

The “Ālu Kurumba Rāmāyaṇa”: The Story of Rāma as Narrated by a South Indian Tribe¹

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INTRODUCTION

The Ālu Kurumbas, a small tribe numbering just about a thousand souls, live in the forest regions of the Nilgiri Hills of South India. Traditionally, they are occupied with food-gathering, hunting, and practising shifting cultivation. The language spoken by them is an independent member of the southern branch of the Dravidian family of languages.

In the course of linguistic and ethnographic field-work conducted among the Ālu Kurumbas,² I was able to collect on tape more than 300 texts from this tribe's rich oral literature. While working on this corpus,³ I could easily discern a noticeable number of these texts as non-indigenous traditions, their predominant source being the Sanskrit literature. This is a phenomenon which is by no means surprising, since it may be observed with numerous ethnic groups all over India, including even communities who live in nearly inaccessible mountain and forest areas. So, it is small wonder that the oral narrative literature of the Ālu Kurumbas not only contains versions of the stories of Hariścandra, Prahlāda, Nala and Damayantī, King Śibi, etc., but also of the great epics, Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. And it is in particular the Rāmāyaṇa version which, on account of its many peculiarities, forms the most noteworthy and outstanding example of the (originally) non-indigenous traditions of this tribe.⁴

As it presents itself, this prose version of the Rāmāyaṇa, very frequently, as well in some main features as in numerous details, deviates from the classical version of Vālmiki and manifests more or less strong resemblances to many of the folk versions of the Rāmāyaṇa

which are current all over India, and to several of the South-East Asian versions. One of the most striking of its divergences, which may be expressly named here, is the episode of Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa.⁵ This episode of (Ayi- and) Mayi-Rāvaṇa or (Ai- and) Mai-Rāvaṇa or (Ahi- and) Mahī-Rāvaṇa is known as forming a part of the later, post-classical Rāmāyaṇa literature. It not only constitutes a brief section of the Sanskrit Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa (1.11.73–130)⁶ and is given a particular treatment in two (not yet edited) Sanskrit texts, viz., Mairāvaṇacarita⁷ (Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, nos. D 2082–2086 and no. R 647 (a)) and Hanūmad-vijaya (ibid., nos. D 12215 and 12216), but it is also handed down to us through poets from various parts of India who wrote in their respective mother-tongues, viz.,

- Bengali:* (a) Mahīrāvaṇer Pālā⁸ by Kṛttivāsa; (b) Dānaparva⁹ by Kāśīrāma;
- Assami:* (a) Mahīrāvaṇa-vadha¹⁰ by Anantakandalī; (b) Pātālakhaṇḍa-rāmāyaṇa¹¹ by the same poet; (c) Mahīrāyaṇa-caritra āru Vetāla-caṇḍīra Upākhyāna (=Mahīrāvaṇa-vadha)¹² by Candrabhārati; (d) Pātāli-kāṇḍa¹³ by Vidyāpañcānana;
- Oriya:* (a) Dakṣiṇī-rāmāyaṇa or Dāṇḍī-rāmāyaṇa¹⁴ by Baḷarāma Dāsa; (b) Vicitra-rāmāyaṇa¹⁴ by Viśvanātha Khuṅṭiā; (c) Rāmalilā¹⁵ by Vikrama Narendra; (d) Nalarāmacarita¹⁴ by Śīsu Īśvaradāsa; (e) Mahīrāvaṇa-vadha¹⁶;
- Hindi:* Rāmalīngāmṛta (sarga 8)¹⁷ by Advaita;
- Gujarati:* Narmakathākośa¹⁸;
- Marathi:* (a) Bhāvārtha-rāmāyaṇa (6.51–54)¹⁹ by Ekanātha; (b) Ahi-mahīrāvaṇa-vadha²⁰ by Mukteśvara;
- Kannada:* (a) Mairāvaṇa-kāḷaga²¹; (b) Kauśika-rāmāyaṇa²²;
- Tamil:* Mayilirāvaṇaṅ-katai²³;
- Malayalam:* Pātāla-rāmāyaṇa.²⁴

In addition, this episode is also found incorporated in South-East Asian Rāmāyaṇa versions, viz.,

- Thai:* Rāma-kīen²⁵;
- Laotian*²⁶: (a) Khvay 'Thuaraphi (Gvāy Dvóraḥbī)²⁷; (b) Phra Lak Phra Lam (Brah Lak Brah Lām)²⁸;
- Burmese:* 'Thiri Rāma²⁹;
- Malay:* Hikayat Seri Rama (Hikāyat Srī Rāma).³⁰

For the contents of the Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa episode as well as for divergences other than that, the reader may consult the detailed summary given below. The present paper is primarily aimed at draw-

ing the attention of the scholars concerned with this tribal version of the Rāmāyaṇa by giving a detailed summary of its contents. It is not its aim to detect and dwell on parallels to all its specific peculiarities. However, it may be pointed out that a thorough comparative study of all divergent features will be found within the scope of a book which is under preparation at present, entitled: The "Ālu Kurumba Rāmāyaṇa": Text, Translation and Comparative Study.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS³¹

1. *Bāla-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1-184)

A long time ago, King Dacara (Daśaratha) ruled over the country of Ayōdi (Ayodhyā). He had three queens, Kōcale (Kauśalyā), Cumitire (Sumitrā), and Kayigēyi (Kaikeyī), but no issues from them. Although King Dacara sent prayers to various gods, his desire for issues remained unfulfilled, until the sage Vicuvāmitura (Viśvāmitra) made his appearance at his court and announced that sons would be born to him only if he succeeded in shooting 101 elephants.

In those times, Rāvaṇa, the ruler of Laṅge (Lankā), had subdued all the gods—with the exception of Emme-Daruma-Rāja³² (Dharmarāja, Yama) whose existence and function was not known to him.

One day, he asked himself how it came that all his subjects had to die. He decided to find out the truth in the world of gods. But none of the gods would disclose the reason for that. Only when he finally announced that they could do nothing against him, as a life of many ten million years had been granted to him, Indura (Indra) informed him that Emme-Daruma-Rāja was responsible for the death of the living along with his accountant Cittura-Pattura (Citragupta) who kept records on the deeds of the mortals. And Indura added that Rāvaṇa would be able to stave off death from his subjects, if he only managed to seize Emme-Daruma-Rāja.

Thereupon, Rāvaṇa went to see him and cursed him and his six helpers to become beetles.

Then he demanded from him that he should grant everlasting life to his two elder brothers, Ayi-Rāvaṇa and Mayi-Rāvaṇa, who ruled over the netherworld underneath Laṅge. Emme-Daruma-Rāja had no alternative but to comply with his demand.

While Rāvaṇa continued to oppress gods and men, the gods, one day, assembled and took counsel together as to what they should do to get rid of this disgraceful enslavement. They reached an agreement to the effect that they should come together on an auspicious day to discuss everything in detail. After a little deliberation, they decided on the following Friday. On that day, the gods passed a resolution saying

that Civa-Perumānu's (Civa-Perumān's, Śiva's) trident and Kisuṇa's (Kṛṣṇa's) sword should become the means of their rescue. Each of the gods should bestow his blessings on these divine attributes whereupon they should be transformed into little puppets (balls). These puppets should then be sent down to earth to become human beings who would destroy Rāvaṇa and bring about their liberation.

Now Vicuvāmitura informed the gods that King Dacara of Ayōdī had no issues from his three queens. And he added that he had advised him to shoot 101 elephants in order to obtain issues. Meanwhile, he had managed to kill 100 elephants, and before long, he would definitely shoot the last one. As soon as this would come to pass, the gods should transfer the two puppets into the wombs of the queens, Kōcale and Cumitire. Being born, they would become great heroes who would be sent into the forest, fight with Rāvaṇa and ultimately overcome him. But it would be wise to grant King Dacara two more sons, who, during the absence of the two heroes, would remain at the court. The gods fully agreed to Vicuvāmitura's plan.

At that time, there lived at some place an old blind couple along with their son. When they had found a bride for him and married him to her, he had to go to war. But his wife did not look after her parents-in-law as it would have been fitting, although she had been requested by her husband to do so before he left. Daily she used to cook seven dishes from rice and various kinds of millet and seven different vegetable curries; but thinking that the old couple would not suspect anything, she always served them only a gruel made of rāgi millet while she enjoyed all the other dishes herself.

Eventually the day came when the son of the old couple returned from war. On that day the old man, while groping about on the floor of the house, found a grain of cooked rice. Thanking god for this find, he gratefully stuck it to his forehead without wondering about it. In this state, he was met by his returning son who was somewhat disturbed at seeing the grain of cooked rice on his father's forehead. Misinterpreting it, he asked him why he had not washed his face properly. Thereupon, his father told him everything. Enraged about the misconduct of his wife, who had just gone for water, he waited for her to come. As soon as she appeared, he cursed her to become a dog and go away. And so it happened.

Then he placed his old parents into two baskets and set out carrying them by means of a carrying pole. After going a long distance, he reached the forest where King Dacara pursued his 101st elephant. Having arrived there, he put down the baskets in which his parents were seated, and, as they had become thirsty, took a calabash and went

down to a lake to bring some water.

Now King Dacara, who was very near, heard the sounds which were produced when the old couple's son was filling the calabash with water, and mistaking these sounds for those brought about by an elephant while drinking, he blindly shot an arrow in that direction. Unfortunately, his arrow hit the old couple's son who, dying, lamented his parents' fate and entreated the king who came rushing there, to bring his parents some water and look after them in his place, without letting them know that he was a different person. The old people, however, could not be deceived. When King Dacara brought them water, they asked him who he was before he had uttered a single word. Even though he answered that he was their son, they did not believe him. They said that he did not tell them the truth; that they were Cittura-Pattura and that they wished to die if their son was dead. Now King Dacara disclosed his identity and told them how everything had come to pass, how he, in search of his 101st elephant, the killing of which would promise him issues, had let himself be deceived in such a manner. Thereupon, the old people told him that now he had shot his 101st elephant and would be blessed with issues. He should, therefore, return to his country. Then they both passed away, without having touched the water offered to them by King Dacara.

King Dacara went back home and found his three queens pregnant. And soon after, four sons were born to him: Rāmaru (Rāma) by Cumitire, Laccumaṇa (Lakṣmaṇa) by Kōcale, Barada (Bharata) and Caturuguna (Śatrughna) by Kayigēyi.

In the meantime, Vicuvāmitura, in the disguise of an old blind man, set out for King Dacara's court in order to offer his service as a teacher for the king's sons. But he did not do this in a direct way. He simply requested the king to protect him and assign him some work. When King Dacara asked him what kind of work he could do as a blind man, Vicuvāmitura replied that he knew all the sciences which a prince ought to know, starting from archery, horse riding and so on. However, King Dacara wanted to make sure of it first and made him undergo a test. He had a mango fruit placed on the battlements of the fort and requested Vicuvāmitura to shoot it down from there. After he had proved his skill, Vicuvāmitura was engaged by King Dacara as a teacher for his sons.

While King Dacara's sons grew up, they were instructed in all sciences by Vicuvāmitura.

At that time, King Janagaru (Janaka) ruled over the town of Midile (Mithilā). He had a daughter called Cīde (Sītā) who excelled in perfect and unrivalled beauty. In his fort, there was a huge bow which

nobody was able to bend. When Cīde reached her marriageable age, King Janagaru had announced everywhere that he would give his daughter and his kingdom only to a suitor who would be able to bend that bow and fix the string. Many princes came and tried their luck but none of them succeeded.

The tidings reached Vicuvāmitura's ears, who knew that only Rāmaru was able to master the given task. He informed Rāmaru about all the particulars and prevailed on him to start for Midile. Rāmaru could not refuse his teacher's request and gave his consent. Having received the blessings of his father, his three mothers, and his teacher, he set out, accompanied by his brother Laccumaṇa and Vicuvāmitura.

On arriving at Midile, King Janagaru showed them the bow and Rāmaru at once proceeded to bend it, in full view of all the luckless princes who were still there. And while he bent it in order to fix the string, the bow broke in two. Thereupon, King Janagaru praised him as the strongest of all princes and promised him his daughter and his kingdom.

Immediately preparations were made for the marriage ceremony. Meanwhile, Rāmaru approached his would-be father-in-law and requested him to grant the following favour: After the completion of the marriage, he would prefer to go back to his father's country together with his wife Cīde, Laccumaṇa, and Vicuvāmitura and, therefore, would not be able to take over the reign over Midile. Having returned to his home country, however, he would send him his two brothers, Barada and Caturuguna, for assisting him in the administration of his kingdom. Without hesitation, King Janagaru complied with Rāmaru's request and suggestion.

Then the marriage took place. When the celebrations had come to an end, Rāmaru, accompanied by his wife, brother, and teacher, went back to his father's country and sent his brothers, Barada and Caturuguna, to King Janagaru of Midile.

2. *Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1–50)

Meanwhile, King Dacara had become aged and thought of making over the reign to Rāmaru, his eldest son. This was obviously sensed by his third queen, Kayigēyi. Since she knew that he could not refuse her any wish, she went to him and asked him to grant her a favour. Un-suspectingly, he promised to fulfil any wish of hers. Now she requested him to crown Barada king in Rāmaru's place and send Rāmaru to the forest for a period of fourteen years. Bound by his promise, King Dacara had to yield to her desire.

When Rāmaru learnt what had happened, he promptly set out accompanied by his wife Cīde and his brother Laccumaṇa and left Ayōdi, under the laments of all the inhabitants of the town.

Soon after Rāmaru, along with his wife and Laccumaṇa, had gone to the forest, Barada returned from Midile. When he asked his father as to the whereabouts of Rāmaru, he only bowed his head. Rāmaru's mother, likewise, did not tell him anything. Thereupon, he went to his mother who proudly made known to him what she had done for him. Barada, being utterly shocked, abused his mother as well as her name and without delay set out to meet Rāmaru in the forest. He entreated him to come back and accept the crown. But Rāmaru refused saying that he must not counteract to his father's word.

Thereupon, Barada asked him to give him at least his sandals. When Rāmaru had complied with his wish, Barada returned to Ayōdi and placed Rāmaru's sandals onto the throne. Thus he demonstrated that Rāmaru was the only rightful ruler over Ayōdi even though he, Barada, would now reign the kingdom in his place for fourteen years.

3. *Aranya-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1-52)

In the meantime, the tidings of Cīde's unrivalled beauty had also reached Laṅge. When Rāvaṇa, the ruler of Laṅge, heard thereof, he knew that he must have her at any cost.

Rāvaṇa had three brothers; one of them, Gumbagaruṇa (Kumbhakarṇa), was with him in Laṅge while the other two, Ayi-Rāvaṇa and Mayi-Rāvaṇa, ruled over the netherworld underneath Laṅge. Accompanied by Gumbagaruṇa, Rāvaṇa now set out for the forest where Rāmaru together with Cīde and Laccumaṇa had settled. On the orders of Rāvaṇa, Gumbagaruṇa transformed himself into a deer (*Axis axis*) and appeared before Cīde. On seeing the deer, Cīde wished to have it and asked Rāmaru to catch it for her. But before Rāmaru started for the hunt after the deer, he requested her to remain where she was, and left her in Laccumaṇa's care.

The deer went deeper and deeper into the forest and Rāmaru followed it closely until he succeeded in shooting it. But when it fell down, it uttered, in the voice of Rāmaru, some plaintive sounds and cried for Laccumaṇa. On hearing these pretended cries for help, Laccumaṇa was at once determined to come to his brother's rescue whom he thought to have run into danger. However, before he left he drew three lines around the hut and enjoined Cīde from stepping out of the hut during his absence. If a beggar came, so he added, she might leave the hut in order to give him alms, but then she should, on no account, pass over the three lines.

As soon as Laccumaṇa had gone, Rāvaṇa appeared in the disguise of a beggar in front of Cīde's hut and asked for alms. When she stepped out of the hut to give him something, he tried to approach her and, in doing so, stepped on the first of the three lines. Forthwith, he was caught by fire. Warned by this, he stepped back and the fire disappeared. Then he bade Cīde to come near him. At first, Cīde refused, but ultimately, Rāvaṇa succeeded in persuading her to cross the three lines. Immediately, Rāvaṇa seized her and placed her into a car which he had transported to the spot by magic. Then he flew off with her in this car together with Gumbagaruṇa who, meanwhile, had appeared on the scene. But soon they encountered the king of the birds of prey who attempted to stop Rāvaṇa. A fight ensued in the course of which the king of the birds of prey was defeated.

In the meantime, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa had found out that they had been deceived by somebody. When, having returned to the hut, they did not find a trace of Cīde, they immediately went in search of her. Suddenly, they heard a voice calling from a distance: "Rāma! Rāma!" When they had reached there, they saw that it was the king of the birds of prey who, dying, told them that Cīde had been carried off by Rāvaṇa and Gumbagaruṇa in their flying car. Thereupon, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa, without delay, proceeded on their way towards Laṅge in search of Cīde.

4. *Kiṣkindhā-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1-98)

On their way, they came across an immense flock of monkeys who, to their amazement, incessantly sang the name of Rāma. It was the flock of Alumaru (Hanūmat). After Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa had disclosed their identity, they were welcomed and guided into the presence of Cukirīva (Sugrīva), the father of Alumaru. When they had informed him about their object, Cukirīva promised to help them. He offered to accompany them along with all his subjects and aid them in building a bridge to Laṅge. But before that, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa should help him to kill his enemy, Bāli (Vālin). For, as long as he would be alive, he would, according to his nature, inform Rāvaṇa about their plan without delay. Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa agreed and, in the company of Cukirīva, set out to destroy Bāli-Bālu (Vālin).

On the way, they saw a huge accumulation of bones resembling a mountain. When asked by Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa, Cukirīva narrated that at this spot, long ago, a fight between a demon king named Dundubi (Dundubhi) and Bāli-Bālu had taken place. Dundubi was very powerful and never was he vanquished. Therefore, he asked Civa-Perumānu to grant him the favour of invincibility. In order to

get rid of him, Civa-Perumānu requested him to ask other gods who surpassed him in power, for what he desired. But the other gods also hesitated to bestow on him the power which he demanded, fearing that he would destroy all the people and animals on earth. Boiling with rage, he came back to the earth and challenged Bāli-Bālu to fight against him. The fight continued for a long time, but at the end, Bāli-Bālu succeeded in destroying him. He managed to seize him and hurl him far away. His body flew over mountains and, finally, fell down at a place where the sage Madan̄ga (Mataṅga) was doing penance. Enraged about the interruption of his penance, Madan̄ga not only cursed him to die, but also to disappear altogether from the earth. And at that place where he died, there arose now a mountain formed by his bones. With this, Cukirīva closed his account.

Thereupon, Rāmaru requested his brother Laccumaṅa to do away with this mountain of bones saying that this was an obstacle for all men. But as soon as Laccumaṅa, with the big toe of his (right) foot kicked against this mountain of bones, it flew up and landed in the world of gods. Thus the curse uttered by Madan̄ga was fulfilled in its entirety. But now, all the gods execrated the remains of Dundubi to change into fleas, bugs, mosquitos, lice, etc., and, hence-forth, bite and destroy all demons. (But—alas!—nowadays, there are no demons any more and therefore, these insects bite us!) After the removal of the mountain of bones, Cukirīva, Rāmaru and Laccumaṅa proceeded on their way. When they came near the dwelling-place of Bāli-Bālu, informed Rāmaru and Laccumaṅa that Bāli-Bālu, on account of a specific blessing, was invincible. Thereupon, Rāmaru told him that he would bereave him of this blessing by causing him to pronounce a name which was renowned in the fourteen worlds, viz., his own name. This was accomplished in that he, Rāmaru, spoke out his own name in a loud voice. For, when Bāli-Bālu heard this name which penetrated all the fourteen worlds, he, instinctively, said to himself: "Who calls 'Rāma'?" And thus, he was bereft of his specific blessing and was overcome by Rāmaru in the course of the ensuing fight.

After Bāli-Bālu's defeat, Rāmaru and Laccumaṅa, accompanied by Cukirīva, Alumaru and the whole lot of monkeys, headed for the sea-coast.

5. *Sundara-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1-40)

In order to find out the place where Cīde was held captive, Alumaru first of all, flew to Laṅge. Having arrived there, he encountered Rāvaṅa who obstructed his way. At once, they began to compete with each other. Both of them gave proof of their respective powers. Then

Alumaru rolled up his tail so as to form a high cone and sitting on top of it, he called on Rāvaṇa to equal him. Rāvaṇa who, of course, was unable to do so, admitted his defeat for this time. Thereupon, Alumaru provoked him saying that he would not be able to overcome him even if he tied all pieces of cloth which were available in Laṅge, to the end of his tail and set fire to them. He would be ablaze then, but the fire would do no harm to his body. Unsuspectingly, Rāvaṇa accepted this challenge. He had great quantities of cloth and oil carried to the spot. Then he bade his subjects to tie all the cloth to Alumaru's tail and pour on it 1,000 cans of oil. This being done, Rāvaṇa ordered fire set to it. Thereupon, Alumaru jumped up and leaping from roof to roof, set the whole of Laṅge on fire. The fire, however, reached also the secret place where Rāvaṇa held Cīde captive. And thus, Alumaru who, intended to destroy Laṅge by resorting to a ruse, unintentionally caused the death of Cīde!

Cīde's ashes, however, were found by a certain man (whose name had slipped my informant's memory). He carefully collected them, put them into a small box, and consigned it to the water of the ocean.

Eventually the box washed ashore at the opposite coast. A boatman of that country which was ruled by a Pāṇḍya prince discovered the box and hid it in his boat. Then he went to the Pāṇḍya prince and reported to him on his find. It was agreed that the boatman was permitted to keep the box while the contents of the box should devolve to the prince. When, on their arrival at the sea-coast, the Pāṇḍya prince opened the box, he was greatly amazed to see Cīde, who had marvelously come to life again, emerging from it! The Pāṇḍya prince, however, did not keep her under his protection, but had her taken to the netherworld underneath Laṅge and surrendered to Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa.

6. *Yuddha-Kāṇḍa* (sentences 1-257)

Meanwhile, Rāmaru, Laccumaṇa, Cukirīva, Alumaru who had come back again, and the whole race of monkeys started to build a bridge from the mainland to Laṅge. Thereby, they were supported by the race of squirrels which had joined them. While all of them were busy with throwing stones and rocks into the ocean, Rāmaru suddenly ascertained that all the stones that were flung by him into the ocean, went down below the water, whereas those which were thrown by Laccumaṇa, the monkeys and the squirrels, did not sink, but kept floating on the surface of the water. Amazed at this, he caught a squirrel and asked it whether it knew the reason for that; whereupon the squirrel replied that he did not succeed in his attempt from the simple reason

that he did not throw the stones into the water in the name of Rāma, as all the others did. Touched by the devotion of the squirrel, Rāmaru stroked its back. And since that time, the back of the squirrels is embellished by three lines—the marks of Rāmaru's fingers.

As soon as the bridge was completed, all of them marched over to Laṅge. Having reached there, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa plunged into a terrible fight with Rāvaṇa which continued for eighteen days. It so happened that, in the course of this fight, Laccumaṇa was wounded by an arrow shot by Rāvaṇa. In order to heal Laccumaṇa's wound, Rāmaru required a certain medicinal flower which was to be found growing only on a far-away mountain. This flower had a specific property: it constantly flared up and went out. Rāmaru requested Alumaru to bring one of these flowers as quick as possible. And Alumaru who had the power to fly through the air, set out. He reached the mountain and found the flowers. But when he noticed that whatever flower he plucked, went out as soon as he touched it, he, without hesitation, took the whole mountain and carried it to Laṅge. Rāmaru, at being amazed about this, was instantly informed by Alumaru about the reason for this deed. As soon as Rāmaru had placed one of the flowers onto Laccumaṇa's wound, he was cured and, immediately, got up to fight again.

In the course of this fight, Rāvaṇa was ultimately killed. But the victory was not yet theirs. Gumbagaruṇa had not yet come out to fight them, as he fast asleep. He was in the habit of sleeping for six months altogether without interruption. Then he used to be awake for another six months during which time he, incessantly, devoured leaves and stones. Although the warriors of Laṅge did their utmost to awaken him, they did not succeed. Then they led a herd of elephants onto his body and had them trample upon it, but even that was of no avail. Finally, they sent an enormous flock of goats onto him which pestered him in such a way that he woke up. When he had learnt what had happened in the meantime, he approached Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa and submitted to them. Then he told them all about the place where Cīde was kept.

Meanwhile, thirteen of the fourteen years of exile had passed. At the end of this period, Rāmaru was to be crowned king. Now Alumaru started for the netherworld in search of Cīde. While he flew through the air, he, suddenly, was driven by a strong and irresistible wind towards a certain river where a demoness named Maṅgea-Karaci³³ lived. She frankly informed him that she would devour him. By a curse laid upon her by Ayi- and Maṅgea-Rāvaṇa, her hands had been bound together and her head had been transformed into that of a crocodile. This

curse would leave her if only she managed to devour Alumaru. Now, Alumaru tried to escape from his doom by resorting to a ruse. He requested the demoness to open her mouth so wide that she would be able to devour him. But then he caused his body to assume a gigantic size. And when the demoness had opened her jaws adequately, Alumaru diminished his size considerably, leapt into her mouth and, instantly, jumped out again. At that very moment, the curse ended.

Overwhelmed by gratefulness, the demoness who was not disfigured any more, requested Alumaru to become her husband. Alumaru consented, but told her that, beforehand, he had to find Cīde and bring her back to Rāmaru. Thereupon, Maṅgea-Karaci informed him that Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa kept Cīde hidden in the harem of their fort, and showed him the way leading there. Without delay, Alumaru set out and, somehow, reached the place. He found Cīde and succeeded in bringing her back to Rāmaru.

After all of them had happily made their return to Ayōdī, Rāmaru thought within himself that his happiness was not perfect as long as Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa were alive. He decided to destroy them once and for all.

In the meantime, Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa who had discovered the abduction of Cīde by Alumaru, set out in search of her. In the disguise of beggars, they reached Ayōdī and came to know about Rāmaru's plan. They thought that it would be best to bring Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa into their power first and then to carry off Cīde. Thereupon they withdrew into the forest and waited there for Rāmaru, Laccumaṇa, and Alumaru to come.

Soon after, the three of them who had set out to fight Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa reached the forest. At dusk, Alumaru rolled up his tail so as to form a high cone and hiding Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa inside it, sat on top of it. Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa who were nearby, watched everything. In the disguise of priests, they approached Alumaru and asked him to show them Rāmaru, as they wished to offer a pūjā to him. Unsuspectingly, Alumaru told them that Rāmaru and his brother were already fast asleep and that they should come again on the following morning when Rāmaru would show himself to them. But when the two priests insisted on their request, Alumaru gave in and let them enter the interior of the cone formed by his tail. In no time, they overpowered Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa and, at lightning-speed, dug a subterranean passage leading down to the netherworld. Having reached there, they carried the two brothers whom they had put in irons, into their fort and held them captive inside the temple of the fort. This temple was consecrated to the goddess Kālī (Kālī) who, at regular in-

tervals, was appeased by blood sacrifices.

When, on the following morning, Alumaru unrolled his tail, he discovered what had happened. Without delay, he entered the subterraneous passage and hastened down to the netherworld. When he reached the gates of the fort, he was prevented from passing by the doorkeeper, Maccaval(1)a³⁴ who challenged him to a duel.

At that time, both of them had no idea that they were related to each other as father and son. Before Alumaru had left the demoness Maṅgea-Karaci in search of Cīde, she had become pregnant by a drop of Alumaru's sweat which had fallen onto her. So, in due course, she had given birth to a son who is known under the name of Maccaval(1)a.

After Alumaru had accepted Maccaval(1)a's challenge, they both began to fight each other. For a long time, however, the fight continued with none getting the better of the other, and that, until the demoness Maṅgea-Karaci appeared on the scene and asked them why they fought each other. As soon as Maccaval(1)a heard the voice of his mother, he stopped fighting and was, at this very moment, felled by Alumaru.

Then Alumaru confided to his wife why he had come again, and she promised to help him in getting inside the temple of the fort. She told him that she worked for Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa. Daily, she had to gather flowers and adorn the idol of Kāḷi with them. When she had informed him about her duties, Alumaru got an idea. He asked her to conceal him after he had assumed a tiny shape, among the flowers and so take him inside the temple. And she complied with his request. As soon as she had entered the temple, Alumaru slipped out of the flower-basket and assumed the shape of one of Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa's priests. In this disguise, he could walk about and acquaint himself with everything without being hindered. He saw Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa who were put in irons, but did not yet disclose his identity to them. And he came to know that Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa had decreed that, on Friday in a week, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa should be sacrificed to the goddess Kāḷi.

Now, Alumaru thought within himself that it would be best to liberate Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa and destroy Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa on that very Friday. In the meantime, he would be able to procure weapons and bring them into the temple.

On the following Friday, Alumaru hid behind the idol of Kāḷi and waited till Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa along with their subjects had assembled. Then, assuming the voice of Kāḷi, he ordered that they should offer her plenty of food as she would be starving. Amazed and also pleased that the goddess had spoken to them, they instantly

had enormous quantities of food brought to the spot from all parts of the country. Then all the food was poured down onto the idol of Kāḷi through a hole in the roof of the temple. Alumaru devoured everything and when he felt satiated, he asked them to stop and ordered that, next Friday, the sacrifice of Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa should be performed.

That day having come, Alumaru liberated Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa and handed over to them all the weapons which he had procured in the meantime. As soon as Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa made their appearance, Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa began to fight them. The fight continued for twenty-two days in all. But from the very beginning, it seemed to be a losing fight for Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa. When they had managed to kill Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa, they were dismayed to see that they not only became alive again, but also doubled; in other words, that the killing of the two Rāvaṇas resulted in the resurrection of four Rāvaṇas and so on!

While they thus fought against an ever increasing number of Rāvaṇas, Alumaru racked his brains as to what could be done. Suddenly, he heard the voice of his wife Maṅgea-Karaci who called him from outside the temple. When he looked up, he saw her standing at a window of the temple. Instantly, he went there and was informed by her that there was a woman named Āraval(l)i who knew all about the secret of the two Rāvaṇas. She entreated him to rush to her place and ask her for it. Then she showed him the way, and Alumaru flew away.

Having reached at Āraval(l)i's place, he told her all about Rāmaru's and Laccumaṇa's fight against Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa. Thereupon, she consented to reveal the secret of the two Rāvaṇas, but only on condition that Alumaru would promise her that Rāmaru, after his triumph over his enemies, would marry her. Cunningly, Alumaru promised what she desired, but asked her beforehand whether she would mind if the litter on which Rāmaru and Āraval(l)i would be seated during the marriage ceremony, would break in two just when Rāmaru would place the garland of flowers around her neck. (At such an ominous event, Rāmaru would naturally annul the marriage.) Unsuspectingly, Āraval(l)i replied that she would not mind as she wished to marry Rāmaru at any cost.

Then she showed Alumaru the way to a hidden lake which, constantly, would be visited by seven beetles for drawing water. As soon as they would pour a few drops of this water on a dead man, he not only would come to life again, but also would double. When Alumaru arrived at the lake, the seven beetles came flying to it. Without hesi-

tation, he killed six of them with his weapon. But when the seventh, their king, was caught by him, he assumed human shape. Amazed at this, Alumaru asked him as to his identity, whereupon he informed him that he was Emme-Daruma-Rāja. Then he told Alumaru how Rāvaṇa, at one time, and subjugated him and his six helpers and cursed them to become beetles; how he had engaged them to grant everlasting life to Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa and, if they should be killed, to give them back their life twice. Now, he, Alumaru, had liberated him and his helpers and put an end to Rāvaṇa's curse. But before Emme-Daruma-Rāja along with his helpers started for his realm, Alumaru requested him to cause the litter on which Rāmaru and Āraval(1)i would be seated during the marriage ceremony, to break in two just when Rāmaru would prepare himself to place the garland of flowers around her neck.

After Emme-Daruma-Rāja had granted him this request, Alumaru, at once, hastened back to the scene of the fight only to see that, meanwhile, Ayi- and Mayi-Rāvaṇa including their numerous doubles were dead.

Thereupon, Alumaru, together with Rāmaru and Laccumaṇa, set out for Ayōdi. On the way, they met Āraval(1)i who reminded Alumaru of his promise. After Rāmaru had been informed adequately by Alumaru, he consented to marry her. Immediately, they prepared to perform the marriage ceremony. When, according to his promise given to Alumaru, Emme-Daruma-Rāja caused the marriage litter to break in two in the critical moment, Rāmaru, instantaneously, interrupted the ceremony saying that he could not possibly contract a marriage with her after such an incident. To console her, he installed her as princess of Laṅge and, then, set out for Ayōdi together with Laccumaṇa and Alumaru.

After their safe return to Ayōdi, Rāmaru who was happy to finally be united with his wife once and for ever, was crowned king. Presently, Alumaru left for his own country, and all of them lived happily ever after.

NOTES

1. This contribution forms the revised version of a paper which was read at the "International Seminar on Rāmāyaṇa Traditions and National Cultures in Asia," Lucknow, India, October 2-6, 1986.

2. Field-research was carried out from May 1974, to April 1976, particularly among the Ālu Kuṣumbas, but also among two further ethnic groups of the Nilgiri region, viz., the Pālu Kuṣumbas, and the Muḍugas. The research was rendered possible by a grant from the German Research Association (DFG).—So far, apart from some fourteen papers on the language, oral traditions, religion, and ethnography of the

Ālu Kuṟumbas, I have been able to complete two books which represent the first major results from my research project: the first being an exhaustive grammar along with an etymological dictionary of their Dravidian language, illustrated by some specimen texts with translations (in German) which was published in 1982; the second being a selection of thirty-three of their myths in German translation which will appear in 1990 (see REFERENCES CITED).

3. An edition of the collected texts, along with (German) translations and comparative notes, is under preparation.

4. This Rāmāyaṇa version which, in typescript, covers about forty pages (681 sentences), was narrated to me in 1974 by my then main informant, Laccuma (*c. 1949) from Nīṅgāl-ūru (Nedugal Kombai), who heard it from his late grandfather, Kalla. Only a small portion consisting of forty sentences, which correspond to the Sundara-Kāṇḍa, was supplied by Laccuma's aunt, i.e., Kalla's daughter, Mādi (*c. 1918), who passed away in 1984.

5. For allusions to the Mahī-Rāvaṇa story in the Śiva-Purāṇa and in Malik Muḥammad Jāyāsī's Padumāvatī, see KAPP 1988b.

6. BULCKE 1971; 596; SMITH 1982; 217 f.

7. BULCKE 1971; 176, 595-596.; SAHAI 1976; 26-27.; SMITH 1982; 217, 218, 219, 225.

8. SEN 1920; 254-283; BULCKE 1971; 597; DATTA 1980; 552, 554-555.; SMITH 1982; 215-216; SINGARAVELU 1985, 277-278.

9. BULCKE 1971; 597.

10. BULCKE 1971; 233; SMITH 1982, 225.

11. BULCKE 1971, 233.

12. BULCKE 1971; 233; SMITH 1982, 216.

13. SMITH 1982, 225.

14. BULCKE 1971; 240; SMITH 1982, 216-217.

15. BULCKE 1971; 241, 597; SMITH 1982, 216-217.

16. SHASTRI 1980, 591.

17. BULCKE 1971, 193; SHANKAR RAJU NAIDU 1971, 34-35.

18. BULCKE 1971, 597.

19. BULCKE 1971, 250-252, 597.

20. BULCKE 1971, 252.

21. BULCKE 1971, 223, 597.

22. SITARAMIAH 1980, 192.

23. SINGARAVELU 1985, 274-277.

24. KRISHNA WARRIOR 1980, 213.

25. BULCKE 1971, 598; RAGHAVAN 1975, 61; SAHAI 1976, 27; SINGARAVELU 1985, 278-279.

26. RAGHAVAN 1975, 38.

27. SAHAI 1976, 26-27; SAHAI 1980, 293-294.

28. SAHAI 1976, 26-27.

29. HAN / ZAW 1980, 307.

30. STUTTERHEIM 1925, 28, 44, 56, 57, 62, 99; ZIESENIS 1963, 75-79, 162; BULCKE 1971, 263-266; RAGHAVAN 1975, 116; SAHAI 1976, 27.

31. In presenting the contents, I follow the Kāṇḍa arrangement of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa.

32. = "Buffalo-Justice-King," i.e., Yama, Lord of Death; cf. Ālu Kuṟumba *emme* (Tamil *erumai*) 'buffalo' + Sanskrit *dharma-* + Sanskrit *rājan-*.

33. Corresponding to Tamil Maṅkaiyarkk-aracyiār, which is the name of the

queen of the Pāṇḍya king Niṅṅacīr-Neṭumāra Nāyaṅār, a canonized Śaiva saint (!). The second component of the demoness' name, Karaci, resembles that of a cruel demoness who figures in the traditional beliefs of the Ālu Kuṛumbas: Kāraṭi; for particulars, see KAPP 1983, 721–722.

34. Cf. Sanskrit *matsya*- 'fish'+ Tamil *val(l)a(va)ṇ* 'capable, strong man.'

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