PLATE XXXIII f.3b. The beautiful Mount Trikuta (Triple-peaked), the dwelling of various heavenly beings, to the lake at the foot of which comes a herd of rampaging elephants. By Shihb Din.

PLATE XXXIV f.6. The leader of the elephants has his leg seized by a powerful crocodile who dwells in the sacred lake.

PLATE XXXV f.52. Vaṣanta rāga, celebrating the coming of spring.

PLATE XXXVI f.10b. The merchant abandons his injured ox Sanjivaka in the wilderness. By Dharmo.


PLATE XXXVIII (overleaf) f.10b (above). Vyāsa milking the Paruṣa out of the Kāmaśikhaṇḍa, the Wish-fulfilling Cow.

f.11 (below). Sauti begins the narration of the Parva to Shuarana in the latter's hermitage of Naimishāranya. Both by Durākarma Bṛha.
of course survived through later manuscripts. But we have only a small proportion of the dramatic and poetic literature of these centuries and scarcely anything from even earlier periods. Much of the vast Buddhist literature in Sanskrit, whether of the Lesser or Greater Vehicles, has disappeared, while even the Jainas, who early took recourse to writing, managed very early to lose the most ancient strata of their sacred literature. The reasons are clear. The inability of the materials to withstand the rigours of the Indian climate, the heat and humidity, with its attendant superfluity of voracious insects meant that a century or two was the most any manuscript could generally be expected to survive. And the Indian scholar of old, who had worn-out manuscripts copied afresh, would not keep the old one or send it to the temple library but committed it to the sacred waters of the rivers, for both substance and content to be reabsorbed into the seamless web that is the universe. Also wholesale destruction occurred in the 13th and again in the 18th centuries in periods of invasion and civil wars. So that when secular manuscript libraries were established in India, there was little that was very ancient left to collect. Most of the royal libraries were composed principally of new manuscripts, many of them beautifully written and illustrated. It was not until the establishment of British rule in India that systematic searches were undertaken for the assembling of manuscripts in great repositories, so that the literary history of India could be written. But the study of the history of book-illustration, with which we are chiefly concerned, has hardly begun. So much in the early period has been lost, and so much of the medieval period is controversial, that new discoveries are anxiously awaited. And each new discovery only tells us how little we know and how much more complicated the picture is than we can yet comprehend. And even the Mughal period, outwardly so well documented and well represented, is at its beginning mysterious and controversial. So this book is full of doubts and possibilities, and puts forward theories with which many other scholars would disagree. Our purpose is to trace the development of the art of the book, by which we mean manuscripts of beauty whether on account of their format or their calligraphy, their illumination or illustrations, or binding, from the earliest discoveries known to us to the end of the traditions of manuscript production and illustration in the 19th century caused by the twin modern invention of the printing press and the camera. We shall discuss them in terms of religions and cultures and formats and patrons of apparently great diversity. Yet at the end of the day we shall see that India has absorbed, as she always has done, the ways of her invaders and turned them to her own purposes without losing her essential Indianness in the process.
CHAPTER I

Early Manuscript Illumination

It is not yet possible to determine precisely when the Indians began to treat their manuscripts as something other than mere purveyors of information, and to treat them as physical objects capable of being made beautiful both in the way the information was written and in decorations applied over and above the actual textual matter. Calligraphy is an art which finds no mention in ancient Indian literature; certainly there is no surviving treatise on the subject. Yet from the earliest manuscript survivals it is clear that some scribes took immense pains to produce beautiful and measured harmony with their pen, to invest the page with dignity through the use of majestically large and separate letters or of lines proceeding in measured, rhythmic tread across the great width of a page. The former of these devices is found only in Buddhist manuscripts on paper from Central Asia about the middle of the first millennium AD, such as the Kashmir Lotus Sūtra, which must have been a conscious imitation of large-lettered Chinese calligraphy. Yet the manuscripts are totally Indian in character, being in the pothi format but on paper, and resemble large-scale birch-bark manuscripts from India. They conform in shape to no Chinese model. Likewise the script is the Central Asian variant of the Gupta script, used also for the Indian languages of the area. With what devotion these scribes must have sat down to copy with the utmost beauty known to them the Lotus Sūtra or the Perfection of Wisdom in language as remote to them as Hebrew to us.

In the Indian subcontinent itself, examples of early manuscripts of similarly majestic size have been found only in the excavated stūpas of Gilgit. Here they are on large birch-bark sheets, but the script is much smaller than their Central Asian counterparts, being remarkable for the regularity of the spacing of the letters and lines, achieving a dignified, rhythmic whole (No.1). These manuscripts also are of Buddhist origin, as are all calligraphically noteworthy early manuscripts. Their only decorative elements are concentric roundels of considerable size, and a few elaborately designed versions of the Buddhist dharmacakra. An early tradition refers to the copying of Buddhist texts in golden letters, but there is no evidence of such a technique being practised in early India. The tradition in Nepal of writing with gold ink on blue-black paper may now be dated comfortably to the 12th century (No.11), but this type of paper seems never to have been used in India. The reference in the Nepalese Vamsāvalī (Chronicles) to one Yasodharā fleeing in the reign of Shankaradeva with the Prajñāpāramitā written in the year 225 in letters of gold must refer to the Nepal era (the date equals AD 1105), rather than to the chronicle’s explicit citation of the Vikrama era (i.e. AD 170), when only palm leaf and birch bark were available for manuscripts. The occasional attempts to fix gold on to palm leaves as in the miniatures of the Pāñcarāja dated c.1557 (No.4) show how difficult it was; an entire manuscript in gold script would have been impossible to fix. So the reference must be to paper and hence corroborates the early dates for the two 12th-century manuscripts on paper from Nepal (No.11).

The earliest illustrated manuscripts are found from the last two centuries before the collapse of the old Hindu states system about 1200—a few pairs of manuscript covers from Kashmir in a style more related to Central Asian painting than to that of India, a considerable number of illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts and covers of Buddhist texts from eastern India under the Pala dynasty and from Nepal in a closely related style, whence come also a few Hindu ones, and a much smaller number of Jaina examples from Gujarat and Rajasthan, with one isolated Jaina example from Karnataka. Are they merely the accidental survivals of a much more widespread tradition, with many centuries of development behind them? Or are they the earliest survivals of a tradition that only began at about the same time?

The Indian texts of the first millennium AD are full of references to painting. We read of pictures painted on walls, of picture galleries, of painted wooden panels or paintings on cloth, of the art of portraiture. There are various technical manuals besides, on how to prepare surfaces and means of achieving certain technical effects such as foreshortening. We can still see the pitifully few remnants of the classic art of fresco painting at sites such as Ajantā and Ellora, and see that the manuals and artistic practice usually agreed. The Tibetan historian Taranātha has given us a valuable account of the different styles of painting practised in ancient India. There are, however, no references whatever to the illustration of manuscripts, whether of palm leaf or birch bark. Any argumentum ex silentio is not necessarily decisive in an Indian context, and since so few Indian manuscripts pre-date the 11th century we would still perhaps be justified in keeping our options open. However, the evidence of Central Asia may perhaps be taken into account, where innumerable leaves and fragments of Indian-language manuscripts, on palm leaf, birch bark and paper, in date from the 2nd century to the 10th, have been discovered. Not one of them bears an illustration. It is immaterial in this context whether these manuscripts were actually written in India or in Central Asia. Had the art been at all widespread in India we could legitimately expect some evidence to turn up in Central Asia, either in a fragment of Indian provenance, or in a Central Asian imitation of an Indian manuscript, for where in script and format the Central Asian scribes imitated Indian exemplars, they would surely have imitated illuminations also. It is noteworthy that the only illustrated manuscript material to be unearthed in Central Asia is either of Chinese inspiration or of Manichaean origin, and we know from Arabic sources of the habit of the Iranian Manichaeans of illustrating their manuscripts, an art learnt from the Byzantines. It is quite possible, however, that the illustration of wooden covers would have had a period of some development before 1200, especially in western India and Kashmir, and our remarks here apply only to the actual folios of manuscripts.

If then it would seem unlikely that the illustration of palm-leaf manuscripts did not occur much before about the year 1200, what was the inspiration that started them along this path? The earliest decorated Jaina manuscripts from 1050 contain drawings and diagrams, with coloured miniatures not appearing until the 12th century, so that we must suppose that the art originated in eastern India and Nepal, and spread to other areas of western and southern India, i.e. it originated in a specifically Buddhist environment. Now it is noteworthy that none of the early manuscripts are in fact ‘illustrated’ in the sense of the pictures illustrating events described in the text. The most favoured Buddhist text by far, the Prajñāpāramitā, is a work of the most abstruse
metaphysics, on the nature of Buddhahood, Bodhisattvahood, and of Wisdom. The miniatures used to illustrate them are usually of the Buddhas, transcendental (the Jinas) or Mortal, the Bodhisattvas, goddesses, and their devinities, and the eight great events in the life of the historical Buddha. Their presence in the manuscript has no connection with the text itself, which is far earlier than the developments of the Mahāyāna which led to the proliferation of these deities. The manuscripts were generally commissioned by pious laymen as acts guaranteeing spiritual merit, the greatest rewards coming from manuscripts of greatest beauty. In the Tantric school of Buddhism prevalent in eastern India at this time, the act of painting a maṇḍala or an equivalent was more a spiritual than an artistic exercise, and meditation on the depicted divinities for the initiate served to concentrate the mind on one or other aspects of the divine. It was these developments in Vajrayāna Buddhism which would seem to have precipitated the illustration of manuscripts to form, as it were, maṇḍalas in miniature, bringing divine aid to the protection of the manuscripts and to the spiritual well-being of both donor and artist.

Technically, the possibilities of decorating palm-leaf manuscripts are limited by the nature of the medium itself. The decorative elements apart from calligraphy are threefold. Firstly, small figurative paintings occupying the centre of a leaf, or sometimes two or three such paintings occupying the centres of the two or three columns of text into which a large leaf would be divided, the number of stringholes being the deciding factor in the arrangement of the columns. Such paintings invariably occupy the full height of a leaf, but rarely exceed that measurement in width, and are usually contained within painted margins. If larger compositions were essayed, utilizing the entire width of the leaf, none has survived; it is improbable that this could have been a standard feature as the decoration generated by the turning of leaves in such manuscripts results in flaking of the painted surface to a far greater extent than in painted paper leaves of a manuscript in codex format.

A second decorative possibility was afforded by the margins between the columns of text and at the edges. Many surviving manuscripts have painted geometrical and arabesque designs on at least all those leaves which contain paintings (Nos. 5–9); while a very few have little figures of monkeys, worshippers, the Buddha, cāityas etc. in these positions (No.10). Related to this type of decoration is the provision of little vignettes of animals or flowers or diagrams to mark chapter endings as in No.8 where it is restricted to those leaves which already have central paintings on them. The third element was the wooden ruling-boards (pajā) at top and bottom of the manuscript, both inside and outside, on which could be painted much larger compositions than was possible on the leaves.

The most usual cycle in Buddhist manuscripts is of 18 paintings arranged in groups of six, with three per side, at beginning, middle, and end of the manuscripts of the Prājñāpāramitā, consisting usually of the eight great miracles in the life of the Buddha, some of the five Jinas (transcendent Buddhas), the goddess Prājñāpāramitā, and some of the great Bodhisattvas (Nos.4, 5, 6, 9). One Pāla manuscript of this text originally had no fewer than 36 paintings, with in addition to the cycle of 1 pair of paintings marking the end of each of the 32 chapters (No.8), forming perhaps a most complex maṇḍala. Other Buddhist texts have different cycles. The Purāṇaṇa, a set of five charms dedicated to five different protective goddesses, is illustrated with their images, and sometimes in addition those of the five Jinas to whom they are linked (No.9). The illustrations of the Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra are known only from an incomplete manuscript; here each of the 53 surviving folios (which comprise the bulk of the text) contains two paintings, and uniquely among Pāla manuscripts, some of the narrative episodes in the sūtra are illustrated (No.10). The Lotus Sūtra, despite the immense popularity of the scripture, is usually illustrated only by one or two introductory paintings, as are a few other Buddhist texts.

The wooden covers gave much greater scope and freedom to the artist than the restricted space available on one of the folios, but only rarely was the opportunity taken to depict a fully integrated painting (No.12). More usually the covers were divided into compartments, with scenes from the life of Buddha on one, and Prājñāpāramitā with attendants and worshippers on the other. However, there are very few examples of a Pāla manuscript surviving complete with its original painted covers, which were the parts of the manuscript most exposed to damage; the Prājñāpāramitā in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston dated c.1134 is perhaps one of them. It is quite possible that none of the 11th-century manuscripts had illustrated covers, as the covers must have been deemed less intimately connected with the text itself, and less capable of imparting magical protection. Only two sets of covers are of possible 11th-century date, both of Nepalese origin, enclosing illustrated manuscripts dated 1028 and 1054 — however, these covers do not fit into the stylistic development of Nepalese painting between two securely dated manuscripts of 1015 (No.3) and 1071 and are more likely to be 12th century; it was in this century and the next that many Nepalese covers were given to earlier Nepalese and Pāla manuscripts (see Nos.2, 3, 5, and 9).

Turning to the Jaina manuscripts, we can see that again the miniatures do not illustrate the text but are rather images of Jaina divinities. The Tantric element that led to the illustration of Buddhist manuscripts is apparent in Jainism to a much lesser extent, but even so the Vidyādevi (goddess of wisdom), the Jaina equivalent of the Buddhist Prājñāpāramitā, occur in two of the surviving documents, on a pair of covers (No.13) which show significant influence from Pāla art and on the leaves of a manuscript dated 1161, where their function can only be magically protective. The earliest surviving illustrated Jaina manuscript is dated 1096, and has delightful drawings of the goddess Shri and the love-god Kāma, with elephants, vases etc., and other manuscripts of this date have drawings of lotuses and diagrams in similar style. They apparently continue a tradition found in birch-bark manuscripts (No.1). Illustrated manuscripts with paintings are not found before the 12th century, and have just a few opening illustrations of the gods, the gods and goddesses, various monks, including sometimes the authors of the work, and the patrons of the manuscript. No large-scale iconographic sequence is attempted, except possibly for the Vidyādevi sequence, nor in any 12th-century manuscript is there any attempt at a narrative sequence illustrating the texts. The texts chosen for illustration are not confined to a few favourites as with the Buddhists, but include various parts of the Jaina Canon or its commentaries. It is only by accident that these illustrated manuscripts have survived rather than others, but it is not without significance that they are all canonical texts,
and that the miniatures in them have no connection whatever with the text. In other words, they must be serving the same purpose as the Buddhist miniatures, that of magical protection of the text and the bestowing of benefits on the donor. The same is true of the only known illuminated Digambara palm-leaf manuscript, a group of semi-canonical works on karma dated c. 1112 from southern India which has the same set of miniatures—divinities, donors, monks, etc. The earliest miniatures that actually occur in texts capable of illustration are of early 13th-century date in works on the lives of Mahāvīra and Neminātha, but the opportunity so to do is not taken, and the miniatures are simply of the Jinas and the donors. In fact, the earliest manuscript with narrative paintings is dated 1208, a Subhamāthā, with 23 miniatures, and the earliest such manuscript of the Kalpasūtra, the life of the Jina Mahāvīra which was the standard text for illustration and presentation in the 12th and 16th centuries, is not for another century, and is dated 1370. Even this has only six miniatures, and it is not until the roughly contemporary Kalpasūtra from Varanasi that there is a manuscript with a set of 34 miniatures fully illustrating the narrative portions of the Kalpasūtra. By this time of course there was considerable influence from the Islamic world on the arts of India, and it is quite possible that narrative paintings in Jaina manuscripts are in imitation of the Persian book-arts. From the subject-matter of the miniatures in these Jaina manuscripts which we have traced from 1060 to 1370, it would appear that the art of manuscript illustration must have begun in western India only in the 11th century, and doubtless under the stimulus of emulating Buddhist manuscripts.

The drawings in the 11th-century manuscripts, the lack of fixed iconographical schemes in those of the 12th century, the slow realization of the possibilities of narrative illustration, all point to this conclusion.

On the other hand, the paintings on the covers (pālīs) of Jaina manuscripts seem infinitely more assured than those on palm leaves, and it is possible that there is a longer tradition behind them. There are indeed references in Jaina literature to painting pālīs, which may be cloth or wood panels. The Jaina covers from western India are concerned quite often with historical events of importance to the Jinas, such as the meeting between the Shvetambara Jaina polymath Vādī Devaśūri and the Digambara scholar Kumudachandra for the purposes of theological debate in 1124 at the court of Siddharāja Jayasimha of Gujrat, or the consecration of the temple of Mahāvīra at Marot in Marwar by the famous Jaina aśārya Jinadatta Śūri (No.18). Quite a large proportion of the 20 or so surviving Jaina pālīs do not depict either historical events or standard divinities, but on one of their sides include a flowering creeper motif which loops around a large variety of birds and animals—monkeys, geese, elephants, even a giraffe—revealing a delight in nature that is one of the enduring motifs of western Indian painting (No.15).

Calligraphically these manuscripts are of great beauty, especially the Buddhist ones. The script used in the latter is the ornamental Siddhamāthā (‘Perfect-measure’) or Kuṭāla (crooked) script, so called from the marked twist at the bottom of the vertical stroke of each character ending in the finest of points. At its best the characters are put with measured and even tread across the leaf, the heavy horizontal and vertical strokes being balanced by the lighter curves between of the characteristic portions of the letter, by the sublinear twist and by the flourishes of vowel indicators above the line, most markedly above the top line. This script was already archaic by the 11th century. In this particular form it is found only in manuscripts from the Buddhist monasteries. The Buddhist manuscripts from Nepal tend to use the early Nāgārī script to much lighter effect, although some have the Siddhamāthā (No.3). However, in Nepal from the 15th century there was an archaistic revival of the Kuṭāla, called Rājapāna, using gold ink on blue-black paper. Although the effect of these manuscripts is of great richness, the Rājapāna is a complex character of no great calligraphic beauty, being heavy in effect without comparable dignity. It is moreover an almost unreadable character, and was probably never intended to be otherwise, for the texts written in it are of a very limited range and copied for pious purposes or donation to monasteries. There they remained wrapped and unread—like the earlier Kuṭāla manuscripts brought from India, except for the annual pūjāpūjā, or book-worshipping day, when they were placed on public view and their covers anointed with sandal-paste, which still adheres to many of them (No.7).

The script used in the western Jaina manuscripts was an early form of Nāgārī with characteristics that mark it out as Jaina—special forms of certain letters and diphthongal signs which normally protrude above the line always occurring before the letter (e and o) or with a combination of both (ai and au). It is an elegant rather than monumental script, and remained characteristic of the Shvetambara Jinas until the 15th century. The southern Digambara Jaina manuscripts used an early Kannada hand, of no particular beauty.

All the early illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts which have survived from eastern India are of Buddhist texts, while all those from western and southern India are of Jaina ones. The Buddhist manuscripts owe their survival to having been taken to Nepal by monks fleeing the destruction of their monasteries by the Turkish invaders about 1200, and deposited usually in temple libraries there. The Jaina ones were in any case deposited in bhānḍārs or libraries attached to temples in Jaina strongholds in western and southern India such as Jaisalmer, Patan, Cambay and Moadhidi, and they and their contents have survived to the present day. There are no survivals of a Hindu tradition of manuscript illustration in India from this time, but there certainly was one in Nepal, represented by documents from the 12th and 13th centuries (Nos.13, 14). The dated Buddhist documents from India are all in the regnal years of the Pala monarchs, who were Buddhist, except for one manuscript dated in the reign of the Hindu monarch of south Bengal, Hariwarman, to which area one more manuscript can be assigned on stylistic grounds (No.10), but it would be dangerous on account of the paucity of early manuscript material from Hindu Bengal to argue that Hindu illustrated manuscripts should also have survived had any been done there. Jaina bhānḍārs in western India have a catholic content that includes early and important manuscripts of Buddhist and Hindu texts, but no early Hindu illustrated manuscript is to be found in them. Again one can argue no case for this that the Hindus of western India did not decorate their manuscripts as the number of Jaina illustrated ones is in any case extremely small. We have argued above that the Hindus of India did not have a proper manuscript and library tradition until later, so it is in any case unlikely that there would have been many illustrated ones from this time, but we cannot at this stage rule out the possibility. From the Nepalese evidence it is clear that Hindu illustrated manuscripts are far
outweighed in number by Buddhist ones, as is to be expected, even though it would appear that the number of adherents of both religions in Nepal at this time was roughly equal.

From the evidence presented by later illustrated manuscripts of Hindu, and Muslim texts from Bengal (No.43), Assam (Nos.119–22) and Orissa (Nos.115–8), in which there are stylistic continuities of the Pāla tradition, the most striking being the placing of figures under scalloped arches or their derivatives, whether in interior or exterior scenes, it is possible to argue that the Pāla style could not have been confined just to artists working in Buddhist monasteries, but must have been widespread throughout eastern India, at least in wall paintings, if not in manuscripts, and that likewise it must have been used for Hindu paintings, even though the earliest of these manuscripts is of 12th-century date. The former point is indeed proven by the covers of the 1446 Buddhist manuscript from Arrah in Bihar (No.31), which are descended in style directly from the Pāla tradition, but 250 years after the destruction of the monasteries of Nalanda and Vikramashīla.

If, as we believe, manuscripts were first illustrated in India about AD 1000 specifically to add magical power and protection to the manuscripts of the Prajñāpāramitā, it is hardly to be wondered at that there are so few Hindu manuscripts illustrated, as there would have been hardly any occasion to do so. The precise iconographic depiction of a deity as an aid to meditation did not have the same force or rationale in Hinduism as in Tantric Buddhism. Those Hindu illustrated manuscripts which have survived from Nepal are identical in style to the Buddhist ones, coming often perhaps from the same brush, but painted without the same religious and philosophical significance. The pair of covers (No.13) showing the avatars of Vishnu, for example, is decidedly odd iconographically; the image of Vishnu Ananta (lying on the snake Ananta) seems to be confused with Brahma in the multi-headed form of the recumbent divinity, while some of the avatars are conventional Bodhisattva representations. The hand which painted them was more used by far to Buddhist manuscripts.

Any discussion of the style of the Pāla Buddhist manuscripts is hampered by the paucity of securely dated and provenanced material. The dated manuscripts are all given in the regnal years of kings, with no distinctions between them even if there be more than one king of the same name—three Gopālas, two Mahāpālas, etc. Opinion is also divided on the date of the Pāla monasteries, both relative and absolute. Only five of the illustrated manuscripts give their provenance—one from the great monastic university of Nalanda (Nos.5, 9) one from the monastery of Vikramashīla (No.7), and one much damaged, from Uddandapuri (Bodleian Ms. Sansk. c.123(R)). Absolutely fixed are the manuscripts dated in the reigns of Nāyapalī (c.1043–58), Rāmapalī (c.1082–1130), and Govindapalī (1161–1175), which group includes two of the manuscripts from Nalanda.

The styles employed vary considerably. On the one hand is a style which employs a sinuous and flowing line able of itself to suggest volume, which is also achieved through gradations of colour tone, in harmoniously composed groups of figures (usually exemplified by part of the Mahāpāla manuscript in the Asiatic Society Library, Calcutta); on the other is a style which uses an angular and distorted line and flat colour planes with only the most perfunctory attempts at modelling, in simplified groups (the other Mahāpāla manuscript in Cambridge University Library [No.2]. Attempts have been made to classify the first of these styles as 'early Pāla' because of its affinity with the classical frescoes at Ajantā, and the brittle style as 'late Pāla' because of its affinity with the norm in medieval Indian painting from the 12th century on. However, neither Mahāpāla manuscript can be later than c.1070, firmly in the centre of the probable time span covered by the surviving manuscripts (c.1000–1170), while manuscript paintings of unquestionably later date (those dated in the reigns of Rāmapalī and Govindapalī, Nos.5, 6, 9) show in their handling of modelling and line more of an affinity with the so-called 'early' style than with the 'late' one.

A more profitable line of enquiry towards establishing a relative chronology lies perhaps in an analysis of the iconographic content of the paintings, and the way in which certain conventions from the first half of the period are misunderstood by painters in the latter half. A notable example is the use of thrones, cushions and haloes. It is usual for seated divinities in manuscripts dated in the Rāmapalī period to have a lotus or double-lotus base beneath them, and a cushion behind them, which hides the lower part of a throne-back, the top of which protrudes above the cushion on either side of the divinity's head. They can also have a double halo, a small one round the head and a larger one around the entire body encompassing also the small halo. The earliest securely dated manuscript to show the double halo is the Nāyapalī manuscript in Cambridge (No.4) of c.1057, but this has no throne-backs or cushions. Of the two manuscripts dated in the reign of Mahāpāla I (c.1095–1043) or II (c.1075–88) which are either slightly later than the Nāyapalī manuscript or 50 years earlier, the Calcutta manuscript has double haloes while the Cambridge manuscript (No.2) has a small, single one. As for the throne-backs, in the Rāmapalī period, artists either no longer recognize them, for what they were or else deliberately ignored their real nature, for the throne-top is tilted at right angles to the axis of the divinity's head. They have often been termed 'frames issuing from the divinities' shoulders. Moreover, the standing Buddha and the Buddha lying down in his post-medicinal scene are each encumbered with cushion and throne-top, and with double haloes also in the latest manuscripts. The standing Buddhas in the Calcutta Mahāpāla manuscript display the accompanying throne-back and cushion, while many of the divinities also display the double halo, features which would seem to argue against the early date (c.1000, in the reign of Mahāpāla I) suggested for it. With the possible exception of one miniature, that of the birth of the Buddha, there is nothing in this manuscript that necessarily places it much earlier than Rāmapalī manuscripts, with which it is stylistically linked. On the other hand, the Cambridge Mahāpāla manuscript does not display any of these features, so that on iconographic grounds we arrive paradoxically at the conclusion diametrically opposite to that usually propounded for these two manuscripts on stylistic grounds, namely that the Calcutta manuscript belongs to the Mahāpāla I period and the Cambridge to Mahāpāla II. We believe the precise opposite to be true, and date them c.1080 and c.1000 respectively. An early dating for the Cambridge manuscript is suggested by other arguments also (see No.2).

An examination of the evidence from Nepal reinforces these arguments. There are two incontrovertibly 11th-century illustrated manuscripts from Nepal, dated 135/1015 in Cambridge University Library
reduced, and the subsidiary figures much more sensibly organized. The result is a truer art of book illustration, even though at the sacrifice of the vividness of the vignettes. We have not been able to determine between these two dates to enable us to see this process in transition. The Narayāna manuscript (No.4) is a definite improvement technically, but experiments with the gilding of the flesh of all the human figures, a nose too successful experiment as most of it has disappeared. It was not apparently repeated in the later Pāla manuscripts. We are here, it seems, witnessing early attempts to translate styles used in fresco or other large-scale paintings into a miniature compass, and it is not to be supposed that the techniques to do so could have been acquired immediately or that the translation could be accomplished without a crushing of gears. From the available evidence it took about 70 years to evolve both the classic Pāla style which we associate with the reigns of Mahāpāla II, Rāmapāla, and Gopāla III, covering the period c.1075-1143, and the classic Nepalese style.

The iconographic peculiarities of the Pāla school such as throne-backs and cushions accompanying the standing Buddha are a school that was becoming increasingly atrophied and decadent, and they are common to all the later manuscripts. No doubt the earlier manuscripts contained paintings that were scaled-down versions of larger frescoes or pañjas, but once an iconographic norm had been established the evidence suggests that the paintings were copied from existing patterns almost by rote. Mistakes of iconography that crept in by misunderstanding were irreverent. Many of the Bodhisattvas in the later manuscripts are unidentifiable, they have no attributes peculiar to themselves. Colours can be arbitrarily changed, even in the lovely manuscript dated in the 30th year of Nārāyaṇa (No.6) where the entire scheme of blue throughout and sticks rigidly to it, despite the clear weight of tradition and evidence from other manuscripts that green is required.

Nonetheless, if we ignore the peculiarities of some of the miniatures depicting the scenes from the life of the Buddha, these tiny miniatures in the classic Pāla period of painting (Nos.5–9) are of a grace and beauty which belies the decline of the religion they serve, having arrived at a peak of classical perfection. The crudities of the earlier manuscripts have been ironed out. Only the bare essentials for iconographic comprehensibility are included now in the miniatures. The Bodhisattvas sit in graceful pose on lotus seats with often no background other than the halo which is their radiant emanation of light. Flaking of the paint reveals the beauty and sureness of the line, its superb expression of the mercy and compassion which is the essence of Bodhisattvahood.

The Pāla kingdom was reduced by rival Hindu dynasties to a small territory round Gaya by the reign of Govindapala (commencing in 1101), and even this was destroyed soon afterwards. There are no illustrated Indian Buddhist manuscripts dated after this last reign, although there are some undated ones assigned to this period. The Buddhist monasteries and with them the traditions of Pāla painting were destroyed by the Turkish onslaught which swept across the plains and then reached the Battle of Tarain in 1192. Of the rest of eastern India outside the Pāla dominions, only one illustrated manuscript has so far been published. Dated in the reign of Harivarman, one of a Vaishnava dynasty which ruled in south-eastern Bengal about 1100, it is a Buddhist manuscript of
the Prajñāparamitā in one of its longest recensions. In a related style, but linked architecturally more to the Sena dominions of south-western Bengal, is a newly discovered manuscript of the Kāraṇḍavyūha (No. 10) which even in an incomplete state is the most heavily illustrated manuscript to survive from this period. Both are in a simplified Pāla style, with neatly drawn figures, but eschewing any attempt at the sophisticated modelling practised under the Pālas. The Kāraṇḍavyūha is however remarkable for its being the only Buddhist manuscript of the period to attempt narrative illustration— a few of its miniatures actually represent the events described in the text.

In Nepal, the 12th century was a kind of plateau in its achievement in the art of manuscript illustration. The heights reached in the 10th century manuscript were not attained again, but a number of very fine manuscripts and covers survive from the period, including two manuscripts (No. 15). From the 11th century on, the best painters in Nepal must have found even the comparatively large paintings in the 1185 manuscript (No. 11) too cramped, and concentrated exclusively on large-scale paintings on cloth (pajo), while manuscript illumination developed a rigidity that argues a drying art even in so fine a piece of painting as the Devī in No. 14. The technique here is brilliant, but the effect is cold; the pliancy and fluency of line and colouring in earlier Nepalese work has disappeared, leaving a hardness of line and a monotonous approach to colour modelling that is impressive in so tiny a compass but ultimately unsatisfying. Similar rigidity is to be observed in all later manuscript illustrations, but largely without compensatory brilliance. The collapse of the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms of northern India after 1192 left Nepal isolated culturally as well as politically. Removed from the Indian states system, she continued in isolation for many centuries, and her manuscript traditions need not concern us again.

The much greater rarity of illustrated Jain manuscripts on palm leaves does not permit us to indulge in any large-scale discussion of stylistic development. All these manuscripts were preserved in the Jain bhāndāras of Rajasthan and Gujarat, with the exception of a group from Modherī in Karnātaka, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary we must assume that the manuscripts concerned were produced in these areas of western and southern India. The Jainas in the 11th and 12th centuries were by no means unrepresented in other areas of India, and may have illustrated their manuscripts. But it is only where safe refuges could be provided in the underground bhāndāras that any have survived, and it is to the latter that these manuscripts owe their survival.

We must first separate on grounds of style the painted wooden covers from the illustrated palm leaves. This we can easily do as there is in fact no connection between them. None of the surviving covers is now attached to a manuscript, illustrated or otherwise; none of the manuscripts with illustrations has a painted cover. This separation of the two seems to have been largely the case in eastern India also, where only one Pāla manuscript has survived with its original cover. Now the Jainas, covers of which the earliest appears to be the late 11th century, are painted with a technical assurance that argues an already existing school of pajo painting. The style is somewhat more angular and linear than Pāla art as of austere grandeur. The birch bark is of good quality, smooth and of even colour, with attractive darker brown lustre running across the leaf. Of decorative elements there are only large circles which mark the end of one of the major divisions of the Vīmaṇa (as in f. 152), and the smaller circles which mark off verses. The final folio contains three very large decorated circles, apparently dharmacakras, the Buddhist Wheel of the Law. The circles are numbered on the recto, on the left. The stringhole is a third of the way along from the left, and sits in solitary splendour in a blank square, four lines deep. Its undamaged state suggests the whole Ms. was little used, as constant friction of the leaves over the cord would in course of time have produced considerable damage. It was doubtless a presentation Ms., given to the Buddhist monk whose relics were enthroned in the stūpa at Gīlgit along with his library. The remains of the Ms. is in the National Archives, New Delhi, and a private collection in Lahore.

frontation, with the different episodes of the story spaced out along both sides of the cover but interlocking.

The miniatures on the 12th-century palm leaves on the other hand are of much greater cruelty, even though they use the same basic technique and artistic vocabulary, and this cruelty is a constant factor throughout the manuscripts of this and the next century. In the 13th century, the basic vocabulary has practically disintegrated and it took another century to fashion a new one, as we see in the 1370 Kālaṃputra in the Ujjamāho Dharmasāla Bhandāra in Ahmadabad. Attempts at plasticity have disappeared, the linear technique has triumphed, but it is now that one also imposes fixed distortions and angularities. The further projecting eye, of which there are hints as early as the Amāntā and Ellora frescoes, occurs in the book-covers as well as the palm-leaf illustrations; in the former it co-exists happily with the generally plastic approach, in the latter it becomes part of the angularity and distortion. The free rendition of the human figure in the earlier work is impossible in the later, figures must stand, sit or lie in only one position, their clothing disposed in only one way. To compensate for these conformities to stereotypes, artists were allowed freedom of colouring and textile design which in the hands of the master who painted the Ujjamāho Kālaṃputra afford it a grace and delicacy not achieved before. In this manuscript and the approximately contemporary Idar Kālaṃputra we can see that the narrative iconography of the Kālaṃputra is fixed and is the same as the Bombay paper manuscript of the same date, but we cannot as yet determine the source of it. This must have occurred in Gujarat during the course of the 14th century, doubtless at a centre like Pattan which could impose it on others. Although palm leaves continued to be illustrated in western India for another century, new developments occur only in the paper manuscripts.

1 "Vinayavastu of the Mulasarvastivadins" The rules of monastic discipline in Sanskrit of the Mulasarvāstivādin, one of the schools of Hinayana Buddhism, compiled about the 4th century AD. This school seems to have had its stronghold in Kashmir and Gandhara. Its Vinaya contains in addition to the usual monastic regulations a large number of illustrative stories (avadana) and sūtras so that it forms one of the most important sources for the study of early Indian narrative literature. The discovery of almost the entire work at Gūlījīt (in its Sanskrit original (being previously known only from its Tibetan and Chinese translations) was one of the greatest literary discoveries of the century.

This Ms., consisting apparently of some 243 almost perfectly preserved leaves of birch bark of great size (12 x 66 cm), superbly written in the Gupta characters of the 7th century, was dug up out of a collapsed stūpa at Gīlgit in 1951. This is a Ms. of the finest quality, this time, but it is still capable of expressing considerable plasticity through modelling and indeed through the line itself. The narrative technique is fluent, as in the great Devāsuri-Kumudāchandra con-
Illustrated on p. 35.

The Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Sections (see No. 2).

This manuscript was written in Nepal in the 15th year (1351/1352) of the famous monastery at Swayambhunath, three centuries after the death of Buddha. The manuscript is written in a beautiful calligraphic style, and the text is beautifully arranged in columns. The scribe used a fine pen to write the text, and the ink is still well-preserved. This manuscript is a valuable example of the art of calligraphy and the beauty of the language of classical Sanskrit.

Illustrated on p. 47.

Five hymns addressed to five Bodhisattvas for protection. These hymns are among the most ancient of Buddhist literature, and they are widely used in Buddhist practice.

Illustrated on p. 81.

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The Bodleian Ms. is dated in the year 15 of Rāmaśākara, and was copied at the famous monastery-university of Nālandā by the scribe Atmanāka Bhāratīkāra. The manuscript has 101 folios and has been progressively illustrated over the 56 years in between. Each of the paintings is characterised by its own unique style and technique, reflecting the evolution of Buddhist art during that time.

8 'Asaṭhasāhrīcikā Pāñjapāramitā' Illustration on p. 20.

The Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Sections (Section 6).

This manuscript is one of the most illustrious surviving Pāla manuscripts in the library of Gopalaśvāmi at the monastery of Vīrakottā. This great monastic-university establishment was founded by Dr. Bhāraptūla (c.781-821) to teach the Pāñjapāramitā doctrine, and was destroyed along with the other Buddhist monasteries at the end of the 12th century. Its site has recently been identified at Antakla a village of Bhagpat in Bihar.

The precise king named in the colophon is a matter of some controversy, as there were three kings named Gopala in the dynasty becoming clearer that it must be the third of that same, whose reign began c.1330. The Ms. is illustrated in a form of a series of panels, facing each other in two rows, and the middle position of each page is divided by diagonals into four triangles, each of which is coloured in one of the basic colours. There can be no doubt that this is deliberate, as even the least is deliberately restricting their colour range, and indeed colouring their subjects in accordance with his own, rather than with iconographi
cal demands.

'Asaṭhasāhrīcikā Pāñjapāramitā'COLOUR PLATE I

The Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Sections (No.2).

This Ms. is known from the reign of Gopala II, dated in his 48th year (c.1334), with 18 manuscripts, and now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This is another one of the many shrines, although not elaborately decor-
cated. This manuscript is one of the earliest surviving with its original decorative covers, and on these the architecture is as detailed as in the later British Library, London, Or.6962a.

This is a layout of four folio pages in three columns (13, 17, and 13 cm wide); 18 manuscripts, almost all with folios with corner decorations in ara
dascral and geometric designs; wood covers 6.5-7.2 cm, with painted interior panels.


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13 Inner covers. The avatars of Vishnu.

Collection in Los Angeles. c.1250. They scholars have been reluctant to accept in the absence of corroborating evidence as to the antiquity of papermaking in Nepal. However, the Ms. of the Vaishnava literature contains manuscripts of superb quality which are unquestionably of 11th-century date, as well as a secure colophon dated in year 503 of the Nepal era (c.1185), in the reign of Somesvaradeva (reg. c.1180-1203). Palaeographically the Ms. is in a securely 11th-century hand, and it is the earliest known dated example of such blue-black paper. An even earlier Ms. dated 1095 on normal Nepalese yellow paper is in the Amroh Collection in California.

The Ms. has two miniatures at the beginning on facing folios, of the Buddha seated on a lion-throne with attendant Bodhisattvas, and of the six-armed form of Vishnu seated similarly with two near-naked arhats above pouring out hams of music. Both display naturalistic modelling and a plastic use of colour of the greatest sensitivity. The companion text, Namavistari, is in the same calligraphic hand, and has four miniatures of slightly lesser refinement.

British Library, London, Or.1397 A and B. 6½ and 8½ x 620mm, and 8½ x 570mm. Blue-black paper: five lines of Kavi script in alternate silver and gold ink; stringhole to right of page. A has two paintings 9½ x 600mm on right side of page, with decorated squares around stringholes on those pages: four miniatures. B has nine, 9½ x 620mm: unbound.

12 Manuscript cover: Colour plate VI

A single wooden cover to a palm-leaf Ms., with painted inner surface representing the left side of Vishnu. One of the most famous of the early Buddha biography-stories, which recount the lives of the Bodhisattva (Buddha-to-be) in his former existences, primarily dating from the 5th century BC, they are part of the literary heritage of southern Buddhism. A version of this famous story however survived in the Mahayana tradition, under the title of Vajrakīrti's Jātaka, included in several of the Sanskrit collections of Avadānas and Jātakas. The story concerns the Bodhisattva's incarnation as Prince Vishvambhara, who embodied the virtue of charity, and whose disinterestedness is tested by the gods to such an extent that he gives away his goods, his house, his kingdom, and eventually his wife and children.

This extremely rare example of narrative technique used on the cover of a manuscript. The divinities painted in the Ms. are to be regarded as scaled-down versions of icons as wall paintings, it would follow that this cover is a version of a full-size fresco of this subject, and indeed with its fluid traditions from one episode to the next it recalls the narrative technique employed in large-scale wall paintings as in Ajanta. It dates to c.1180, from Nepal.

National Museum, New Delhi, 5.5 x 3.22m. Wooden cover, bevelled top: 5½ x 5½cm: plain top, painted interior. Bibliography: JGMA p.114 and cited references.

13 Pair of manuscript covers: Colour plate VII

A pair of covers illustrated with the iconography of Vishnu.

This pair of Nepalese covers must once have enclosed a Hindu manuscript; they are datable to the 12th century. The upper cover is divided into three groups of three panels divided by the stringholes with their decorative pattern, representing the Vishnu, Bhairava, and the Various other divinities. The lower cover has six panels, showing a four-armed blue Krishna with devotee, Buddha with devotee, Kali on a green horse, and four others, and a male attendant standing beside the horse. In the latter, a male attendant standing beside the horse. In the latter, a male attendant standing beside the horse. One panel which probably represents a Māra figure standing beside Vishnu who is shown asleep on Ananta (Ananta-rāsa), which he he appears to have three heads and a male attendant rather than Lakshmi; the next is

14 Devimahatmya: Colour plate VIII

The Devimahatmya (Glorification of the Goddess) is a lengthy hymn from the Mahābhārata Purāṇa, in which the Devi, the Goddess, is worshipped as the supreme principle of the universe, and as the source of every manifestation of the divine spirit so that the deities of all the gods and goddesses arise from her.

over demons who tyrannize the world, in particular, her victory over Mahishasura the Buffalo-demon.

Three palm leaves, each with a painting of the Goddess slaying the Buffalo-demon to the left of the two leaves in the middle, are to the right of this manuscript. The second of the two leaves in their present arrangement has a male attendant to the left of the two leaves in the middle, and the boy at the right of the hole. There is no text, other than a damaged inscription in Sanskrit in Nepalese Bhāmī script of the 13th/14th century on the reverse of the third leaf, which appears to record details of the drawing of the miniatures, but which has so far eluded precise decipherment. The precise function of these leaves is puzzling. They may be fragments of a manuscript of the Devi-bhāgavatam. They may possibly be an artist's preparatory studies for a larger painting on cloth or on a wall, but in this case their format remains puzzling, as there is no obvious reason for painting such studies on palm leaves when cloth and paper were both available, and the shape of the leaf prevented its full utilisation. But there can be no doubt of the provenance of these leaves, which is in Nepal, of the 13th century. The subject is identical in all three paintings, save that the Goddess's colour is respectively blue, green and red. With one foot firmly planted on her lion vehicle, and the other on the back of the decapitated demonic buffalo, she stands serenely holding the weapons given her by the gods, while lassoing with her snakes the demons Chandras and Munda.

British Library, London, Or.13860.
fl. 39: 49 x 18 40m; telipura leaves; no text on verso, two lines of Bhāmī script on reverse of fl. 3; three miniatures, 49 x 8.8 cm, with extension on fl. 2a; central stringhole.

Bibliography: Unpublished.

*See Pal 1172, fl. 27b, for an almost contemporary version in Pāla and Pal 1254, fl. 23a, for a simultaneous version, realizing the same subject.

15 Manuscript cover
A wooden cover (pahāli) of a palm-leaf Ms, with on the inner surface representations of two Pāli-śāstra, and two female devatas.

The Viṣṇuśāstra, goddesses of wisdom, of whom there are 16 in the Jaina tradition, seem to be related to both the Buddhist Prākāśikāvatās and the Hindu conception of the mother-goddesses. This is one of a pair of covers, the other being badly damaged, showing the 16 Viṣṇuśāstra, together with a pair of female devatas, one labelled Devatā Śrīlakṣī, the other Devatā Śrīgaja, the implication of the former is that being the lady is a royal devata.

The rendering of the Viṣṇuśāstra seems to be partly dependent on influences from the Pāli Buddhist manuscripts, in their frontal viewpoint, save that the attitudes they carry and thearches under which they sit, which are unique in Jaina painting at this period. The artist was none too clear about whether these arches were in fact arches, throne-backs or halos, as they tilt about depending on the inclination of the devī head. If these are dependent on Pāla models, then it is impossible to date them before the second quarter of the 12th century, to which time the two royal ladies would seem to belong.

They differ markedly from the set of Viṣṇuśāstra published by Moti Chandras in a Ms. dated 1041, in which none of these Pāla characteristics is apparent.

The outside of the cover is decorated with a charming creeper design, showing on two sides from the mouth of a hitherto unknown in the centre of the board, with elephants and strange beasts depicted in the loops of the creeper. This is one of several such designs known from this period.

Labhāi Dalpatbhai Institute, Ahmedabad.
Provenance: Jaina bhopāli, Jainelaur.
Wooden cover, bevelled edges; 75 x 58cm; two stringholes; both sides identical.
Ms. 1945, f. 77-80, for a description of others.

16 Manuscript cover
COLOUR PLATE VII
A wooden cover (pahāli) of a palm-leaf manuscript.
This is the only part of this manuscript that is known. Its upper surface is divided into two unequal portions. It depicts on the left the conversation between two Jaina monks, who are labelled as Śrī Jñānādbhī Śiṅhi and Śrī Śukhāsandraśā, with two laymen in respectful postures, and on the right, beyond the stringhole, an image of the Jaina Tirthābhāmu, Mahāvīra, with four lay devotes, and two chowrie-bearers. Jñānādbhī Śiṅhi was one of the greatest Jaina teachers of Rajasthan in the 12th century. Born in Dholak in 1075, he became the pupil, and ultimately successor, of Jñānādbhī Śiṅhi, the 43rd Punish of the Mathurāgacchha. During his pontificate he made frequent tours throughout Rajasthan and Gujarat, one of the most famous being to consecrate a temple of Mahāvīra at Marot in Marwar.

This forms the subject of a pahāli formerly in one of the Jaina bhopāli, which is probably contemporary with the event. Three similar pahāli in all involving Jñānādbhī are now known, and it would be rash to assume that all of them must be contemporary with the great Jaina pahāli or have some personal connection with him. However, stylistically they all belong to the 12th century, and this small one probably to the latter part of the period. It seems to have been copied from, or at least to belong to the same school as, the contemporary version referred to above.

This latter depicts the consecration scene in the centre of a much longer panel, with a conversation between Jñānādbhī and Jīnavardhana on the left, and on the right between Jñānādbhī and a monk whose name has been somewhat damaged, but which has been read in Śrīgajavijaya. It would be possible however to read it as Śrīgajavijaya/Indradyāna, and hence be the same subject as in this smaller version. Indeed the two alcoves (nīrāmākā) of the image would fit the available space better than the one of 'cave'. This small cover could then be seen as a version of part of the larger one. Both covers have the identical lotus pattern round the stringhole, with margings of small, white flowers, and the same marūvī leaf pattern forming a border round the cover.

Labhāi Dalpatbhai Institute, Ahmedabad.

Provenance: Jaina bhopāli in Jainelaur.
Wooden cover, bevelled edges; 55 x 490cm; stringhole one third of way from left; painted exterior; plain design, with flower designs added later.
Moti Chandras, 1945, f. 77a-70.

CHAPTER II
Manuscript Illumination during the Delhi Sultanate

The conquest of northern India by the armies of Shāh ‘Ad-Din Ghori after the battle of Tarain in 1192 and the establishment of Muslim rule over the major part of the subcontinent for the next 500 years, although initially, and at intervals thereafter, destructive, yet enriched India’s society with new blood and her art forms with new concepts and ideas.

Muslims are a people of the book, the revelation of God, the Holy Koran. By 1200 they had carried the arts of calligraphy and book illumination to supreme heights and were shortly to embark in Egypt and Iran on the most monumental period of book illumination ever known, in copies of the Koran produced on the most majestic and expansive scale, and embellished with gold and lapis lazuli. To this same period belong the earliest illustrated manuscripts of Arabic, and in the 14th century of Persian, literature. The Mongol conquest of much of the Middle East in the 13th century opened up its arts to the influence of China, particularly its book arts, and by the late 14th century there had emerged the classical forms of Persian book illumination, which had such profound effect on the Indian book arts.

To copy the Holy Koran was in itself a most pious act; to do it superbly was an act that brought earthly praise and reward as well. The calligrapher was the highest artist known in the Islamic world, his primacy depending on his writing down the word of God. The illuminator and painter stood far beneath him. The Arabs, of course, frowned on both painting and sculpture as contrary to the Prophet’s commandment and very rarely illustrated their manuscripts. The Iranians, who had much earlier traditions of manuscript illumination, probably before the Arab conquest, and certainly before the Mongol invasions which destroyed nearly every library in Iran, had fewer inhibitions about painting; but it was usually a private art, for the delectation of rulers and their courts. To the frontispieces and chapter-headers, the Miniature Illumination and narrative miniatures—true miniatures, illuminated with gold. And as no other people, they truly illustrated the text, interweaving script and paintings.

The rulers set up studios at their courts to produce books—indeed to beautify and burnished paper, to write the text, to illuminate it, to paint the miniatures, and finally to bind the result in soft leather and to decorate it. This courtly bibliographic tradition was not fully established in India until the end of the 14th century. But the new Muslim rulers of India immediately introduced their own concepts of books. They, of course, had no truck with palm leaves and to begin with must have imported paper from Iran and elsewhere (there are early references to Syriac paper being used in India), before setting up their own production centres.

Very few manuscripts in Persian or Arabic have survived from the first two centuries of Muslim rule, perhaps because of the sack of Delhi in 1398 by Timur. It is also a great problem distinguishing Indian Islamic manuscripts from Iranian ones, before the emergence of a distinct Indian...