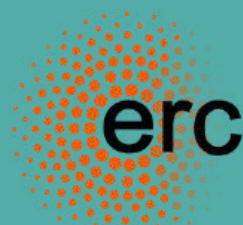




UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE

DAAM
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA,
AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO



New Research on South Asia

PROGRAMMA DI

SETTEMBRE-OTTOBRE 2026

CICLO ANNUALE DI CONFERENZE A CURA DEL CENTRO DI STUDI SULL'ASIA MERIDIONALE E IL
SUD-EST ASIATICO DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE.

LA PARTECIPAZIONE AD ALMENO CINQUE INCONTRI NEL CORSO DI UN ANNO DARÀ DIRITTO
ALL'ACQUISIZIONE DI 2 CFU, PREVIO SUPERAMENTO DI UNA PROVA ORALE



**HEIDELBERGER AKADEMIE
DER WISSENSCHAFTEN**

Akademie der Wissenschaften
des Landes Baden-Württemberg



PALAZZO CORIGLIANO, ANTISALA DEGLI SPECCHI

ORE 15:00

28 SETTEMBRE

“FORMS OF FEMALE AGENCY IN CONSERVATIVE HINDU TRADITIONS”

SPEAKER: UTE HÜSKEN, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

30 SETTEMBRE

“MANY TELLINGS OF A HOLY PLACE:

**THE TEMPLE LEGENDS OF KANCHIPURAM IN THEIR DIFFERENT FORMS OF
TRANSMISSION”**

SPEAKER: JONAS BUCHHOLZ, HEIDELBERG ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

2 OTTOBRE

**“ADMINISTRATORS TAKE THE STAGE: MONASTERIES, DONORS AND TEMPLES
IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY, 16TH-18TH CENTURIES”**

SPEAKER: MARGHERITA TRENTO, EHESS, PARIS



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PALAZZO CORIGLIANO, ANTISALA DEGLI SPECCHI

ORE 15:00

SPEAKER: JOHN W. NEMEC

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA/VISITING PROFESSOR DAAM

5 OTTOBRE

“READINGS IN SANSKRIT: KALHAṆA’S RĀJATARAṄGĪNĪ”

7 OTTOBRE

“KASHMIR IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY:
ON THE TRANSMISSION OF BUDDHISM TO TIBET”

12 OTTOBRE

“READINGS IN SANSKRIT: BHAṬṬA VĀMADEVA’S JANMAMARAṆAVICĀRA”

14 OTTOBRE

“MEDICINE AND RELIGION IN EARLY-MEDIEVAL KASHMIR”

YOUR PARAGRAPH TEXT

Abstracts

Forms of Female Agency in Conservative Hindu Traditions

Ute Hüsken, Heidelberg University

In parts of contemporary Hinduism, women and girls are being trained in Sanskrit texts and rituals traditionally reserved for men—a development many see as a break with tradition. Learning, teaching, and transmitting these texts, and performing the rituals themselves, have long been the exclusive prerogative of male Brahmins. Drawing on fieldwork in Pune and Varanasi, I will present these settings together with their historical background and ask: Why and how do women choose to enter a tradition that excludes them? What are their experiences? And what competing agendas do the different stakeholders—men included—bring to these processes? As we will see, women respond to criticism in strikingly different ways, and their agendas differ correspondingly—shaped above all by caste affiliation, political affiliation, economic situation, and the urban/rural divide.

Many Tellings of a Holy Place: The Temple Legends of Kanchipuram in Their Different Forms of Transmission

Jonas Buchholz, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

This talk presents the research programme of the ‘Hindu Temple Legends in South India’ project, which investigates the temple legends (*sthalamāhātmya/talapurāṇam*) of the South Indian city of Kanchipuram across their different forms of transmission: textual sources in Sanskrit and classical Tamil as well as oral narratives, visual representations, and ritual performances. Drawing on my ongoing work on the Śiva temples of Kanchipuram, I will present one particular temple—the Siddheśvara

(Cittīsvaṛar) temple—as a case in point. The talk will demonstrate how early-modern texts—particularly the *Kāñcippurāṇam* of Civañāṇa Muṇivar—have been instrumental in shaping the temple’s traditions, while showing how these textual accounts are complemented by oral and visual narratives that can be encountered on site. Building on this case, I will argue that a full understanding of temple traditions in Kanchipuram and elsewhere requires studying both textual and non-textual forms of transmission in conjunction.

Administrators take the stage: monasteries, donors and temples in the Tamil country, 16th–18th centuries

Margherita Trento, EHESS, Paris

This presentation examines the growing role of members of non-Brahmanical Śaiva monasteries (*ātīṇam*) in the administration of Tamil temples from the late sixteenth century to the eve of colonialism. Copper-plate and stone inscriptions show how monks of the Vellala caste belonging to the *ātīṇams* mediated between temple authorities and Nāyaka-period donors over grants and endowments. They also presided over new forms of collective funding, as seen at Thiruchendur in the eighteenth century. This growing centrality also translated into visibility: Vellala monks began to be inscribed into the decorative programs of temples through portraits in painting and sculpture. I situate this shift within the early modern rise of the Vellalas, a still understudied process that reshaped Tamil society, religion, and literature in this period.

John W. Nemec, University of Virginia/visiting professor DAAM

Readings in Sanskrit: Kalhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī

In this session we will read excerpts of Kalhaṇa's famed Rājatarāṅgiṇī (RT), the "Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir." In particular, we will examine the fourth taraṅga or chapter of the work, specifically RT 4.126-143 and 4.191-218. These passages record the rise to kingship and the prosperous history of king Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa, the grandson of the founder of the famed Kārkoṭa Dynasty (A.D./C.E. 625-855) who ushered in a Kashmiri "golden age." Muktāpīḍa reigned into the middle of the eighth century, from A.D./C.E. 724 until 761, and his military prowess proved to be a match against the violent, global forces vying for control of Central Asia and beyond in the period in question, coming as he did in direct military contact with the Tibetan Empire, among other foes. In his reign, both Buddhism and Hinduism (principally Vaiṣṇavism) were patronized generously, Muktāpīḍa having had built the famed Mārtaṇḍa Sun Temple and the richly endowed city of Parihāsapura. This session reads how Kalhaṇa chronicled history in a vital moment in the Valley, highlighting not only the ecumenism of royal patronage but also the international character of this Kārkoṭa king's reign, which placed foreign figures from the Turki Śāhi kingdom directly into his government and sent political emissaries as far afield as Beijing.

Kashmir in the Eighth Century: On the Transmission of Buddhism to Tibet

In this lecture I seek to answer the question as to what role Kashmiris may have played in facilitating the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. As is well known, Padmasambhava was said to have brought the religion to the plateau, having had before this significant contact with the famed cremation ground at Uḍḍiyāna. Given the extensive reference to this sacred site in non-dual Śaiva works composed and circulated in Kashmir, a question arises as to whether the Tibetan interest in this site was mediated

by way of the Valley itself. I argue that this is unlikely, at least in the eighth century, given: the particulars of the chronology of references to Uḍḍiyāna in Śaiva and Buddhist sources; the contemporaneous religious and political situation in Kashmir in the period when Padmasambhava is reputed to have flourished; and the geography and geopolitical constraints of the period. The lecture in the end paints a detailed picture of Kashmir in the eighth century.

Readings in Sanskrit: Bhaṭṭa Vāmadeva's Janmamaraṇavicāra

In this reading session we will explore the only extant writing of one Bhaṭṭa Vāmadeva (fl. c. 1050-1100), the great grand-disciple of Abhinavagupta and the student of Yogarāja: the Janmamaraṇavicāra or “Contemplation of Life and Death.” The work is striking for its extensive quotation of Śaiva tantric works, many of them now lost, which he cites aside medical works, such as the Suśrutasaṃhitā and other texts addressing human physiology and embryology. We will read passages from the opening of the text, which offers a sophisticated poetic verse that uses double-meanings (śleṣa) in a striking fashion, to the paradigmatic recitations of the work of non-dual Śaiva theology, to its detailed accounting of the formation and constitution of the human body. In doing so, we will have occasion to access the readings of the three extant Śāradā manuscripts of the work, collated and edited for the first time in this study.

Medicine and Religion in Early-Medieval Kashmir

In this talk I seek to chart the history of the mutual interaction of Indian medical traditions with religion (in general) and Śaivism (in particular) in the Valley of Kashmir in its premodernity. I will show that this history, covering as it does more than five-hundred years, is not only more extensive than has been recognized to date, but is also fascinating and complex. For medical traditions find their way not only into the somewhat laconic and understudied eleventh-century work, the Janmamaraṇavicāra of Bhaṭṭa Vāmadeva, but also: the Śivadharmā corpus (principally the

Śivadharmottara); the probably Kashmiri work of Hindu Law, the Viṣṇusmṛti; Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's master compendium of Naiyāyika thought, the Nyāyamañjarī; Kṣemendra's Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā (at least after a fashion); and even Śārṅgadeva's master-work of musicology, the Saṅgītaratnākara (which we include because while the author composed it in the employ of the Yādava Dynasty in the Deccan, this was only after he fled his home in Kashmir). All in all, this talk will test the limits of the hypothesis, that the introduction of medical concerns into religion carried with it a concomitant degree of ecumenism and caste-inclusivism that were less-commonly seen where doctors and their shaky status vis-à-vis personal ritual purity were set to the margins.