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Bhāskara's Brahmasūtrabhāṣya — An Unpublished Edition by J.A.B. van Buitenen*

INTRODUCTION

Bhāskara, who probably flourished a few decades after Śaṅkara,¹ composed commentaries on the Brahmasūtra (BS), the Bhagavadgītā and the Upaniṣads,² of which only two, viz. the (complete) commentary on the BS, i.e. the Brahmasūtra-Bhāskarabhāṣya (BSBh), and the (fragmentary) commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, have survived. These commentaries are important for our knowledge of the history of Indian philosophy, since Bhāskara seems to interpret the basic texts more conservatively than his predecessor Śaṅkara.

Bhāskara states in his introduction to the BSBh that

*sūtrābhīprāyasamvṛtyā svābhīprāyaparakāśanāt |
vyākhyātaṃ yair idaṃ śāstraṃ vyākhyeyaṃ tannivṛttaye ||
pāda a: -samvṛtyā Dv] -samvṛtṭyā vB; pāda c: yair vB, Dv] yad Dv(2).*

This authoritative teaching has to be explained [again] in order to stop those who [previously] commented upon it, because [they only] revealed their own intentions by concealing the intention of the Sūtra.

This means that Bhāskara composed his commentary on the BS in order to correct the unfaithful interpretations of previous commentators or – if we take the plural *yaiḥ* as an honorific form – of his predecessor Śaṅkara. Since Bhāskara thus claims to give a most faithful exposition of the original ideas of the BS and to rectify the points where preceding commentators distorted its original intention, a detailed analysis of his

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¹ Nakamura dated Bhāskara at about A.D. 750-800 (1950: 87). There is still some discussion about this date. Ingalls, for example, fixed the upper limit of Bhāskara's date after Śaṅkara, by refuting the hypothesis of vB that Śaṅkara and Bhāskara were contemporaries and knew each other (Ingalls 1967: 61; van Buitenen 1961: 268). I follow Nakamura and Ingalls for the moment.

² Cf. Raghavan 1968: 281.

interpretation of the scripture and further studies of the points of disagreement will be of great interest for students/scholars of Indian philosophy. However, only a reliable edition will enable us to understand Bhāskara's views properly.

Published in 1915, the *editio princeps* of the BSBh has been judged to be a very poor edition.³ The late Prof. J.A.B. van Buitenen therefore set out to work on a new critical edition of the BSBh in 1956. Though van Buitenen (hereafter: vB) could complete the work – as we know from one of his articles⁴ –, the edition was never published, its whereabouts known only to a few.

vB's critical edition of the text in handwritten Devanāgarī script with a typed critical apparatus (along with an introduction of eleven typed pages) was recently re-discovered, and it will soon be made available to scholars. The present paper reports on the (pre-)history of vB's edition and discusses some of the problems that occurred in the course of preparing it for publication.

1. PREHISTORY

1.1 The First Edition of the BSBh

The 1915 edition is mainly based on “a very brittle manuscript in Bengali characters lacking some folios” (Dvivedin 1915: ii). It records variants from a second MS in Devanāgarī script owned by a Bābū Govindadāsa of Benares (Dvivedin 1915: ii), and from a third source,⁵ on which Dvivedin does not provide any details.

³ Cf. the following comments, arranged in chronological order: “a rather imperfect edition” (Hiriyanna 1943: 39); “it contains so many misprints and errors which cause difficulties in reading that it makes us feel as if we read an illconditioned manuscript. [...] We cannot trust Bhāskara's commentary, for the reason given above” (Nakamura 1951: 375 [tr. by TK]); “Published in only one edition, based on few and corrupt manuscripts, and badly edited” (Ingalls 1953: 292); “The first ten pages contain about 200 errors of reading, transcription, and punctuation. The rate of error decreases as the work progresses but never becomes low enough for one to read the text with ease” (Ingalls 1967: 61, n. 3); “Einer der Gründe für die soeben gekennzeichnete Vernachlässigung Bhāskaras in der bisherigen Forschung dürfte die Tatsache sein, daß der Text seines BSBh in der bis heute einzigen Ausgabe in einem überaus korrupten Zustand vorliegt. [...] Für den schlechten Zustand des Textes ist offenbar neben der Überlieferung eine ungewöhnliche Unfähigkeit des Herausgebers V.P. Dvivedin mitverantwortlich” (Rüping 1977: 6); “[T]he poor quality of the available edition justifies a full (where possible corrected) reproduction of his words.” (Bronkhorst 2004: 32f.).

⁴ Van Buitenen 1961: 268, n. 1. Cf. also Bronkhorst's summary cited below on p. 297.

⁵ *pā[thāntarah] 3 pu[stake]*; e.g., BSBh(Dv), p. 1, n.

It is evident that Dvivedin had trouble handling the “very brittle” (*atijarjara*) MS and that he was well aware that his edition contained many errors “because it is difficult to understand [the text], because making mistakes is innate to human beings, and because I am old and my eyesight is very poor.”⁶ “Such errors,” he continues, “... will be corrected in the second edition.”⁷ However, a second revised edition never appeared. Since we have neither a list of corrigenda nor any other means of verification, and since, according to vB,⁸ the original MS used by Dvivedin seems to be lost, it is impossible to determine whether the edition reports the readings of its textual witnesses correctly.

1.2 VB's Edition and its Rediscovery

VB claims to have had access to all manuscripts known to him and to have collated them thoroughly.⁹ Judging from what he states in one of his articles,¹⁰ his work was completed in 1961. Like the critical edition, the accompanying English translation was never published.

Everything known about vB's unpublished materials up to the year 2004 has been summarized by Bronkhorst:¹¹

J.A.B. van Buitenen stated in 1961 ...: “A critical edition and annotated translation of the sūtrabhāṣya [of Bhāskara] by the present writer will soon be published in the Harvard Oriental Series” [van Buitenen 1961: 268, n. 1]. In 1967 Daniel H.H. Ingalls stated (...): “J.A.B. van Buitenen has prepared a critical edition of the surviving texts [of Bhāskara's commentaries on the Brahmasūtra and on the Bhagavadgītā], which will shortly be published in the Harvard Oriental Series together with an English translation from the same hand” [Ingalls 1967: 61]. In an obituary ..., Ingalls says various things about the Bhāskara project, among them the following (...): “But then administrative work and family problems drained most of his (...) energy. There was a divorce. The Bhāskara was shelved, never to be mentioned again to me by word or by letter after 1966” [Ingalls 1988: xx]. It appears that van Buitenen's work is now with Klaus Rüping.

⁶ “*atra durāhatvād bhrāntēḥ puruṣadharmatvād vṛddhatvād indriyadaurbalyāt*” (Dvivedin 1915: x).

⁷ “*evamjātīyakāni bahūni skhalitāni vartante tāni dvitīyasamskaraṇe pariśuddhāni bhaviṣyanti*” (Dvivedin 1915: xi).

⁸ *Introduction* ii.

⁹ *Introduction* iif., cited in full below on p. 298.

¹⁰ Van Buitenen 1961: 268, n. 1.

¹¹ Bronkhorst 2004: 34, n. 3.

According to Ingalls, he and vB had originally planned to cooperatively edit and translate the BSBh as well as the Bhagavadgītābhāṣya:¹²

In 1956 van Buitenen received a Rockefeller Fellowship to work on Bhaskara with me at Harvard. [...] Originally he was to edit and translate the Brahmasutrabhāṣya and I was to do the Gītābhāṣya. Later I gave the Gītābhāṣya material to him so that he could do the whole.

The only publication that resulted from Ingalls' and vB's joint project was an edition of the Bhagavadgītābhāṣya.¹³ The whereabouts of the translation of the Gītābhāṣya are unknown, and it is unclear whether it still exists. The English translation of the BSBh, which was consulted by Long,¹⁴ also seems to be lost.

The location of the unpublished edition of the BSBh was investigated again in 2005 by Walter Slaje. As Bronkhorst had correctly presumed, it was in the possession of Rüping. According to the information received by Slaje, after vB's death on September 21, 1979 (Ingalls 1988: xxi), the material came into the hands of J.W. de Jong and was then transferred to D.H.H. Ingalls. Ingalls entrusted the material to Klaus Rüping, who had made a name for himself in the field with his 1977 monograph on Bhāskara. On September 5, 2005, shortly before Rüping's demise, the materials were finally handed over to Walter Slaje, under whose supervision I am now working on the material with the consent of vB's widow.

2. ON REPRODUCING THE MATERIAL

The edition is available in the form of a single photocopy. It contains 390 pages and, as stated, consists of a typed introduction by the editor and a critical text in handwritten Devanāgarī script with typed footnotes reporting variant readings.

In his introduction vB says:¹⁵

This new and critical edition of Bhāskara's important work needs no justification for anyone who has tried to make use of the *editio princeps*.

¹² Ingalls 1988: xx.

¹³ This edition was published under the name of the editor, Subhadropādhyāya, to whom the Gītābhāṣya material must have been given by van Buitenen; he refers to this edition as follows: "A preliminary edition of both MSS [of the Gītābhāṣya, TK] is under preparation by Dr. Subhadra Jha" (van Buitenen 1965: 106, n. 27).

¹⁴ "I have been able to consult most of the more relevant portions of Bhāskara's commentary in the form of an unpublished translation by J.A.B. van Buitenen" (Long 1979: 395, n. 3).

¹⁵ *Introduction* iif.

All available manuscripts were consulted and all but two fully collated for the text; *improved readings must run over a thousand* [emphasis by TK]. In assuring that no MSS were overlooked I was greatly helped by Dr. V. Raghavan of Madras who personally went through 400 catalogues and lists in his files for the important *New Catalogus Catalogorum*. [...] The manuscripts were collated by me personally or under my direct supervision. [...] Totally eleven MSS of the text have come to my knowledge. Nine of these have been collated; two were left aside.

VB also supplies a stemma of the MSS he consulted.¹⁶

The handwriting of vB's Devanāgarī text, which is in different hands, is for the most part easy to read. At some places the text was corrected, apparently with reference to MSS. The handwriting of the correctors in the margin is in many cases illegible,¹⁷ and we would need to examine the original MSS they consulted for the corrections to be able to interpret it. Since corrections were made by different hands, it is very difficult to say which reading represents vB's final judgement. It is also difficult to tell which corrections were added by vB himself and which were made by someone else (possible candidates are de Jong and Ingalls).

The number and variety of corrections to the main text, the footnotes and the marginal insertions give the impression that the document was not supposed to serve as the fair copy to be submitted to the printer. Therefore, a mere reproduction of the material would not meet the standards required for publication. With a view to faithfully preserving vB's editorial achievements, the most effective procedure would be to produce a diplomatic edition of this draft.

A diplomatic edition forces us, however, also to reproduce errors and mistakes. Here is an example of an "obvious" error:

The image shows two lines of handwritten text in Devanagari script. The first line reads "॥ श्री ॥" (Om Shri Om) and the second line reads "॥ शारीकमीमांसाभाष्यम् ॥" (Om Sharīkamīmāṃsābhāṣyam Om). The handwriting is somewhat cursive and appears to be a reproduction of a handwritten title.

Figure 1: The title of vB's edition (on the first page)

As shown above, the title reads *śārīkamīmāṃsābhāṣyam*, which is obviously an error for *śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣyam*. This reading is attested by Bhāskara himself, who uses the term *śārīraka* three times in his BSBh,¹⁸

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion see Section 3.1.

¹⁷ An example is the last line of text in figure 4 below.

¹⁸ Cf. BSBh(Dv), p. 5.7, 6.20 and 15.21.

as well as by Upavaṛṣa, whose reference to *śārīraka* (i.e., the BS) is quoted by Bhāskara and Śaṅkara.¹⁹ We can easily explain the wrong reading as due to a haplography and correct it to *śārīraka*-. Frequently, however, cases are more difficult to decide. Here is an example of a less “obvious” error:

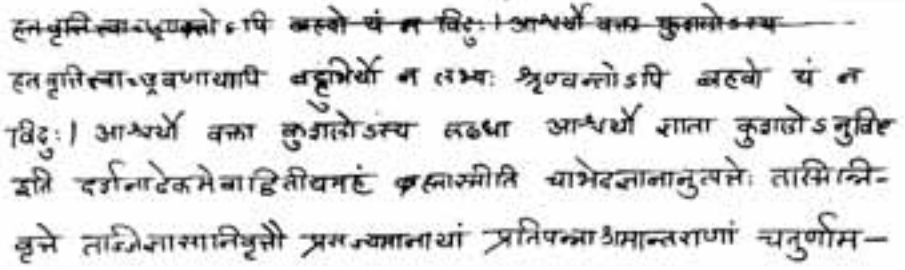


Figure 2: A quotation of Kaṭha Upaniṣad II.7

At the beginning of the third line, vB reads *viduḥ*, which seems to be an error for *vidyuh*. However, here the criteria for identifying the error are far less clear than in the previously discussed case. One argument against vB’s reading would be that Bhāskara himself quotes the same passage with the form *vidyuh* in his *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*.²⁰ Another argument would be that *vidyuh* also occurs in a printed edition of the Upaniṣad.²¹ There is, however, a possibility that *viduḥ* was actually an authorial variant that was lost in the course of the transmission of the *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and thus is not reported in the printed editions. If this is the case, a hasty correction would be a mistake, and such procedure would in general bring in more errors and mistakes, and thereby diminish vB’s achievements. We would even be responsible for suppressing a variant reading of the Upaniṣad. These considerations suggest that a diplomatic reproduction is actually the best method for dealing with vB’s edition.

¹⁹ Cf. Śaṅkara’s *bhāṣya* on BS III.3.53.

²⁰ Cf. BhGBh, p. 61.9.

²¹ Cf. the edition by Limaye and Vadekar who do not report any variants (*EPU* 16).

3. RE-EDITING THE BSBH

3.1 The Question of the Reliability of vB's Edition

The diplomatic edition will preserve the state of the original as faithfully as possible by reproducing it as it is. Although vB's critical text is clearly superior to the first edition by Dvivedin, it still has to be improved in accordance with the current standards of scholarship. In fact, a complete reassessment of the material with a view to establishing the best possible text version is called for.

The main text, as already stated, is handwritten in Devanāgarī script by multiple hands; the corrections in the margin are in different hands.²² Hence it would appear that vB's associates first prepared the main text by transcribing from one or two MSS, and then correctors reported the variants.

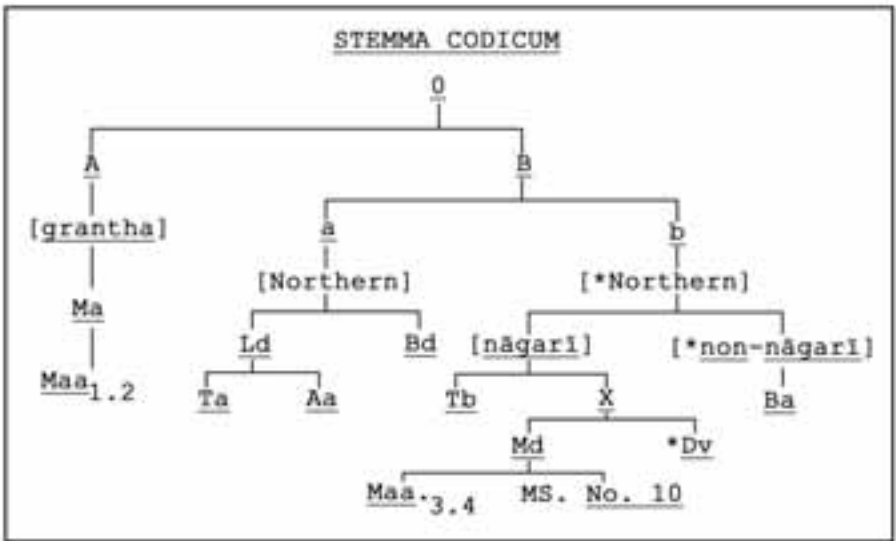


Figure 3: vB's stemma codicum

According to his own explanations, vB established his text by comparing the readings of hyparchetype A, which are derived from South Indian MSS, with readings from hyparchetype B, which he derived from North

²² We can see one such example in the first line in figure 2 above. This correction cannot have been made by vB; it was definitely made by a transcriber who noticed that he had omitted a line by eyeskip, and then corrected the whole line and started a new one.

Indian MSS. In order to establish the readings of both hyparchetypes, he only took samples from MSS of both main groups.²³

As far as I could ascertain from a partial check of vB's edition against other MSS he claims to have consulted, vB left many variant readings unreported. For example, MS Ld in his stemma contains about 2,000 variants which make for crucial differences in the respective context, but vB does not report them. It is impossible to tell whether vB intentionally did not report these readings or just overlooked them. I also found that vB hardly reports the variants given in Dvivedin's edition (Dv in his stemma), working as if it did not exist at all. In view of this, vB's statement that "all available manuscripts were consulted and all but two fully collated,"²⁴ cannot be taken to imply that he reported all readings of all witnesses.

The hyparchetypical readings of A and B were obviously established by vB by comparing the readings within each group. He then established the best reading through a comparison between A and B.

We now turn our attention to the original MSS whose readings might have been "collated" but not "reported" by vB.

3.2 How to Reedit vB's Material

A new truly critical edition of the BSBh can draw upon corrections given in vB's edition; see examples in figure 4 below. By reporting readings "after correction" along with those "before correction" the entire content of vB's edition will become accessible, inclusive of all marginal and interlinear corrections. These corrections, as already pointed out, are by various hands and it is sometimes difficult to say to which hand a specific correction belongs; therefore all of them will be treated as being *post correctionem*.

In order to improve upon vB's edition, we need to scrupulously examine the MSS consulted by vB as well as the text of Dvivedin's edition.²⁵ All

²³ VB frequently adopts one reading as a sample from among other different readings of the same group. The problem is that we are not told from which MS the adopted reading stems, since vB only gives the abbreviation "e.c." (*exempli causa*) in his footnotes.

²⁴ See his *Introduction* ii, quoted above on p. 298.

²⁵ According to Dvivedin (1915: ii) the MS he consulted for his edition is dated *śaka* 1546. VB converts this date into A.D. 1624 and regards the MS as "but a little more recent than my oldest dated B manuscript (A.D. 1553)" (*Introduction* ii), that is, MS Ld in group B of his stemma (see fig. 3 above). VB reports the dating in the colophon of Ld as being *samvat* 1611, which can be converted to A.D. 1554 (or A.D. 1553, as vB has it).

परिमाणपरिमाणं परमाणुं स्रुणुं नक्तं कार्यं जायते ।
 इति परिमाणपरिमाणं परिमाणं सा स्रुणुं नक्तं न
 परिमाणान्तरमात्रं । तेषु च यो बहुलसंख्यो सो महत्त्वं शेषितं
 च परिमाणान्तरमात्रं । स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं ।
 10 तत्रेदमुच्यते । मया तत्र स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं
 महत्त्वं च जायते । वाङ्मयादप्यहं योजनं कर्तव्यं -
 परिमाणपरिमाणं स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं ।
 20 इति स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं
 मया विदुषोः नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं । न नक्तं
 15 इति स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं
 4 कर्मणोः स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं
 स्रुणुं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं नक्तं
 कारणगुणेन संबन्धत इत्यभुपगमात् । तस्मात् कारणगतं
 समानतात्वेन परिमाणान्तरं स्वभावादेव नारभते द्वितमं ।
 संख्या पुनः समानतात्वेनात् संबन्धान्तरमात्रं न पुनरनुलं

Figure 4: Corrections between the lines and in the margin

variants will be recorded in the new edition. Another important aspect is the identification of quotations, which was beyond the scope of vB’s edition.²⁶

The publication of a critical edition of Bhāskara’s work, along with all preserved readings, will – it is hoped – be of benefit to all scholars who want to grasp the ideas of the ancient Vedāntin Bhāskara.²⁷

Accordingly, this manuscript would indeed be a little older than Dvivedin’s. But vB’s calculation (*Introduction* iv) is wrong. As a matter of fact, Ld’s colophon gives the date as *saṃvat* 1911, which corresponds to A.D. 1854. (I thank Dr. Karl-Heinz Golzio for his kind help in calculating the date.) VB must have misread the cipher nine in the colophon as a six. The additional information in the colophon (*caitraśuklapakṣe tithāv aṣṭamyaṃ guruvāsare*) confirms that *saṃvat* 1911 is the correct reading.

²⁶ As shown in figure 2 above, the text contains a verse quoted from the Kāṭha Upaniṣad (II.7): *śravaṇāyāpi bahubhīr yo na labhyaḥ śṛṇvanto ’pi bahavo yaṃ na vidyaḥ | āścaryo vaktā kuśalo ’sya labdhā āścaryo jñātā kuśalo ’nuviṣṭaḥ ||*. The quotation is not identified in vB’s edition, nor is there any indication that it could be one. Instances of still unidentified citations in the BSBh will have to be thoroughly checked.

²⁷ Cf. also Bronkhorst’s estimation of the situation: “All serious scholars of Vedānta are of course impatiently waiting to see these editions and translations [of van Buitenen] in print” (Bronkhorst 2004: 34, n. 3).

1. Abbreviations and Sigla

BhGBh	<i>Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya</i> by Bhāskarācārya. Ed. by D. Subhadropādhyāya. [<i>Sarasvatī Bhavana Granthamālā</i> 94]. Varanasi 1965.
BSBh	Brahmasūtrabhāṣya of Bhāskara.
BSBh(Dv)	<i>Brahmasūtra with a Commentary</i> by Bhāskarācārya. Ed. by V.P. Dvivedin. [<i>Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series</i> 20]. Varanasi 1991 (repr. from the edition Benares 1915).
BSBh(vB)	<i>Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya</i> . Ed. by J.A.B. van Buitenen. Date unknown, unpublished.
Dv	V.P. Dvivedin.
<i>EPU</i>	<i>Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads</i> . Vol. I. Ed. by V.P. Limaye – R.D. Vadekar. Poona 1958.
Ld	Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya, MS dated 1854 (Samvat 1911). Number 2481 (3273) in: Julius Eggeling (ed.), <i>Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office</i> . Vol. I. London 1887, p. 803.
vB	Johannes Adrianus Bernardus van Buitenen.

2. Literature

Bronkhorst 2004	Johannes Bronkhorst, Śaṅkara and Bhāskara on Vaiśeṣika. In: H.W. Bodewitz – Minoru Hara (ed.), <i>Gedenkschrift J.W. de Jong</i> . [<i>Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series</i> 17]. Tokyo 2004, p. 27-38.
Dvivedin 1915	V.P. Dvivedin, Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣyasya Bhūmikā. In: BSBh(Dv), p. i-xi.
Hiriyanna 1943	Mysore Hiriyanna, Bhāskara's View of Error. <i>Indian Philosophical Studies</i> 1 (1943) 39-44.
Ingalls 1953	Daniel H.H. Ingalls, Śaṅkara's Arguments against the Buddhists. <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 3 (1953) 291-306.
Ingalls 1967	Id., Bhāskara the Vedāntin. <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 17 (1967) 61-67.
Ingalls 1988	Id., Obituary. In: van Buitenen 1988: xix-xxii.
<i>Introduction</i>	Johannes Adrianus Bernardus van Buitenen, Introduction. In: BSBh(vB), p. i-xi.
Long 1979	J. Bruce Long, God and Creativity in the Cosmologies of Whitehead and Bhāskara. <i>Philosophy East and West</i> 29 (1979) 395-420.
Nakamura 1950	Hajime Nakamura, 初期のヴェーダーンタ哲学 (Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku). Tokyo: Iwanami, 1950.
Nakamura 1951	Id., ブラフマーストラの哲學 (<i>Brahmasūtra no tetsugaku</i>). Tokyo: Iwanami, 1951.

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- Rüping 1977 Klaus Rüping, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Vedānta-Philosophie. Teil 1: Philologische Untersuchungen zu den Brahmasūtra-Kommentaren des Śaṅkara und des Bhāskara. [Alt- und Neuindische Studien 17]*. Wiesbaden 1977.
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