

Jāyāsī's use of Rajput chivalric tropes should not be read as "self-identification" with Rajputs. Instead, he suggests that the *Padmāvat* uses conquest themes to claim Chishti superiority while taking down the Delhi sultans' claims to universal power (p. 199).

Two chapters on the *Madhumālātī* of Shaikh Mīr Sayyid Mañjhan Shaṭṭārī Rājgīrī, written in 1545 (also translated by Behl, with Simon Weightman, in 2000), are followed by a final chapter titled "Hierarchies of Response," an attentive meditation on the contexts of reception of Hindavī courtly poetry, from performative aesthetics to reading practices and the role of meditative music. The volume is sprinkled with many of Behl's characteristically effective translations and occasional detours (my favorite is one on cats in Sufi literature). With its subtle readings, its steadfast rigor in contextualization, and its thorough dismissal of the sectarian binaries within which such texts have been traditionally read, the book is a illuminating, cosmopolitan, and continually insightful read and a wonderful testament to Behl's lasting place in South Asian scholarship.

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The Four Hundred Songs of Love: An Anthology of Poems from Classical Tamil. The Akanāṅṅūru.

Translated and annotated by GEORGE L. HART. Regards sur l'Asie du Sud/South Asian Perspectives, no. 7. Pondichéry: INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE PONDICHÉRY, 2015. Pp. xx + 485. Rs. 1000, €43.

Like most of the other poems from the Old Tamil (or *caṅkam*) corpus, those of the *Akanāṅṅūru* ("400 Poems in the *Akam* or 'Love' Genre") were most likely composed in the first three centuries of the common era, and subsequently organized into anthologies in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by Pāratam Pāṭiya Peruntēvaṅār. Also known as the *Neṭuntokai*, the "long anthology" or "the collection of long poems," its poems range in length from thirteen to thirty-one lines and represent the work of 142 poets. George L. Hart, who has done more than any other scholar to ensure that these texts become available to English readers, has done us yet another great service with this translation.

This anthology is known for its unique organization according to *tiṅai* or "landscape," the literary device that best characterizes *caṅkam* poetry. In the *Akanāṅṅūru*, all of the odd-numbered poems are *pālai*, those of the wasteland, which treat themes of estrangement, discomfort, separation, and elopement. The poems ending in "2" and "8" are *kuṛiñci*, those of clandestine love before marriage and usually set at night in the hills or under the cover of millet fields. The poems ending in "4" are *mullai*, set in fragrant forests in the rainy season and treat themes related to patient waiting after marriage, most usually as the wife, accompanied by her girlfriend, awaits the return of her husband from the *pācaṅṅai* or "war camp," where he is in service to his king. The poems ending in "6" are *marutam*, set in cultivated riverine tracts and largely concerned with infidelity and sometimes spoken by the *parattai*, the wife's rival. Finally, the poems ending in "0" are *neytal* and are composed on themes related to anxious separation and lamentation both before and after marriage and set at the seashore.

Hart begins the book with a gentle—and very general—introduction to the poems of the *Akanāṅṅūru*, discussing their portrayals of "village" and "psychic" realities, noting that the poems contain "nothing otherworldly or rarefied" (p. vi). The translated poems that Hart uses as examples are difficult to read, giving us a sense of what lies before us in the body of the book, and I must admit that I am missing Hank Heifetz's touch (Heifetz is a poet who collaborated with Hart on his translations of two other Tamil texts, the *Puṛaṅṅūru* and the "Forest Book" of Kampaṅ's *Rāmāyaṅa*). Hart also provides a very brief but useful introduction to "suggestion" in Tamil poetics, the devices of *uḷḷurai uvamam* ("implied comparison") and *iraicci-p-poruḷ* ("indirect suggestion") (pp. viii–ix).

I reviewed the Hart and Heifetz translation of the *Puṛaṅṅūru* in *The Journal of Asian Studies* over a decade ago, and my complaints about the introduction to that book also hold true for this one. After all of his close work on this rich and important text, Hart seems to have nothing much to say about it, other than what has been said many times before about *caṅkam* poetry in all kinds of other sources.

The introduction is very dissatisfying. Writing requires a different kind of thinking and sustained attention than does translation, and I wonder if sheer exhaustion might be the reason, for translating this particular text was surely a struggle. As Hart himself writes, “Many if not most of the poems are quite difficult” (p. xix). The translations as a whole are painstakingly accurate, but they are not compact. They lack economy and are unreadable in places. I find them far too literal, and Hart’s longer accompanying notes tend to ramble, but they are still helpful. His notes on what U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar and other commentators have written have helped me to make sense out of Hart’s choices as a translator. My concerns have nothing to do with Hart’s skill or knowledge—these poems are difficult, to be sure—but they could have benefitted from another’s eye. These poems were composed to be declaimed, and I have found that even in English translation, they work better if read slowly and out loud. There is a discernable iambic pulse to many of Hart’s lines.

The *pālai* landscape utterly permeates this anthology, and the themes throughout are very familiar. I found myself gravitating towards the *caṅkam* masters: Uvaiyār, Kapilar, the *neytal* virtuoso Ammūvaṇār, Pālaipāṭiya Peruṅkaṭuṅkō, and the brilliant and inimitable Paraṇar, who is definitely the star of this anthology. I find the translations a bit prudish at times—we all have difficulties with the word *alkul*—which Hart translates as “waist” or “hips” but glosses in his notes as *mons veneris*. But the poems are challenging, and they are challenging to read, even in translation. They are also of deep emotional complexity, and many of the *pālai* poems are spoken by the hero to his own heart from the midst of the lonely wasteland. The sheer length of the poems seems to allow for more contemplation within them, giving way to more emotional coloring. The poems of the other landscapes are bounded by the *pālai* poems on either side, given the arrangement, and I have come to understand why this anthology was organized in this peculiar way. Many of the *pālai* poems are about motherhood and womanliness, and the themes seem far less varied in this anthology than in the others, and again, I wonder if it is the length of the poems that causes this, because most of the poets have had to rely more on drama and much less on imagery. The poems seem to expand upon the core ideas of the brief, image-driven compositions of the other *akam* anthologies, *Kuruntokai* and *Aiṅkurunūru*, giving a better sense of all of the culture swirling around the shorter poems. The length of the poems also makes the *uḷḷurais* complex. It must have been a challenge for the poets to sustain the *uḷḷurais*, and all the more difficult for the translator. The longer format works quite effectively for the poems of war in the *puṇam* genre, but not so much for the *akam* poems. What we gain, though, is a much fuller picture of the *caṅkam* imaginative universe relating to the *akam* genre.

We gain a great deal from reading these poems. There are marvelous glimpses of daily life, and the anthology quite clearly demonstrates what the aesthetic leanings of individual poets were, especially in terms of the *pālai* landscape. The male world is very much in evidence in this anthology: we learn a great deal about the *puṇam* sphere of kings and warriors in these *akam* poems. So many of them are spoken from the world of the war camp or by the hero on the road, urging on his charioteer as he rushes back to his waiting wife in the *mullai* poems. The whole homosocial world of attachment and fealty is alive and well in these poems: so many of them are about the constraints of patronage, service to kings, and ancient Tamil networks of commerce and trade. In effect, we learn just as much—if not more—about war and public life as we do about the private worlds of love.

The poems describe the beauties and horrors of nature, and also a great deal of human violence and plunder, and I would think that—probably more than anyone living today—Hart would have a great deal to say about the ways in which the *Akaṇānūru* and the *Puṇānānūru* complement and talk to each other. Judging by the authors’ names, the connection of this anthology to the city of Madurai is very strong: 43 out of the 142 poets represented in this text were obviously either born in Madurai or had generational ties to the city.

In his brief introduction Hart remarks that the “poetry of the anthologies is so bound by convention that it is difficult for varied styles to appear” (p. iii), but all of my moments of quiet astonishment came from the compositions of Paraṇar and Ammūvaṇār. Paraṇar composed thirty-three poems in the collection in the *marutam*, *kuṟiṅci*, and *pālai* landscapes, while Ammūvaṇār composed five *neytal* poems and only one in *pālai*. While these poets were utter masters of their craft, the entire collection is studded with utterly remarkable imagery, but also with very moving, plain-spoken utterances. Take poem #26,

for example, a *marutam* composition by Pāṇṭiyaṅ Kāṅappēreyil Tanta Ukkirapperuvaluti, in which a married woman who has just given birth speaks about her philandering husband to her girlfriend: “He used to celebrate these breasts of mine./but now they sag with sweet milk for our son./they are soft and covered with spots.” And here are the words of the fine female poet Auvaiyār, composed in the *pālai* landscape. The heroine is speaking to her friend, as she learns that her lover is leaving. She compares herself to a starving tigress as her mate listens to the bellowing of a stag. She then says, in a moment of intimacy, words that could well have been spoken today: “I have grown so thin it seems I will die, I grieve and I don’t feel like eating./My arms have lost the beauty they once had/and every day I think sadly of how he left me/ with nothing to cure my grief, I sit and do nothing.” In *neytal* poem #390, Ammūvaṅṅār imagines his hero as he recounts his encounter with the beautiful daughter of a salt merchant: “I stood in her way and said, ‘O you with a lovely, curving navel/and arms like bamboo, you didn’t tell us what it costs/for the salt of your body.’” But Paraṅar takes the prize. Hart notes that Paraṅar “is famous for long, extensive (and seemingly overdone) descriptions” (p. 171 n. 1), but I do not find them so. To me, they are masterful, innovative, and emotionally forceful, such as in his *kuṛiṅci* poem #122, in which a heroine speaks to her girlfriend about all of the obstacles to an assignation with her lover, who is within earshot. Here are a few lines from the middle of the poem: “And even if the dogs with their loud barking sleep,/a huge moon, bright as day, spreads with its light in the sky./And even if the moon sets behind its mountain/and thick darkness falls, a loud-voiced owl/living on the rats in our house screeches fearfully/in the middle of the night when spirits roam/. . . One day, when everything was asleep, he, with his fickle heart,/didn’t come, and so, friend, our affair is hopeless . . .”.

As difficult as these poems are, the struggle to read through them is rewarding, and this book in no way diminishes our debt to George L. Hart.

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Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e. By VLADIMIR A. LIVSHITS, translated by TOM STABLEFORD and edited by NICHOLAS SIMS-WILLIAMS. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, pt. II: Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian periods of Eastern Iran and Central Asia, vol. III: Sogdian IV. London: SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES, 2015. Pp. 315. £60.

Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e is a landmark volume: the first time that a major edition of the Mugh documents, the only Sogdian manuscripts to have been found in Sogdiana itself, has been published in English. More precisely, it is an English translation of Livshits' Russian publication consisting of two parts: a re-edition of many Mugh documents—this part being a substantial reworking of the initial publication of the texts a half-century before¹—and the re-publication (and here, translation into English) of several of Livshits' articles on Sogdian texts from various sites in Central Asia. The importance of having this book available in English can hardly be overstated, as it will certainly be the standard work on the Mugh documents upon which future research will be based.²

The importance of the Mugh documents should not be lost on any scholar of medieval Central Asia, the history of the Islamic conquests, or Iranian philology. These seventy-seven documents (seventy-five in Sogdian, one in Arabic, one in Old Turkic) form the only surviving part of the archive of Dhewashtich, the last ruler of Sogdiana before its complete submission to the Muslim conquerors in

1. V. A. Livshits. (2008), *Sogdijskaja epigrafika Srednej Azii i Semireč'ja*, Saint Petersburg. The original publication of the texts was *Sogdijskie Dokumenty s Gory Mug*, vol. 1 *Opisanie, Publikatsii i Issledovanie Dokumentov s Gory Mug* (A. A. Freiman, 1962); vol. 2 *Juriditseskie Dokumenty i Pis'ma* (V. A. Livshits, 1962); vol. 3 *Khozyajstvennye Dokumenty* (M. N. Bogolyubov and O. I. Smirnova, 1963), Moscow.

2. It should be noted that all comments made in this review are to be taken as applying to the author's (= Livshits') work, rather than to that of the editor and translator, who deserve much gratitude for making this essential work available to a broader audience.