THE JAIMINIBHĀRATA AND ITS EASTERN VERNACULAR VERSIONS

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purāṇa pabitra kathā prati ghare ghare |
jayadeba jaiminibhārata pāṭha kare ||[1]

The purāṇas and holy stories [are heard] in every home,
and Jayadeva and the Jaiminibhārata are read.

In the above verse from the *Dharma maṅgal*, an 18th century Bengali folk epic by Mānikrām Gaṅguli, the poet describes a village inhabited by religious people: it is one in which the sacred texts are read and the sacred stories are recited. Only two texts are named. Though alliterative considerations played a role in the the poet's choice of titles, those selected obviously must have ranked amongst the most highly regarded religious works of his day. Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* is not a surprising choice but the *Jaiminibhārata* may seem to be one. The *Jaiminibhārata*, which describes the horse sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira, however, enjoyed an impressive popularity in eastern India in Manikrām's day as can be seen by the large number of versions of it found in Assamese, Bengali and Oriya. In Assam the poet Haribar Bipra, who is of uncertain date,[2] rendered several of its episodes into Old Assamese, namely the *Lavakuśar yuddha*[3], the *Babhruvāhanar yuddha*[4] and, perhaps[5], the *Tāmradhvajar yuddha*. Another Assamese poet Gaṅgadhar, also of unknown date, treated the first subject again in his *Sītāra banabas*[6] and the entire *Jaiminibhārata* was rendered in Assamese by three poets, Gaṅgadās, Bhavanidās and Subuddhi Ray between the 16th and 17th centuries and inserted into the Assamese *Mahābhārata* where it replaces the fourteenth parvan.[7] The theme was equally popular in Bengal. There is an early independent Bengali version of the *Jaiminibhārata* by Śrīkara Nandī[8], and versions of it are included in the *Mahābhāratas* of Kāśīrām Dās[9] and Kabi

1 Datta & Datta 1960: 223.

2 Some historians of Assamese literature identify the Haribar's patron with King Durlabhnārāyaṇ of Kamatā who ruled at the end of the 13th century, or King Durlebhendra of Kamatā who ruled at the beginning of the 16th century; for a discussion of this see Barua (1964: 10) and Sarma (1972: 81). Both the language and the subject matter of these works suggest, however, a much later date.

3 See bibliography: *Lavakuśar yuddha* 1959.

4 See bibliography: Baruvā & Neog 1960.

5 Its authorship is doubtful (Sarma 1972: 89–90).

6 See bibliography: *Sītāra banabas* 1975.

7 See bibliography: Dattabaruvā 1993.

8 See bibliography: Kābyatīrtha & Sen 1912.

Sañjay[10] where, as in Assam, it takes the place of the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*; the Lava Kuśa episode, in addition, appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttibās[11]. Later Bengali versions of the Jaiminibhārata were made by Ananta Miśra, Ghanaśyam Dās and Dbija Premānanda; these still remain in manuscript (Śāstrī 1941: §§ 42–44). The popularity of the theme did not abate with the coming of the British as there is a 19th century translation by Rājarām Dutt, still in manuscript (ibid.: § 46), a verse version by Kaliprasanna Bidyāratna[12] and a free prose translation by Candranāth Basu[13] Finally one can note Oriya versions by Niḷambara Dāsa[14] and Indramaṇi Sāhu[15].

RESEARCH ON THE JAIMINIBHĀRATA

The Jaiminibhārata, which is also referred to as the *Jaimini-aśvamedha*, the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* and even confused with the *Jaiminīyasaṃhitā*,[16] has not excited a great deal of interest amongst western scholars. There even seems to be some confusion as to its contents: some manuscripts of the *Mairāvaṇacarita*, an apocryphal Rāmāyaṇa episode, claim to be a part of it (Raja 1973: 311) and Bengali manuscripts of the story of King Daṇḍī, absent from the Sanskrit original, claim the same (Śāstrī 1941: § 46). There are a number of printed editions of the Sanskrit text: Bombay editions from 1850, 1860, 1863 (which is the one used here) 1885 and 1932, Calcutta 1870, and editions with Marathi (Wai 1913), Gujarati (Ahmedabad 1909)[17] and Hindi translations (Gorakhpur 1961).

The first western scholar to comment on the Jaiminibhārata was Albrecht Weber who wrote an article on it in an obscure journal in 1869. Not long thereafter H. Mögling published portions of a Kannada translation in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* between 1870 and 1873: this version by the poet Lakṣmīśa is said to be the most popular work in Kannada literature. In the following century Maurice Winternitz devoted a few pages to it in his history of Indian literature and in 1970 J. Duncan M. Derrett wrote an article entitled *Greece and India again: the Jaimini-Aśvamedha, the Alexander-romance and the Gospels* where, because of the neglect it has suffered, he calls the epic 'a Cinderella amongst Sanskrit compositions' (Derrett 1970: 19). As the title of his article announces, Derrett believes the Jaiminibhārata to be inspired by various western works. Also important is a summary of the contents of the Jaiminibhārata and a comparison of them to the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* of the Mahābhārata

9 See bibliography: *Kāśīdāśī mahābhārata*, s.a. The 14th *parvan* was not written by Kāśīdās but by Dbija Raghunāth.

10 See bibliography: Ghoṣ 1966.

11 See bibliography: Datta 1901.

12 See bibliography: Bidyāratna & Basāk 1884.

13 See bibliography: Basu 1917.

14 Noted by Duncan Derrett (see below).

15 See bibliography: Sāhu, s.a.

16 As is done by Sukumar Sen (1971: 75).

17 Raja 1973: 310.

Jaiminibhārata and a comparison of them to the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* of the Mahābhārata by Raghunath Damodar Karmarkar in his critical edition of the fourteenth *parvan* (Karmarkar 1960: xxiv–xliv).

Opinions on the date of the Jaiminibhārata, which seems to be connected with early *Pañcarātra* texts, especially the *Nārāyaṇīyaparvan* of the Mahābhārata,[18] vary. Winternitz writes that 'it is not earlier than the later sections of the Purāṇa literature' and in any case, later than the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* which it quotes (Winternitz 1972: 586). Karmakar (1960: xxiv) assigns it to the time around the beginning of the present era but gives no reasons for doing so. Derrett (1970: 24, 27) suggests 1100–1200, a date which seems reasonable.

THE JAIMINIBHĀRATA AND THE ĀŚVAMEDHIKAPARVAN

The Jaiminibhārata has been called an *upabhārata*, a secondary Mahābhārata but if there be such a genre of Indian literature, this seems to be the sole example of it. The traditional account is that Vyāsa, the legendary author of the Mahābhārata, taught the Mahābhārata to his five pupils Sumantu, Jaimini, Śuka, Paila and Vaiśampāyana and each of them in their turn wrote his own version of the Mahābhārata; unfortunately these proved to be superior to that of their mentor so the jealous Vyāsa ordered all of them to be destroyed. Only one small fragment, tradition has it, managed to survive his envy: the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* of Jaimini.[19] Jaimini's *Bhārata* differs very much in its subject matter from the 14th *parvan* of the Great Epic, which, as its editor, R. D. Karmarkar, points out, 'though named *Āśvamedhika*[*parvan*] does not say much about the aśvamedha' (Karmarkar 1960: xxiv); the Jaiminibhārata, on the other hand, does actually deal with the horse sacrifice. The Mahābhārata version, after treating other matters, finally comes round to an account of the horse sacrifice only in its seventy-first *adhyāya* where it describes how Arjuna follows the sacrificial stallion in its wanderings and encounters and defeats various kings, all of whom are the sons of monarchs killed by the Pāṇḍavas and their allies in the great Bhārata war. These kings are never slain since Yudhiṣṭhira has told Arjuna that enough blood has been shed and orders that their lives be spared (14.75.20). These confrontations are described quite briefly with the exception of the dramatic confrontation between Arjuna and his son Babhruvāhana, king of Maṇipura. The entire *Āśvamedhikaparvan* is 96 *adhyāyas* long, little more than a quarter of which are concerned with the horse sacrifice proper.

The Jaiminibhārata is a different work with a different caste of characters. In the Mahābhārata Arjuna acts alone. In the Jaiminibhārata he is accompanied by Vṛṣaketu, the son of his erstwhile foe Karṇa, Meghavarṇa, son of the demon Ghaṭotkaca and grandson of Bhīma, neither of whom are mentioned in the Mahābhārata, and Kṛṣṇa's sons Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Now and then Kṛṣṇa turns up to lend a hand and Hanumān,

18 This was pointed out to me in a personal communication by Petteri Koskikallio whose study, *The Wandering Horse: From Vedic Horse Sacrifice to Post-Vedic Ritual Ideology*, is forthcoming. I am also indebted to him for much of the other information here.

19 The *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* tells a story of how Jaimini has a conversation with four wise birds in the Vindhyā Mountains on points in the Mahābhārata which were unclear (Rocher 1986: 192).

princes named Yauvanāśva,[20], Nīladhvaja, Haṃsadhvaja, Sudhanvā, Suratha, Tāmradhvaja, Mayūradhvaja, Candrahāsa and Duḥśāla, with one exception,[21] unmentioned in and unrelated to the kings of the Mahābhārata. One episode and one episode only has been taken from the *Āśvamedhikaparvan*: the story of Arjuna's encounter with his son Babhruvāhana (JBh 22–24, 37–40). When Arjuna discovers that the ruler of Maṇipur is Babhruvāhana, his son by Citrāṅgadā, and prepares to do battle with him, he asks whether any other hero has found himself in such a situation. In response he is told the story of Kuśa and Lava and the resulting story takes up chapters 25 to 36 of the Jaiminibhārata making it the longest single episode in it; thus just as the Mahābhārata contains a version of the Rāmāyaṇa in form of the *Rāmopākhyānā*.

THE KUŚA LAVA EPISODE

The Kuśa Lava episode[22] appears in a number of variants. According to the Valmīkian Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma exiles his wife Sītā to the forest and she gives birth to twin sons, Lava and Kuśa, in the ashram of Vālmīki. When the two boys grow up, the sage teaches them the Rāmāyaṇa and their recitation of it brings about their recognition by their father. This story is a later addition of the epic as is the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of which it is a part. The oldest version of the Kuśa and Lava tale or *Kuśalavopakhyānā,* is found in the *Paumacariyaṃ* of the Jaina poet Vimalasūri and a very similar version is included in the *Padmapurāṇa* of another Jaina poet, Raviseṇa. 'Hindu' versions of the story can be found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Uttararāmacarita* of Bhavabhūti.[23] The most influential version, however, is that found in the *rāmāśvamedha* section of the *Padmapurāṇa*,[24] where, unlike earlier recountings (with the partial exception of Bhavabhūti's play), it is part of an account of Rāma's horse sacrifice. Lava and Kuśa steal the sacrificial horse and capture the warriors protecting it only to learn from their shocked mother that they have been fighting their uncle Śatrughna and that the horse belongs to their father. The account of Kuśa and Lava in Jaiminibhārata follows that in the *Padmapurāṇa* but extends it: there, after Rāma's sons defeat Śatrugna, the final episode the *purāṇa* account, Rāma reacts by despatching a second army under his brother Lakṣmaṇa and when it is defeated, he leads a third army himself, only to realize too late that he has been fighting his own sons and suffering the same fate.

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20 Yauvanāśva is the king from whom the sacrificial horse is stolen; the others are encountered in confrontations provoked by the horses's wanderings.

21 An exception is Duḥśāla, son of Jayadratha, who drops dead of fright when he hears that the horse is being protected by Arjuna, who had killed his father in the Bhārata war.

22 In the *Padmapurāṇa* and the Jaiminibhārata they are referred to as Kuśa Lava and in the vernacular versions of the story as Lava Kuśa.

23 Kāmil Bulke (1962: 710–713) gives a brief survey of this and the other versions of the Kuśa Lava tale. For details on these versions see W. L. Smith, forthcoming.

24 The version consulted here is the Ānandāśrama edition of 1894. It is translated by N. A. Deshpande (1990).

third army himself, only to realize too late that he has been fighting his own sons and suffering the same fate.

These two versions of the Kuśa Lava episode are so close that it is obvious that one must be indebted to the other and that the borrower must be the Jaiminibhārata. In the *purāṇa* the Kuśa Lava episode is the climax which the other encounters in the *Rāmāśvamedha* lead up to, while in the Jaiminibhārata it is no more than a lengthy digression which could be omitted without affecting the rest of the narrative; later poets such as Śrīkara Nandī, Kaśīrām Dās and Kabi Sañjay realized this and did not include it in their versions of Jaimini's *Bhārata*.[25]

The Kuśa Lava episode might well have been the core around which the other episodes of the *Rāmāśvamedha* of the *Padmapurāṇa* collected; it is the oldest of its episodes and much different in that it is not devotional in spirit while the others are devotional tales. These other episodes tell how different kings or princes - king Subāhu and his sons Damana, Suketu and Citrāṅga; king Vīramaṇi and his son Rulmāṅgada; and king Suratha and his sons Campaka, Mohaka and Ripuñjaya - seize the sacrificial stallion and provoke a battle with its guardians. What is striking is that all these warriors are fervent devotees of Rāma whose *aśvamedha* they do their best to thwart. Subāhu only fights Śatrughna because he is suffering under a curse; Satyavān, is so fervent a devotee that he has those of his subjects who do not worship Rāma are beaten with rods; Vīramaṇi fights because of a boon given him by Śiva; and Suratha only desists when Rāma himself appears on the battlefield to give him *darśan*. The devotional character of the *Rāmāśvamedha* helps suggest a date; the first devotional work written in Sanskrit is the *Bhāgavatapuraṇa* (9th century?) and Rāma *bhakti* was a later development, consequently this section of the *Padmapurāṇa* must have been composed at least several centuries after the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and the Jaiminibhārata which borrows in turn from it, must be still later. This makes a date of 1200–1300 seem reasonable.

DEVOTED ENEMIES

Several of the warriors faced by Arjuna and his army in the Jaiminibhārata were later canonized. The most famous and important of the North Indian hagiographic compendia, the *Bhakt māl* of Nābhādās (c. 1600) with its commentary by Priyadās (c. 1712) lists Sudhanvā and Suratha, both slain by Arjuna in battle (JBh 17–20), Mayūradhvaja, and his son Tāmradhvaja who defeats Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in battle, (JBh 42–46) and Nīladhvaja (JBh 15) among the saints of the devotional movement. Nīladhvaja, whose daughter is married to the fire god Agni, intercepts the sacrificial stallion and only opposes Arjuna at the insistence of his wife Jvālā. As a result his sons are killed in battle. Nīladhvaja then surrenders the horse and his enraged wife, after failing to bully him into continuing the fight, commits suicide and to be transformed into the arrow which Babhruvāhana later uses to kill his father Arjuna (JBh 15).

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25 It is perhaps also significant that both the *Rāmāśvamedha* of the *Padmapurāṇa* and the Jaiminibhārata are exactly 68 *adhyāya*s in length.

same name as the devout king in the *Padmapurāṇa*), are sons of king Haṃsadhvaja. Haṃsadhvaja seizes the sacrificial horse and orders his sons to come to the battlefield for the impending fight under pain of death.[26] Sudhanvā, however, stops to take farewell to his wife, Prabhāvatī, who is childless, and when he does so, she tells him it is time for *ṛtugamana* as prescribed by the *dharmaśāstras*. Sudhanvā then fulfills his maritial obligations and as a consequence is late for the muster. Haṃsadhvaja, enraged at his tardiness[27], consults with his two *purohita*s, Saṅkha and Likhita and sentences him to death for disobedience. Sesame oil is brought to the boil in a huge *kaṭāha* (an Indian wok) and Sudhanvā, whose only regret is that he will not be able to behold Kṛṣṇa, leaps into the bubbling liquid. As soon as he lands in it, the oil becomes as cool as the water in a forest pond and the surprised *purohitas* stare at Sudhanvā's head bobbing on its surface muttering name of Hari and looking like a lotus afloat in a lake. Śaṅkha then throws a coconut in the oil to test its temperature and it bursts into two pieces one of which strikes him in the head and the other Likhita. Realizing his mistake Śaṅkha jumps into the oil and embraces Sudhanvā. Haṃsadhvaja then forgives Sudhanvā who marches off to battle where he proves himself to be a redoutable warrior by felling Vṛṣaketu, Pradyumna, Anuśālva in short order before confronting Arjuna who decapitates him with an arrow.

Sudhanvā's brother, Suratha then takes the field. He is another fierce fighter and defeats various Pāṇḍava heroes before coming face to face with Arjuna. When Arjuna cuts off his right arm with an arrow; Suratha attacks with a club in his left; Arjuna cuts off his left arm, Suratha then attacks him with his teeth; Arjuna shoots off his legs, but this doesn't discourage him either, for he wiggles towards Arjuna like a snake so Arjuna decapitates him like he did his brother.[28] Kṛṣṇa summons Garuḍa to transport his head to the Prayāg *tīrtha*. When Śiva sees Garuḍa passing by, he commands his servant, Bhṛṅgin, to take the head from Garuḍa so that he can string it on his the necklace of skulls. After a scuffle the skull falls into the waters at Prayāg, where Nandi fishes it out and delivers it to Śiva. The battle is over. Kṛṣṇa then asks Haṃsadhvaja to embrace him, and this he does, forgetting his anger and the grief for his sons; for what do such things matter to one who has attained Kṛṣṇa?

VĪRABHAKTI

It seems remarkable that the actors in the *Rāmāśvamedha* and Jaiminibhārata fight fiercely and enthusiastically against the representatives of the deity they adore and even the deity himself. This less conventional mode of devotion, which apparently is first given expression in the *Padmapurāṇa*, is reminicent of *dveṣabhakti*, 'hate-devotion' described

26 King Vīramaṇi decrees the same punishment for stragglers in the *Padmapurāṇa* (5.40.30). He, however, is obeyed.

27 Haṃsadhvaja assumes that his absence indicates hostility to Kṛṣṇa and he accuses his son of being *kṛṣṇaparāṇmukhaṃ* (JBh 17.60).

28 The same scenario is found in the *Padmapurāṇa* (5.20.86ff).

himself. This less conventional mode of devotion, which apparently is first given expression in the *Padmapurāṇa*, is reminicent of *dveṣabhakti*, 'hate-devotion' described in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and later developed in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.[29] Here it is claimed that Kṛṣṇa's enemies were saved because of their intense hate for him. According to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* Śiśupāla was so filled with the fear of and hate for Kṛṣṇa that his mind was totally concentrated on him; since it is the mental concentration on the deity which is essential, regardless of the motives for that concentration, Śiśupāla is granted liberation. The same mode of *bhakti* is also referred to as *saṃrambhamārga*, 'the path of rage'.[30] 'I consider even those demons as devotees', the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states, 'who had fixed their minds on the Lord of the Triple World through rage and who saw Lord Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield approaching them, wielding his discus mounted on the back of Garuḍa'.[31]

A later variant of this mode of *bhakti* is found in devotional Rāma literature, where it is said that Rāma's foe, Rāvaṇa, was actually a secret devotee and intentionally provoked the wrath of Rāma by kidnapping Sītā in order to be killed by him knowing that a death at his hands meant immediate translation to heaven. This scenario can be found in several recensions of Vālmīki as well as the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*.[32] Rāvaṇa's hostility is thus a shame, an act played out in order to goad Rāma into slaying him. One more variant is discussed in the technical literature of *bhakti*. Reviewing the various modes or *rasa*s of *bhakti* in his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmi discusses *vīrabhakti*, 'heroic devotion', whose practioners he divides into four categories: *yuddha*, *dāna*, *dayā* and *dharmavīras*. The *yuddhavīra*, he explains, is eager to please Kṛṣṇa by challenging him in battle and gives as an example of a mock-battle (*keliyuddha*) one fought between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopa* Dhāmā on an island in the Yamunā which was witnessed by an audience of cowherds: Kṛṣṇa shoots arrows at Dhāmā who knocks them down by swirling a stick (*laguḍa*); Rūpa also points out that according to the *Harivaṃśa* Kṛṣṇa wrestled with Arjuna and defeated him while Kuntī watched.[33]

None of these descriptions seem to adequately describe the situations in the Jaiminibhārata where the battles cannot be called mock-battles since they result in fatalities; nor are Kṛṣṇa's opponents motivated by hate for or rage at him like Śiśupāla or are they acting out roles like Rāvaṇa. One of the vernacular poets, Indramaṇi Sāhu, however, does draw parallels to the last example. According to him, as Sudhanvā is preparing to enter the battlefield, his father encourages him with the following words:

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29 Perhaps the first allusion made to it is that in Bhāsa's *Bālacarita*, where the bull-demon Ariṣṭa decides to attack Kṛṣṇa in order to be slain by him and thereby gain heaven (Hardy 1983: 85).

30 See Sheth 1984: 147–154. The term *saṃrambhamārga* is used in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and by Rūpa Gosvāmi.

31 *manye 'surānbhāgatāṃs tryadhīśe saṃrambhamārgābhiniviṣṭacittān ye saṃyuge 'cakṣata tārkṣaputramaṃśe unābhāyaudhamāpatantaṃ* (Bhāgavatapurāṇa 3.2.24).

32 See W. L. Smith 1992: 262.

33 *tathā ca harivaṃśe, tathā gaṇḍīvadhanvānaṃ vikrīḍanmadhusūdanaḥ | jigāya bharataśreṣṭhaṃ kuntyāḥ pramukhato vibhuḥ ||* Rūpagosvāmin, Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu 4.3.10 (Haridās Dās 1943: 475).

If one is killed by his hand, one's abode is the heaven of Vaikuṇṭha.[...]
Do righteous battle with him and gain release from rebirth.[34]

This is, however, exceptional. Otherwise the motives given by the protagonists themselves are two: first, the desire to behold the object of their devotion with their own eyes. They want to have *darśan* of Kṛṣṇa. Haṃsadhvaja steals the sacrificial horse and provokes the battle because he knows 'where Arjuna is there without a doubt stands Kṛṣṇa himself'[35] and he is aware that if he checks Arjuna on the battlefield, Kṛṣṇa will come to his aid. This is the reason he is so angry at his son Sudhanvā: his absence threatens to deprive him of the sight of Kṛṣṇa. The opposite takes place in the confrontation between Tāmradhvaja and Kṛṣṇa. Tāmradhvaja fells Kṛṣṇa and, leaving him lying on the battlefield, takes the captured sacrificial horse to the city to display it to his father. In Haribar Bipra's description of this event, Tāmradhavaja's father Mayūrdhvaja is enraged. How, he tells his son, could he be so wicked (*duṣṭa*); he's a sinner (*pāpiṣṭha*) and a bad son (*kuputra*):

'You got to touch Mādhava,
I didn't [even] see Hari, that's my ill fate. [...]'
He scolded his sons in many way
[since] he had had Govinda in his hands and abandoned him. [36]

The second motive is obedience to one's own *dharma*. Sudhanvā, for example, might at first consideration seem an unlikely saint: he disobeys his father's orders to order to please his wife, is condemned to death for doing so, is saved by Kṛṣṇa (*prabhāvāt keśavasya*, JBh 18.20), and then, ordered into battle by his father, does his best to defeat Arjuna before being killed by him. The modern commentator of the *Bhakt māl* (Nābhādās 1931: 167) refers to Sudhanvā as *ek strīvratadhārī* and as famous for his *dharma-karmaniṣṭhā*; one who supports his wife in the performance of her vows and one assiduous in the performance of his dharmic duties; in other words, Sudhanvā was a person who followed without deviation the dictates of *patidharma*, husbandly duty, and fought at the command of his father as prescribed by *putradharma*, his obligations as a son, and beyond these heeded the obligations of *kṣatriyadharma* or *vīradharma*. Vallābhācārya notes that every devotee comes to experience Kṛṣṇa is the particular mood (*rasa*) which is most appropriate to him; thus Bhīṣma (the example he cites) related to Kṛṣṇa in terms of the *vīra rasa* (Redington 1983: 364). For warriors like Nīladhvaja, Sudhanvā or Tāmradhvaja, then, the battlefield is the most appropriate place for them to experience Kṛṣṇa. Sudhanvā's father, as has been seen in Indramaṇi Sāhu's *Bṛhat jaiminibhārata*, urges his son against Arjuna telling him to 'fight righteous battle', *nyāẏa yuddha kara*; the adjective *nyāẏa* 'righteous', i.e. 'according to the rules of *dharma*' is

34 *paṅkaja locana śyāma naba jaḷadhara | tāṅka saṅge bhakti bhābe karibu samara ||*
tretāyuge rābana ye rāma droha kari | yuddha kari malā mukti dele tāṅku hari ||
tāhāṅka darśane hue pāpā tāpa dhbaṃsa | tāṅku haste mṛtyu hele bekuṇṭhare bāsa || [...]
tāṅka saṅge nyāẏa yuddhe pāa mokṣapada | (Sāhu, s.a.: 122).

35 *yatrārjunas tatra hariḥ svayaṃ tiṣṭhaty asaṃśaya* (JBh 17.6).

36 *mādhavaka pāili lāga | mai nedekhilo hari iṭo se abhāgya ||* [...]
aneka prakāre nindā karilā putraka | hāte pāi eri deva govindaka || (Baruvā & Neog 1960: 119).

experience Kṛṣṇa. Sudhanvā's father, as has been seen in Indramaṇi Sāhu's *Bṛhat jaiminibhārata*, urges his son against Arjuna telling him to 'fight righteous battle', *nyāya yuddha kara*; the adjective *nyāya* 'righteous', i.e. 'according to the rules of *dharma*' is used by the poet repeatedly. In Kabi Sañjay's poem Sudhanvā's sister tells him that his family will laugh at him (*hāsibe*) if he is defeated by Arjuna, and he promises his mother, who is equally eager for his success, that 'Following *kṣatriyadharma* I will meet Viṣṇu in battle. I never turn my face (from a fight).'[37] Great emphasis is put on the requirements of duty, disinterested duty as described in the *Bhagavadgītā*, meaning ones duty as a warrior, no matter who ones opponent may be: whether a blood relative as in the Mahābhārata or a fellow devotees as in the Jaiminibhārata.

The same consideration is a factor in the strange story of Arjuna's confrontation with his son Babhruvāhana. When Arjuna's army approaches his kingdom, Babhruvāhana asks his minister, Subuddhi, how he should react. Subuddhi replies that his paramount duty, *paramadharma*, is to show respect to his father, *pitṛpūjanam* (JBh 22.28), so Babhruvāhana dismounts from his chariot, approaches Arjuna on foot, throws himself on the ground at his feet and offers himself, his kingdom and all his treasure to him. In reply Arjuna kicks and insults him. S. N. Sarma, commenting on this scene, criticizes Arjuna's 'unchivalrous' behavior which he sees as unworthy of him (Sarma 1972: 87). What Arjuna is doing, however, is acting from motives of chivalry: he is enraged because his son is not behaving as a *kṣatriya* should behave and this is why he abuses him, accusing him of not being his true son but a coward and acting like a *vaiśya* rather than a Pāṇḍava. These insults are calculated to make him act as he should, and, just as Arjuna intends, Bahruvāhana finally loses patience with his father, picks up his arms and, after a five-day battle, slays him with the arrow Nīladhvaja's wife Jvālā had been transformed into. The situation is resolved when Kṛṣṇa arrives to bring Arjuna back to life.

This episode also highlights another feature which has aroused comment. Arjuna, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Vṛṣaketu, Meghavarṇa and the other Pāṇḍava heroes (as they are called) are frequently felled or even killed by their foes. The inferiority of Arjuna and his allies has been seen in a very negative light by some scholars. S. N. Sarma (1972: 11) writes that 'the old martial spririt and heroic ideals were toned down to popular sentimentalism', while R. D. Karmarkar (1960: xxiv) notes that '[according to tradition] the Pāṇḍavas were there [in Jaimini's lost *Bhārata*] shown in an unfavorable light', and notes that 'the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa do cut a sorry figure throughout.' The modern commentator of the *Bhakt māl*, feeling obliged to explain Arjuna's defeat at the hands of Tāmradhvaja, claims that Tāmradhvaja was permitted by Kṛṣṇa to defeat Arjuna in order to rid Arjuna of the disease (*rog*) of pride (*garba*) (Nābhādās 1931: 172). But this does not explain why Tāmradhvaja also managed to defeat Kṛṣṇa. It seems more likely that the reason for the defeats of Arjuna and the others is their opponents' great devotional fervor. Devotional intensity is reflected in martial prowess. In this tradition the victor is he who is morally, that is, devotionally, superior and here Arjuna does not have that advantage.

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37 *kṣetrī dharmma anusārī biṣṇu saṅge raṇe | kariba bimukha āhmi nahe kadācane ||* (Ghoṣ 1966: 573).

OTHER EPISODES

The story of Tāmradhvaja who defeated both Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa even after Kṛṣṇa had destroyed 100 *akṣauhiṇīs* of his troops with his discus displays a different devotional motiv. Realizing that he could not overcome Tāmradhvaja on the battlefield, Kṛṣṇa resorted to different tactics: he and Arjuna disguised themselves as brahmans and went to Mayūradhvaja, the father of their foe, who, as a good Hindu monarch should, immediately offered to grant them whatever they wanted. Kṛṣṇa introduced himself as a brahman named Kṛṣṇaśarmā and said that while he and his son were travelling through the forest, a lion seized his son. When he offered himself in his son's stead, the lion declined, but offered to release the boy in exchange for half the body of king Mayūradhvaja whose flesh was tender from a lifetime of eating the most delicate foods. Without the slightest hesitation Mayūradhvaja agreed to sacrifice himself; when he was about to be sawn in twain, Kṛṣṇa revealed himself. Mayūradhvaja and his son then returned the horse (JBh 82–89). Here we see a different mode of *bhakti*, and one ultimately derived from the self-sacrificing saints of Buddhism, along with the Buddha himself, 'who made sacrifices with the flesh of his own body'.[38]

Another elaborate tale (JBh 50–55) tells the story of king Candrahāsa of Sarasvatīpura. It was this episode which monopolized the attention of both Weber and Witnernitz in their respective writings on the Jaiminibhārata because of the folklore motifs it contains. This story has little to do with the horse sacrifice being instead concerned with Candrahāsa's boyhood, during which an amazing good fortune allows him to repeatedly thwart the attempts of an evil minister to murder him. The tale is given a devotional gloss: Candrahāsa is described as reciting the name of Hari night and day and studying the Vaiṣṇava scriptures diligently, and thus it is the strength of his faith that saves him from all perils.

A few minor episodes lack even this nod to *bhakti*. One describes Arjuna's visit to the land of women where he battles its Amazon queen, Pramīlā; their duel is stopped by a celestial voice ordering them to cease fighting and to marry (JBh 21.83–92; 22.1–26). Later Arjuna and his army are attacked by the demon Bhīṣaṇa who plans to offer Arjuna as a human sacrifice and devour his soldiers (JBh 22.32ff).[39] There are also marvels and wonders: the stallion enters a lake and is tranformed into a mare (JBh 16.10ff) while another magical lake turns it into a tiger (JBh 21.49ff). Touching an enchanted boulder (*śīlā*), the horse is petrified (*jaḍībhūta*) (JBh 16.10); the cause of this, it is found, is the curse of a sage.[40] Another, more unusual feature of the Jaiminibhārata is that it contains humor, such as in the story Arjuna is told when he asks a hermit the story of the

38 *yo'sau svamāṃsatanubhir yajanāni kṛtvā* (Mukhopadhyaya 1963: 1).

39 Similarly in the *Padmapurāṇa* (5.5.34) Śatrughna is attacked by the demon Vidyunmālin. In both works it is only these two demons who are, in contrast to the kings, genuinely hostile.

40 Similarly in the *Padmapurāṇa* (5.16.10ff) the sacrificial horse becomes stiffened (*stambhayati*) when it trods ground enchanted by the curse of a sage.

curse of a sage.[40] Another, more unusual feature of the Jaiminibhārata is that it contains humor, such as in the story Arjuna is told when he asks a hermit the story of the enchanted boulder. Once, the hermit says, there was a sage named Uddālaka who married a woman named Caṇḍī who was the diametrical opposite of the good Hindu wife. She absolutely refused to do what her husband asked her and even went so far as to say that she had no need of sons, *putraiḥ kim me prayojanam* (JBh 16.49). Poor Uddālaka was in despair. He was about to celebrate his father's *śraddhā* ceremony and Caṇḍī refused to cooperate in the ceremony. Uddālaka then met a sage named Kauṇḍinya who noticed how agitated and thin he looked and when asked the reason for his frazzled appearance, Uddālaka explained his situation. Kauṇḍinya then came up with an ingenious solution to Uddālaka's problem: *śanakaiḥ viparītaṃ vaco vada*; 'always say the opposite of what you mean'. So Uddālaka went home and told his wife that guests were coming and ordered her not to greet them, not to feed them and said he was going out. Naturally the contrary Caṇḍī did the opposite and insisted on feeding and entertaining the guests. Uddālaka also performed the *śraddhā* ceremony using the same trick to ensure his wife's cooperation until the very end of the rite, when he slipped up and asked her to throw the *piṇḍas* in the river as prescribed by the scriptures. When she heard this, true to form, she threw them on a dung heap instead. Uddālaka then cursed his wife to become the rock which petrified the horse. The curse will be ended, the sage tells Arjuna, when Arjuna touches the boulder. He does and the horse and the brahman's disobedient wife are freed.[41] Caṇḍī has learned her lesson of course and now is prepared to be a model wife.

THE VERNACULAR RENDERINGS

The Jaiminibhārata enjoyed an impressive popularity. The reasons for this seem clear. One of the more important was its entertainment value. As the editor of the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* notes with disapproval, 'The Jaimini-Aśvamedha [...] is intended in every way to cater to the taste of the ordinary public for the bizarre and the miraculous' (Karmarkar 1960: xliii). It is a work replete with wonders, battles, humor and epic prestige and all this is wrapped up in a religious package. It is interesting that the Jaiminibhārata is included in Assamese and Bengali versions of the Mahābhārata, even though it is not a part of the original Mahābhārata, while the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is a genuine part of the original Mahābhārata, is omitted in the same vernacular renderings.

The first Bengali Mahābhārata was translated under Muslim patronage in the fifteenth century and was the work of Kabīndra Parameśbar, court poet to Laskar Parāgal Khān, a general who conquered Tripura and Chittagong for the Bengali Sultan Nusrat Shāh (1519–32). Under his patronage Parameśbar composed a Mahābhārata which he entitled *Pāṇḍaba Bijay* which was also known as the *Parāgali Mahābhārata* because of

40 Similarly in the *Padmapurāṇa* (5.16.10ff) the sacrificial horse becomes stiffened (*stambhayati*) when it trods ground enchanted by the curse of a sage.

41 This is reminiscent of a well-known story in the medieval Rāmāyaṇa tradition about how the unfaithful Ahalyā was cursed to become a stone until touched by the dust of Rāma's feet.

> One day the Khān was sitting in court with his friends and retainers. They heard [the recital] of the holy book [*puṇyakathā*], the *Bhārata*. The sage Jaimini wrote a *purāṇa-saṃhitā*, when they heard the story of the *aśvamedha* they were very pleased. The Khān then gave a command. We have heard the song [*gīta*] of Vyāsa that of the sage Jaimini is [sweeter] than it. Everyone does not understand the Sanskrit *Bhārata*. Poets, listen to my request, spread this story in the language of the country, let my fame will spread throughout the world.[42]

Śrikara Nandī did as commanded and as a consequence his poem is sometimes called the *Chuṭikhāner mahābhārata*.[43] There are several later Bengali Mahābhāratas, the most widely circulated of which is that of Kāśīrām Dās which was written before 1642; Kāśīrām was responsible for the first four *parvans* of the work and the rest were composed by sons, grandsons and others including one Dbija Raghunāth who wrote the *Āśvamedhikaparva*;[44] parts were also borrowed from other Bengali Mahābhāratas. Kabi Sañjay, as noted earlier, also included Jaimini's poem in his version. The Assamese Mahābhārata was a collective work commissioned by the Kuch king Naranārāyaṇa (1540–84) who appointed Rāma Sarasvatī, the title of a brahman whose real name was Aniruddha, as editor in chief. In the preface to his 'translation', Rāma Sarasvatī relates how the king sent a bullock cart filled with manuscripts of the Mahābhārata to his home. After Naranārāyaṇa's death his successors continued to support the translation work. Rāma Sarasvatī, aided by the poets Kamsāri Kāẏastha and Gopināth Pāṭhaka, never got any farther than the first twelve *parvans* which take the story to the end of the war. The *Āśvamedhikaparvan* was written by three later poets Gaṅgadāsa, Bhavanīdāsa and Subuddhi Rāẏ. It is a close rendering of Sanskrit original and, unlike the Bengali versions, includes the Lava Kuśa episode In these versions of the Jaiminibhārata the story is told at length. The original *Āśvamedhikaparvan* occupies around 3% of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata while those in Kaśidās and the Assamese Mahābhārata are about three times longer and the version in the Bengali Mahābhārata of Kabi Sañjay occupies almost 20% of the whole and this despite the fact that he, like Kāśīrām Dās, omits the longest episode in it, the story of Kuśa and Lava.

It is not surprising that so many Assamese, Bengali and Oriya poets were interested in the Jaiminibhārata: numerous version of the two great epics are found in all three languages. The vernacular Rāmāyaṇas, despite the fact that they are commonly referred to as 'translation literature', are not primarily based on Vālmīki but on a number of different Rāmāyaṇa traditions oral as well as written, making each Old Assamese, Old Oriya and Middle Bengali Rāmāyaṇa unique. The authors of the vernacular Mahābhāratas had fewer literary antecedants to draw from and hence tend to be more dependent on the Sanskrit original, though here, too, one does find a considerable amount of variation. The *Bana-*

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42 *paṇḍite maṇḍita sabhā khāna mahāmati | eka dina basi āche bāndhava saṃhati || śunila bhārata pothā ati puṇyakathā | mahāmuni jaiminira purāṇa saṃhita || aśbamedha kathā suni prasannahṛdaẏa || sabhākhaṇḍe ādeśila khāna mahāśaẏa | byāsa gītā śunila cārutara || tāhāta kahila jaimini munivara || saṃskṛta bhārata nā bujhe sarvajana | mora nibedana kichu suna kabigaṇa || deśī bhāṣe ehi kathā kariẏā pracāra | sañcarau kīrtti mora jagata bhitara ||* (After Sen 1971: 76, 351).

43 The language of the only printed edition (Kābyatīrthak & Sen 1912) is, however, not at all old.

44 Bandyopadhyāy 1966: 466.

Middle Bengali Rāmāyaṇa unique. The authors of the vernacular Mahābhāratas had fewer literary antecedants to draw from and hence tend to be more dependent on the Sanskrit original, though here, too, one does find a considerable amount of variation. The *Banaparvan*[45] of the Assamese Mahābhārata, for example, is over one thousand pages long – making it longer than the Sanskrit original – and overwhelmingly apocryphal. Kabi Sañjay's Bengali Mahābhārata contains apocryphal *parvans*, including an episode entitled *Draupadī yuddha* which contains an account of Draupadī's martial intervention in the Bhārata war.

Renderings of the Jaiminibhārata, in contrast, though they usually keep far closer to the storyline of the original, are far from being true translations either. One can take for example their treatment of the short episode describing Arjuna's visit to the kingdom of women. None of the eastern vernacular versions referred to here follow the Sanskrit original closely; all have different emphases, details and provide varying descriptions of the *strīrājya* and its inhabitants. Most are longer than the original and differ as much from it as they do from each other. Careful translations are not found at all; they seem to have been incompatible with the poetic temperament. Even relatively modern Bengali renderings by Kaliprasanna Bidyāratna (1884) and Candranāth Basu (1917), which claim to be 'from the original Sanskrit' (*mūl saṃskṛta haite*), add asides and poetic digressions. The most obvious change in our vernacular renderings is that poets drop episodes: Kaśīrām Dās, for example, omits the Candrahāsa episode, as does the Assamese Mahābhārata and the Bengali poets leave out the Lava Kuśa episode as has been noted. These are sins of omission and most of the changes made by the poets are of this kind; literary embellishments are, of course, added and some material, inevitably, is parochialized. Otherwise they seem to have been made with an eye closely kept on the Sanskrit original and this suggests that the matter of the Jaiminibhārata had not been so thoroughly absorbed into and transformed by the popular tradition as had that of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa.

VERNACULAR APOCRYPHA

Though free from major intrusions, a few elaborate apocryphal episodes are found in eastern vernacular versions of the Jaiminibhārata. Two of the examples concern Sudhanvā. In the first, the Oriya poet Indramaṇi Sāhu tells the story of Indumatī or Indurekhā, the daughter of the king of Karṇāṭa. Indumatī is meditating in the forests of Campaka (Haṃsadhvaja's kingdom) when she is attacked by a Niṣāda king intent on raping her. Her screams are heard by Sudhanvā, who rescues her. The grateful Indumatī then vows to serve Sudhanvā the rest of her life. When the sacrificial horse enters the kingdom, Indumatī realizes the danger and prays to the goddess Gaṅgā who gives her an amulet (*kabaca*) which, when hung around one's neck, makes its wearer invincible and an irresistible arrow (*gaṅgāśakti śara*). Then, in male disguise (*gupta beśe*), she gives both to Sudhanvā, thereafter becoming his companion. It is with the help of these gifts that

[45] In eastern India the *Āraṇyakaparvan* or the *Araṇyaparvan* is called the *Vanaparvan*.

Indumatī in warrior (*bīra*) guise sitting in front of Sudhanvā's tent, bow and arrow in hand, he decides to outwit her by using his *māyā*. First he transforms himself into Prabhāvatī, Sudhanvā's wife, but the alert Indumatī turns 'her' away, telling her to go back to the women's quarters where she belongs. Kṛṣṇa returns as Sudhanvā's mother, fails again, and comes back in the form of his father only to be rebuffed a third time. He finally succeeds by transforming himself into a duplicate of the goddess Gaṅgā and in this shape is finally admitted into Sudhanvā's tent.[46] Once inside, Kṛṣṇa transforms himself into a brahman and asks for the amulet and the arrow as alms and the good Vaiṣṇava Sudhanvā readily gives them, thus sealing his doom. This story is an obvious borrowing from the Mahābhārata tale which tells how Karṇa, who was born with armor and earrings, was tricked into giving these as alms to Indra, Arjuna's father, in brahman disguise.[47] Indramaṇi makes his indebtedness to this source obvious by twice using the phrase *kabaca o kuṇḍala*, 'amulet and earrings' rather than *kabaca o śara*, 'amulet and arrow'. He also refers to the Mahābhārata story. The next day at the conclusion of his fight with Arjuna, Indumatī reveals her true identity to Sudhanvā. At that moment Arjuna fires an arrow which splits in two, decapitating the couple simultaneously. The story ends on an odd advaitic note: Kṛṣṇa picks up the heads and 'two figures came out from the two heads and merged with Śrīkṛṣṇa's body'.[48]

Another interesting innovation is found in Kabi Sañjay who tells the story of Bibeka, the apocryphal son of Sudhanvā and Prabhāvatī. As has been seen, Sudhanvā fulfilled his marital obligations as prescribed by the *śāstra*s on the eve of battle. Bibeka was the result of that union. When exactly three days are left before the termination of Yudhiṣṭhira's horse sacrifice, Bibeka asks his mother about his father. Logically Bibeka should be only a few months old at most since, as the poet notes, the sacrifice had been underway for less than a year. Nevertheless Bibeka, described as a child, *śiśu*, (the same word used to describe Kuśa and Lava in vernacular works),[49] is capable of battle, having been born with his body encased in armour (*gāeta kabaca*).[50] Prabhāvatī teaches her son the art of weaponry (*dhanurvidyā*) and supplies him some powerful mantras (*mahāmantra*). Thus equipped Bibeka marches to the battlefield to confront a very surprised Arjuna and

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46 This particular incident is obviously modeled on the Mahīrāvaṇa tale in the regional Rāmāyaṇa tradition: Mahirāvaṇa plans to kidnap the sleeping Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and to get past Hanumān, who is guarding them, assumes different shapes before finally taking one which fools the monkey hero. For this cycle see Smith 1982.

47 This story not included in the text of critical edition of the Mahābhārata but a short version of it is found in appendix 60 of the *Ādiparvan* and fuller accounts in the vulgate, as in the Gītā Press edition (Ādiparvan, pp. 334–335).

48 *dui śiraru dui mūrtti hoiṇa bāhāra | śrīkṛṣṇa dehe miśile* (Sāhu, s.a.: 137).

49 This resembles the story of Ahirāvaṇa who, like Bibeka, goes to battle directly from his mother's womb in order to avenge his slain father, Mahīrāvaṇa; see Smith 1982.

50 As was the new-born Karṇa as noted above. In the previous tale *kabaca* referred to an amulet hung round the neck rather than body armor. Karṇa legends seem to have influenced these tales for two reasons: first, Karṇa was Arjuṇa's most formidable enemy in the Mahābhārata, secondly, just like Sudhanvā, he was considered a saint: in eastern India he is considered the epitome of generosity and usually called Dātā Karṇa, 'Karṇa the Giver'.

weaponry (*dhanurvidyā*) and supplies him some powerful mantras (*mahāmantra*). Thus equipped Bibeka marches to the battlefield to confront a very surprised Arjuna and proceeds to defeat Vṛṣaketu[51], Babhruvāhana, Candrahāsa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Yauvanāśva, Suvega, Hanumān and, finally, both Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. When a messenger reports the news of this disaster to Yudhiṣṭhira, he, like Rāma in the *Kuśalavopakhyānā*, despatches another army, this one led by Bhīma and it is crushed as well. Learning of this second defeat, Yudhiṣṭhira bursts into tears and his weeping is heard by Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and Kṛṣṇa's other wives who decide to remedy the situation. They arm themselves and march off to the battlefield only to suffer the same fate as everyone else.[52] When Kṛṣṇa regains consciousness, he realizes the difficulty of his situation and so goes to Haṃsadhvaja and tells him that his grandson has been obstructing Yudhiṣṭhira's horse sacrifice. Both then go to Bibeka. There, at the request of Haṃsadhvaja, Kṛṣṇa assumes his four-armed *svarūpa* or 'essential form' a sight which causes Bibeka to fall at his feet and submits. Kṛṣṇa then congratulates him for his battlefield prowess and everyone returns to Hastināpura where the horse sacrifice is completed. (Ghoṣ 1966: 649–61.)

In medieval Assam, Bengal and Orissa the Jaiminibhārata was, along with the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, one of a small number of narrative works which, in vernacular garb, served as important instruments in the transmission of Sanskritic values to the regional cultures. It must have played a similar role elsewhere as well. Besides the Kannada retelling of the Jaiminibhārata, there are versions in Telegu, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Maithili and Newari.[53] The question of the number and distribution of vernacular versions of Jaimini's *bhārata* remains to be dealt with, as do the details of the date, geographical origin and sectarian affinities of the Sanskrit original; it is to be hoped that such problems will be addressed when more attention is finally given to this very popular, very influential and much neglected religious epic.

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51 Who according to the Sanskrit original had already been killed by Babhruvāhana.

52 This interesting episode was probably suggested by an apocryphal *parvan* in Kabi Sañjay's *Mahābhārata* entitled *Draupadī yuddha* in which Draupadī, along with the wives of other warriors, similarly takes the field.

53 See Koskikallio, forthcoming, chapter 4.1.2.

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