

PATRICK OLIVELLE

THE DATE AND PROVENANCE OF THE *VIṢṆU-SMṚTI*:  
ON THE INTERSECTION  
BETWEEN TEXT AND ICONOGRAPHY\*

I

Among the extant Dharmaśāstras, the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is the forgotten step child. It is not much in evidence in the modern scholarship on ancient Indian jurisprudence; it was also by and large ignored by the native scholarship. Only in 1622 was a commentary on it finally written by the Benares pandit Nandapaṇḍita, although according to the very late *Sarasvatī-vilāsa* (16th century CE) there appears to have been a commentary on this text by Bhārucci; it provides extensive quotation from this commentary. It is unclear how much trust we can place on this testimony, or even if this is the same Bhārucci as the celebrated (7th century according to Derrett; the evidence for this is, however, tenuous) commentator of Manu, although Derrett appears to believe that they are the same<sup>1</sup>. Yet, there is no clear citation from or

---

\* I want to thank the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) for the use of the images reproduced in this study.

1. Derrett (1975, I: 7) comments on the problem created by the fact that many of the *sūtras* cited by the *Sarasvatī-vilāsa* are not found in the extant *Viṣṇu-smṛti*: “I toyed with the possibility that the compiler, whose originality goes beyond both scope and detail, invented the citations, naming a long-dead and rare author, and that he either practised upon his employer or was practised upon himself – which latter is not unknown in the Indian scene. But after looking into numerous examples which Kane lists from the *Dāyabhāga* section of the *Vyavahāra-kalpa* of the *Sarasvatī-vilāsa* I am

reference to Viṣṇu in the extant portion of Bhārucci's commentary on Manu<sup>2</sup>, something unlikely if he had written or was intending to write a commentary on this text. Further, I have been unable to find any manuscript of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* written in any southern script. All the manuscripts used by Jolly (1881) and the Adyar Library edition (1964) are written in the Devanāgarī script. It is surprising that a text commented on by Bhārucci, probably a southerner, would not exist in any southern script<sup>3</sup>.

The earliest citation from the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* I have found is in Medhātithi's (9th century) commentary on Manu, where the text is cited twice and obliquely referred to once<sup>4</sup>. I have been able to trace only one of these citations in the extant Viṣṇu. It is clear then that a Dharmaśāstra ascribed to Viṣṇu existed at least by the 9th century.

The *Viṣṇu-smṛti* was translated by Julius Jolly in 1880 as volume 7 of the Sacred Books of the East. Jolly also published an edition of the Sanskrit text in the same year through the Asiatic Society of

---

ready to abandon that suspicion. The views of Bhārucci, some of them well worthy of attention in spite of their having being abandoned by *śāstrīs* of later centuries, agree with those found in this present commentary on Manu."

2. Derrett (1975, I: 7) gives one anonymous *pratīka* (on Manu 8.39: *ardhikaḥ kulamītram ca*) which is *Viṣṇu-smṛti* 57.16. But a verse such as this could be found in many sources, and it is unclear whether Bhārucci had this *Viṣṇu-smṛti* verse in mind. The significance of the fact that Bhārucci does not cite the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, according to the Derrett, "is not great seeing that Bhārucci cites so few authors in any case."

3. Given that many of the verses of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* cited with Bhārucci's commentary in the *Sarasvatī-vilāsa* are not found in the extant *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, Kane (1965-72, I: 568) thinks that the author had before him "a larger version of Viṣṇu current in the South." If that were the case, it is inexplicable that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is not preserved in any southern script.

4. On Manu 3.238 Medhātithi comments: *yad api viṣṇunā paṭhitam, "pretāya brāhmaṇān bhojayet pretapitre pretapitāmahāya ca pretaprapitāmahāya" iti, atrāpi naiṣam śrūyate pṛthak bhojayed iti*. This is very similar to *Viṣṇu-smṛti* 21.12: *saṃvat-sarānte pretāya tatpitre tatpitāmahāya tatprapitāmahāya ca brāhmaṇān devapūrvān bhojayet*. On Manu 9.76 he cites the following text of Viṣṇu: "*aṣṭau viprasūtāḥ ṣaṭ rājanyāḥ caturo vaiśyāḥ dviguṇam prasūtetī | na śūdrāyāḥ kālaniyamaḥ syāt | saṃvatsaram ity eka*" *iti*. I have not been able to locate this in the extant *Viṣṇu-smṛti*. On Manu 2.6, Medhātithi cites the verse of the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (1.4-5) that lists the authors of Dharmaśāstra beginning with Manu, Viṣṇu, Yama, and Āngiras; but Medhātithi himself thinks that this list lacks authority (*smarṭpariḡaṇanā manur viṣṇur yamo 'ṅgirā iti nirmūlā*) because it omits such well known authors as Paiṭhinasi, Baudhāyana, and Pracetas.

Calcutta. Both the translation and the edition are totally beholden to the text as presented and interpreted by Nandapaṇḍita. Of the five manuscripts used by Jolly, four had Nanda's commentary, and the only one containing simply the text, according to Jolly, was the most faulty. The entire text with Nandapaṇḍita's commentary was freshly edited by the Adyar Library in 1964 on the basis of 12 manuscripts, eight of them containing also the commentary, although some were fragmentary.

The *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is basically a prose composition containing 100 chapters, with almost every chapter ending in one or several verses. The text is presented as the discourse of god Viṣṇu to goddess Earth at her request. Indeed, the first chapter containing the dialogue between Viṣṇu and Earth is entirely in verse, and so are the last two that conclude their conversation.

Lingat devotes exactly two pages to the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, much of the information being borrowed from Kane, who, as usual, undertakes a close examination of the text and its relationship to other Dharmasāstras, especially to Manu and Yājñavalkya. Jolly, in the introduction to his translation, acknowledged the dependence of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* on Manu, especially with regard to the verses. Nevertheless, he, as well as Bühler, considered the text to be a Vaiṣṇava recast of a much older Dharmasūtra belonging to the very ancient Kāṭhaka school of the Black Yajurveda. It must be remembered that most scholars in the 19th century thought that the textual history of many extant texts, including the *Mānava Dharmasāstra*, can be explained through the recasting or versification of older *sūtra* texts<sup>5</sup>. As Lingat puts it: "Bühler and Jolly believe...that Viṣṇu is, in substance, much more ancient than Āpastamba, even earlier than the fourth or fifth century B.C." (1973: 26).

Kane challenged, rightly I think, Jolly's conclusions regarding the date and textual history of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*. He pointed out that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is dependent on Manu not only for its verses but also for its *sūtras*. "There are," Kane argued, "hundred of *sūtras* which are merely prose equivalents of verses from the Manusmṛti" (1965-72, I:

---

5. For an argument against this position with respect to Manu, see my comments in Olivelle 2005, 5-25.

116). Other *sūtras* are likewise recasts of verses from the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*. Nevertheless, Kane was still unwilling to give up the thesis of Jolly that the extant *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is a recast of an older prose work. He argued that verses from the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* are not cited in many of the early medieval works such as those of Viśvarūpa and Vijñāneśvara, and concluded that “it is not unlikely that the *sūtra* first contained mostly prose *sūtras* based on Manu and the Kāṭhakaḡṛhya and verses were tacked on later” (1965-72, I: 119-20). Because of its close connection to the literature of the Kāṭhakas, Kane also concluded that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* “was originally intended to be a Dharmasūtra for the students of the Kāṭhaka” (1965-72, I: 123). Kane agrees with Jolly that the final version we have is a Vaiṣṇava recast. The original *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is dated by Kane to 300 BCE - 100 CE, and the present inflated text to 400-600 CE.

## II

I have a deep-seated suspicion of theories that posit the gradual evolution of ancient Indian texts through repeated recasting and editorial activities. Not that such editorial activities did not take place; but often such views of the textual history of works are the result of a 19th and early 20th century penchant to view texts as floating debris that gather together in an unconscious process and to ignore the authorial agency and intent of the authors. I have argued this point in my introduction to the critical edition of Manu (Olivelle 2005) and do not want to discuss it here again. I want to argue, however, that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is a unitary work of a Dharmapāṭhaka Brahmin, that is, an expert in the Dharmasāstric tradition, who also happened to be a devotee of Viṣṇu, perhaps belonging to one of the emerging Vaiṣṇava communities, a work that was composed sometime between the 6th and the 9th centuries CE. I leave open the possibility, indeed the probability, that redactoral activities have intervened between the original text and the extant one, and that such features as the numerous verses closing each chapter and the very division of the text into 100 chapters may be due to such redactoral activities. Indeed, some chapters contain only a single *sūtra* (34, 39, 40, 42).

Let me first take up the arguments for the antiquity of the prose sections of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* and then those supporting the recasting of the *sūtra* work. The connection scholars have seen between the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* and the Kāṭhaka school is unmistakable. Yet, the fact that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* borrows from the *Kāṭhaka Gr̥hyasūtra* or gives Kāṭhaka versions of mantras does not necessarily make it as ancient as the other *sūtras* of the Kāṭhaka, as Jolly has argued. This connection can be explained simply by assuming that the author belonged to the Kāṭhaka school of the Black Yajurveda, especially if the text was written, as I will presently demonstrate, in Kashmir where the Kāṭhakas were prominent even into the second half of the first millenium CE. Clearly the assumption that this was originally a Dharmasūtra for people belonging to the Kāṭhaka school is a stretch and cannot be supported by the meagre evidence available<sup>6</sup>. Some of the central features of the text, such as the centrality of written documents and ordeals, make it impossible to be placed several centuries before the common era. Viṣṇu is also the only Dharmasāstra that refers to *satī*, which he calls *anugamana* at 20.39 and *anvārohaṇa* at 25.14: *mṛte bhartari brahmacaryaṃ tadanvārohaṇaṃ vā*.

I also disagree with Kane's dating of 300 BCE to 100 CE, even if we charitably take the latter date. Kane's argument that the inclusion of Viṣṇu among the authors of Dharmasāstras listed in two verses of Yājñavalkya (1.4-5) makes Viṣṇu older than Yājñavalkya is, I think, inconclusive at best because of the doubtful authenticity of this list. Such a list is not found in any other Dharmasāstra, and it sits rather uncomfortably in the context of the *dharmapramāṇas* within the Yājñavalkya text. The list, quite incongruously, also includes Yājñavalkya himself! It also includes other authors such as Kātyāyana, Bṛhaspati, and Parāśara, who are clearly later than Yājñavalkya. Without a critical edition of Yājñavalkya's text<sup>7</sup> it is impossible to know whether this list is a later interpolation possibly taken over from a commentary, but every indication points in that

6. If it was ever a recognized Dharmasāstra of the Kāṭhaka school of Kashmir, it is difficult to see why Devapāla in his commentary on the *Kāṭhaka Gr̥hyasūtra* fails to cite the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* even though he cites Manu and Yājñavalkya frequently.

7. I am now in the process of producing such a critical edition of the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*.

direction. The rejection of the authority of this list by Medhātithi (see note 2 above) also makes me think that these verses were not viewed by him as part of the authoritative *smṛti* of Yājñavalkya but probably as an attempt by someone to draw up a list of Dharmaśāstric authors. The clear dependence of Viṣṇu on Yājñavalkya, sometimes even verbatim, as shown by Kane himself (1962-75, I: 117), makes it certain that Viṣṇu is later than Yājñavalkya.

Evidence for the late composition of Viṣṇu also comes from his vocabulary. Viṣṇu has long sections on writing, written documents, and ordeals – all indicating that he is later than Manu and the *Arthaśāstra*, neither of which deal with documentary evidence in the context of court proceedings. Viṣṇu also uses the term *pustaka*, the earliest attested use of which is probably by the 6th century astronomer Varāhmihira. I have already drawn attention to the fact that Viṣṇu is the only Dharmaśāstric author who recognizes the ritual immolation of a widow; he is also the only one to treat the *tīrthas* extensively (Chapter 85). All this clearly points, I think, to a date later than many of the major extant Dharmaśāstras.

Turning to the hypothesis that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is a recast of an ancient prose *sūtra*, I want to argue that the Vaiṣṇava character of this text is not something imposed from the outside by a redactor but something that runs through the text; it was probably part of the author's plan and not the result of redactoral intervention. Unlike the texts of Yājñavalkya and Manu, where the frame stories make their appearance at the beginning and has little impact on the body of the text, the Vaiṣṇava character of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* is transparent throughout the text. Indeed, Chapter 65 is on the worship of Viṣṇu as part of a householder's duties. I give here a few other examples:

- 24.35 By giving a virgin according to the Seer's marriage (one gains) the world of Viṣṇu.
- 49.5-6 By performing the same rite (Mārgaśiṛṣa) on the twelfth day of both fortnights for one year, he attains the heavenly world; and by doing the same during his whole life, the world of Viṣṇu.
- 49.6 By worshipping Keśava on the new-moon day as absorbed in Brahman and on the full-moon day as absorbed in yogic meditation, he attains the Great.

- 97.16 During the first and the last parts of the night a Yogin should always and tirelessly meditate on Puruṣa-Viṣṇu, who is without attributes; who is the twenty-fifth.

Further, Earth is present throughout the text as an interlocutor. She is addressed repeatedly by Viṣṇu: see, for example, 5.194; 19.24; 23.46; 47.10; 96.97; 97.10; 98.1, 3, 102; 99.1, 7, 10; 100.4.

The *Viṣṇu-smṛti* appears to be a work of an individual belonging to the Kāṭhaka *śākhā* writing a Dharmaśāstra specifically for a community of *Viṣṇu-bhaktas*<sup>8</sup>, clearly drawing from the major Dharmaśāstras of the time, principally Manu and Yājñavalkya.

### III

Finally, I want to focus on the Kashmiri provenance of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, which will also permit us to fix its date with somewhat greater certainty. In his 1880 translation (p. xv), Jolly already hinted at a possible Kashmiri link on the basis of the connection between the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* and the Kāṭhaka *śākhā*, which is prominent in Kashmir. There are, however, iconographic grounds that are stronger than the association with the Kāṭhakas and that compel us to locate the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* in Kashmir.

The frame story of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* takes us back to the time when the night of Brahmā, the end of a Kalpa, was over, and Viṣṇu, wishing to create the universe, realized that Earth, Pṛthvī, was submerged in water. In his Varāha-avatāra, Viṣṇu plunged into the ocean and lifted up Earth. Earth, however, was troubled by the thought of who would support her in the future. She goes first to Kaśyapa and, at his urging, goes to the milk ocean to see Viṣṇu himself. She pleads with him: *uddhṛtāhaṃ tvayā deva rasātalatalaṃ gatā | svasthāne sthāpitā viṣṇo lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā || tatrādhunā hi deveśa kā dhṛtir me bhaviṣyati |* “You raised me up, O god, when I was sunk to the bottom of Rasātala, and you settled me in my own location, O Viṣṇu, seeking the welfare of the worlds. What will be my support there now, O lord of gods?”

---

8. Such a sectarian composition of a *dharma* text is not unprecedented as demonstrated by the *Vaikhānasa Dharmaśāstra* produced probably a few centuries before the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*.

(1.45-46). Viṣṇu replies: *varṇāśramācāraratāḥ santaḥ śāstraikatat-parāḥ | tvāṃ dhare dhārayiṣyanti teṣāṃ tvadbhāra āhitaḥ ||* “Good people who take delight in the conduct of the social classes and orders of life and who are totally devoted to the śāstras, O Earth, will support you. The task of caring for you is entrusted to them.” (1.47) The Earth then asks: *varṇānām āśramāṇām ca dharmān vada sanātana |* “Tell me, O Eternal One, the Laws of the social classes and orders of life.” (1.48-49) This, then, is the context for the teaching of dharma by Viṣṇu to Earth.

I have noted already the strong Viṣṇu-*bhakti* evident in the text. In Chapter 97 of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* we have a discourse on Yogic meditation. In this context, the *smṛti* tells a person who is unable to engage in abstract meditation that he should meditate on Lord Vāsudeva “wearing a crown, ear-rings, and bracelets; graced with the Śrīvatsa mark; his chest adorned with a garland of wild flowers; with a gracious countenance; with four hands carrying a conch, a discus, a mace, and a lotus; and with Earth between his feet.” (*kirīṭinaṃ kuṇḍalinam aṅgaḍinaṃ śrīvatsāṅkaṃ vanamālāvibhūṣitoraskaṃ saumyarūpaṃ caturbhujam śaṅkhacakraḡadāpadmadharam caraṇamadhyagatabhuvam dhyāyet*, 97.10) This is undoubtedly a description of an iconographic representation of Viṣṇu -the meditator is instructed to look at this statue and focus his thoughts on Viṣṇu with the aid of his physical representation. The last phrase of the description of this statue is significant: “with Earth between his feet” – *caraṇamadhyagatabhuvam*. The statue, then, had Earth located between the two feet of Viṣṇu. Quite unlike other Dharmasāstras, the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* advocates the use of statues in worship. In Chapter 65, which deals with the worship of Viṣṇu, for example, the text tells the householder: “Then, after he has bathed well, washed his hands and feet thoroughly, and sipped water properly, he should worship Lord Vāsudeva, who is without beginning or end, before a statue of the god or in a sacred ground” (*athātaḥ susnātaḥ suprakṣālitapāṇipādaḥ svācānto devatārcāyām sthale vā bhagavantam anādinidhanam vāsudevam abhyarcayet*, 65.1).

The depiction of a Viṣṇu statue with Earth between his feet is mentioned again in Chapter 98, where Earth herself is paying homage to Viṣṇu after she has received instruction on *dharma*. Earth bows her knees and head and praises Viṣṇu, saying: “Lord, the four elements



have made their abode permanently near you, ether in the form of the conch, air in the form of the discus, fire in the form of the mace, and water in the form of the lotus. I too in this very form wish to remain in the middle of the Lord's feet" (*bhagavan tvatsamīpe satatam evaṃ catvāri bhūtāni kṛtālayāni ākāśaḥ śaṅkharūpī vāyuś cakrarūpī tejaś ca gadārūpī ambho 'mbhoruharūpi | aham apy anenaiva rūpeṇa bhagavatpādamadhye parivartinī bhavitum icchāmi*, 98.2). Earth thus becomes the fifth element to be iconographically reproduced on the Viṣṇu image. This too is clearly a description of a statue, with the added information that it was Earth herself at the beginning of creation who desired to be represented between the feet of Viṣṇu "in this very form." Earth had presented herself to Kaśyapa and Viṣṇu in the form of a beautiful woman<sup>9</sup>, and it is in this form that she is to be represented in the iconography.

Now, it is only in the Viṣṇu iconography originating from Kashmir that we find Earth located *between* the feet of Viṣṇu<sup>10</sup>. However, I have been unable to locate a textual source for this depiction outside of the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*; the prescriptions in the *Viṣṇudharmot-tara Purāṇa*, as far as I can see, make no mention of the earth between the feet of Viṣṇu, probably because it has no description there of Viṣṇu Vaikuṅṭha; it is in the iconography of this form of Viṣṇu that we find the earth represented between the feet.

---

9. She is described (1.22-29) thus: "her eyes were like petals of a blue lotus; her face beamed like the autumn moon; she was resplendent with curls resembling a swarm of bees; she was radiant with a lower lip resembling a Bandhujīva flower; with lovely brows, dainty teeth, lovely nose, curved brows, conch-shaped neck, compact thighs, she had buttocks supported by plump thighs; her breasts – even, full, with no space in between – gleamed, resembling the bulges on the foreheads of Śakra's elephant and dazzling like gold; her arms were as delicate as lotus filaments; her hands resembled budding sprouts; her thighs looked like golden columns; her knees were plump and touching each other; her shanks were even and without hair; her feet were exceedingly charming; her buttocks were plump; her waist was like that of a lion cub; her nails were coppery red and shining; her figure charmed everyone; with her glances she was constantly making the quarters filled with blue lotuses; the goddess was likewise lifting the gloom from the quarters with her brilliance; she was dressed in the most exquisite and white clothes and adorned with the best jewels; with her footsteps she was covering the earth, it seemed, with lotuses; she was endowed with beauty and youth; and she approached with modesty."

10. I want to acknowledge that it was Michael Willis of the British Museum who first drew my attention to the significance of this iconographic detail.

In the statues of Viṣṇu originating from north-central India, Earth is either absent or iconographically represented *under* the feet of Viṣṇu. Here also I have been unable to find a textual source for this depiction. The description of the manufacture of a statue of Vāsudeva in the *Agni Purāna* (Ch. 44-45) makes no mention of Pṛthivī, but only of Śrī, Puṣṭi, Lakṣmī, and the Vidhyādhara.

I want to present first some examples of Earth in sculpture from the Indian mainland outside Kashmir where she is invariably found beneath the feet of Viṣṇu. Given the scope of this paper and the limits of a journal article, I will give here only four images. Many more are available in on-line sites<sup>11</sup>. Figure 1 given below is a standing figure of Viṣṇu from Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh<sup>12</sup>. Here we see the figure of Earth with palms joint in adoration sculpted into the pedestal of the statue underneath the feet of Viṣṇu. Figure 2 is from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh<sup>13</sup>. The main figure of Viṣṇu is damaged, but one can see Earth clearly carved into the pedestal. Figure 3 is from Manwa, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh<sup>14</sup>, and here we see the Earth holding up the feet of Viṣṇu with her hands; she is surrounded by serpent deities. Figure 4 is from the Gwalior Fort in Madhya Pradesh<sup>15</sup>. Here too Earth is sculpted beneath the pedestal of the standing figure of Viṣṇu.

---

11. Other images with Earth beneath the feet of Viṣṇu can be seen in the following images in the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) photo archives at <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aiis>. They are Accession Numbers 34042, 84151, 34145. See also the sculptures from central India at the British Museum, Bridge Collection, OA 1872.7-1.75; OA 1872.7-1.41. These can be accessed at the Compass website of the British Museum: <http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass>.

12. This and the following photographs are from the Center for Art and Archeology, AIIS. Figure 1 is Accession No. 33458; the statue is presently located in the Rani Durgavati Museum, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh and dated to the 10th century CE.

13. Figure 2 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 76268. The statue is currently located in the Jardine Museum, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. It is dated to the 10th century CE.

14. Figure 3 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 5673. The statue is currently located in the State Museum in Lucknow. It is dated to the 9th century CE.

15. Figure 4 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 34145. The statue is currently located in the Central Museum of Gwalior. It is dated to the 11th century CE.

Turning to iconography originating in Kashmir, we note that Earth is regularly depicted between the feet of the god, in the same manner as described in the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*. In Figure 5 below Viṣṇu is seated with legs apart, and Earth is depicted between his feet emerging from the earth with her face turned upward<sup>16</sup>. Figure 6 is from Anantnag, Jammu & Kashmir<sup>17</sup>. Here we have a standing figure of Viṣṇu with Earth standing with arms outstretched between his two feet. In Figure 7 from Kashmir<sup>18</sup> is a standing Viṣṇu with Earth emerging from the earth between his feet. Finally, Figure 8 from Verinag, Anantnag in Kashmir<sup>19</sup> depicts the standing Viṣṇu with Earth between his feet<sup>20</sup>.

These iconographic representations from north-central India and from Kashmir show clearly that the descriptions of Earth between the feet of Viṣṇu in the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* could not have originated anywhere else other than Kashmir.

#### IV

We can conclude with a good deal of certainty, then, that the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* was written somewhere in Kashmir sometime after the 6th and probably before the 9th century CE. Now, it is well known that there was a strong Vaiṣṇava presence, especially of the Pañcarātra

---

16. Figure 5 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 10615. The statue is currently in a private collection in Srinagar, Kashmir. It is dated to the 10th century CE.

17 Figure 6 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 14425. The statue is currently located in the S. P. S. Government Museum, Srinagar. It is dated to the 12th century CE.

18 Figure 7 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 9700. The statue is currently located in the S. P. S. Museum, Srinagar. It is dated to circa 850 CE.

19 Figure 8 is from the AIIS photo archives, Accession Number 14421. The statue is currently located in the S. P. S. Museum, Srinagar. It is dated to the 8-14th centuries CE.

20 For other images with Earth between the feet of Viṣṇu, see the AIIS photo archives, Accession Numbers 14424, 15510, 14421, 14422, 14427, 14428, 14429, 9675. See also the following figures of Vaikuṅṭha Viṣṇu published in *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*, eds. E. Errington and J. Cribb. Cambridge: Ancient India and Iran Trust, 1992.

variety, in Kashmir during this period, as testified to by the *Nilamata Purāṇa*.

There is, of course, the other great Vaiṣṇava composition originating from Kashmir, the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*. Like this text, which Rocher calls a “Pañcarātra document”(1986: 252), the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* also probably has a Pañcarātra orientation with the mention of the Śvetadvīpa as the reward for devotion to Vāsudeva (49.4) and of the four *vyūhas* (67.2). This, I think, is the best we can do for now in dating and geographically locating the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*.

#### References

Bühler, G. (trans.) 1886. *The Laws of Manu*. Sacred Books of the East, 25. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Derrett, J. D. M. (ed. and trans.) 1975. *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*. 2 volumes. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Jolly, J. (ed.) 1887. *Mānava Dharma-śāstra: The Code of Manu. Original Sanskrit Text Critically Edited according to the Standard Sanskrit Commentaries*. London: Trübner.

Jolly, J. (trans.) 1880. *The Institutes of Vishnu*. Sacred Books of the East, 7. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jolly, J. (ed.) 1881. *The Institutes of Vishnu together with Extracts from the Sanskrit Commentary of Nanda Paṇḍit Called Vaijayanti*. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

Kane, P. V. 1962-75. *History of Dharmaśāstra*. 5 volumes. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Krishnamacharya, V (ed.) 1964. *Viṣṇusmṛti*. with Nandapaṇḍita's commentary *Keśavavaijayantī*. 2 vols. Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre.

Lingat, R. 1973. *The Classical Law of India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Olivelle, P. (ed. and trans.) 2000. *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Olivelle, P. (ed. and trans.) 2005. *Manu's Code of Law; A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rocher, L. 1986. *The Purāṇas. A History of Indian Literature*. Ed. Jan Gonda. Leiden: Brill.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

