**ASIA BEYOND BOUNDARIES CONFERENCE**

**TRANS DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON PRIMARY SOURCES FROM THE PREMODERN WORLD**

Date – 27-31 August 2018  
Organizers – Peter Bisschop & Elizabeth Cecil  
Location – Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

The 5-day international conference *Asia Beyond Boundaries: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Primary Sources from the Premodern World* unites a wide range of scholars—working in the fields of history, archaeology, religion, anthropology, art history, classics, and philology—in an effort to explore new perspectives and methods in the study of primary sources from the premodern world. This conference represents the culmination of the European Research Council (ERC) Synergy project *Asia Beyond Boundaries: Religion, Region, Language and the State*, a research consortium of the British Museum, the British Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Leiden University.

The first two days of the conference (August 27th & 28th) will focus on project specific research presented in four thematically organized sessions:

1. Text and Beyond  
2. Material and Beyond  
3. Language and Beyond  
4. Religion and Beyond

The fourth session is dedicated to interactions between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism with special reference to the *Skandapurāṇa*.

August 29th will feature exhibitions highlighting materials from the special collections of the Leiden University Library and objects from the Museum Volkenkunde.

The final two days of the conference (August 30th and 31st) will consist of panels with a broader thematic focus, aiming to create a trans-disciplinary dialogue that explores key questions related to the following themes:

1. Narrative Form and Literary Ideology  
2. Imperial Landscapes and Regional Identity  
3. Religion, Politics and Wonder-working  
4. Environmental History and Material Matters
**Panel Descriptions**

The panel *Narrative Form and Literary Ideology* investigates the use of narrative to craft rhetorics of community and identity in the premodern world. Engaging with a wide variety of literary genres and styles—from epics and belles-lettres to travelogues and birth narratives—the panel is particularly concerned with the ideological dimensions of narrative literature, and accompanying questions of authorship, audience and patronage.

To what extent did narratives serve as vectors for social change, as stages to contest norms, or as tools to perennialize boundaries? How were narratives embedded in particular places and times? Alternatively, how did narrative forms and literary ideologies transcend spatial and temporal constraints?

The panel *Imperial Landscapes and Regional Identity* engages with recent scholarship on the development, expansion, and transformation of political landscapes. Combining the study of particular sites, [inter]regional economic networks, and imperial geographies, the panel examines the ways in which interventions in the physical and built terrain served as a means of self-styling for rulers of imperial and regionally embedded polities. These studies also raise broader questions concerning the participation and investment of other social groups—e.g. religious specialists, artisans, merchants, agrarian communities—in designed landscapes.

How were regimes of power articulated and contested spatially and over time? To what extent did imagined or idealized geographies inform the socialization of spaces, memorial practices, and the allocation of resources in a region? How might we use politically engineered landscapes to map the interactions of historical agents and the dynamics of acculturation in the premodern world?

The panel *Religion, Politics and Wonder-working* starts from the perspective that religion and politics in the premodern world were thoroughly enmeshed. The panel specifically investigates the various ways in which a sense of wonder or awe created by and associated with objects, places, people and rituals, was integral to the expression and experience of religious authority. Ruling elites and those aspiring to power, in turn, sought to mobilize religious media in the service of their own agendas. How was wonder created, maintained and transmitted though religious media? How and why did historical agents—religious specialists, rulers, and other actors—invest in the production of monuments, texts, and practices associated with wonder-working? And, perhaps most importantly, how did the evocation of wonder make religion persuasive in the premodern world?

The panel *Environmental History and Material Matters* integrates the study of material culture with considerations of built landscapes and human interactions with and within the natural world over time. Moving between the disciplines of art history, archaeology, and anthropology, the contributions to this panel use objects, places, and physical terrain to access the development of economic, political, and social networks across regions.

How might we approach disparate objects and sites—from ceramics and cities to paintings and ports—as evidence of the interactions of humans with their environments over time? Can we conceive these sources as materialized expressions of identity and community in the premodern world? And to what extent can the lived world of premodern agents be accessed through the surviving material evidence?
MONDAY – AUGUST 27TH

9.00 – 9.15  Coffee and Preliminaries

9.15 – 9.45  Welcome by Peter Bisschop (Leiden University)
Opening by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Academic Director, LIAS)
Introduction by Michael Willis (British Museum)

9.45 – 12.45  PANEL I – TEXT AND BEYOND

Sam van Schaik (moderator): British Library
Gergely Hidas: British Museum
Daniel Balogh: British Museum

11.15 – 11.30  Coffee Break

Lucas den Boer: Leiden University
Robert Leach: University of Zurich

12.30 – 12.45  Final Discussion

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch (Museum Café)

14.00 – 17.00  PANEL II – MATERIAL AND BEYOND

Michael Willis (moderator): British Museum
Robert Bracey: British Museum

15.00 – 15.15  Coffee Break

Anna Filigenzi: University of Naples
Janice Stargardt: University of Cambridge
Nico Staring: Leiden University

16.45 – 17.00  Final Discussion
TUESDAY – AUGUST 28TH

9.15 – 9.30 Coffee and Preliminaries

9.30 – 12.30 PANEL III – LANGUAGE AND BEYOND

Nathan Hill (moderator): SOAS
Marc Miyake: SOAS
Tom Hoogervorst: KITLV Leiden

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee Break

Lewis Doney: Universität Bonn
Charles DiSimone: Universität München

12.30 – 12.45 Final Discussion

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch (Museum Café)

14.00 – 17.00 PANEL IV – RELIGION AND BEYOND (INTERACTIONS BETWEEN VAISHNAVISM AND SHAIVISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SKANDAPURANA)

Peter Bisschop (moderator): Leiden University
Judit Törzsök: EPHE/Sorbonne, Paris

15.00 – 15.15 Coffee Break

Nirajan Kafle: Leiden University
Yuko Yokochi: Kyoto University
Hans Bakker: University of Groningen

16.45 – 17.00 Final Discussion

19.00 Dinner at Restaurant Jacob
**Wednesday – August 29th**

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| 11.00 – 12.30 | Exhibition: Leiden Special Collections  
University Library – Vossius Room & Heinsius Room (2nd Floor) |
| 13.30 – 14.00 | **Museum Volkenkunde** – Introduction & Guided Tour  
Francine Brinkgreve (Curator Insular Southeast Asia) |
| 14.30 – 15.00 | **Museum Volkenkunde** – Introduction to Indonesian Bronzes Exhibition  
Marijke Klokke (Leiden University) & Mathilde Mechling (Sorbonne) |
THURSDAY – AUGUST 30TH

9.00 – 9.15  Coffee and Preliminaries

9.15 – 9.30  Opening by Mark Rutgers (Dean, Faculty of Humanities)
             Introduction by Elizabeth Cecil (Florida State University)

9.30 – 12.45  PANEL V – NARRATIVE FORM AND LITERARY IDEOLOGY

             Jim Fitzgerald (keynote): Brown University
             Csaba Dezsö: Eötvös Loránd University

10.30 – 11.00  Coffee Break

             Amy Langenberg: Eckerd College
             Benjamin Fleming: City University of New York
             Max Deeg: Cardiff University

12.30 – 12.45  Final Discussion

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch (Museum Café)

14.00 – 17.00  PANEL VI – IMPERIAL LANDSCAPES AND REGIONAL IDENTITY

             Richard Payne (keynote): University of Chicago
             Jason Neelis: Wilfrid Laurier University

15.00 – 15.15  Coffee Break
             Vincent Tournier: EFEO Paris
             Emmanuel Francis: CNRS/CEIAS Paris
             Lidewijde de Jong: University of Groningen

16.45 – 17.00  Final Discussion

19.00  Dinner at Lot & De Walvis
FRIDAY – AUGUST 31ST

9.15 – 9.30  Coffee and Preliminaries

9.30 – 12.30  PANEL VII – RELIGION, POLITICS AND WONDER-WORKING

Leslie Orr (keynote): Concordia University
Jonathan Silk: Leiden University
Petra Sijpesteijn: Leiden University

11.00 – 11.30  Coffee Break

Laxshmi Greaves: Cardiff University
Elizabeth Cecil: Florida State University

12.30 – 12.45  Final Discussion

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch (Museum Café)

14.00 – 17.00  PANEL VIII – ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND MATERIAL MATTERS

Miriam Stark (keynote): University of Hawaii
William Southworth: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

15.00 – 15.15  Coffee Break

Divya Kumar Dumas: University of Pennsylvania
Miguel John Versluys: Leiden University
John Guy, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

16.45 – 17.00  Final Discussion

17.00 – 17.15  Concluding Remarks

18.15 – 20.00  Reception at the Faculty Club, Leiden University
HANS T. BAKKER (The British Museum)
*The Skandapurāṇa and Bāṇa’s Harṣacarita*

The composers of the *Skandapurāṇa* and Bāṇa, the author of the *Harṣacarita*, were actors in and witnesses to the same historical world in Northern India of the end of the 6th and first half of the 7th century. This historical reality became sublimated in the two works in two very different ways: on the one hand it is lifted up to the atemporal realm of the Saiva mythological universe in the versified style of the Purāṇa, in which historical details are eschewed as far as possible, and, on the other hand, transmuted into a historical novel in the kāvya prose style, in which historical reality is glorified and its timeless essence is expressed through symbolism and literary metaphor. Moreover, the focus of each of the texts is intrinsically different: the Purāṇa intends to sanctify geographical locations by associating them with the world of Saiva mythology, thus giving them a transcendent quality; the kāvya aestheticizes the life and deeds of its historical protagonist, and thus transcends the contingency and idiosyncrasy of the human condition. The common ground of the two texts is found in their nature: they are both idealized, comprehensive, literary imaginations, products of the same cultural mould, which explains the occurrence of interface. In this paper I will explore this interface.

DÁNIEL BALOGH (The British Museum)
*Dr(a/u)(p/m/vy)avardhana: who, where, when?*

The *Brhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira (6th c. CE) mentions a king of Avanti named Dravyavardhana, who wrote an epitome of Bharadvāja’s work on omens. As early as 1957, V. V. Mirashi suggested that Dravyavardhana may have been a ruler of the Aulikara dynasty, hypothesising that he reigned very shortly before Yaśodharman and that his seat was Ujjayini, the city signified by the name Avanti. This sparked a heated debate between Mirashi and D. C. Sircar about the capital of the (later) Aulikaras, which the former insisted was Ujjayini, while the latter maintained the established view that it was Daśapura. The capital debate fizzled out without a consensus, but the discovery of the Risthal inscription of Prakāśadharmar cast a new stone in the pond. This epigraph, the only known record of the genealogy of the later Aulikaras, tells us of the progenitor of the dynasty who preceded Prakāśadharmar by five generations, and whose name has been variously read as Drapavardhana (Ramesh and Tiwari), Drumavardhana (Jagannath and Ashvini Agrawal) and Dramavardhana (Sircar). The initial editors of the inscription, Ramesh and Tiwari, suggested that this ruler may have been identical to Dravyavardhana of the *Brhatsamhitā*, but this was received with caution on the part of Richard Salomon. A. M. Shastri rejected it outright, making a case for Dravyavardhana as a successor of Yaśodharman and the personal patron of Varāhamihira. My paper reviews earlier arguments and, going back to the source texts, argues that Dr(a/u)(p/m/vy)avardhana was, after all, most likely a single person.

PETER C. BISSCHOP (Leiden University)
*Trumping the Mahābhārata: The Portrayal of Vyāsa in the Skandapurāṇa*

The upcoming fourth volume of the critical edition of the *Skandapurāṇa* introduces a major new theme: the integration of the Vaiṣṇava avatāra mythology within a Śaiva framework. The *Skandapurāṇa*’s critical engagement with Vaiṣṇavism is reflected first of all in several important
narrative strands that deal with Viṣṇu's manifestations, in particular the primary three, Nara-
siṁha, Varāha and Vāmanā. A less obvious, but no less significant aspect of this engagement con-
cerns the way in which the text addresses the cultural hegemony of the Mahābhārata, which by
the time of its Gupta redaction had acquired a conspicuous Bhāgavata stamp.

In this paper I will argue that in portraying Vyāsa, the narrator of the Mahābhārata, in the
opposite role of devoted student of Sanatkumāra, the Skandapurāṇa authors were aiming to take
control of the Bhāgavata dominated orientation of the great epic. The Skandapurāṇa tells us that
Vyāsa, who at the start of the text is dejected because of the disappearance of his son Śūka in his
quest for liberation, in the end himself follows the Pāṣupata road to liberation. It is worth reflect-
ing upon the radicalness of this portrayal of the religious affiliation of the author of the Sanskrit
epic, who by many was held to be an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa. As I will show, it is but one of sev-
eral ways in which the Skandapurāṇa trumps the perspective of the Mahābhārata.

Finally, I will consider to what extent the Bhāgavata orientation of the Mahābhārata may
have affected the form and composition of other early Śaiva and Viṣṇu compositions as well, in
particular the Śivadharma and the Viṣṇudharma.

ROBERT BRACEY (The British Museum)
Economic and Political Contexts for Coins

This talk will explore the differing economic and political contexts of coins in the first millennium
AD. In particular how coins are shaped by their context, and thus what they can be expected (or not)
to tell us about those contexts. Using examples relevant to other parts of the project (Gupta, Pyu, Western India, Naga, etc.) the talk will ask how useful coins are as sources for wider historical
trends; can they help to resolve big questions or are their systemic relations with other events suf-
ficiently under-determined to restrict their utility to their own, decontextualized, numismatic
space.

LUCAS DEN BOER (Leiden University)
Contextualising the Tattvārthasūtra

The Tattvārthasūtra (TS) is the first systematic compendium of Jaina doctrine and is still regarded
as an authoritative overview of the Jaina tenets by contemporary Jains. We do not know when and
where it was composed but there are good reasons to situate the text and the first commentary,
the Tattvārthasūtrabhāṣya, in the Gupta period. The TS is not only the earliest philosophical trea-
tise in the history of Jaina thought, but it is also the first Jaina text that favoured Sanskrit over Pra-
krit, which seems to be a sign that the author of the text tried to connect to a wider intellectual
milieu. However, it is far from clear how the Jaina community related to other social and intellec-
tual groups under the Guptas. Further, we don’t know which mechanisms sustained the Jaina ren-
nunciants and whether they had to compete for patronage. Even though these questions remain
to be resolved, it seems that the Gupta age was a transformative period for the Jaina community,
which matches the innovative character of the TS. In my presentation, I will discuss what
the TS and the bhāṣya can tell us about their historical circumstances, and how the aims of the
author(s) can be linked to the social history of the Jainas. For this purpose, I will focus on the lan-
guage and rhetorical strategies of the texts in the light of the historical evidence of the Jainas in
the Gupta period.
ELIZABETH A. CECIL (Florida State University)
Architectures of Intimidation: Manipulating Landscapes and Manufacturing Awe in Early South & Southeast Asia

Sanskrit inscriptions are replete with poetic allusions to the monuments and temples commissioned by rulers. When eulogizing king Karkkarāja’s temple on Mt. Elāpura, for instance, the poet describes the astonishment of the gods who, while cruising by in their celestial chariots, are awestruck before the wondrous edifice. Such a temple, they conclude, must be svayambhu, a natural feature of the landscape, since no man-made construction could inspire such wonder. The genius of the epigraphic description is evident when read in view of the temple itself, a vertical excavation hewn from the living rock.

In early polities that lacked the infrastructure associated with the traditional ‘state’, and those defined by an unruly terrain—i.e. mountains, deserts, and coastal littorals—in which expansive areas and populations could evade a ruler’s direct control, the king’s ability to reshape physical geography served as a potent exercise of power. Integrating epigraphic, material, and geographic evidence, this study shows how political power was materialized through landscape “manipulation”—a term extending beyond conventional practices of territorialization intrinsic to political regimes. Instead, “manipulation” refers specifically to modes of altering terrain through dramatic, and often permanent, modifications to the land.

More specifically, through prominent landscape exemplars in India, Vietnam, and Laos, I will explore how such manipulations strategically targeted defining features of the natural landscape; features that had a long history as highly charged locales for religious practice and pilgrimage. More than monuments attesting to artistry, innovation, or the aestheticization of politics—a topic much discussed in the historiography of these regions—the monuments surveyed in this paper highlight the capacity of architecture to fundamentally, and even violently, alter the beholder’s experience. Like the gods at Elāpura, the viewers stood in awe of these altered spaces in which they lived, worked, and worshipped.

MAX DEEG (Cardiff University)
Describing the Own Other: Chinese Buddhist Travelogues Between Literary Tropes and Educational Narratives

Taking the title of the conference quite literally, this paper will focus on a type – rather than a genre – of premodern Asian literature which owes its existence to the fact that the authors went or looked beyond boundaries. Using the example of the Chinese “Pilgrim Records” I will try to demonstrate that taking them as specimens of very particular narrative forms and content and looking at models which were followed for writing them, but also taking into account the innovation in the texts opens new ways of interpretation and contextualization which differ from the rather simplistic reading of the sources as “eye-witness reports”, delivering sometimes reliable, sometimes refutable pieces of information. Uncovering the literary ideology of this wider type of “xenological” – in the sense of writing about foreign places and peoples in the context of Buddhism – literature in the Chinese context helps to understand the multi-layered auctorial intentionality; this then throws an interesting light on how literature “beyond borders” and ideas and concepts of self-identity and “othering” were constructed in a Buddhist and pan-Asian context. I will discuss examples from the most famous of these sources, Xuanzang’s Datang Xiyu ji (“Record
of the Western Regions of the Great Tang Dynasty"), but also from other texts. These texts are unique insofar as they describe the Central Asian and South Asian other, but at the same time drawing on the concept of a shared Buddhist identity to convey specific messages to their readership.

Csaba Dezső (Eötvös Loránd University)
“When there is someone among them to support the family, those of the solar line don’t stay at home.”
Royal Succession in Gupta Period Poetry and Inscriptions

This paper examines the ideology and practice of the transfer of royal power as it is reflected in Sanskrit and Prakrit literary works and inscriptions from the Gupta period. Some questions to be examined: Can a king retire? Can a successor be chosen, elected, or invited? Who can lay claim to the throne and what can justify such a claim? What happens if there is no heir or if the heir cannot occupy the throne? Who qualifies as a suitable heir? Does an heir need to be qualified? Can a successor reject the throne? Can a queen occupy the throne? Who can become a regent and what is his / her role? What distinguishes royal inheritance in early and in imperial state formations? The interplay among normative texts, belles-lettres and inscriptive “chronicles” deserves closer attention: the narratives of epics and plays present examples of both the ideal transfer of power and the conflicts among potential heirs: similar issues are dealt with using related rhetorical devices in inscEptrional narratives (which are often used to reconstruct dynastic history). On the one hand, literature is not isolated from contemporary social and political realities, and on the other inscriptions do not simply record “facts” or “events” but present them in the prevalent rhetorical and ideological frame.

Charles DiSimone (Universität München)
Holes Throughout the Whole: Paleographical and Codicological Features of a Scriptorium in Gilgit in the Production of the Dirghāgama Manuscript

The Mulasarvāstivāda Buddhist tradition thrived in the first millennium CE and was prevalent in the areas of modern day North India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In the area of Gilgit, in Pakistan, there have been amazing manuscript finds in the last century starting with the famous ‘Gilgit Manuscripts’ found in the 1930s and more recently the Dirghāgama manuscript, which came to the attention of scholars in the 1990s.

There can be little doubt that the Gilgit manuscripts and the Dirghāgama manuscript were produced in the same area and in a contemporaneous period. It is even quite possible that they were produced by the same scriptorium. We know that the scriptorium that produced the Dirghāgama manuscript consisted of at least six individuals who worked together copying manuscripts by trading the verso and recto sides of birch bark folios. This presentation will examine the Mulasarvāstivāda Dirghāgama manuscript from the Gilgit area, introducing new discoveries in the paleographical and codicological features of the manuscript, and insights into the methods and practices used by the scriptorium that produced Buddhist texts centuries ago.
LEWIS DONY (Universität Bonn)

_Dharma and Dar ma: Indic Influence on Tibetan Language and Culture as Evidenced in the dBa’ bzshed History_

The Tibetan empire (c. 600–850) reached its greatest extent during the reign of Emperor Khri Srng Idev brtse (755–c.800), maintainig numerous contacts with post-Gupta South Asia. This emperor also presided over the growing institutionalisation of Buddhism in Tibet, as a state religion that drew much of its literary and artistic influence from the south. A mass translation exercise funded and led by imperial power formed part of this process. However, when Buddhist texts were translated during the seventh or eighth or century, they were translated. Sanskrit or Prakrit did not become the priestly or scholarly language at court, though there exist signs that early Tibetan translations relied more heavily on transliterations (somewhat like Lokakṣema’s second-century translation committee). The Tibetans seem to have followed a general linguistic trend among states that convert to a new religion, while along with this came cultural influence (from the Indic world especially) on Tibetan Buddhist notions of virtue, _karma_, rebirth, philosophical reasoning and the practices of bodhisatva-kingship and so forth. Philologically interrogating a pivotal early history concerning the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, which formed one of the major _foci_ of my time in the Beyond Boundaries project, I shall unpack some of these processes and influences on Tibetan language and culture between the eighth and the eleventh century.

ANNA FILIGENZI (University of Naples)

_Spatial Peripheries and Places of Identity: The Archaeological Reading of Not-Edified Spaces in Swat (North-Western Pakistan)_

Since its very inception in 1956, the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan pursued a holistic understanding of the cultural history of Swat, the region known from ancient sources as Uddiyana, in which field research was concentrated. Though constantly engaged in large-scale excavations, which brought back to light major landmarks of the ancient urban life and of the hegemonic religious systems, attention was always paid to the much less conspicuous traces of ‘subaltern’ societies and folk beliefs, as well as to the interaction and symbiosis between the different strains of local cultures.

As Giuseppe Tucci — the founder of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan — wrote in 1958 in his first article on Swat, ‘one must question the country itself’. This not only means that correct historical reconstructions need archaeological investigations, but also that correct archaeological investigations need to be as inclusive as possible.

In fact, ‘Landscape archaeology’ — now regarded as the new frontier for archaeology — is not a new category of action but a practice embedded in good investigation strategies. Based on case studies drawn from the latest research, the presentation will discuss the cultural meaning of not edified spaces, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, at the same time highlighting how fresh achievements were indeed prepared by unflagging efforts towards documenting the past from a non-hierarchic perspective.
James L. Fitzgerald (Brown University)

*Why So Many ‘Other’ Voices in the ‘Brahmin’ Bhārata? Debating and Enacting Dharma in Cities, Courts, and Ashrams; out in Fields (even Battlefields) and on the Road (even on the Road to Heaven)*

Though one implied goal of the written Sanskrit *Mahābhārata (MBh)* was to persuade armed rulers in Mauryan-era north India, and their subject populations—while entertaining them—that those men who carried, deployed, and identified with, the tradition of the ancient and holy brahman—the Vedas and its associated rites—(that is, “brahmanas,” “brahmins”) were powerful men making uniquely important contributions to the general welfare and thus deserved special respect, protection, and privileges; at the same time, the voices in the epic that present various features of that socio-cultural ideology are quite heterogeneous and sometimes surprisingly situated in the world (a śūdra, a butcher, a housewife, a Banarsi merchant, a woman yoga-lord, a serpent, etc., etc.). And while some of the frequent discussion of brahmins and Brahminic culture and ideology within the epic predictably exalts brahmins, or at least attests to their awesome powers, at other times such discussions are surprising by the harshness of the negativity directed at aspects of Brahminism. How do we explain these apparent incongruities? Is our basic premise about a ‘brahmin MBh’ in error? Or can we refine that premise in some way that maintains it while also grounding the variety of voices and taking the scathing diatribes justly into account? This paper will present a small sampling of the variety of authoritative voices the *MBh* makes heard and will then present an argument showing that certain features of the narrative arc of the whole *MBh* provide us with essential, previously unnoticed information about the overt ideological aims that informed the final design of the epic as a whole.

Benjamin J. Fleming (City University of New York)

*The Śivapurāṇa Tradition and the Jyotlīṅga Story-cycle in Medieval Śaivism*

This paper contributes to a larger project that traces the development of an extensive network of Śaiva pilgrimage centers in India between the 10th and 14th centuries associated with the so-called “twelve jyotīṅgas” or līṅgas of light. With specific focus on the Śivapurāṇa—a textual tradition associated closely with the emergence of this set of pilgrimage centers—my analysis will illuminate the contents of jyotīṅga story-cycles from two parallel strands of this tradition called the Jñānasamhitā and the Kṛtirudrasamhitā. These story-cycles were redacted from regional traditions by Śaiva adherents from an array of lived practices—such as the Pāśupatas—synthesizing them into an idealized narrative “map” of Śaiva sacred geography. We can trace, for instance, the assertion of līṅga worship as well as the language of avatāras more strongly in the later strata of the text. This redactional strategy reflects attempts to homogenize and unify coherent, conceptual-narrative language in order to popularize and “universalize” Śaivism from earlier diversities. This universalizing impulse allowed isolated communities—adherents, patrons, other devout agents—at regional pilgrimage sites, the chance to “map” onto an emerging pan-Indic Śaiva topography, creating a broad sense of community and belonging.
In North India, the Gupta period (ca 320-510 CE) witnessed the spread of Sanskrit as the political and expressive language in inscriptions and the final displacement of the Prakrits in this capacity. This shift also took place very early in South India, notably in Andhra, under e.g. the Pallavas around 350 CE, a dynasty which re-located in the North of present-day Tamil Nadu around 600 CE.

Focussing on the Tamil South, I will present, in the very *longue durée*, from around the 6th c. to the 18th c. CE, a bird’s eye view of the different political languages used in this region, which experienced the coexistence and cross-fertilisation of two literary and intellectual traditions, one expressing itself in Tamil and the other in Sanskrit.

I will show that the inscriptions commissioned by major and minor dynasties in the Tamil area evince various strategies of public communication, which relied on the Sanskrit and/or Tamil literary tradition. Use was made of different languages (Sanskrit, Tamil, Manippiravālam, Telugu, etc.) and scripts (Grantha, Siddhamārka, Tamil, Vāṭṭeluttu, etc.), in various constellations (monolingual, bilingual). The choice of language and language registers was often made in relation with the content and with the inscribed materials (stone, copper). Various genres of eulogies were produced: Sanskrit *prāśastis* proper, in the form of a genealogy; Tamil *meykkōrttis*, focussed on the achievements of a single ruler; lists of *birudas*. I will illustrate my points with inscriptions drawn from the corpora of the Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas, Muttaraiyars, Irukkuvēḷs, Cōḷas, Kāṭavarāyars, Vijayana-gara kings, Nāyakas, and Tenkācā Pāṇḍyas.

LAXSHMI GREAVES ANDRADE (Cardiff University)

*The Best Abode of Virtue*: The ritual of Sattra represented on a Gupta period lintel from Gaṅghāvā, Uttar Pradesh

This paper begins with a scene on the intriguing Gupta period stone lintel from Gaṅghāvā (Allahabad district, Uttar Pradesh), described by James Harle as being ‘in many ways as mysterious as it is beautiful’. The scene in question depicts a tiered structure with a series of pillars situated along the uppermost platform. Ascetic-type figures are shown crouching at the base of the structure and on its platforms, being served food and drink. Other ascetics or *brahmanaśas* (religious specialists) are being offered garments or cloth. This scene is positioned directly adjacent to a small but awe-inspiring image of the god Viṣṇu as Viṣvarūpa, the omniform lord, radiating light or flames. He resides at the centre of the composition. The sun and moon gods (Sūrya and Candra) are placed at the beginning and end of the lintel respectively, while arguably, two of the *nakṣatras* (lunar mansions) - Rohini and Kṛttikā - have also been depicted. Taken together, I would suggest that the temporal dimension of the ritual is being indicated.

Other figures, including musicians, soldiers and bearers of offerings make their way in a manner reminiscent of the Panathenaic procession on the Parthenon temple, towards the *brāhmaṇas* on the left-hand side of the panel, and towards Viṣṇu on the right-hand side.

I interpret the ascetic scene as a depiction of a ritual, which here involves the feeding and clothing of *brāhmaṇas* at a *sattra* (*sattra* being both a ritual act and an institution akin to an almshouse). Indeed, Gupta inscriptions from Gaṅghāvā inform us that money was donated to permanently support a *sattra*. Importantly, one of the inscriptions dates to 418 CE during the reign of Kumāragupta I, and on stylistic grounds, this date is likely to be commensurate with the lintel.
Thus, it is possible that the *sattra* described in the inscription is that pictured on the lintel. The proximity of the depiction of ritual donations to the *brāhmaṇas* and the worship of the god on the lintel, also raises pertinent questions about how closely the two were considered as intercon- nected and whether parallels are intended to be drawn between Viṣṇu offering this theophany of his glorious form to the man kneeling at his feet, and the accomplishment of this auspicious ritual. Those who wish to be granted such a cosmic vision (*darśan*), would surely be inspired by this wonderous image to make offerings to the local *brāhmaṇas*. This potentially indicates a propa- ganda effort by the patron(s) of the lintel. It is probable, then, that the relief-carvings on this lintel depict an extended ritual that took place in this ancient settlement, in a similar form, possibly multiple times. It might be further suggested, that this processional image acted not only as a re- cord of events, or as a persuasive tool, but also as a means of ensuring that, on a cosmic plane, the ritual embodied in stone was enacted in perpetuity, thereby placating the gods and helping to sa- feguard the sacrosanct nature of the locale.

This paper will also address the remarkable correspondence in style and execution between the remnants of the Garhwa gateway and the ruined gateway pillars from Bilsar (Etah district, Uttar Pradesh), located 218 miles to the northwest. Fascinatingly, *sattra* is also referred to at Bilsar in column inscriptions which date to 415 CE. These inscriptions characterise the alms- house as ‘the best abode of virtue’ and ‘beautiful as a mansion’s pinnacle’. I will argue that the sty- listic similarities between the gateway pillars at Bilsar and the gateway pillars and lintel at Garhwa enable us to place the latter architectural elements to c. 418 CE, around fifty years earlier than estimations made by both Joanna Williams and James Harle. Lastly, I will raise the possibility that artists from the region encompassing Bilsar might have been responsible for the carving of the Garhwa lintel.

**John Guy** (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

*The Circulation of Religious Commodities in Andhradesa*

The expansion of monastic Buddhism in the 3rd century BCE in the territories under Maurya rule marks the beginnings of a recorded history of institutionalized Buddhism in eastern India and the Deccan. The Mauryan successors, the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus, have left a comprehensive archaeological footprint on the landscape of Andhradesa and Telangana. This region, spanning from Sanchi and Bharhut on its northern frontiers, to the rich river systems fed by the Krishna and Godavari in the southeast, is the most comprehensive and coherent Buddhist landscape to have been preserved from this early phase of Buddhist India.

Undoubtedly rivalled in their day by the Gandharan kingdom in the north-west, and the Buddhist homelands of northern India and Nepal, today the southern Buddhist sites alone survive in a sufficiently coherent state to allow us to interrogate both the geography and the artefacts that populated it. Through the study of the material traces of early Buddhism, we can begin to sense the dynamic interplay of people, things and places that animated this landscape, and through which ideas, texts and images circulated.

Underpinning monastic order is the predictable placement of structures within the closed world of the monastery occupied by the *sangha*. A series of interrelated spaces, each with a de- fined ritual function, created the architectural order of the monastery. At the spiritual centre of this schema was the stupa, embodying in its form the dual concepts of relic and dharma. Beyond the stupa lay the assembly hall (*vihara*), for preaching and instruction, open pavilions for commu-
nal eating, small apsidal chapels that permitted private *pradaksina*, and monastic cells for habitation and meditation. This paper will examine these spaces, built and natural, into which efficacious objects – relics, texts, dharma-pillars - were consigned, to animate and sanctify the Buddhist landscape.

**Gergely Hidas (The British Museum)**  
*The Vajra Beak Vow, King of Ritual Manuals (Vajratūṇḍasamayakalparāja)*

This paper considers a recently discovered Sanskrit dhārani spell text from around the 5th century - a rare Buddhist scripture with a focus on the practice of weather control for successful agriculture by overpowering mythical Nāgas. The only known closely related text that survives in South Asia is the *Meghasūtra* (ed. Bendall 1880), a likely forerunner featuring the dharmabhānaka preacher of the Law as the officiant. The *Vajratūṇḍa*, a longer text of six chapters, presents the vidyādharā spell-master as the ritualist using *mandala(ka)*s and *mudrās* and employing more complex and radical means to gain mastery over these serpentine beings. With the completion of a critical edition and annotated translation based on four Nepalese witnesses various aspects of this tradition will be discussed including wider contexts.

**Nathan Hill (SOAS)**  
*Reconstruction of Proto-Burmish*

This paper presents a reconstruction of Proto-Burmish. The Burmish languages consist of eight tongues (Burmese, Achang, Xiandao, Atsi, Lashi, Chasan, Bola, Maru). All but Burmese are spoken in the Sino-Burmese hills. The Burmans moved down to the plain c. 1000 AD, overrunning the Pyu urban civilization. By reconstructing Proto-Burmish we learn about the material culture and social institutions of the ancestors of the Burmans, before contact with the Pyu.

The Burmish languages furthermore serve as a case study to introduce a new computer-assisted methodology for comparative historical linguistics: 'Transparent Etymologies'. We describe each step of our workflow in detail and explain how and why this method of computer-assisted language comparison (CALC) not only gets better results than recent fully-computational attempts of the 'Quantitative turn' in historical linguistics, but also overcomes some obstacles that have hindered linguists using the traditional Comparative Method.

**Tom Hoogervorst (KITLV Leiden)**  
*How Indianized are the Languages of Southeast Asia?*

This presentation traces over two millennia of linguistic influence from the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia, focusing on a number of phenomena that typically receive little scholarly attention. I compare the influence of different Indian languages on different Southeast Asian languages in an attempt to outline a number of broader patterns and general tendencies. Rather than starting from the vantage point of a hypothetical Sanskrit, Pali or other “cosmopolis”, I situate the origins of trans-regional language contact within the archaeological contexts of early agriculture, metallurgy and commerce. The resultant processes of lexical borrowing of Indic vocabulary took place centuries before writing systems, religious practices, and other tangible markers of contact with the subcontinent entered the historical record of Southeast Asia. The poorly understood role
of vernacular languages, including spoken Tamil and northern “Prakrits”, will also be addressed. Was vernacular influence restricted to commercial entrepôts situated along the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean? How far and through which routes did it spread?

Notwithstanding the common assumption that the nature of contact across the Bay of Bengal was radically different in post-classical times compared to later historical periods, I give examples of continued linguistic influence in Islamic, colonial, and post-independence times, again with the aim to explore some continuities that merit closer attention. As is well known, Sanskrit in particular continues to inspire the formation of neologisms in both South and Southeast Asia. This beckons the question of whether or not this is done collaboratively or in different ways by the language reformers of India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Southeast Asian mainland. What are the areas of divergence and overlap? What social tensions underlie these policies of top-down language engineering? I conclude by briefly addressing the topic of reciprocal influence, interrogating which Southeast Asian languages – if any – have asserted the greatest influence on the linguistic landscape of South Asia.

LIDEWIJDE DE JONG (University of Groningen)

On the Edges of Empire: Imperial Landscapes in Roman Palmyra

It is a common misconception that Syria was barely touched by Roman imperialism and that existing traditions continued unchanged. Lack of (or limited) evidence for the main instruments of Roman power known from other parts of the Empire – colonization, urbanization, Imperial cult, victory and military architecture – has led scholars to propose a superficial impact of Roman rule on the region of modern Lebanon and Syria.

The archaeological evidence tells a different story and illustrates pronounced changes between the 1st and 3rd century CE. Whereas these lack a clear Roman signature, i.e., a cultural connection to tastes and trends developed in Rome itself, the changes nonetheless should be connected to disruptions and new possibilities following the establishment of Roman power in Syria.

This paper illustrates this process by looking at the oasis town of Palmyra, located in the Syrian Desert on the eastern edge of the Empire. Its inhabitants developed a distinct and hybrid culture, mixing Iranian, Mesopotamian, Syrian, Greek, and possibly nomadic influences. It is a good example of a flourishing local culture under Roman rule.

The extension of Roman power, in combination with migration, sedentarization, and an influx of wealth from long-distance trade, was highly disruptive to Palmyrene social structure. The archaeological record gives indications of how Palmyrenes tried to deal with this, for instance, by building opulent family tombs, monumental urban sanctuaries, and by copying empire-wide, or global, trends in funerary portraiture and epigraphy. A new cultural language thus emerged that was distinctly Palmyrene, but could not have existed without Rome.

NIRAJAN KAFLE (Leiden University)

Transcending Sectarian Boundaries: The Kṛṣṇāṭamāvṛata and its Impact on post-Vedic “Hinduistic” ritual

calendar, according to which many Hindu annual ceremonies were performed” It is certainly the case that the āhavanīya fire ritual, for example, was gradually supplanted by a form of worship which was performed in front of the image of a deity—the piṭṭa (Eino 2005: 99). However, not only was one type of worship superseded by another, the principal performer of a rite also changed in time.

While Eino’s contribution therefore certainly holds true, we would like to show, by way of the present contribution, that further significant developments took place, demonstrably so with the advent of the Śivadharmaśāstra. The latter work provides textual evidence for profound changes in the superstructure of the system of (Śaiva) worship. Not only does chapter ten of the Śivadharmaśāstra (10.17–33) lay out a framework of worship originally conceived for the context of the kṛṣṇāstamīvara (the observance of the eighth day of the dark half of [the lunar month]). This scheme soon became a role model for later adaptations. What is more, we will show how the innovations introduced in chapter ten of this work soon transcended the boundaries of religious affiliation and came to be readily accepted by the wider Hindu communities.

**Divya Kumar-Dumas** (University of Pennsylvania)

*Shapes of Water: Iconographies of Landscape in Pallava-Period Mamallapuram*

Today a beachfront cultural destination in Tamil Nadu, India and an archaeological site on the World Heritage List, yesterday Mamallapuram existed in a liminal space between land and sea. Yet, certain widely-held historical categories shroud our understanding of how Mamallapuram would have been experienced in the past, since its architectural features have been disaggregated and studied selectively over time. Most art historians writing about early Mamallapuram declare it the preeminent port of Pallava kings who ruled from Kanchipuram (c. 7th to 9th AD). By considering the lay of the land, architectural distribution, iconographies, and records left by medieval visitors, I argue against this prevailing opinion. Mamallapuram was constructed with architecture not to produce a port city for Indian Ocean trade. Instead, this place was designed as a milieu – that is, both a physical object with constructed formal qualities and an actual place made to be experienced by subjects. During its Pallava period of significance, Mamallapuram became the focus of elite ritual and spatial production. Its early patrons constructed this milieu by augmenting an existing geo-physical reality for early visitors to the place. In this paper, I will reflect upon the relationship between the actual physical layout of Pallava-period Mamallapuram and its abundant iconographies of water in order to raise questions about how I believe its landscape may have been designed.

**Amy Langenberg** (Eckerd College)

*Fetal Epics: Birth, the Buddha, and the Auspicious Female*

The Garbhavakrānti-sūtra is an early first-millennium sūtra text originally composed in Sanskrit (but extant only in Tibetan and Chinese) that narrates the human fetus’s journey from conception to birth (and beyond). The embryology narrative in the Garbhavakrānti-sūtra is an aesthetically powerful and emotionally compelling tale, a sort of epic adventure story that genders the realm of desire in which the ignorant are fated to live out their lives. In this tale, the struggling hero, the fetus, is implicitly male; the perilous samsāric wilderness he traverses, female. Comparing the Garbhavakrānti-sūtra’s narration with the Buddha’s extraordinary birth story found in multiple
roughly contemporaneous sources, reveal unsurprising differences (for instance, while the ordinary human womb is a place of utmost filth, the Buddha’s birth experience is pure in all ways) but one notable similarity. Neither the Garbhavakrānti nor the hagiographical texts portray the fertile female body as something auspicious. Auspiciousness is a coveted value in Vedic-Hindu ritual and is associated with, among other things, young, fertile, and beautiful women. The dropping of female auspiciousness in Buddhist contexts is a notable development with implications for how maleness might be conceptualized and managed in Buddhist social environments. Although seemingly a negative for women, the uncoupling of female sexuality and fertility from auspiciousness lifts the burden of auspiciousness from female shoulders, creating at least the discursive potential for a virtuous female life not centered upon sexuality and childbearing.

ROBERT LEACH (University of Zurich)
Śiva and Śaivism in Early Vaiṣṇava Tantra

In the centuries succeeding the decline of the Gupta empire in the sixth century CE, Vaiṣṇavas struggled to compete with Śaivas in attracting royal patronage in most parts of Northern India. The predominantly Vaiṣṇava Kārkoṭa dynasty of Kashmir (c. 626-855 CE) represents an important exception to this pattern, and in several Vaiṣṇava works which appear to have been composed in this region either during or shortly after the Kārkoṭa period, we encounter an attitude towards Śiva and certain Śaiva teachings which is markedly different to that found in later Vaiṣṇava literature, including the Pāṇcarātra Saṁhitās. The Vaiṣṇava works I refer to here include the earliest extant texts propagating a form of Tantric Vaiṣṇavism, namely the SvāyambhuvaPaṇcarātra, the Devamṛḍapaṇcarātra and the Aṣṭādaśavidhāna, as well as sections of the Viśudharmottara such as the Saṅkaragītā. In this paper I will address certain representations of non-Vaiṣṇava traditions in these works, focusing in particular on Śaivism, and I will ask for whom such representations were made, and to what extent we might determine whether they were motivated by political considerations.

MARC MIYAKE (The British Museum)
The Pyu Language and Beyond: Glossing in a Wider Asian context

The civilization that flourished in the mid-first millennium CE in what is now Myanmar is known almost entirely from archaeological and external sources; we do not even know for sure what its people called themselves. The label “Pyu” for that civilization is merely a convenient Burmese exonym; it has never been found in the texts in that civilization’s largely undeciphered language.

For a century, only one Pyu-language text – the Pyu section of the quadrilingual 12th-century Kubyaukgyi (a.k.a. “Myazedi”) inscription – has been extensively studied, beginning with the seminal work of Blagden (1913, 1919). Unfortunately, it has not turned out to be the key to other Pyu inscriptions, partly because its language contains innovations absent from the presumably older texts in the corpus. Blagden (1913–1914) and Shafer (1943) studied a handful of other Pyu inscriptions, but the remainder of the corpus has been neglected in the West, and progress beyond transliterations has been limited in Myanmar.

In recent years, an international team of researchers has collected all known Pyu texts and published them online at the Corpus of Pyu Inscriptions (http://hisoma.humanum.fr/exist/apps/pyu/index2.html).
The most important of the hitherto neglected texts is the 6th century Kan Wet Khaung Gon inscription, an original piece of Sanskrit verse not only giving an insider’s view of politics within what it calls the ‘Two Cities’ but also shedding light on the depth of understanding of Sanskrit among the Pyu elite. The verse is broken up into individual words sans sandhi, each with a gloss or explanation in a special style of Pyu with Sanskrit-like features absent from the rest of the Pyu corpus. This style predates other South and Southeast Asian glossing styles such as nissaya in Burmese. I will put this style into a greater areal context, comparing and contrasting it not only with glossing styles in the Indic cultural zone but also with the Korean hanmun hundok and Japanese kanbun kundoku glossing styles in the Chinese cultural zone.

JASON NEELIS (Wilfrid Laurier University)
An Epigraphic and Petroglyphic Landscape at Shatial Bridge on the Upper Indus in Northern Pakistan

Over 1100 Middle Iranian and Indian inscriptions mostly written in Sogdian and Brāhmi from the 4th to 7th centuries CE and approximately 700 petroglyphs ranging from prehistoric to Buddhist periods are concentrated at Shatial Bridge (Fussman and König 1997). This site was an important crossing on the Upper Indus River where merchants, artisans, religious visitors, and other travelers and regional inhabitants marked a junction for long-distance trade and cross-cultural exchanges between South Asia, Central Asia, and a Sogdian triangular network (Sims-Williams1996) by writing graffiti and abrading drawings on darkly patinated rocks in the high mountain desert environment. Recent interdisciplinary fieldwork by Pakistani and international researchers using advances in imaging and mapping techniques, including 3D laser scanning, photogrammetry, and aerial videos, provides new materials for addressing questions about this unique epigraphic and petroglyphic landscape. Why was the terrain redesigned with such a profusion of writing and images, including an extraordinary triptych with a central stupa, a depiction of the Śībi Jātaka (gift of flesh) and an uncertain structure surrounded by Sogdian, Brāhmi, and Kharoṣṭhi graffiti, probably datable to 300-350 CE (Fussman 1994)? What was the significance of an intervention in the built environment on top of a prominent rock outcropping with the earliest petroglyphs? Was Shatial a trading post, shrine, camp for travellers waiting to cross the river and mountains, all of these together, or entirely something else? In this presentation, Shatial’s epigraphic and petroglyphic landscape will be regionally contextualized with other Upper Indus sites in the Chilas plain and built terrains associated with the Palola Şahi rulers of Gilgit in the 6th – 8th centuries CE.

LESLIE C. ORR (Concordia University)
Plainly Powerful: Late Medieval Epigraphical Voices in the Temples of Southernmost Tamilnadu

The late medieval temple in Tamilnadu is an assemblage of awe-inspiring architectural forms – soaring towers that surmount the entrances and elaborately sculpted corridors and pavilions. On the other hand, the inscriptions engraved on the temple’s stone walls are physically quite unimpressive even as they can be discursively powerful as texts, recording on occasion the commands of kings and even of the god enshrined in the temple. Further, the engraving itself is constitutive of the authority and instrumentality of the text, and related to its original enunciation as well as possible reiterations in oral performances. I focus in this presentation on the inscriptions of the 13th to
The making of an Iranian, imperial Caucasus provides a salient case study in the transformation and contestation of political landscapes on account of the uniquely well-documented responses of regional political actors to imperial interventions. In the course of the fifth century CE, the Iranian court sought to integrate Caucasian regions more directly and intensively into its structures of rule over which its claims had previously been modest, halting, or wholly aspirational. It erected walls, fortified complexes, and royal cities in the Mughan Steppe, the Caspian Littoral, and the Ayrarat Valley, extending the empire’s archipelagic territorial system deep into the Caucasus with novel “islands,” zones of intensified resource extraction and mobilization. It also installed an Iranian elite – that is, aristocrats with ērān lineages, generally Zoroastrian in religion and either Parthian or Persian in language – culturally distinct from the regional aristocracies, to varying degrees. It abolished the regional kingdoms of Armenia and Albania, as the Caucasus became fully integrated into the Iranian ethno-territorial framework of ērānšahr, without the mediating institutions of traditional regional political cultures.

Such entwined infrastructural transformation and ideological erasure encountered resistance in varied forms, ranging from violent rebellion to the outpouring of regional historical writing. The paper will revisit classic works of Armenian historiography – the histories of Ehiše and Łazar Parpec’i – not simply as historical accounts of the storied rebellion of 451, but also as efforts to redefine and relocate aristocratic political autonomy in the Caucasus within a political landscape already irreversibly made Iranian. It will argue that their narratives of aristocrats sacrificing their lives in battle to resist the Iranian court paradoxically established terms of collaboration with, and participation in, the Iranian regime, for imperial rule depended on the cooperation of regional aristocrats who often shared lineages with their Iranian counterparts even when they differed in religion, language, and ethnicity. Armenian historiography propagated, in an entirely new form, an ideology not only of Armenian ethnicity, but also of Armenia as an ethno-territorial framework, a counterpart to ērānšahr. Here, too, the Armenian historians envisioned a Caucasus located squarely within the Iranian imperial landscape, with the political traditions and privileges deriving from the ancient histories of its aristocrats, loyal agents of the Iranian court even in the very act of rebellion. The paper will seek to show how literary production can reveal the complex negotiations of political roles, powers, and privileges, against the backdrop of a political landscape undergoing processes of infrastructural and ideological transformation.
SAM VAN SCHAIK (The British Library)

Reflections on the Role of Magic and Healing in the Spread of Buddhism in Asia

From the early stages of Buddhism, monks have used spells to heal the sick, repel evil spirits, perform divinations, and bring rain. Yet these activities are often overlooked in Buddhist studies. In this paper I will discuss a Tibetan book of spells, recovered from the cave library in Dunhuang, China. The book contains a plethora of brief rituals for different purposes, ranging from simple medical recipes to complex practices for divination, making rain, summoning and dismissing spirits, and protecting pregnant women and children. I will show some of these rituals can be traced back to earlier Buddhist scriptures, while others adapt practices that originate outside of Buddhism. It is also possible to identify aspects of these rituals that are still practiced today by modern ritual specialists. In this presentation I focus on the role of ritual specialists such as the owner of this booklet in establishing and maintaining links between Buddhist monasteries and lay communities. I will argue that focus this provides an important counterpoint to the usual interest in the relationship between monks and kings, by showing how networks established at a lower level may have been more important in the spread of Buddhism beyond India, especially across the Silk Routes and into China and Tibet. And by the Gupta-period Indic origins of many of these magical ritual practices, we can gain an insight into the ways in which Buddhist networks facilitated the transmission of elements of Gupta culture, including votive media and the Sanskrit language, into other parts of Asia.

JONATHAN SILK (Leiden University)

Buddhism, Royalty and Dream Interpretation

The links between religion and the state, in pre-modern contexts in principle royalty, are nearly universal. In India, from the earliest time period to which we have any access, Buddhism’s links with royalty are front and center, namely in the relation between the monastic community and the emperor Asoka. While modern historians can study the evidence of Asoka’s own inscriptions, the Buddhist traditions themselves remembered and imagined the role of Asoka and other monarchs in their own, perhaps wildly ahistorical, ways. The present presentation examines one such clearly ahistorical narrative of an encounter between a royal figure and the Buddha. A small text, repeated in a variety of forms in sources found in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and far beyond in Arabic, Persian, old Slavic and more, presents a royal figure who has a series of prophetic dreams. These are interpreted by, in some versions, malicious brahmans in horrible ways, but when the king in question turns to the ultimate dream interpreter, the Buddha, he learns that actually the dreams have nothing to do with him. They are rather harbingers of a future decline in the Buddhist monastic community. This material raises many questions, including: what does it mean to present what are, palpably, authorial concerns about some perceived decline in moral standards in the form of a retrospective prophecy of a present future? Why, most relevantly for the present conference, is the protagonist a royal figure? What might this tell us about the relationship between Buddhism and royalty in ancient India? And finally, what does it mean that the dreams in question are interpreted by the Buddha? Just what are dreams in the Buddhist world-view? In the brief time available for the presentation, some attempts will be made to address these questions.
**William Southworth (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)**

*The Relationship between Site Distribution, Land Use and Overseas Trade in Northern Champa from c. 200 to 1200 CE*

This paper will examine long term changes in the geographic distribution of religious and settlement sites in the northern area of the Champa culture (now central Vietnam) up to circa 1200 CE. During the first half of this period (from c. 200 to 800 CE), sites are clearly concentrated along the river valley systems, notably that of the Thu Bồn river that encompasses the sites of Mỹ Sơn and Trà Kiệu. This pattern can be viewed as a natural extension of the pattern of late prehistoric sites in this area.

During the subsequent period (c. 800 to 1200 CE) this pattern changes radically, with new religious foundations, notably the Buddhist monastic complex at Đồng Dương, located in rich agricultural plains away from the main river valleys. At the same time, the port of Đà Nẵng appears to have become a new focus for international trade. This trend is partly continued during the last period studied (from c. 1000 to 1200), but with new concentrations of sites developing around Tam Kỳ and Quảng Trị.

These geographic developments can also be traced in the content and distribution of Sanskrit and Cham-language epigraphy and the sequence of trade embassies and diplomatic missions between the northern Champa polities and China. By comparing these material and textual sources, it is hoped that a clearer picture of the environmental context of northern Champa will emerge.

**Janice Stargardt (University of Cambridge)**

*Synergies and Creative Differences in 4th – 6th century between Gupta India and Pyu Urbanism at Sri Ksetra*

Responding to the overarching theme of the Beyond Boundaries Grant 609823, Asia, the results of new archaeological and environmental research carried out at Sri Ksetra 2014-8, will be presented as it illuminates both synergies and creative differences. Of particular interest will be new evidence on early to mid-1st millennium urban forms, with and without water; modes of contact between societies in central and southeast India, on the one hand, and non-indic Pyu societies of central Myanmar, on the other. Their consequences as revealed in significant cultural changes and continuity at Sri Ksetra will be presented under the following topics: the appearance of literacy in Pali, Pyu and Sanskrit, the adoption of Buddhism on both popular and court levels, the integration of pre-existing Pyu funerary culture into Buddhism; indic impulses creatively adapted in the new production of Pyu ceramics and silver coinage and their further spread in Southeast Asia, to the other Pyu sites of Beikthano and Halin, but also further afield through the complex interactions between the Pyu and Dvaravati civilisations. This discussion will be accompanied by images and a selection of the new maps of Sri Ksetra and its environs prepared by members of the Department of Archaeology, Myanmar and the Pyu research group, University of Cambridge

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Miriam Stark (University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa)

Landscapes, Linkages, and Luminescence: First Millennium CE Environment and Social Change in Mainland Southeast Asia

Conventional Southeast Asian scholarship uses documentary sources and art history to explain the origins of first millennium CE developments, when temple-anchored Brahmanic and Buddhist religions, international trade networks, and the region’s earliest cities emerged. This text-driven approach has created a ‘Gupta echo effect’ on the field, and debates about “Indianization” (and more recently “Sanskritization”) remain part of the conversation. Archaeological research offers complementary perspectives on how Southeast Asians constructed politico-ritual landscapes in dialogue with, not under control of, Gupta and post-Gupta South Asia.

Geopolitical factors and regional intellectual paradigms partly explain why archaeological research lags behind epigraphy and art history for interpreting Early Southeast Asia. Yet findings from recent landscape-based archaeological research complicate interpretations in novel and important ways. Recording and dating Brahmanical structures that housed Indic gods refines chronology and defines geographic limits of new ideologies; documenting the scale of urban centers that emerged along trade routes and housed religious monuments yields demographic insights; provenancing artifacts defines interactional space; and collaborating with environmental scientists builds local environmental histories. This backdrop is needed to understand intersections between social strategies and environmental constraints: or environmental history and material matters.

This paper blends archaeological and historical research from protohistoric and pre-Angkorian Cambodia as a springboard for discussing first millennium CE developments across mainland Southeast Asia. Studying sites, water features, statuary, ceramics and beads helps us understand how Southeast Asians drew from a South Asian idiom to forge ritual-political landscapes, establish local identities, and cohere populations into several of the region’s earliest states.

Petra Sijpsteijn (Leiden University)

Writing Letters to the Nile River

Soon after the Arabs took over control of Egypt in the mid-seventh century a catastrophe doomed when the yearly Nile inundation on which all life depended in Egypt was not forthcoming. Egypt’s new governor ‘Amr b. al-‘As had refused to fulfil the human sacrifice that the province’s Christian inhabitants had urged him to complete as it would secure the rising of the waters. Worried about the bad harvests and ensuing famine that would occur, ‘Amr writes the caliph in Medina ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The caliph decides to write the Nile a letter to obey to God’s will which is delivered by the governor after which the flood does occur and a good harvest is secured.

In this paper I will examine what this story tells us about religious and worldly authority of the players involved. The river Nile who is addressed as an independent power but who finally has to submit to a (new) religious authority, the Egyptian Christians who demand that old rituals continue to maintain the life they have lived so far, Egypt’s Arab governor who represents a new political and religious regime which confronts head-on the old status quo and the caliph who represents the highest religious authority, God, who, finally, is involved indirectly as well. The caliph’s position at this early time combined religious and political authority with very concrete tasks such
as fulfilling prayers to call for rain at times of draughts, but who also represents in this story the sensible, consolatory and wise power who offers the final solution. The paper will also address the issue of Islamicisation of the Egyptian landscape through stories like this which fits the time period in which it came into circulation.

**JUDIT TÖRZSÖK** (EPHE/Sorbonne, Paris)

*Viṣṇu, his Weapons and his Son called Vṛka in the Skandapurāṇa*

This paper examines the way in which Viṣṇu and his son, Vṛka, are described from the śāiva perspective in the Skandapurāṇa, focusing on the weapons they use. Among the weapons, references to Viṣṇu's disc (*cakra*), its use against the demons and its story of origin are looked at in particular and the śāiva appropriation of this vaisnava attribute is analysed. The Skandapurāṇa's version is then compared with another, later śāiva retelling of the *cakra* story in Jayadratha's *Haracaritacintāmani* (Kashmir, 12th-13th cent.), which seems to represent a further stage in the śaivaisation of the myth.

The *cakra* also figures in a chapter of the Skandapurāṇa that relates a fight involving Vṛka, Viṣṇu's son. The figure of Vṛka is yet another element in the śaivaisation of Viṣṇu's mythology, who is thus provided with a son, similarly to Śiva. The quarrel between the two sons, Vṛka and Skanda, and then between Viṣṇu and Skanda, may express an opposition between Śiva and Viṣṇu, without involving the supreme god himself in the conflict.

**VINCENT TOURNIER** (EFEO Paris)

*Monaɪks, Könɪgs, and the Conquest of Buddhist South Asia: From Dhānyakaṭaka to the Himalaya*

The reflections presented in this paper stem from a wider project to map more adequately the history and geographical spread of Buddhist monastic orders (*nikāya*), their self-representation, and their interactions with the temporal order in the first half of the first millennium CE. It explores how members of Indian Buddhist lineages from the Deccan showcased, in their public discourses, their trans-regional networks as well as their past involvement in the spread of the Dharma and the "conversion" (*pravāsa*) of foreign lands.

I will show how especially epigraphic and visual discourses in Andhra reflect a broader rhetoric also identifiable in the historiographic genre, which bloomed particularly from the 3rd/4th centuries onward. Surveying the imagined “maps” envisioned by these sources, I will interrogate their genesis, structure, and function within a broader community of discourse. Monks not only reshaped the Buddhist past; they also appropriated and recast an imperial rhetoric developed by the ruling dynasties (in the period considered, especially the Sātavāhanas and their successors in Andhra). Indeed, I will show how the rhetoric deployed in a variety of media possesses formal affinities with, and is the spiritual equivalent of, the royal “conquest of the directions” (*dīgvijaya*).
Miguel John Verslyts (Leiden University)
Witnesses and Protagonists. Travelling Objects in Hellenistic Eurasia

In order to situate premodern Asia in its global context, material matters constitute a privileged point of departure. Things were important globetrotters in this period and often had a profound impact on new parts of the network they entered. This is also what we see in the period of premodern history we call Hellenistic, especially from around 200 BC onwards. The global context for Asia in that period often was Eurasia, the landmass between the Atlantic and the Pacific, and then in particular the zone roughly between 20 and 35 degrees north latitude, what Ian Morris has called Eurasia’s “lucky latitudes”. Many objects from this period testify to Eurasian interactions across large regions and as such they certainly are the materialized expressions of identities and communities. The main point I want to make in my lecture, however, is that they are much more than that - and that objects should also be studied as premodern agents in their own right. To do so I will present several case studies concerning travelling objects, from India to Rome, and try and analyse what they represent in terms of connectivity but also what they do in terms of agency.

Michael Willis (The British Museum)
Material and Beyond: Religion, Region, Language and the State

Our ERC project has focused on the history and culture of the Gupta dynasty and its subordinates. Although marked by developments that shaped South Asia for centuries, study of this pivotal moment is fragmented and compartmentalised. The purpose of the project has been to move beyond these limitations.

Concerns about ‘silos of knowledge’ emerged in management studies in the 1990s. This analysis has had little impact beyond the commercial sector. In historical research, modern nation states, regional languages and research protocols have reinforced the status quo. In moving beyond these constraints, three research themes have been developed to cross the disciplines and regions covered by the project. These are: (1) Royal, Ritual and Religious Centres; (2) Languages, Texts and Corpora (3) Network Dynamics.

To effectively address these themes in our part of the project, we have focussed on ancient Vidarbha and the Vākātaka dynasty. We have (a) prepared a census of sites based on published and unpublished reports; (b) geographically located listed sites with co-ordinates and relevant topographical, environmental, numismatic, epigraphic data; (c) carried out spot-checks based on listed sites; (d) identified zones for detailed documentation.

This has led to a more comprehensive understanding of known sites and monuments, putting them—and their epigraphic records—into a comprehensive geographical and archaeological context. It has also led to the discovery of new sites and, with comparisons to the Vidiśā region, a better understanding of the configuration of sites and the reasons for the movement of cult sites and royal centres.
YUKO YOKOCHI (Kyoto University)
Śivaloka and Viṣṇuloka: the Accommodation of God’s World in the Purānic Cosmography

The description of the cosmos called ‘Brahman’s egg’ (brahmāṇḍa) probably formed a part of the oldest layer of the Purānic corpus. As the name brahmāṇḍa suggests, Brahmā is on top of this hierarchical cosmos and presides over it. When the new religious culture centred on a transcendental God, either Rudra-Śiva or Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu, developed, it became an important task to locate the world of God, especially for the lay devotees for whom the highest goal to reach after death was the world of their God. In this paper I will trace the early phase of these attempts in both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, mainly based on three texts—the Skandapurāṇa, the Śivadharottara and the Viṣṇupurāṇa—and compare the strategies of both religious groups.