



16th International Indology Graduate Research Symposium

Naples, Italy

23–25 September 2026

Programme & Abstracts

Organizers:

Luca Piscopo, Antonella Santoro and Dorotea Operato



Dottorato
Asia
Africa
e Mediterraneo



UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE

DAAM
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA,
AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO



Centro di Studi sull'Asia Meridionale
e il Sud-Est Asiatico

Programme

Day 1: Wednesday, 23 September

([L'Orientale University of Naples](#), Palazzo Corigliano, Salone delle Conferenze, 2nd floor)

09:15–09:30: Welcome coffee & registration

09:30–09:45: Institutional greetings

09:45–10:00: Opening remarks

10:00–11:30: First session: Vedic Ritual, Knowledge, and Poetics

Alessia Manca (University of Cagliari)

A Possible Change of Paradigm: Ahīnas Āśvatthi versus Keśin Sātyakāmi

Jessica Bourdoux (University of Liège)

Voices of the Ritual: Interrelationship Between stotrā- and śastrā- in the Vedic Tradition

Leonard Gethin (University of Oxford)

Roots of Poetic Craft in the R̥gveda

11:30–12:00: Coffee break

12:00–13:30: Second session: Jain Intellectual Traditions

Surbhi Jain (SOAS, University of London)

From Textual Classification to Interpretation: The Development of Aṇuoga in Jaina

Jinesh Sheth (University of Birmingham)

Omniscience, Anekāntavāda and the Goal of Jainism: A Reinvestigation

Anthony Ruda (University of Oxford)

The Jaina Mathematical Worldview

13:30–14:45: Light lunch

14:45–16:15: Third session: Buddhist Textual Transmission and Doctrinal Formations

August Sundin (Ghent University)

Dividing the Mahāprajñāpāramitā: Chapter Divisions and Structural Recensions in Greater Gandhāra and Tibet

Luigi Hari Tehel Singh (University of Vienna)

The Goddess(-less) Chapter: Re-examining a Detail in the Devatāparivarta of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa in Light of the Sanskrit Text

Nobuyuki Suzuki (Leiden University)

The Concept of Bimba in the Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa

—Group Photo—

18:00: Aperitif

Day 2: Thursday, 24 September

(L'Orientale University of Naples, Rettorato, Palazzo Du Mesnil, Sala Viganoni)

09:30–11:00: Fourth session: Buddhist Philosophy, Language, and Soteriology

Qingyang Huang (EPHE-PSL)

Artificial Samaya: Convention or Contract? A Dharmakīrtian Perspective on Everyday Language and Mantra

Yan Ma (ISTB, University of Vienna)

When the Ekāneka Argument Meets Sūtra Commentary: Kamalaśīla's Philosophico-Soteriological Hermeneutics in the Vajracchedikāṭīkā

Zhoulin Li (Leipzig University)

Assembling the Scattered: An Investigation on the Paramārthagāthā in the Yogācārabhūmi

11:00–11:30: Coffee break

11:30–12:30: Keynote lecture

Florinda De Simini (L'Orientale University of Naples)

Philology and the History of South Asian Religions, or: Is your Edition really necessary?

12:30–13:30: Light lunch

13:30–14:30: Fifth session: Non-Duality and Eschatology

Gabriele Geranzani (L'Orientale University of Naples)

Non-Duality from the Side of Consciousness and from the Side of the Object: A Study of Abhinavagupta's Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī 1.5.2

Arkamitra Ghatak (University of Heidelberg)

The "Cosmic Mother" as Messianic Agent in Akhaṇḍa Mahāyoga Eschatology of Gopinath Kaviraj

14:30–15:00: Coffee break

15:00–16:30: Sixth session: Sacred Geography and Religious Plurality

Aneesh Raghavan (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities)

Sacred Rivalries and Shared Spaces: Exploring Sectarian Interplay in the Śaiva Kāñcīmāhātmya

Devaki Sapkota (University of Heidelberg)

Śaiva Reconfiguration of a Vaiṣṇava Tīrtha: Śālagrāma in the Śivapurāṇa

Yunheng Xu (University of Heidelberg)

Tracing the Divyadeśams in Kanchipuram

Day 3: Friday, 25 September

([L'Orientale University of Naples, Rettorato](#), Palazzo Du Mesnil, Sala De Giovanni)

09:30–11:00: Seventh session: Manuscripts and Editorial Strategies

Haolin Wang (Université Paris Cité)

Capsules and Dots: Diagrammatic Instructions in Bhavēśa's Līlāvātīvivaraṇam

Vishnupriya Srinivasan (EFEO Pondicherry)

Behind the Incorrect Sanskrit: Tamil Conceptual Interference and Authorial Intention in the ORI2519 Manuscript of the Kāmākṣīvilāsa

Vigneshwaran Muralidaran (EFEO Pondicherry)

From Vēru to Metrical Name: Editorial Strategies and the Shifting Burden of Knowledge in Tamil Talapurāṇam Editions

11:00–11:30: Coffee break

11:30–13:00: Eighth session: Texts Across Media: Script, Inscription, and Performance

Raffaello De León-Jones Diani (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

A Sanskrit Praise to Śiva in the Perso-Arabic Script

Liwen Liu (Harvard University)

Jirṇoddhāra and the Survival of Newar Buddhism: A Study of Narratives and Inscriptions in Nepal

Noam Shany (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

A Matter of Time: Ritual and Time in Kūṭiyāṭṭam Theatre in Kerala

13:00–14:30: Light lunch

14:30–16:30: Ninth session: Literary Adaptation, Deities and Imaginal Worlds

Simon Winant (Ghent University)

Why Adapt a Mini-Kirātārjunīya in a Jain Adaptation of the Mahābhārata? Devaprabhasūri's Restrained Nods to Bhāravi in the Pāṇḍavacarita

Kacper Lepionka (University of Warsaw)

Implied Audience and Narrative Strategy in the Virāṭaparvan of the Mahābhārata

Maria Iontseva (University of Oxford)

An Industry of Miracles: A Typology of Tantric Dream Operations

Georgi Krastev (EPHE-PSL / University of Vienna)

It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No, it's... the City of the Gandharvas! – on the deeper implications of this visual metaphor as a terminus technicus for the particular appearance of hidden dimensions of reality and their nature throughout Indian religious discourse

16:30–16:45: Closing remarks

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Alessia Manca

(University of Cagliari)

A possible change of paradigm: Ahīnas Āśvatthi versus Keśin Sātyakāmi

The name of Ahīnas Āśvatthi is not an unusual one in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*: the ritual specialist and thinker, whose teachings have been well explored by Shults 2015, appears in at least four narrative JB passages. The brahmin is clearly bound to the Pañcāla court of king Darbha Śātānīki, and directly to king Keśin Dārbhya, due to his office of *purohita*. On the other hand, the same can be said about the younger and less famous Keśin Sātyakāmi. In more than one occasion (e.g. JB 2.122 and 3.350), the two of them are mentioned together, as part of the same royal entourage; nevertheless, in this particular case, namely JB 1.285, their rivalry is open, and it pivots on the prestigious possibility of being the only (or the favourite) court priest, whose valuable wisdom is the price for having the rājanya's protection. The brief and complex passage thus hints at the ordinary problems of being a *purohita*, at the same time opening a number of questions which this paper intends to deal with. The translation and the analysis of the text will address issues of power, instruction, prestige, esoteric knowledge and emotions. Two different models of sage will be confronted, thus displaying a possible competition between two ways of conceiving knowledge.

Shults, Brett (2015), Reflections and Teachings of Ahīnas Āśvatthi, Asian Literature and Translation Vol.3, No.3, pp.1-18.

Jessica Bourdoux

(University of Liège)

Voices of the Ritual: Interrelationship Between *stotrā-* and *śastrā-* in the Vedic Tradition

The *Agniṣṭoma*, like other soma sacrifices, is characterised by several items, including the number of sung lauds (*stotra*) and recited lauds (*śastra*), always in the same quantity. This specific combination is referenced with various lemmas: *īc-* and *sāman-*, *gāthā-* and *nārāśamsī-* or *stotrā-* and *śastra-*. This communication will focus on the association of *stotrā-* ‘sung laud’ and *śastra-* ‘recited laud’, which is only attested in liturgical texts, specifically the *saṃhitā* of the Black Yajurveda, the brāhmaṇas and the sūtras. The term *stotrā-* appears only a few times in the hymns of the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda, while *śastra-* is mentioned even less frequently on its own. Many occurrences of *stotrā-* and *śastra-* just count the number of lauds featured in the soma rituals, like in TS 6.6.11.1, where sixteen compose the *ṣoḍaśin* ritual. Contrary to the other combinations of lauds, there is no clear separation between the two lauds. Both serve the same purpose of making the sacrifice complete and efficient, which is rendered through ritualistic considerations, while the other pairs of lauds are described with mythological, linguistic, and sacrificial arguments. In compositional or independent positions, the word *stotrā-* might be replaced by *stutā-*, keeping the connection to this specific sung laud performed in the ritual: for instance in TS 3.2.7.3, where both positions appear twice, and in some passages from the brāhmaṇas (AB 2.38-39, GB 1.5.23 or JB 1.236). This substitution is more commonly found in compounds than in independent positions, and it seems to be older due to its inherited nature (cf. the Avestan *staōta-*, already recorded in the Old Avestan corpus). This should be elaborated upon by comparing it with the few attestations of these words and their contexts, which will also allow highlighting their antiquity within the Indo-Aryan tradition.

Leonard Gethin

(University of Oxford)

Roots of Poetic Craft in the Ṛgveda

Metaphors linking material crafts, such as carpentry, with the immaterial craft of poetry have long been recognized as a trope of Ṛgvedic poetics. Taking the verbal root as a starting point, this paper sketches a method for the study of such metaphors. I then consider what the poetry–carpentry metaphor and the fact of its formulaic repetition can suggest about the oral-compositional processes behind the Ṛgveda.

Beginning with $\sqrt{takṣ}$ ‘to fashion’, a root intimately associated with the metaphor at hand, I show how it patterns with others (e.g. $\sqrt{kṛ}$ ‘to do, make’, $\sqrt{jan}$ ‘to beget’, $\sqrt{piś}$ ‘to cut’ and $\sqrt{vraśc}$ ‘to cleave, cut off’) to form a semantic field or ‘Wortfeld’. I analyze clauses in which these roots occur—their agents, patients, and similes—to map formulaic patterns: who $\sqrt{takṣ}$ -es what, so to speak. As this method is expanded, it engages some of the larger, complex lexical cosmologies the Ṛgveda revels in. This is drawn out by a close reading of the Agni hymn RV vii.7.

I advance two conclusions. (1) I propose a method for studying formulaic language. While something like a poetic formula (following Parry–Lord) is widely discussed for the Ṛgveda, the impressionistic, even subversive, ways in which poets exploit formulaic expectation make the phenomenon hard to locate. Beginning with verbal roots and expanding into the patterns that form around them provides one way of tracking formulaic figures without restricting them within a theoretical framework. (2) Attestations of the metaphor itself provide a targeted window into the language through which the Ṛgvedic poets understood their own compositional craft: often through verbs in past-tense forms and comparison to the slow, deliberate craft of carpentry. These, I argue, hint at a distinctive oral-compositional idiom motivated within the text’s fundamentally ritual concern.

Surbhi Jain

(SOAS, University of London)

From Textual Classification to Interpretation: The Development of *Aṇuoga* in Jaina literature

The paper examines *aṇuoga*'s emergence and its role in hermeneutics within the Jaina literature. Jaina authors have developed various hermeneutical tools, like *naya*, *nikṣepa*, etc., for interpreting the vast corpus of scriptures. One such tool is *aṇuoga* (exposition). Texts such as *Āvaśyakasūtra*, *Anuyogadvāra*, etc. describe *aṇuoga* as the bridge between a verse and its meaning. *Aṇuoga* is classified into four types. The study traces the earliest textual attestations of the fourfold classifications in the Śvetāmbara source *Āvaśyakasūtra*—namely *Dhammakahāṇuoga* (narrative exposition), *Caraṇakaraṇānuyoga* (ethical exposition), *Gaṇḍiyāṇuoga* (mathematical exposition) and *Davvāṇuoga* (metaphysical exposition); and examines its parallel development in the Digambara tradition. Samantabhadra (2nd-3rd century CE?) first introduced the four classifications as *Prathamānuyoga*, *Karaṇānuyoga*, *Caraṇānuyoga* and *Dravyānuyoga*. While the thematic scope of these categories remains broadly comparable, their formulation and terminological distinctions need to be analysed. Another aspect of the paper argues that *aṇuoga* not only serves as a framework for textual classification but also as a tool for interpretation. Even though the *aṇuoga* schemes are widely discussed amongst Jaina readers and believers, the study of the factors affecting the emergence and development of classifications and their interpretative role remains under-explored. Through a close reading of the primary texts, such as *Āvaśyakasūtra*, *Nandīsūtra*, *Daśavaikālika*, etc. of the Śvetāmbara and *Kaṣāyapahuḍa*, *Chakkhaṇḍāgama*, *Ratnakaraṇḍa*, *Śrāvakācāra*, *Dhavalā*, etc. of the Digambara, collecting the scattered sections concerning *aṇuoga* as a theme and studying them as a cluster will be instrumental in understanding the chronological development of the *aṇuoga* schemes. The paper argues that the *aṇuoga* classifications were introduced for a better understanding of the readers, and it also serves a hermeneutical purpose to some extent. Through numerous applications of *aṇuoga* on different concepts of Jaina philosophy, an attempt is made to prove the hermeneutical aspect of *aṇuoga* classifications. The paper thus re-evaluates the role of *aṇuoga* in Jaina exegesis, suggesting that its interpretative function has been underemphasised in existing scholarship.

Jinesh Sheth

(University of Birmingham)

Omniscience, Anekāntavāda and the Goal of Jainism: A Reinvestigation

This paper attempts to re-investigate the notion of omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) in Jaina philosophy with respect to two key issues: one, its relationship with *anekāntavāda* (non-one-sidedness), and two, whether it is the ultimate goal in Jainism. A survey of the contemporary scholarship on both these issues shows that a major portion of such scholarship is not based on sound textual basis and that it is somewhat misconstrued which has led to several problems. The argument is based on a close study of selected portions of key Jaina philosophical texts such as Umāsvāmin's *Tattvārthasūtra* (Aphorisms on Categories), Samantabhadra's *Āptamīmāṃsā* (Critique of an Authority) and their respective commentarial traditions. Through close textual exegesis, I (re-)investigate two sets of questions. First, on the relationship of *anekāntavāda* with omniscience: does *anekāntavāda* entail that only the omniscient beings have complete access to reality? Can the perspective of the omniscient be considered as an 'absolute' perspective? Are the perspectives of mundane beings always limited and flawed? On the other hand, on whether omniscience is the ultimate goal in Jainism: is *kevala-jñāna* the same as *kaivalya* in Yoga philosophy? Is it necessary to be omniscient to obtain eternal bliss? If knowledge of reality must be acquired to attain liberation, and if reality is multi-faceted, and if omniscient beings are the only ones to have complete knowledge of reality, does this not entail that omniscience is the end goal of Jaina philosophy? Deliberations on these questions and a philological and philosophical analysis of Jain texts on these issues would reveal a different picture than what is generally perceived to be the case.

Anthony Ruda

(University of Oxford)

The Jaina Mathematical Worldview

In *Gaṇitasārasaṅgraha* (GSS)—the earliest complete Sanskrit text solely concerned with mathematics (*gaṇita*) as a distinct discipline (c. 850 CE)—the Digambara Jaina mathematician Mahāvīracārya claims that “Whatsoever there is in the three worlds... all of that cannot be without *gaṇita*” (GSS 1.16). I argue that Mahāvīracārya’s claim should not be glossed over as the boast of an overzealous mathematician, but as a metaphysical claim that represents the culmination of distinct developments within the Jaina tradition. For Mahāvīracārya, mathematics is the very foundation of the Jaina system of reality, not merely a convenient tool for quantifying what already exists within it. This “strong interpretation” of GSS 1.16, in which the Jaina universe is understood as inherently mathematical, is contrasted with a more conservative reading, asserting mere universal measurability—the “weak interpretation”, as suggested in the first published edition of Raṅgacārya (1912).

The development of a Jaina mathematical worldview is reconstructed, from the pluralist ontology of the early systematisers (Umāsvāti and Kundakunda). Amongst the fundamental substances, *ākāśa* is defined as a collection of space-points extending into an infinite, transcosmic realm of pure space (*alokākāśa*) that is structurally akin to a mathematical object, functioning in turn as the support of the Jaina *triloka*. Mahāvīracārya’s metaphysics finds its clearest precedent in the mathematised cosmography of Yativṛṣabha’s *Tiloyapaṇṇattī*, offering a unified framework for Jaina cosmology and karmic theory, the soteriological significance of which would be fully realised in the mathematical manoeuvres of Nemicandra’s corpus.

The strong interpretation is thereby supported by a Jaina worldview that is ontologically committed to various actual infinities (souls, atoms, time cycles, space). The resulting system is legitimately modelled as a mathematical structure, entailing a robust mathematical realism, with sophisticated notions that anticipate Cantorian set theory. GSS 1.16 becomes an explicit formulation of a long developing Jaina insight: mathematical knowledge is self knowledge.

August Sundin

(Ghent University)

Dividing the Mahāprajñāpāramitā:

Chapter Divisions and Structural Recensions in Greater Gandhāra and Tibet

The recension of the *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus reflects processes of expansion, redaction and localized variation. Among the earliest extant Sanskrit witnesses, the materials grouped as the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, preserved in manuscripts from Gilgit in northern Pakistan and Dunhuang in the present-day Gansu province stand in a complex relationship to the Tibetan translations of the larger *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus, particularly as these texts become formalized into the 18,000, 25,000, and 100,000 line recensions. Previous scholarship, including the work of Edward Conze, Stefano Zacchetti, and Seishi Karashima, has explored aspects of these interrelations. However, the continuity and variation of chapter divisions across these textual traditions has not been systematically examined. This paper argues that two distinct chapter division systems are reflected across both the Greater Gandhāran and Imperial Tibetan corpora, in contrast to the *Abhisamāyālaṃkāra*-based structure attested in Sanskrit witnesses from Nepal and in later Tibetan translations of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The first system, preserved in the Tibetan *Prajñāpāramitā* in 25,000 and 100,000 lines, appears in later canonical forms as a related but independent structuring of the text when compared with a near-complete Sanskrit witness from Gilgit. However, early Tibetan evidence, particularly 9th-century Dunhuang fragments, reveals that these chapter divisions were, with only minor variation, closely aligned with those of the Gilgit manuscript. The second system, preserved in the Tibetan *Prajñāpāramitā* in 18,000 lines, closely corresponds to the chapter division systems attested in two more fragmentary Sanskrit witnesses of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, one from Dunhuang and one from Gilgit, which diverge from the structure of the near-complete Gilgit manuscript. Taken together, these systems point to two distinct *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* traditions in Greater Gandhāra, and to their transmission into Tibet, where these structural divisions were inherited even when the translations themselves were not verbatim reproductions of their Sanskrit counterparts.

Luigi Hari Tehel Singh

(University of Vienna)

The Goddess(-less) Chapter: Re-examining a detail in the Devatāparivarta of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa in light of the Sanskrit text.

The sixth chapter of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, often titled “The Goddess,” portrays Śāriputra engaging in a lengthy debate with an unnamed Goddess. After acknowledging the Goddess’s superior understanding of the dharma, Śāriputra asks why she has not yet abandoned her female form. In response, the goddess magically exchanges forms with Śāriputra and argues that the categories “male” and “female” do not exist in reality. While similar narratives occur elsewhere, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*’s version presents peculiarities that merit closer examination. This paper begins with a simple observation: the character thus far known as the “Goddess” is not presented as such in the Sanskrit; rather, the text calls them “*devatā*.” I argue that the narrative not only benefits from but in fact requires reading *devatā* more literally as a “deity” of non-specific or ambiguous gender. Taking this ambiguity seriously highlights the chapter’s central teaching—abandoning conceptual distinctions—and clarifies its parallels with other elements of the narrative. This reading also brings to light contrasting perspectives within the text, especially concerning the identity of the *devatā*. Furthermore, by comparing the extant Sanskrit with the three Chinese translations, the paper contends that the base texts used by the translators did not differ greatly from the extant Sanskrit text, and that the variant reading “goddess” (天女 *tiān nǚ*), found in Kumārajīva’s and Xuánzàng’s translations, reflects their interpretation of *devatā*, probably conditioned by Śāriputra’s point of view.

Nobuyuki Suzuki

(Leiden University)

The Concept of Bimba in the Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa

The term *bimba* (“image”) has important meanings across Indian literature, referring to the disc of the sun or moon, a cult image (in the sense of *mūrti*, *pratimā*, or *vigraha*), as well as a luminous image or apparition. This presentation examines *bimba* as it appears in the story of the eight-year-old girl Candrottārā in the *mahāyāna sūtra Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa*. It first considers the general usage of *bimba* in Buddhist texts, and then analyzes how the redactor of the *Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa* employs the concept. To address these questions, I begin by examining examples of *bimba* in *mahāyāna* sources, including the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Jñānālokālaṃkārasūtra*, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and so on, before turning to a more detailed discussion of the *Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa*. The *Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa* depicts scenes in which Candrottārā participates in a *svayaṃvara* and engages in dialogue with Śāriputra and bodhisattvas while holding a *bimba*, which is presented as a visible, personified, three-dimensional, luminous image of the Tathāgata. This Bimbha was sent by the Buddha to bring her to his presence. Furthermore, the text suggests that the *bimba* itself embodies the concepts of non-duality and the non-arising of phenomena. In this discussion, I argue that the redactor of the *Candrottārā-dārikā-vyākaraṇa* expands the meaning of *bimba* as found in conventional texts and integrates it into the narrative structure. I show that the text uses *bimba* as a key element enabling Candrottārā to receive her prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) in the presence of the Buddha, indicating a close relationship with the concept discussed in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (c. late 4th century CE). Additionally, the scene in which Candrottārā participates in the *svayaṃvara* while holding the Buddha’s *bimba* finds a parallel in the Sanskrit version of the *Avadānaśataka* (c. 5th century CE). These parallels suggest a conceptual connection between this text and Buddhist literature from around the 4th and 5th centuries CE.

Qingyang Huang

(EPHE-PSL)

Artificial Samaya: Convention or Contract? A Dharmakīrtian Perspective on Everyday Language and Mantra

This paper examines how the Buddhist philosopher Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660) addresses the parallels and discrepancies between everyday language and mantra in his auto-commentary on the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. Both everyday language and mantras are phonetic by nature, yet they are said to function differently: ordinary language conveys meaning, whereas mantra, as a form of sacred or ritual speech, is expected to yield religious or magical results. I first present Dharmakīrti's critique of the Mīmāṃsaka claim that *śabda* is eternal (*nitya*) and functions through its inherent power (*śakti*). Dharmakīrti argues that if *śabda* were permanent, two theoretical difficulties would follow. First, its application to newly arisen objects would become unintelligible. Second, it would remain unclear why only certain ritual practitioners obtain the intended results of mantras. Dharmakīrti maintains that, in both everyday and ritual contexts, if *śabda* is to perform these functions successfully, it must undergo change in the very process. Such involvement in functional activity, he argues, contradicts the claim that *śabda* is permanent. I then turn to a response proposed by his opponents. They maintain that *śabdās*, though permanent, do not themselves participate in the functional process but are instead revealed (*abhivyaakta*) by other factors, thereby preserving their integrity and permanence. Dharmakīrti argues that this proposal does not resolve the initial difficulties and raises further problems. Finally, I outline Dharmakīrti's own account of how everyday language sustains its systematic regularity and how magical mantras bring about specific results in ritual practice. In this discussion, the notion of samaya plays a central role. The term carries different meanings and functions in the two contexts. In everyday language, it refers to convention — the established linguistic agreement that underwrites semantic regularity. In the case of mantra, by contrast, samaya functions as a contract between the original composer of the mantra and its practitioner, specifying the conditions under which the mantra yields its intended result.

Yan Ma

(ISTB, University of Vienna)

When the Ekāneka Argument Meets Sūtra Commentary: Kamalaśīla's Philosophico-Soteriological Hermeneutics in the Vajracchedikāṭīkā

The Indian commentary tradition on the *Vajracchedikā* sūtra (VCh) represents a rich but underexplored site of philosophical appropriation. This paper focuses on a signal innovation within that tradition: Indian Buddhist philosopher Kamalaśīla's deployment of the *ekāneka* (neither-one-nor-many) argument as a hermeneutical instrument in his **Vajracchedikāṭīkā* (VChT), composed in Sanskrit but extant only in Tibetan translation. Taking the commentary on VCh §13c — the exchange concerning earth-particles (*prthivīrajas*) and world-realms (*lokadhātu*) — as a test case, I contrast Kamalaśīla's exegesis with Vasubandhu's **Vajracchedikāṣaptadhārthaṭīkā*. Where Vasubandhu's reading remains within a broadly Abhidharmic and Yogācāra descriptive framework, Kamalaśīla systematically mobilises the *ekāneka* argument to ground the sūtra's negations in a pramāṇa-inflected (logico-epistemological) Madhyamaka analysis of ultimate and conventional reality.

This move reflects the broader 8th-century synthesis of Madhyamaka and pramāṇa associated with Śāntarakṣita and his student Kamalaśīla. Beginning with Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* verse 1's programmatic definition of *ekāneka*, the argument is elaborated across Kamalaśīla's **Madhyamakāloka* and *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (TSP) into a comprehensive philosophical demonstration of the lack of *svabhāva*. When this synthesis is transposed onto sūtra commentary, it constitutes what I term a “philosophico-soteriological hermeneutical strategy”: scripture's language is reread through the logic of *ekāneka* not merely to establish a philosophical position but to structure a graduated path of contemplative insight.

Situating this strategy within the Bsam yas debate context, I argue that Kamalaśīla's commentarial choices carry a polemical dimension. Against his opponent Moheyan's advocacy of sudden enlightenment — itself grounded in a literal reading of the VCh — the VChT's insistence on analytical meditation as constitutive of the path represents a sustained defence of the *vipaśyanā* standpoint — one grounded not in assertion alone, but in the rigour of pramāṇa reasoning applied to canonical scripture.

Zhoulin Li

(Leipzig University)

Assembling the scattered: An Investigation on the Paramāthagāthā in the Yogācārabhūmi

The *Paramāthagāthā* (Verses of Ultimate Meaning), preserved as part of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, is a distinctive text dedicated to the systematic exposition of the important Buddhist tenet of the selflessness of the person (*pudgalanairātmya*) from an early Yogācāra perspective. Addressing a tenet shared across both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna traditions, the text incorporates materials that can be traced to canonical and paracanonical texts, and interprets them from the viewpoint of the emerging Yogācāra tradition.

On the basis of a revised critical edition and an annotated translation of the text, the present study investigates the possible sources of the verses through comparative historical-philological analysis with earlier canonical and paracanonical texts. The analysis reveals discrepancies in wording between the verses and the commentary, in the order of the verses, and in the interpretation of the verses and of the commentary. Such features provide insights into the compositional history of the text. In particular, they indicate that the author of the verses was likely distinct from both the commentator and the compiler. Moreover, certain structural inconsistencies between the verses and the commentary further suggest that the compiler and the commentator were not identical. Based on the historical-philological investigation, the study argues that the compiler of the verses and the commentator are unlikely identical, and the formation of the text is thus three-layered.

This sheds light on the way in which the canonical and paracanonical texts may have been treated in the early Yogācāra tradition, and contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of the textual and doctrinal development in the early Yogācāra tradition.

Gabriele Geranzani

(L'Orientale University of Naples)

**Non-Duality from the Side of Consciousness and from the Side of the Object: A Study of
Abhinavagupta's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī* 1.5.2**

This paper examines a passage from Abhinavagupta's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī* (ĪPVV), focusing on the problem of defining non-dualism (*advaita*) within the Pratyabhijñā tradition. The analysis is based on a close reading of the Sanskrit text alongside a translation of the corresponding portion of Utpaladeva's *Vivṛti*, with particular attention to Abhinavagupta's exegetical strategies. The passage shows that non-duality is not presented as a single doctrinal claim, but is articulated through two complementary perspectives: from the side of consciousness (*saṃvinmukhena*) and from the side of the object (*arthamukhena*). While the former serves to undermine the assumption of an independently existing object, the latter makes it possible to account for the structured multiplicity of experience. Read in this light, the non-duality of the object allows for an account of relations (*sambandha*) between cognitions, subjects, and objects without positing independently existing relational entities (such as *samavāya* in Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika). This move responds to a precise epistemological and ontological requirement: overcoming naïve dualism is not sufficient, since without recognizing the non-duality of the object, the very possibility of relations would remain unexplained. At the same time, the text displays a marked pedagogical orientation. Different formulations of non-duality (e.g. “the object is consciousness”) are presented as context-sensitive steps, guiding the student from the deconstruction of apparent separateness to a framework in which the plurality of experience can be coherently articulated within non-duality.

Arkamitra Ghatak

(University of Heidelberg)

The “Cosmic Mother” as Messianic Agent in Akhaṇḍa Mahāyoga Eschatology of Gopinath Kaviraj

This paper sheds light into a hitherto understudied aspect of the eschatological theory of Akhaṇḍa Mahāyoga devised by the renowned twentieth century Bengali Indologist and philosopher of Tantra Gopinath Kaviraj (1887–1976). In the late 1940s, Kaviraj came up with the eschatological vision of “universal salvation that would...bring about the dissolution of the entire cosmos” to be effected through a practice he called Akhaṇḍa Mahāyoga. He claimed to have received this idea from and was initiated into this soteriological project, along with few others, by a hidden lineage of yogic masters and yoginis, whom he called *mātrikās*, who operated from an esoteric location called *siddhāśrama*. When one of the initiates of this group was to attain the hitherto unachieved trans-cosmic status of the Mahāyogī, he would penetrate the “mother of the cosmos” Yogamāyā, leading to the creation of *akhaṇḍa maṇḍala*—“a boundless post-eschatological kingdom that can embrace all mankind”—that would result in universal liberation. This presentation illustrates the role of the “cosmic mother” as an intermediary in this messianic enterprise envisaged by Kaviraj, both in her abstract form as well as through her esoteric and human representatives, the *mātrikās* and contemporary female spiritual adepts respectively. Focusing on his correspondences with figures from the spiritual and intellectual networks in Varanasi, where he lived and worked, the paper reveals the influences of contemporary messianic imaginaries and wartime crisis on his Mahāyoga discourse. It also decodes the role of women, such as one of his female co-initiates within the Mahāyoga movement and female gurus like Ānandamayī Mā (1896–1982) and Śobhā Mā (1921–2004) with whom he was in close contact, in informing his understanding of the salvific role of the “cosmic mother.”

Aneesh Raghavan

(Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities)

**Sacred Rivalries and Shared Spaces:
Exploring Sectarian Interplay in the Śaiva Kāñcīmāhātmya**

Among the several *Sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram, the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* stands out as a voluminous text that narrates the origin stories of over a hundred Śiva temples located in and around the city of Kanchipuram. Its primary aim of articulating the sanctity and spiritual greatness of Kanchi is matched, and even reinforced, by its strong emphasis on the glorification of Śiva. While the former is distinctly achieved without question, the latter unfolds in more complex and nuanced ways. The composer(s) of this strongly sectarian text engaged with a distinctive sacred geography that has long been shared by multiple religious traditions with comparable prominence. The Varadarāja temple anchors the Vaiṣṇava landscape of Kanchipuram, while the Ekāmrānātha temple in the northern part of the city serves as the focal point of a Śaiva network. The Kāmākṣī temple, situated at the town's center, is central to Śākta worship, and Jain temples to the west mark an enduring Jain presence. These sectarian landscapes are not discrete; rather, they overlap and intersect, connected through shared legends, deities, and mythological figures. The Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, however fervently Śaiva, acknowledges and responds to other traditions and deities such as Viṣṇu and Buddha. It uses ways that consciously or subconsciously reveal their coexistence, albeit within a hierarchical framework that insists on its sectarian superiority and its religious rivalries. This paper will explore such instances to demonstrate how the text articulates nuanced sectarian rivalries that reflect the sustained religious diversity of Kanchipuram.

Devaki Sapkota

(University of Heidelberg)

Śaiva Reconfiguration of a Vaiṣṇava Tīrtha: Śālagrāma in the Śivapurāṇa

The *Śivapurāṇa* places the famous Vaiṣṇava sacred site of Śālagrāma, located in the northern Mustang region of present-day Nepal, within an explicitly Śaiva mythological framework. The sanctity of Śālagrāma as a Vaiṣṇava *tīrtha*, however, has deep textual roots. It appears already in the *Mahābhārata* (*Vanaparvan* 3.82.106) as an uncontested locus of Viṣṇu's presence within the pilgrimage itinerary of the Pāṇḍavas' forest exile. This sanctity is further exalted in the Tamil Vaiṣṇava Bhakti tradition, where the Ālvārs (sixth–ninth centuries CE) invoke Śālagrāma alongside canonical northern *tīrthas* such as Badarī, Ayodhyā, Mathurā, and Dvārakā. Tirumaṅgai Ālvār devotes an entire decad to the site, and by the twelfth century Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians incorporated Śālagrāma as the northernmost of the 108 Divyadeśams. Even early Śaiva sources, notably the *Niśvāsamukha* (c. seventh century CE), acknowledge the site without polemic as a major Vaiṣṇu sanctuary. A deliberate Śaiva reinterpretation appears in the Yuddhakhaṇḍa of the *Rudrasaṃhitā* (chapters 13–41) of the *Śivapurāṇa*. Here the origin of the Śālagrāma is narrated through two connected cycles: the Vṛndā–Jalandhara episode (chs. 13–25) and the Tulasī–Śaṅkhacūḍa episode (chs. 26–41). In both narratives the invincibility of the Asura adversaries depends upon the protective force of female chastity (*pativratā-dharma*). Viṣṇu, at Śiva's command, intervenes through deception, assuming the form of their husbands in order to violate this chastity and thereby enable Śiva's otherwise impossible victory. The narrative culminates in Tulasī's curse (*Rudrasaṃhitā* 2.5.41.33–34), which fossilizes Viṣṇu as the Śālagrāma stone on the banks of the Gaṇḍakī river. This presentation argues that this Śaiva reinterpretation was successful. The same narrative is adopted and adapted in later Sanskrit Purāṇas—including the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Padmapurāṇa*, and *Skandapurāṇa*—as well as in vernacular traditions such as the Nepali *Svasthanīvratakathā*. These developments indicate that the *Śivapurāṇa*'s Śaiva reframing of a major Vaiṣṇava sacred site achieved wide acceptance across both Sanskrit and regional intellectual traditions.

Yunheng Xu

(University of Heidelberg)

Tracing the Divyadeśams in Kanchipuram

Nowadays, we witness various books on *Divyadeśams* that facilitate pilgrimage. The complex system of 108 *Divyadeśams* (Tamil *nūṛreṭṭuttiruppati*), the sacred sites of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, is not a fixed inheritance from Ālvārs but developed through the ages. Most *Divyadeśams* are in Tamil Nadu. In Toṇṭaimaṇḍala, viz. Northern Tamil Nadu, there are 22, as is shown in Garuḍa Vāhana's *Divyasūricaritam*. Kanchipuram alone has 14. Focusing on the lesser-known *Divyadeśams* in Kanchipuram, I will examine how the sacred geographies were gradually elaborated in various media in Sanskrit, Tamil, and other languages. Ultimately, *Divyadeśams* derive from the Ālvārs' hymn in classical Tamil before the 10th century. However, *Divyadeśams* are usually mentioned or listed in the verses themselves, often vague or combined with formulaic phrases. Soon after the compilation of the 4000 *Divyaprabandham*, Śrīvaiṣṇava scholars started to write Maṇipravālam commentaries on these verses, which played a crucial role in elucidating the identifications and attaching new myths to the sites. Parallely, Sanskrit *stotras* were composed by Vedānta Deśika for some Kanchi sties, which enhanced the importance. Meanwhile, epigraphic evidence since the 10th century sometimes demonstrates the names of *Divyadeśams* and their presiding deities, echoing with the hymns, thereby anchoring the literary tradition in stones. Apart from the earlier writings in sacred canons, stones, and copper plates, later genres, including multi-lingual hagiographies, Sanskrit *Māhātmyas*, and Tamil poems, presented more systematic ideas of the 108. They are sometimes found in modern *Ācāryas*' discourses, pilgrim books, and temple signboards, which add further new touches to the narratives. By concentrating on Kanchipuram, we can see that the *Divyadeśam* system emerged not directly from the Ālvārs poetry but resulted from a cumulative process across languages, genres, and historical contexts. Attempts to systematise happened from time to time, while new beliefs were added to the existing sacred geographies.

Haolin Wang

(Université Paris Cité)

Capsules and Dots: Diagrammatic Instructions in Bhavéśa's *Līlāvātīvivaraṇaṃ*

This study investigates the function of "capsules" and "dots" within a 1784 CE manuscript (Jyotisa 9208) containing Bhavéśa's *Līlāvātīvivaraṇaṃ*, a prose commentary on Bhāskara II's *Līlāvātī*. Written in the Maithili script, the manuscript features unique diagrammatic elements—boxed "capsules" containing numerical data and sequences of dots or strokes—primarily within the *parikarman* (arithmetical operation) sections. Initially, these features were theorized as generic representations of the "working surface" (*pāṭī*), where capsules served as static containers for computational results. However, ongoing decipherment and technical reconstruction of complex operations, specifically cube root extraction, suggest a more dynamic utility. We propose that the capsules function as spatial constraints designed to define and stabilize decimal place values during multi-step procedures. Furthermore, the "dots" (often appearing as short strokes or hyphens) likely serve as scribal prompts or mnemonic markers, signaling successive stages in the algorithmic flow. By analyzing these markers through a close reading of Bhavéśa's text, this research argues that these features reflect the active engagement of a reader or scribe (potentially Śrī Rūpanātha). Whether these notations represent a student's internalization of mathematical rules or a teacher's pedagogical insertions, they offer a rare glimpse into the historical "working classroom" of medieval Indian mathematics. These findings suggest that the manuscript was not merely a passive record of Bhāskara's rules, but a functional, interactive tool for mastering the procedural logic of the *Līlāvātī* tradition.

Vishnupriya Srinivasan

(EFEEO Pondicherry)

Behind the Incorrect Sanskrit: Tamil Conceptual Interference and Authorial Intention in the ORI2519 Manuscript of the Kāmākṣīvilāsa

The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* is a Sanskrit *sthālamāhātmya* of approximately 1400 verses narrating the foundational legends of the three principal deities of Kāñcīpuram, namely Kāmākṣī, Ekāmrānātha, and Varadarāja. This paper, situated within the broader project of producing a critical digital edition of the text, takes as its primary focus the only available unpublished grantha manuscript ORI2519, examined alongside the two known printed editions: one in Telugu script from 1889 and a Devanāgarī edition from 1969 that appears to be a largely uncritical reproduction of the former.

The manuscript presents a philologically complex case. Its Sanskrit is marked by frequent metrical irregularities, syntactic violations, and morphologically incorrect coinages, yet it is far from a careless document. While instances of eye-skip point to its being a copy, contrasting evidence of conceptual reworking argues for its being an authorial draft. The relationship between ORI2519 and the 1889 edition is equally revealing. The editor silently corrects syntactically incoherent passages while retaining coherent ones verbatim, suggesting that this manuscript may well be the source of the first edition.

More significantly, this paper demonstrates that the linguistic failures of ORI2519 are not arbitrary errors but systematic traces of a Tamil-speaking author composing in Sanskrit. The author's conceptual framework is demonstrably Dravidian, evidenced by non-finite verbal constructions mirroring Tamil *vinaiyeccam* and by neologisms such as *apaśyātmā*, morphologically incorrect in Sanskrit yet transparently rendering a Tamil conception such as *vinaiyālaṇaiyum peyar* (participial noun). At two significant junctures, the editor's inability to recover the Tamil logic underlying the manuscript's phrasing proves telling: in one instance he replaces a difficult passage with a new narrative altogether, and in another he silently omits what he could not comprehend. Both responses become intelligible only when read through a Tamil conceptual lens.

This paper ultimately argues that for the author of the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*, communicative meaning takes unambiguous precedence over formal Sanskrit standardization, making this text a compelling case study in Dravidian mother-tongue interference in Sanskrit textual production.

Vigneshwaran Muralidaran

(EFEO Pondicherry)

From Vēru to Metrical Name: Editorial Strategies and the Shifting Burden of Knowledge in Tamil Talapurāṇam Editions

The Tamil word *vēru* ('different') functions in Tamil manuscript culture as a minimal scribal prompt, signalling to the reader that the metrical scanning of subsequent verses differs from the preceding ones. Manuscripts of Tamil texts, including those of Kacciyappa Muṇivar's *Kāñcippurāṇam* (KP(KM)), one of three Tamil talapurāṇam texts describing the temple origin legends of Kāñcīpuram, relied on this convention with the expectation that readers possessed sufficient metrical competence to respond to the cue independently. This paper examines how this convention was inherited, transformed, and reinterpreted across three centuries of editorial practice, from manuscript scribal culture to modern printed editions, arguing that the persistence of *vēru* across this transmission history is neither editorial negligence nor passive copying, but a marker whose meaning shifted with the change of textual culture. Drawing on collation of ten manuscripts and four printed editions of KP(KM) spanning 1878 to 2012, this paper traces a gradual but decisive transfer of the burden of interpretation from reader to editor, which encompasses metrical scansion, identification of metrical feet, naming of metres, sandhi resolution, and word segmentation. Within this broader trajectory, it argues that *vēru* in the printed era came to encode a technically specific meaning distinct from its manuscript function: rather than signalling a change of poetic metre, it marks intra-metrical variation, namely a shift in syllabic patterning of metrical feet within the same overarching metrical framework. Evidence from the first two chapters of KP(KM) is used to illustrate this argument, demonstrating how the 1910 and 1953 editions independently arrived at consistent editorial decisions that distinguish inter-metrical change from intra-metrical variation, the former receiving explicit metrical names and the latter consistently labelled *vēru*.

These observations have broader implications for how we understand Tamil editorial practice across manuscript and print cultures, and they are particularly relevant for digital critical editions of Tamil texts, where the kind of interpretive decisions that print editors left unresolved can no longer remain unmarked.

Raffaello De León-Jones Diani

(École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

A Sanskrit praise to Śiva in the Perso-Arabic Script

The first folio of ML BL Pers. Add. 5651 contains 9 lines of a Sanskrit invocation to Śiva written in the Perso-Arabic script (*ṣikasta-yi āmiz*). The manuscript itself contains a Persian translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, commonly referred to as the *Arjungītā*, whose text is very close to another Persian translation of said text, commonly referred to as the *Āb-i Zindagī*. The presence of a Sanskrit text written in the Perso-Arabic reinforces the argument that such translations of the Sanskrit *Bhagavadgītā* were produced by and for a Hindu milieu, as is evidenced not only by the wider appropriation of Persian by Hindu elites in Mughal India but also by other such translations. The aim of this presentation is to propose an edition in the Perso-Arabic script of this text as well as a reconstruction of the Sanskrit. It further proposes to situate it in the wider context of Hindu production of Persian material.

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Liwen Liu

(Harvard University)

**Jīrṇoddhāra and the Survival of Newar Buddhism:
A Study of Narratives and Inscriptions in Nepal**

Newar Buddhism, a unique tradition in Nepal, has remained a living tradition while Buddhism in other parts of South Asia declined after the 15th century. While almost all monasteries, including Nālandā and Vikramaśilā in India, have faded into ruins, many monasteries in Kathmandu remain in good condition and continue to function daily. When a religious monument or image begins to deteriorate, *jīrṇoddhāra* (renewing the old) becomes the only means of preserving the physical integrity of the structure. This paper examines the repair of Buddhist monuments during the Malla period (1201–1779 CE) and its role in the survival of Buddhism in Nepal. The paper combines studies of Buddhist narratives with epigraphical evidence regarding temple repairs in Buddhist contexts. The first part focuses on the stories about the repair of *caityas* found in the *Vicitrakarṇikāvadānoddhṛta*, a 19th-century collection of Buddhist legends written in Classical Newar. The fifth story in this text outlines the process of repairing *caityas* and the merit it generates. Following the analysis of prescriptive narratives, the second part of the paper examines how repairs were actually carried out during the Malla period in Nepal. This section explores inscriptions that record repairs to Buddhist monasteries, detailing how the repair process was ritually performed, who financially contributed, and how these repairs helped sustain the monasteries. I argue that promoting the merit of *jīrṇoddhāra* in narratives served as a strategy to maintain monasteries and *caityas* during periods of reduced land donations. The small-scale but regular repairs funded by lay followers from both Hindu and Buddhist communities played a key role in maintaining these religious sites. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of repairs in sustaining Buddhist institutions in Nepal and enhances broader discussions of Buddhist economics and religious sustainability.

Noam Shany

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

A Matter of Time: Ritual and Time in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* Theatre in Kerala

This paper explores the structure of time in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, the oldest living Sanskrit theatre tradition, performed as a "sacrifice for the eyes." It is based on ethnographic research conducted in Moozhikkulam, Kerala, where I witnessed several performances, each unfolding over multiple nights. I argue that the performance does not simply take place in the 'natural' flow of time; rather time is an active force, ritually charged and theatrically rendered, that generates the distinct temporality of the cosmos created on stage through which sacred presence is manifested. Time is brought to the fore through two fundamental structures of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. First, repetition is part and parcel of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*'s dialogue, in which each line is repeated through a sequence of utterances and gestures. Significant verses may be deconstructed, reordered (*anvaya*), and repeated several times. Such repetitions produce multiple dimensions of the performed moment. Drawing on a parallel structure in the *Agnicayana*, a Vedic ritual from the same cultural region, I argue that each passage becomes a distinct unit through which the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* cosmos is built, underscoring its ritual tendencies. Second, non-linear time is present in the *nirvahaṇam*: each time a new character enters, the performance departs from the plot and traces back to the character's mythical past, before returning to the dramatic present that is now enriched by the mythological context in which the play unfolds. This narrative excursion demonstrates the congruence of ritual and dramaturgical performance in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. These two structures reveal time as the malleable material through which the performed cosmos is created, and as a site where the boundary between theatre and ritual becomes porous. Ultimately, this paper offers a case study within Kerala's performance ecology, providing a concrete framework for understanding how time functions as a mediator between ritual, theatre, and text.

Simon Winant

(Ghent University)

Why adapt a mini-Kirātārjunīya in a Jain adaptation of the Mahābhārata?

Devaprabhasūri's restrained nods to Bhāravi in the Pāṇḍavacarita

Following in the footsteps of Kālidāsa as a major poet, Bhāravi composed one of the major *mahākāvya* works with his *Kirātārjunīya* (6th century CE). Based on a famous episode from the *Mahābhārata*, Bhāravī portrays the duel between Arjuna and the God Śiva disguised as a hunter (kirāta) in his *mahākāvya*. In his *Pāṇḍavacarita* (1213 CE), a Jain *mahākāvya* adaptation of the *Mahābhārata*, the monk Devaprabhasūri, instead of drawing on the *Mahābhārata*, includes a sustained allusion to Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* in his *Pāṇḍavacarita*. By including the council on Nīti between Draupadī, Bhīma, and Yudhiṣṭhira (KA 1-2), as well by adapting the duel between Arjuna and the Kirāta so as to resemble the *Kirātārjunīya* more closely, Devaprabhasūri shows off his familiarity with Bhāravi's *mahākāvya*.

However, Devaprabhasūri's allusions to Bhāravi do not engage with Bhāravi's thematic concerns with Royal Śrī as the personification of Royal Power, whereas Devaprabhasūri actively uses Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* as intertext in the *Pāṇḍavacarita* precisely to thematise the Kurus' not always firm grip on Royal Śrī. Moreover, Devaprabhasūri changes the *kirāta*'s true identity: instead of the god Śiva, the hunter turns out to be a vidyādhara. Inspired by the work of Indira Peterson on the *Kirātārjunīya* and building on my dissertation on the *Pāṇḍavacarita*'s intertextuality with Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, I will examine how Devaprabhasūri as a *mahākāvya* author from the second millennium uses allusions with other works of *mahākāvya* with varying purposes. In doing so, I wish to draw attention to the enduring use of allusions in later *mahākāvya*, as well as to a poet's deliberate positioning vis-à-vis canonical *kavis*.

Kacper Lepionka

(University of Warsaw)

Implied Audience and Narrative Strategy in the *Virāṭaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*

The *Virāṭaparvan* is the fourth book of the *Mahābhārata*. Although often considered late, it is an integral part of the text presented in the Critical Edition and is intrinsically connected to the overall structure of the epic. In this presentation, I use narratological and other critical approaches to investigate what can be said about the people for whom this book, and perhaps the whole epic, was composed. I will concentrate on examining what I call the implied audience of the *Virāṭaparvan*, that is, the predispositions embedded in the text that the intended audience was expected to realise.

The *Virāṭaparvan* recounts how, after twelve years of exile, the Pandavas and Draupadi must live for one year without being recognised, now among others rather than in isolation. They enter the court of King Virata and attempt to blend into courtly life. This exceptional narrative situation and its distinctive tone may have allowed the poet to engage more freely with convention and to allude to aspects of everyday life familiar to the audience.

Drawing on a comparative perspective, I show that parallels emerge between the *Virāṭaparvan* and, for example, Homer's *Odyssey*, particularly in the motif of concealed identity. I consider how this motif is developed and how it shapes the tension between the story set in a distant past and the realities of the implied audience. Through this examination, the paper revisits historically oriented readings of the *Mahābhārata* and argues that some inconsistencies and apparent anachronisms, often taken as signs of layered composition, may instead be intrinsic to the text and understood as deliberate references to the world of its implied audience.

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An Industry of Miracles: A Typology of Tantric Dream Operations

What if dreams were not private experiences to be interpreted after the fact, but ritual spaces in which power could be generated, tested, and deployed?

In Śaiva-Śākta tantric literature, the dream state appears not as a by-product of sleep but as a site of intervention – induced, managed, and read for results. The *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* already prescribes two distinct techniques: a breath-based yogic sequence inducing controllable svapnavṛtti, and a ritual incubation summoning a deity called the *svapnamāṇava* who delivers knowledge the text insists is true. From there, dream operations proliferate: the *adhivāsana* – the night before *dīkṣā* – makes dreaming a mandatory diagnostic gate across nine of sixteen sources surveyed, with fire offerings when the dreams go wrong; the *Jayadrathayāmalatantra* routes magical operations against external targets through the dream state, deploying a *yakṣiṇī* as intermediary; the *Tantrāloka* describes the guru synchronising breath with a sleeping disciple's heart to produce dreams the text calls *satyam* – true – before arguing that no valid means of knowledge establishes waking as more real than dream; the *Yoginītantra* prescribes four years of daily *sādhana* to permanently install a goddess inside the dream faculty itself.

This paper presents a systematic survey of dream operations across sixteen Śaiva-Śākta scriptures and exegetical works spanning the 5th to the 17th century. Drawing on critical editions and original translations of unpublished manuscript material, it proposes a fourfold typology by intended effect: revelation, empowerment, magic, and consciousness transformation. What emerges is a tantric architecture of dreaming in which revelation, initiation, efficacy, and transformation are all routed through the nocturnal state. Dreams become a disciplined medium of ritual action: a place where knowledge arrives, power takes form, and the extraordinary is made available through technique.

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It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No, it's... the City of the Gandharvas! – on the deeper implications of this visual metaphor as a terminus technicus for the particular appearance of hidden dimensions of reality and their nature throughout Indian religious discourse

The appearance of the *gandharvas* across many genres of Indian literature and religion is not something particularly surprising as they became one of the more popular species of supernatural semi-divine beings along with the likes of *yakṣas*, *nāgas* and *kinnaras*. However, the persistent appearance of the “city of the *gandharvas*” (*gandharvanagara*) as a recognisable descriptor of visionary phenomena in a wide variety of works ranging from the *Nyāyasūtra*, through several *Purāṇas*, the *Jātakamālā*, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the *Sādhnamālā*, and the *Sekoddeśa* of the *Kālacakra* tantric cycle, as well as numerous others, where such experiences are also reliably likened to illusions, magical apparitions or dreams – regardless of whether that is done in a positive or negative light – cannot be overlooked as coincidental. At the very least this is conclusive evidence of the comprehensive persistence of this visual metaphor across both time and different religious and polemical traditions for more than a millennium. The key question is, however – why was it considered so apt a descriptor? Rather than a generic metaphor, it seems to be referring to something very particular. In this paper I will review the evidence as to whether the city of the *gandharvas* should not, in fact, be regarded as part of a consistent and enduring jargon used intentionally and specifically for the description of visions, unseen dimensions and divine realities in Indic religious discourse.