

## Castles in the Heartland: Place-Making in Early Modern Bundelkhand

This article considers how a manuscript bearing a recension of the *Amaruśataka*—a classical anthology of Sanskrit love poems—prepared in Bundelkhand in north central India in the seventeenth century constructed an image of a town. The manuscript contains ninety-five folios. Each folio bears a poem on top and a painting of lovers frolicking in a mansion beneath it. Taken together the folios aid a viewer or a reader to imagine a town as a physical place and mentality. That is as the grid of beliefs, perspectives, institutions, and practices and etiquette it spawns, which relates in ambivalent ways to customs and ethics. Finally, I argue how such imaginings in this manuscript's folios intersected with ongoing efforts of Bundelkhand's Rajput clans who were remaking the region's towns in brick and mortar as sites of prestige, piety, and pleasure and reorganizing and defending their fortified households against Mughal desires, and with the emergence of new towns across north central India.

*Keywords:* medium; morality; pedagogy; performance; Sanskrit; urbanism; vision.