

Henry T. Colebrooke an August Wilhelm von Schlegel

London, 31.01.1821

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[1] Albany, London

31st Jan^y 1821.

Dear Sir

Your letter of the 18th reached me but a few days ago; and I have deferred acknowledging it no longer, than ^{until} I should have seen the Booksellers after forwarding your letter to them - I learn from them that no copies of the three works mentioned are here procurable; but they will be commissioned for you from India. Black & C^o will at all times be glad to be favored with your orders; and I believe you will find them attentive & careful.

The carelessness of native editors & publishers of works in India, joined with the ravages of worms & termites, is very discouraging to the importation of books thence. Your animadversions are well deserved. I could never impress upon native correctors of the press, while I was there, the duty of a scrupulously careful revision. They are slovenly with the press, as with manuscripts: which commonly are very incorrect. It was on this account [2] my habit to purchase copies which had been much used & studied in preference to ornamented & splendid copies imperfectly corrected.

No good editions of printed Sanscrit can be expected, without European superintendance; and I shall be anxious to learn that you succeed in improving the types; & that the learned of Germany, & yourself at their head, enter on the laborious but important task of editing Sanscrit works.

The Dévanágarí types, which are chiefly used in India, are nearly logographic. The only inconvenience of that plan is the multitude of compartments requisite for the compositor's table. The advantages were however considered as counterbalancing the inconvenience. I mean to say that the compound letters are combined in a single type. It is a method which I introduced there.

I quite concur in opinion with you. that Lithography is more suited to the Persian & Arabic literature, than to Sanscrit. I hope to learn that it is adopted in India for Persian, & for characters of which no types have been struck.

What I think most advisable, & as such have recommended, is, that manuscripts should be prepared with lithographic ink upon transfer-paper, and sent over to be here transferred to stone & printed.

I feel it difficult to answer your inquiry concerning the price of manuscripts in India. When [3] I was residing in the vicinity of Benares I was enabled to purchase books at moderate prices. In every other place I found them very dear: and the cost of transcripts purposely made was enormous. I should be at a loss to recommend to you an agent to make purchases for you. I would rather advise to await opportunities of buying in England. Oriental manuscripts are sometimes for sale, on coming into the hands of unlearned heirs of deceased Orientalists.

I beg you to accept my thanks for the communication of your publication. I only yesterday received it, M^r T. Campbell's books having been long detained by the way: and I have not yet had time to consult it & refer to the passages to which you particularly advert.

The Asiatic society will be much gratified by the communication you intend to make I am confident, no member of that body will take ill a free & candid discussion of topics, though attended with difference of opinion.

Not having an immediate opportunity of reference to books, I cannot just now take on myself to name

commentaries on the Bhágavata Gítá & Rámáyana, from recollection

The Tícás or commentaries of [4] the Rámáyana are collections of notes or Scholia, rather than a gloss or perpetual comment.

The practice of counting Chapters & verses of venerated books tends no doubt to the preservation of the purity of the text: but I take the purpose to be superstitious. The certainty has not preserved the text of Puránas; which is often found disagreeing with the index. The only real ^{effectual} preservation is a perpetual comment of a scholiast.

I should certainly recommend to a future editor of the Hitopadesa to advert to the Panchatantra, to assist his choice between discordant copies of the Hitópadesa. If copies enough of the Panchatantra can be found for collation, it might be advisable to edit the original work itself. A Singhalese version is extant: Which might assist the undertaking.

I hope you will continue to favour me with your correspondence

I remain

Dear Sir

with great respect

very Sinclly Yours

H Colebrooke

Namen

Campbell, Thomas

Körperschaften

Asiatic Society (Kalkutta)

Black, Parry, & Co. (London)

Orte

London

Varanasi (Benares)

Werke

Bhagavadgītā

Hitopadeśa

Jayadeva: Gītagovinda

Manusmriti

Pañcatantra

Purāṇa

Rāmāyaṇa

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