identified their work as such. To give a sense

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of the proportion of colophons that contain *praśasti*, of the 121 manuscript colophons I examined, 35 included a *praśasti*. The bulk of the *praśasti* appear in Jain manuscripts copied roughly between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. However, the practice continued at least until the seventeenth century and then gradually declined. By the early nineteenth century when commercial printing became very popular in British India, the production of manuscripts and the writing of colophons in them had all but ceased. The manuscript colophons that I have studied were published in their original languages in the *Catalogue of the Jain Manuscripts of the British Library* and the *Jaina Pustaka Praśasti Saṃgraha*. Most have never been translated, and my translation and analysis have benefited from my reading of these works in collaboration with senior scholars.

Before considering the dynamics of manuscript production in medieval western India, it may be helpful to historicize the circumstances that led to the cataloguing of medieval manuscripts in modern times. In the nineteenth century, amateur and professional antiquarians first made medieval manuscripts that had long been housed in Jain temple libraries (*bhāndāras*) in western India available for Indological studies. Among them were James Tod, Georg Bühler, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, and Peter Peterson; they acquired and catalogued manuscripts in the collections of the rulers of princely states, Jain clerics, community libraries, and from small *bhāndāras* that were being dismantled. Many of the purchased manuscripts were donated to government collections in British India and to recently founded institutions such as Deccan College in Pune, India. Some manuscripts were exported to art museums and national libraries in Europe, where there was a booming interest in translating hitherto “unknown” Sanskrit literature. As Donald Clay Johnson has shown, these transfers did not unfold without stirring controversy and public debates in the *Times of India* and other newspapers of the day. Nevertheless, the holdings of the famous Hemacandra

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8 For a study on how Western scholars came to learn of Jain temple libraries, see Donald Clay Johnson, “The Western Discovery of Jain Temple Libraries,” *Libraries & Culture* 28, no. 2.
Library in Patan, Gujarat, and those of other important traditional repositories remained inaccessible to modern scholars. Moved by the ongoing nationalist struggle for freedom from colonial rule that valorized India’s classical and medieval heritage, Punyavijaya (1895–1971), an erudite Jain monk, began cataloging these important holdings. He also encouraged fellow learned monks and local scholars including Jinavijaya, Jambuvijaya, and Jugal Kishore Mukhtar to conserve, catalogue, and occasionally translate manuscripts stored in important bhāndāras in western India. Since these scholars were primarily interested either in constructing critical editions of canonical texts (which flattened variants found in manuscripts) and/or in cataloguing holdings in accordance with prevalent norms, they either ignored colophons altogether or merely mined them for basic information. Jinavijaya was an important exception. He published transcriptions of several hundred manuscript colophons written in Sanskrit in their entirety. However, he did not translate them, and he provided only a terse commentary. More recently, cultural anthropologists and historians of religion such as John Cort, Nalini Balbir, and Phyllis Granoff have discovered that manuscript colophons are unique primary sources and have begun to use them in their reconstructions of the history of medieval Jainism.


10 Jinavijaya’s personal narrative of how he worked is found in Jinavijaya Muni, A Catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrit Manuscripts in the Rajasthan Oriental Institute (Jodhpur Collection), part 1, Rajasthan Puratan Granthamala No. 71 (Jodhpur, 1963), 3.

My essay builds on these foundational efforts in important ways. By analyzing approximately 120 colophons of manuscripts preserved in repositories in India and the United Kingdom, datable to the period extending from the eleventh to the seventeenth century, I offer the first broad study of the patterns in places and phases of production; the uneven social worlds of monks, scribes, and patrons; and the crystallizing of ever-new ideologies of kinship and historical consciousness. Through the reading of these colophons, I demonstrate how transregional classical, vernacular, and regional languages all changed in late medieval and early modern India and how these transformations, in turn, appear to have affected social conditioning and ultimately created a new social order. Filaments of this social order persist to this day.

Having briefly considered previous scholarship and the scope and structure of my essay, I will now turn to my findings themselves. My study has led me to understand that manuscripts were copied in myriad urban and rural centers. Roughly half of the manuscript colophons I examined mention places of production. Cities such as Ahmedabad, Khambat, Patan, and Sirohi were particularly productive centers, suggesting the presence of thriving Śvetāmbara Jain communities within them. A few manuscripts were also copied at Bharoch, Bhuj, Dabhoi, Davad, Devagiri, Jaisalmer, Pralhadana, Revati, and Vijapur. Others were copied at unidentified villages such as Kurija, Munkushika, Nandiya, Pralhadana, Vauna, and elsewhere. These data suggest that manuscript production in western India was diversified from its earliest days. Apart from Khambat, the remaining centers of manuscript production were inland towns and cities, and were, for the most part, clustered around modern-day northern and central Gujarat. One wonders why more coastal towns—along the Arabian Sea trade routes, and the Persian Gulf populated as they might have been with networks of wealthy merchants—were not also thriving centers of manuscript culture.12

12 It is possible that Persian and Arabic manuscripts were written in coastal towns in western India in the late medieval period. However, it is beyond the scope of my essay to engage these linguistic spheres and the associated secondary literature.
Nearly all the dated manuscripts in my corpus use the historical Hindu calendar known as the Vikram Samvat. Sometimes the year is written in numerals, and at other times using chronograms—that is, by spelling out words traditionally associated with specific numbers. For example, the word eye (locana) is used to indicate the number two. The decision to use the Vikram Samvat evinces a desire to be firmly situated in a well-established and widely recognized temporal schema. Sometimes, this date is accompanied by an acknowledgment of the leadership of Śvetāmbara Jain ecclesiastical figures, suggesting ways in which western Indian communities were localizing themselves. Among the ecclesiastical figures mentioned are Somasundara (fl. 1400), Jinamanikyasūri (fl. 1500), Jinacandrasūri (fl. 1600), Saubhagyacandrasūri (fl. 1600), and Jinodayasurī (fl. 1700). Sometimes, a long intellectual genealogy of the current ecclesiastical figure is also included. Most manuscript colophons, especially those prepared in the fourteenth century and later, do not include the name of the ruling king. This may have been due to political turbulence during this period. In the late sixteenth century, large parts of western India, including Gujarat, were absorbed into the Mughal Empire. Political stability returned and, perhaps

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13 This calendrical system begins in 58–57 BCE, and it has been widely used in western India since the early centuries CE. The Vikrama era is also known as the Kṛta and Mālava eras. For brief introductions to this calendrical system, see Romila Thapar, *Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 348, and Dineschandra Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), 251–57.


15 See manuscripts 6, 33, 23, 40, and 82 in the Appendix.

16 For examples of this, see manuscripts 39 and 111 in the Appendix.

17 The few that do mention a ruler were copied during the period of Western Cālukya and Vāghela rule over western India. The Western Cālukyas ruled over large parts of western and southern India from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. The Vāghela kings came to power in the thirteenth century and ruled over the region corresponding to the modern state of Gujarat until their defeat to the Delhi Sultanate king Alauddin Khalji in 1304 CE.

18 Several scholars have argued that the wane of Cālukya rule in western India brought in a period of political instability. See, for example, Sheikh, *Forging a Region*, and Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh, eds., *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).
unsurprisingly, manuscript colophons from this period occasionally begin to include the name of the reigning Mughal emperor.\textsuperscript{19}

A further analysis of the dates of production reveals that copying of many manuscripts, especially of Śvetāmbara canonical texts, was completed during the \textit{caturmāsa}, the four-month-long monsoon season. This is a theologically significant period when normally itinerant Śvetāmbara monks and nuns took up residence in cities and gave sermons to lay congregations. The \textit{caturmāsa} climaxes with the Paryushan festival, during which the \textit{Kalpasūtra} was worshipped and read aloud in public gatherings.\textsuperscript{20} For these reasons, it is understandable that this season was a fertile one for preparing manuscripts.

I will now turn to an analysis of scribal culture. Only half of the colophons that I examined give the names of scribes and their collaborators. Typically, only one scribe is mentioned by name, but in a few cases, names of multiple scribes are given. While these scribes are overwhelmingly male, there is one instance of a female scribe.\textsuperscript{21} In a rare case, a painter is also acknowledged.\textsuperscript{22} Some scribes had Sanskrit names such as Nemikumāra and Devaprasāda. Others had non-Sanskritic names such as Sedhaka and Sodhala. Many scribes bore titles such as holy man (\textit{muni, sadhu}), learned ascetic (\textit{ṛṣi}), monastic leader (\textit{ganin}), and monk (\textit{pandit}), indicating that the craft of writing manuscripts was possibly a sacred activity carried out by educated men. Surprisingly, in only a handful of instances are scribes labeled with the Sanskrit professional designators \textit{lekhaka} or \textit{kāyastha}. This demonstrates that these were not the only groups, often understood to be consist-

\textsuperscript{19} For an example of this, see manuscript 74 in the Appendix.
\textsuperscript{20} This summary of \textit{caturmāsa} is based on Lawrence Babb’s account in \textit{Understanding Jainism} (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2015). For an account of reverence of knowledge and manuscripts amongst Jains, see Nalini Balbir, “Jain Treasures of the British Library,” a talk organized at the British Library in partnership with the Institute of Jainology, London, on 22 March 2011.
\textsuperscript{21} The female scribe was a woman named Jau of the Pragvat clan who copied a manuscript of the \textit{Anekāntakayapatākā} in 1430 CE. See manuscript 6 in the Appendix.
\textsuperscript{22} The name of the painter is given as Kanakakīrti. He is identified as a monk. He worked on a manuscript of the \textit{Śalibhadra-caupaī} that was completed in 1726 CE. See manuscript 82 in the Appendix.
ing primarily of brāhmaṇas, who possessed the requisite skills associated with professional scribes. In fact, individuals from non-brāhmaṇical communities like Pragvat and Singh also wrote manuscripts. This finding allows us to accept the postulate of historians Chitrarekha Gupta, Daud Ali, and others that by this period, and perhaps before too, writing was no longer the exclusive domain of the religious elite. The scribal data also establishes that scribes were also occasionally authors, obscuring modern scholarly distinctions between authors and scribes.

I now turn to an analysis of the politics and theology of manuscript patronage. Somewhat fewer than half of the colophons include information about patrons. My corpus suggests that, outside of courtly enclaves and monastic institutions, a motley group of communities contributed to the flourishing of literary culture and manuscript production. Most prominent among them were Pragvats, Śrīmāls, Ukeśas, Pallipāls, and Dharkats. This said, the Pragvats sponsored most of the manuscripts that I examined. Who were these communities, and why did they support manuscript production? Some historians and anthropologists who have studied oral histories and caste purāṇa have supposed that they were predominantly mercantile communities that migrated in large numbers from present-day Rajasthan to Gujarat in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and in the process adopted Śvetāmbara Jain beliefs. However, the data in the praśastis that I have examined indicate that these communities were not exclusively,

23 For examples, see manuscripts 6, 8, 13, 42, and 69 in the Appendix.
25 Consider the case of an erudite Jain monk, Bhāvaśekharagāni, who lived in the seventeenth century. He prepared a copy of the Līlāvatī that is now in the British Library and has at least one other work to his credit, the Rūpasenaṛṣirāsa. See Balbir et al., Catalogue of the Jain Manuscripts of the British Library, 3:499.
26 Such views have been discussed by Lawrence Babb, Alchemies of Violence: Myths of Identity and the Life of Trade in Western India (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, 2004); Sheikh, Forging a Region; and Jinavijaya, introduction to Jain Pustaka Praśasti Sangraha (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1943). Many art historians have also accepted this view. See, for example, John
nor even predominantly, mercantile. About half of the patrons were described with the title śreṣṭhin (“leader of mercantile community”). About the same number of patrons also bore titles like śrāvaka and śrāvikā indicating their status as Jain laity, but withholding further information about their professions. A small number of patrons bore titles such as thākura and thākurānī, indicating a connection to nobility. A close look at the genealogical data embedded in the praśasti reveals that in many cases, one or two members of several generations of a patron’s extended family had the surname “Singh.” Given that this title came to be widely associated with Rajput aristocrats and martial groups in the second half of the second millennium, we may conclude that some Pragvats, Śrīmāls, Ukeśas, Pallipāls, and Dharkats aspired toward and were briefly accorded kṣatriya (warrior) status.

About a fourth of the manuscripts in my corpus identify their patrons as female. Such manuscripts range from works on Sanskrit grammar and yoga by the eminent Jain scholar Hemacandra (1088–1173) to well-known religious texts like the Kalpasūtra. This finding confirms that elite women had access to money, were prominent promoters of learning, and were supporters of manuscript production. I further learned that in most cases, the women who commissioned manuscripts were married, had children, and sometimes had grandchildren too.

The names of the patrons and their extended family members are mostly non-Sanskritic and include proper names such as Deśala, Rāhada, Sodhuka, Virada, and others. Sanskritic ones such as Āśādhara, Devadhara, Rāmadeva, and Yashonāga are also found in this corpus. Lakṣmī, Jinamati, and Suhavā are among the frequently encountered female names. In many families, children had names that spanned the spectrum from non-Sanskritic to Sanskritic. For example, a praśasti composed in the thirteenth century about an


27 The colophons do not mention what individual merchants traded. What is known is that the Gujarat coastline was dotted with Cambay, Surat, and other major seaports. War horses were imported from the Persian Gulf. Cotton, the leading agricultural product in the Gujarat region, along with indigo, oilseeds, sugarcane, and hemp were exported.

28 For complete colophons, see manuscripts 4, 6, 8, 28, 30, 40, 41, 66, 71, 76, 80, 83, 87, and 121 in the Appendix.
Osvāl family tells us that Vīraka and Vālini had five sons and one daughter. Their names were Āmrakumār, Śrīkumār, Jasadu, Śālika, Pūrṇacandra, and Puṇyaśrī. Śrīkumār’s eldest daughter-in-law, Padma Śrī, would later sponsor a manuscript of the *Panchami kathā*, which prompted the writing of this *praśasti*. The onomastic data reveal that few patrons and their family members had names that were distinctly Jain, such as Jinacandra or Jinaratna. For the sake of comparison, Jain monks and nuns mentioned in these *praśasti* had proper names like Abhayadeva, Ajita Singh, Bhuvanacandra, Cakreśvara, Dhanesvara, Haribhadra, Jinadatta, Jina vallabha, Jinesvara, Paramānanda, and Vardhamāna—many of which are redolent of names of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, twelve cakravartin, and others in the śalakapuruṣa pantheon.

Analyzing names of patrons found in early donative inscriptions at Sanchi in Central India, historian Gregory Schopen has interpreted the paucity of distinctly “Buddhist” names as evidence that individuals patronized Buddhist institutions irrespective of their piety and as proof that the religion was not yet widespread in the region. Can we draw on this methodology? In my view, the story is more complex. We cannot easily extrapolate degrees of piety or adherence to a religious path from proper names alone, especially when it comes to lay people. Names are shared between religions. Is Lakṣmī a Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain name? Is it all of them? Accepting this ambiguity, I wonder whether the uneven distribution of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic names in the manuscript colophons and *praśasti* might point toward fluid religious affiliations. Perhaps some family members converted to Śvetāmbara Jainism, while others remained committed to various brahmanical religions.

What we do know from the *praśasti* is that many individuals who patronized Śvetāmbara manuscripts patronized a variety of other Śvetāmbara institutions too, or that they came from families that had patronized

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30 For scholarship that explores this line of inquiry in fifteenth-century Gujarat, see Kapadia, *In Praise of Kings*. 
Śvetāmbara institutions for at least one or two generations. Further, from the *praśastis* we learn that individuals mentioned in them had donated resources to temples, sponsored the erection of icons, and participated in the construction of pilgrim facilities at Abu, Girnar, Śatrunjaya, and other sacred centers. They also supported monks, nuns, and other lay people as well by donating drinking vessels, clothing, and food. They organized celebrations when a monk attained the rank of *ācārya* (master). Furthermore, they constructed new shrines, restored old ones, and established halls for maintaining ritual fasts. All these deeds indicate that manuscript patrons came from wealthy and prominent families where gift-giving was a recognized means of creating bonds with Śvetāmbara monastic institutions and temple authorities.

What prompted these individuals to patronize manuscripts? If we take the manuscript colophons at face value, then it appears that individuals who sponsored manuscripts hoped to receive *puṇya* or *śreyas* (karmic merit, good fortune, auspiciousness, and prosperity) either for themselves or for their close kin, both deceased and alive. At this juncture, it might be worth repeating that these manuscripts included nonsectarian literary and scholastic texts. Perhaps sponsoring manuscripts that would accrue merit to others was a strategy for individuals who might expect to receive favors from them in return. There possibly existed an aspect of competition, albeit removed from routine economic life, in which gifting manuscripts was akin

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31 See manuscripts 8, 21, 34, 39, 88, and 111 in the Appendix.
32 Religious studies scholar Paul Dundas argues that the idea that a layman could accrue *puṇya* or *śreyas* by sponsoring the production of manuscripts, sacred and otherwise, dates to the eighth or ninth century CE. See Dundas, *The Jains*, 72. Gift giving (*dāna*) and its attendant accrual of *puṇya* have long been theorized in South Asia. See, for example, Maria Heim, *Theories of the Gift in South Asia: Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Reflections on Dāna* (New York: Routledge, 2004). One critical difference between Indic theories and the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss’s theory of the gift, in Heim’s view, is that whereas Mauss’s model privileges reciprocity in gift giving, Indic theories allow for the possibility of one-way uninterested gifts. Whether the ideals that were theorized were carried out in practice is a different matter. In the case of these western Indian manuscripts, which were frequently given as gifts to monks, nuns, and others, many *praśasti* writers were careful to note that the patron took joy in sponsoring the production of an illuminated manuscript.
to participating in what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has called “tournaments of value.”

I now turn to a close reading of the praśasti. Manuscripts were usually commissioned on three different occasions. These occasions were: (i) the death or impending death of a close family member, which led to reflections upon the impermanence of the material world; (ii) the receipt of advice from clergy; and (iii) the hearing of a discourse on the virtues of giving, especially the gift of knowledge, or jñānadāna. A typical discourse stressed that in Kali Yuga (the terrible age of dissolution), sentient beings will not receive enlightenment without hearing the Jinas’ teachings. Since this cannot occur without manuscripts, it is imperative that manuscripts containing teachings of the Jinas be written. Often, clergy requested that their lay relatives commission manuscripts. For example, from a thirteenth-century praśasti we learn that Pohani, who had married into the Pragvat clan, had a copy of Rṣabhacaritam written for the use of her brother-in-law, who had become a monk. This establishes that many monks and nuns continued to maintain close ties with their natal families despite monastic codes that expected them to shear such relationships. These relationships became conduits through which the economy of puṇya and śreyas thrived, and intensified the gift-giving relationships between monastic institutions and the laity.


34 That the written manuscript is now critical in propagating teachings is ironic because the Jain traditional view is that most of the religion’s important scriptures were lost. Those that have come down to us were written down imperfectly, many centuries later. For a succinct introduction to Jain scriptures, see Dundas, The Jains, 53–73.

35 See Jina vijaya, Jain Pustaka Praśasti Sangraba, 34–35.

36 In teaching Jainism in universities in the United States, teachers have long privileged asceticism and especially the peripatetic dimension of a Jain ascetic’s life. Manuscript colophons such as this allow me to support Phyllis Granoff’s argument that Jain monastic institutions were much more family-friendly than they are commonly imagined to be. See Phyllis Granoff, “Fathers and Sons: Some Remarks on the Ordination of Children in the Medieval Śvetambara Monastic Community,” Asiatische Studien 60 (2006): 607–33.
That manuscripts were ostensibly copied for accruing punya or śreyas should not lead to the assumption that either makers or patrons were unconcerned with aesthetic value. On the contrary, upon nearing completion of production, scribes expressed that the letters in their manuscripts shone like pearls or glittered like gold. Furthermore, nearly all the manuscript colophons examined concluded with the Sanskrit benediction “ciram nandyāt” (“may [the manuscript] bring everlasting joy”). Such findings allow us to assert that the agents involved in production were eager to create works that might uplift, edify, and bring joy to generations of readers, viewers, and listeners.

What would happen to manuscripts after they were copied? Sometimes, manuscripts remained with the commissioning family for at least one generation. More often, they were promptly presented either to temple libraries, or to monks or nuns who would pronounce discourses based on the text to the public. In many cases the monks and nuns who requested that the manuscripts be made would compose praśasti for the patrons, which would then be written on the manuscript colophons. This indicates yet another way in which monastic institutions and moneyed individuals were imbri-cated. In return for commissioning lavish manuscripts, patrons would see their genealogies authored, given poetic form, and inscribed for posterity. These praśasti may have been relatively private given their position at the conclusion of manuscripts whose circulation was restricted and whose visibility was limited compared to the royal praśasti inscribed on public monuments. However, the opportunity to have a praśasti be composed about one’s family was no small matter: these texts are the earliest written records available regarding the Pragvat, Śrimāl, and other clans. There is also evidence that manuscripts were bought and sold in the marketplace beginning in the fourteenth century. Manuscripts might have been purchased for one

37 One encounters such views in works like Joan Cummins, Indian Paintings: From Cave Temples to the Colonial Period (Boston: MFA Publications, 2006).
38 I use the term “royal praśasti” to describe such inscriptions because they are primarily concerned with praising kings and their immediate kin.
of several reasons. Some were acquired upon a spiritual teacher’s advice. Others were purchased to acquire merit (punya) and were later donated to a religious teacher. Yet others were added to personal collections. Accordingly, manuscripts transited between the realms of gifts and commodities in different phases of their social lives.

The genealogies embedded in these prāñastis suggest that a novel ideology of kinship was coalescing in the context of literary culture and manuscript production. These genealogies were “interested” documents: tools for remembering and forgetting, and for controlling the contingencies of the present. They outlined anywhere between two and ten generations of a patron’s family. They typically began with the name of a male figure, or a husband and a wife. The patron was very rarely a member of the most recent generation. Names of family members of one or two succeeding generations were nearly always mentioned. Why did some families not name their distant ancestors? Might some families have had access to systems of record keeping that enabled them to remember, albeit selectively, up to ten generations of their ancestors? Does a longer genealogy suggest that a family had more social prestige and power than another? In the case of married female patrons, the husband’s family would be represented, although in rare instances we do find the names of women’s parents mentioned as

39 The colophon of a manuscript of the Pārśvanāthacaritra noted that an individual named Ananta purchased it in 1383 upon being urged by a leader of the Tapāgaccha Jain sect. See manuscript 70 in the Appendix.
40 One example of this is manuscript 5 in the Appendix.
41 One example of this is manuscript 94 in the Appendix.
42 This last point about genealogies manipulating the present is indebted to Kiyokazu Okita’s discussion of genealogical studies. Kiyokazu Okita, Hindu Theology in Early Modern Asia: The Rise of Devotionalism and the Politics of Genealogy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.
This systematic erasure of matrilineal kin is evident in the case of male patrons too, whose maternal grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other relatives on the mother’s side are not mentioned. Still, these genealogies broke with tradition by mentioning names of women in the first place, and by evincing an interest in extended family structures. Contemporaneous Sanskrit royal praśasti such as a famous eulogy composed by Śrīpāla in the twelfth century to commemorate the Cālukya king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja’s restoration of a Śiva temple did not mention any royal women at all. Nor did most of the royal praśasti of the first millennium CE. These eulogies were also less interested in detailing the nature and structure of royal families, and more concerned with conveying an impression of smooth political transitions. They were also especially interested in legitimizing dynasties by claiming that reigning kings were ultimately descended from either the mythical solar or lunar lineages. Unlike kings, patrons of manuscript praśasti claimed descent from quasi-historical ancestors.

Manuscript praśasti are also an important primary source for understanding the self-image that western Indian communities sought to project. Patrons and their ancestors were commonly portrayed with a constellation of adjectives: compassionate (sadayā), righteous (viśuddhavṛtti), famous (avāptakīrtī), intelligent (dbimān), wealthy (prauḍhasamappati), handsome (ratikāntarūpa), devout (śraddhāvān), generous (pātravitīrṇavittā), and humble (vinayalakṣmī). Married women, who were often compared to mythical Sītā, were underscored as being chaste (pāvana) and devoted to their husbands (bhartṛcittā). This said, the most frequent descriptors concerned an individual’s fame, wealth, and generous donations to Śvetāmbara establishments.

The question now arises as to whether the composers of these manuscript praśasti were aiming to glorify individuals in the manner of royal praśasti composers. There are certainly many common features between the two genres. As Daud Ali and Sheldon Pollock have compellingly demonstrated,

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fame was of paramount value for rulers. Furthermore, like royal praśastis, these manuscript praśastis also deployed all the expressive capacities of Sanskrit kāvya including literary topoi, figures of speech, meters, and exhibited awareness of the classical canon. They are part of that same imaginative world. To give an example, in eulogizing a family’s founding patriarch, a praśasti writer living in Āśāpalli in Gujarat in the twelfth century, described him thus:

cañcaccārvindurociścayaharahasitākārakīrticchaṭābhiḥ sarppantibhiḥ samantāddhavalitavasudhah śuddhabuddhernidhānam | dikkāntākarṇapūrapratimagunaganah sajjanānandadāyi saṁtosāpārvārah karaṇaripubalam helayā yo jīgāya ||

“He whitened the entire earth with the snaking beams of his fame in the form of his smile that stole a multitude of glittering and beautiful moon rays. He was a repository of pure knowledge. His countless virtues reflected in the earrings of the goddesses of the directions. He bestows happiness on good people and his own contentment knows no bounds. With no difficulty whatsoever, he conquered the strength of his enemies, his sensory capacities” (author’s translation).

45 See Daud Ali, “Royal History as World History: Rethinking Copper-Plate Inscriptions in Cola India,” in Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practice in South Asia, ed. Ronald Inden, Jonathan Waters, and Daud Ali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164–229, and Sheldon Pollock, The Language of the Gods in the World of Men, 145. In discussing manuscript praśastis, I do not wish to overstate this point. It is one of the most commonly occurring descriptors, but in terms of being an overriding virtue, it is in a dialectical relationship with śreyas and punya.

46 To give an example of manuscript praśastis’ creative interaction with canonical works of Sanskrit kāvya (belles-lettres), consider the first verse of praśasti 4 in Jinavijaya, Jain Pustaka Praśasti Sangraba, 5. This verse creates an image of the earth being skirted by the sea. It thereby calls to mind and cites words from the beginning of seventh-century writer Daṇḍin’s ornate art-prose work, the Daśakumāracarita, which begins in a similar manner. For a bilingual edition of Daśakumāracarita, see Isabelle Onians, What Ten Young Men Did (New York: New York University Press, JJC Foundation, 2005).

47 This verse is excerpted from the colophon in manuscript 88 in the Appendix. See Jinavijaya, Jain Pustaka Praśasti Sangraba, 5.
In classical Sanskrit poetry, fame and smiles are conventionally imagined to be white. The moon is also noted for its whiteness. The flight of fantasy in this verse, where the man’s fame is likened to the rays of the moon, depends on these conventions. All the same, Pollock’s view that “it is the aesthetic dimension that constitutes the core purpose of a praśasti often to the subordination or even exclusion of all other concerns” is unsubstantiated by the corpus of manuscript praśasti that I have studied.48 While manuscript praśasti writers mimicked royal praśasti in numerous ways, they also propelled the genre in new directions, and thereby hybridized it.49 Fundamentally, these praśasti were more interested in listing names of family members than in aesthetic delectation. Why was naming family members so important for these clans? Could the answer derive from the fact that many of their members originated from mercantile backgrounds? After all, merchants in India commonly built up booming businesses through family networks.50 Another explanation might issue from the fact that these genealogical praśasti were primarily found on colophons of Śvetāmbara texts that delineate the lives of Tīrthaṅkaras and other exemplary figures. By naming historical patrons, their family members, and clansmen at the end of salient narratives, these individuals were included in the luminous universe of charismatic Jains.

To illuminate the particularities of this foregoing reconstruction of manuscript and literary culture in medieval western India, it is useful to compare these findings with an analysis of the near contemporaneous social world of Buddhist manuscripts prepared in eastern India during the period

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49 In using the concepts “hybridity” and “mimicry,” I am indebted to critical theorist Homi Bhabha’s work. However, I do not wish to suggest that the relationship between royalty and merchants and other powerful laity resembled the colonizer-colonized relationship on which Bhabha’s theorization is based. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
of Pāla rule from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.\(^5\) After this period, large parts of the modern-day Bihar and Bengal regions came under Muslim rule, either directly or indirectly, and major Buddhist centers of learning are believed to have been destroyed. This comparison reveals important similarities and differences. In sum, practices of manuscript-making, and consequently Buddhist cultures and social orders also, were comparatively more connected across large distances, linked to the court to a greater degree, and largely concentrated around prominent intellectual and monastic centers. These large-scale societal features manifested themselves in small details found in the colophons, from choices of calendrical systems to names of patrons. In using the regnal year of a Pāla king as a dating schema and in having queens, princes, and other nobility as patrons, Buddhist manuscript culture in eastern India evinced a connection to courtly circles. On the other hand, the fact that individuals from remote regions such as Nepal and Tibet commissioned manuscripts to be prepared as far away as Nālandā in modern-day Bihar suggests that Buddhist communities in medieval South Asia were more connected. Finally, that the monastic learning centers of Nālandā and Vikramaśila exclusively emerge as sites of Buddhist manuscript production suggest that manuscript-making was considerably more controlled by religious clergy. In comparison, in medieval Western India, we do not find any Jain monastic center(s) that emerge as particularly prominent centers of manuscript production, even though monks were often scribes. Nor did we find that in western India individuals were commissioning manuscripts to be made in faraway towns and cities. Together, all of these findings suggest that manuscript production was a less specialized activity than in eastern India. Furthermore, while manuscript colophons from eastern India also contained \textit{praśastis} to patrons, these did not exhibit intergenerational awareness of family structures like those composed in western India. Finally, in both eastern and western India, women, albeit from elite families, played a prominent role as proponents of manuscript and literary culture. That this was the case should

challenge dominant scholarly paradigms that tend to emphasize the disempowered status of women in medieval India while underplaying narratives such as these, which are replete with emancipatory possibilities.\(^{52}\)

The understanding of literary culture and manuscript production that emerges from the foregoing study of over one hundred late medieval western Indian manuscript colophons establishes a complex picture that dissolves binaries prevalent in scholarly writing. Sometimes, a written text could serve as a springboard for an oral commentary that was elucidated before an assembly. At other times, preparing a manuscript meant rewriting the same text, and at yet other times, it consisted of replicating of a root text with a new exegesis, or producing a text illustrated with a cycle of paintings. This essay has also drawn attention to ways in which scribes made their own contributions, blurring present-day distinctions between authors and scribes, and challenging widely held views of the scribe as an unskilled copyist. I have shown that authorship in medieval western India consisted of a complex interplay between multiple composers, scribes, patrons, commentators, editors, painters, clergy, laity, and other agents. Finally, it emerges that relationships between patrons and scribes were represented in highly variable terms. Occasionally, patrons and scribes belonged to the same caste. In many instances, it was clear that scribes had altogether sidestepped caste society by joining mendicant orders. Most frequently, however, male and female patrons were caste-conscious and eager to improve their social standing, while scribes of both genders elided information that might reveal their caste.

Furthermore, the production notes written on the margins of medieval western Indian manuscripts reflect the development of a new social order. In this order, an increasing number of families were beginning to demonstrate an awareness of intergenerational kin relationships, thinking about their past afresh and setting it down in writing. A novel form of historical

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\(^{52}\) Portrayals of women as disempowered in ancient and medieval India are found in scholarly books and articles. Two representative examples are Mandakranta Bose, ed., *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
consciousness was crystallizing, and new forms of belonging were spreading in the region. In all these ways, we see that literary culture and manuscript production in medieval western India offers windows into numerous historical phenomena: migration, caste fluidity, religious conversion, state formation, urbanization, literary marketplaces, dominance of paper as a medium, canon formation, the persistence of classical forms of knowledge and history writing in the face of vernacularization, and the lives of manuscripts as objects of aesthetic delectation, guides to ethical and moral behavior, gifts, commodities, and shapers of new social orders.
APPENDIX A: List of manuscripts with colophons examined by the author

Notes:

• Wherever known, I have indicated the repository where the manuscript is or was once located. In some cases, manuscripts may now be stored in different repositories. In the time that since these manuscript colophons were first transcribed and published in the early twentieth century, some old collections have been dismantled and their holdings stolen, auctioned off, and reaccessioned in newly formed institutions.

• The numerical dates provided below are in the Vikram Samvat calendar (VS). This calendrical system begins in 57 BCE. To convert to the Common Era calendar from Vikram Samvat, subtract 57.

• Each of the colophon entries contains an acronym (B, JL or JS) followed by a number. B refers to Nalini Balbir et al. eds. *Catalogue of the Jain Manuscripts of the British Library*, vols. 1-3 (London: The British Library & The Institute of Jainology, 2006). JL refers to the section of long colophons in *Jinavijaya*, ed., *Jaina Pustaka Praśasti Sangraha* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyā Bhavan, 1943) and JS refers to the section of short colophons in the same book. The numbers that follow the acronym refer to the colophon number as it appears in that particular book or section.

1. *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* of Hemacandra with Śrīvallabhagaṇi’s *Nāmasāroddhāra*, 1736 VS, British Library Or. 4530 (Miles), B 1350.
5. *Alamkāracūdāmaṇi* of Hemacandra, 1381 VS, British Library Bühler 111 (India Office Library), B 1383.
11. *Anuttaropapātikadaśāḥ* with commentary, 1861 VS, British Library, Or. 13598, B 52.
12. Ātmānuśāsana of Pārśvanāga, 1486 VS, British Library Or. 2121 (Ratnavijaya), B 506.
14. Āvaśyakaniryukti with Guj. Tabo on the Therāvali, 1593 VS, British Library Or. 3347 (C. Bendall), B 229.
15. Āvaśyakaniryukti with prefixed Therāvali, 1478 VS, British Library Or. 13786, B 225.
16. Āvaśyakaniryukti with prefixed Therāvali, 1506 VS, British Library Or. 2105 (Ratnavijaya), B 226.
17. Āvaśyakaniryukti, 1523 VS, British Library Or. 13550, B 227.
19. Āvaśyakasūtra, 1166 VS, Brhat Bhandar, Jaisalmer, JS 15.
20. Āvaśyakasūtra, 14th century VS, Sanghavi Pada, Patan, JL 20.
22. Bhagavatisūtra, 111x VS, Brhat Bhandar, Jaisalmer, JS 2.
23. Bhagavatisūtra with Abhyadeva's commentary, 1691 VS, British Library Or. 5124, B 23.
26. Bhaktāmarastotra with commentary, 1821 VS, British Library Add. MS 26453 (B), B 883.
27. Daśavaikālikasūtra with Haribhadra's commentary, 1699 VS, British Library Or. 2101, B 199.
32. Jñātādhyānacatustaṭayapustaka, 1184 VS, Śāntināth Bhandar, Khambat, JL 2.
33. Jñātādhyānacatustaṭayapustaka, 1184 VS, Śāntināth Bhandar, Khambat, JL 2.
34. Jñātādhyānacatuṣṭayapustaka, 1166 VS, Śāntināth Bhandar, Khambat, JL 2.
35. Kalpasūtra, 1502 VS, British Library, Or. 13700, B 97.
36. Kalpasūtra, 1521 VS, British Library Or. 5149 (H. Jacobi), B 98.
40. Kalpasūtrākālikācāryakathā, 1696 VS, British Library Or. 13959, B 104.
41. Kalpasūtrākālikācāryakathā, 14th century VS, Sanghavi Pada, Patan, JL 19.
43. Kalpasūtrākālikācāryakathā, 1365 VS, Śāntināth Bhandar, Khambat, JL 35.
44. Kathānakkōṭa of Vijayacandraśrī, 1166 VS, Sanghavi Pada Satka, Patan, JS 16.
46. Kāvyadarśa of Daṇḍin, 1190 VS, Sanghavi Pada, Patan, JS 34.
47. Kāvyālaṃkāravṛtti, 1139 VS, British Library Or. 13959, B 104.


52. *Līlāvati* of Bhāskarācārya, 1697 VS, British Library Or. 13457, B 1389.

53. *Līlāvatī* of Lālacandagaṇi, 1802 VS, British Library Or. 13639, B 1390.


55. *Mahāvīracarita* of Nemicandrasūri, 1368 VS, Sangavi Pada Satka Bhandar, Patan, JL 36.


57. *Nirayāvaliyāo*, 1865 VS, British Library Or. 13599, B 95.


60. *Niśīthasūtracūrni*, 1145 VS, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, JS 4.


64. *Pancavastusūtra*, 1161 VS, Sanghavi Pada, Patan, JS 11.


73. *Prabodhacintāmaṇi* of Dharmasundara, 1514 VS, British Library I.O. San. 2468 (Gaikawar), B 1296.


75. *Pramāṇamīmāṃsāvṛtti* of Hemacandra, 1486 VS, British Library Or. 2134 (Ratnavijaya), B 676.

76. *Praśamarati* of Umāsvāti Vācaka with an *Avacūri*, 1539 VS, British Library Or. 2098 (Ratnavijaya), B 518.

77. *Praśnottara* of Jinavallabha with an *Avacūri*, 1660 VS, British Library Or. 5231 (H. Jacobi), B 1387.


79. *Ṛtusaṁhāra* of Kālidāsa, with glosses, 1654 VS, British Library, I.O. San. 2525 (Gaikawar), B 1312.

80. Śabānūśāsana of Hemacandra, 1470 VS, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin, JL 98.


82. Śālibhadracapai of Matisāra, 1783 VS, British Library Or. 13524, B 747.
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<td>85.</td>
<td>Saṁgrahaṇīratna of Śrīcandra with an Avacūrni</td>
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<td>Saṁgrahaṇīratna of Śrīcandrasūri with Devabhadra’s commentary</td>
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118. Yogasāstra of Hemacandra with a commentary, 1251 VS, Sanghavi Pada Satka Bhandar, Patan, JL 22.
119. Yogasāstra of Hemacandra with a commentary, 1477 VS, British Library Or. 2119 (Ratnavijaya), B 552.
120. Yogasāstra of Hemacandra with an Avacūri, 1556 VS, British Library Or. 5186 (H. Jacobi), B 555.
121. Yogasāstravrतti of Hemacandra with a commentary, 1292 VS, Śāntināth Bhandar, Khambat, JL 25.