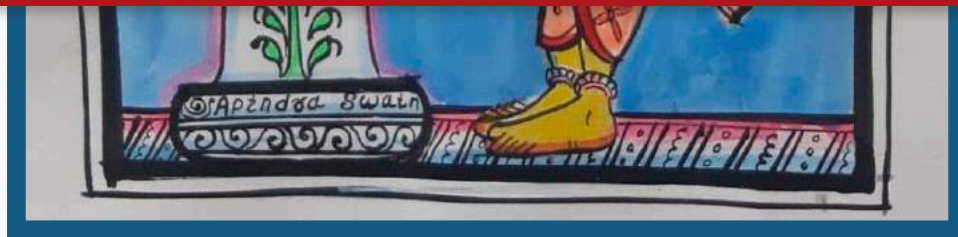




Heidelberg Indology Doctoral Symposium

# Disruption

Hybrid Symposium: November 13-14, 2021



With generous assistance from:  
Margot und Friedrich Becke Stiftung  
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Organised by the doctoral students of  
Cultural and Religious History of South Asia,  
South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University

## HeidelbergSanskrit

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Attend in-person\*:  
South Asia Institute  
Voßstraße 2, 69115 Heidelberg

Or online via Zoom:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87120878952?  
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\*In compliance with university Covid-19 safety regulations

# Symposium Program

Saturday 13 November, 2021

10:15am-10:30am **Opening Remarks**

10:30am-12:30pm **Panel 1: Disruption and COVID-19**

Respondent: Dr. Mukesh Kumar (Anthropology, SAI: Heidelberg University)

Arkamitra Ghatak (South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University)

*Disruption and Divine Intervention: Messianic Narratives and Online Communities of Faith in times of Pandemic*

Diksha Narang (South Asian University)

*“This Disease Won’t Affect Those that Work in the Sun”: Labour Culture Amidst the Pandemic*

Soumili Mondal (Department of English, Banaras Hindu University)

*Disruption in Folklore: A Study Through the Context of “Vratakathās”*

12:30pm-1:30pm **Lunch Break**

1:30pm-3:30pm **Panel 2: A Perspective from History**

Respondent: Prof. Kama MacLean (History, SAI: Heidelberg University)

Humaira Afreen (Presidency University)

*From “Medieval” to “Early Modern”: The Disruption in the Historiography of South Asia*

Nabajyoti Ghosh (Ashoka University)

*Disruption and Redefinition: Mishmis and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century*

Anna Scarabel (Heidelberg University)

*A Challenge to Mūrti Pūjā—How to Avoid Disruption*

3:30pm-4:00pm **Coffee Break**

4:00pm-5:00pm **Open Discussion: The Pandemic and my Work**

All timings are Central European Time (CET)

Each presentation is 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of questions. After brief remarks from the respondent, we will open the floor to a discussion of all the papers together.

## Sunday 14 November, 2021

10:30am–12:30pm **Panel 3: Disruption in Literature**

Respondent: Prof. Ute Hüsken (Classical Indology, SAI: Heidelberg University)

Dominik A. Haas (University of Vienna)

*How to Make a Religious Text Resistant to Disruption: The Case of the Gāyatrī Mantra*

Simon Winant (University of Ghent)

*Literary Debts and Discontinuity in Devaprabhasūri's Pāṇḍavacarita: (De)constructing (Dis)continuities*

Chandrabhan P. Yadav (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

*Resolving 'Disruption': Ukkaṅṭhita-bhikkhu and Women as the 'Objects' of Deviation in the Buddhist Narratives*

12:30pm–1:30pm **Lunch Break**

1:30pm–3:30pm **Panel 4: Disruption in Grammatical Traditions**

Respondent: Dr. Anand Mishra (Classical Indology, SAI: Heidelberg University)

Valentina Ferrero (University of Cagliari)

*Is the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī Still Navya Vyākaraṇa? The Analysis of Its Disruptions*

Anita Maria Borghero (University of Naples 'L'Orientale' / University of Cagliari)

*Broken Lines in the Process of Normalizing Languages: Two Cases of Discontinuity between Pāṇini and the Vedas*

Radha Blinderman (Harvard University)

*Vaiṣṇava and Śākta Grammars Facing Disruption*

3:30pm–4:00pm **Coffee Break**

4:00pm–5:00pm **Keynote Address:**

**Dr. Vera Lazzaretti** (Centre for Research in Anthropology [CRIA], Lisbon)

*The Shadow of Ayodhya in Banaras: Reflections Around Disruption and its Reverberations*

All timings are Central European Time (CET)

## Panel 1: Disruption and COVID-19

### Disruption and Divine Intervention: Messianic Narratives and Online Communities of Faith in times of Pandemic

Arkamitra Ghatak

South Asia Institute(SAI)-Heidelberg University

This presentation will focus on how the community of disciples of Sri Sri Sobha Ma, the guru of the Nimbārka Vaiṣṇava tradition, responded to the Covid 19 Pandemic, by shifting to the digital platform and by reiterating the messianic agency of the Guru as the divine saviour in times of calamity. The Pandemic coincided with the Birth Centenary year of the Guru leading to the disruption of the grand celebrations planned by her community of followers to mark the occasion at her Ashram in Varanasi and Kalyani, West Bengal.

The Pandemic prevented the disciples from gathering together for local prayer meetings called Milan Mandir held every Sunday, which played an important role in reifying strong community ties among the disciples. The community then was compelled to organize zoom meetings on Sundays and on other religious occasions which are of specific ritual importance to the community. However, as I will point out in this presentation, the shift to online meetings led to a rupture in older modes of devotional and ritual expression within the community and led to the production of new ones. While earlier meetings followed a rigid structure with a codified succession of hymns performed in front of the image of the Guru, the zoom meetings are less structured and the programmes comprise different hymns, readings from hagiography of the Guru or the sharing of specific experiences by the devotees of the miraculous intervention by Sobha Ma.

Held in the backdrop of the Pandemic, the narrative structure of the meetings reveals a marked emphasis on the role of the Guru as the Divine Saviour. Every meeting ends with the collective prayer requesting the Guru to descend and save mankind from the “terrible darkness.” The narratives that are shared underscore the ongoing presence of the Guru (even after her death) as a messianic agent not only in the lives of her devotees and disciples as well as the nation and the world. While many of these narratives recount their survival, battle and recovery from Covid-19 as an instance of the Guru’s grace, some also highlight specific dreams where the Guru assures the devotee that the dark times will pass. As I wish to show in this presentation, such narratives are framed in terms of hagiographic episodes from the life of the Guru, which underscore her one-ness with the Mother-Goddess and affirm her (post-mortem) role in leading the world out of calamity. I argue that such narratives and messianic aspirations generated around the figure of the Guru are crucial to the survival and formation of the online circle of devotees when physical participation in religious events are disrupted.

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Arkamitra Ghatak is a Doctoral Student at the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg since 2019. Her Doctoral Project is titled “The Female Guru as Jagat-janani: A Transcultural History of ‘Universal Motherhood’ in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”. She is a DAAD Scholarship Holder and a part of the Graduate Programme of the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS). Her research interests include global religious history with special focus on gender, modes of female agency in historical perspective, transcultural intellectual history and articulations of piety and spirituality in South Asia and beyond.

## **“This Disease Won’t Affect Those that Work in the Sun”: Labour Culture Amidst the Pandemic**

Diksha Narang  
South Asian University

Based on ethnographic research during the coronavirus pandemic, this paper seeks to understand the moral identity of precarious labor during the pandemic through their social and political responses to the coronavirus pandemic. Among laboring groups, a frequent assertion was made that coronavirus was not a physical threat but an existential threat to survival because of restrictions on work and mobility. At the same time, the protection of the ‘mazdoor’ or manual laborer from this physical ailment was located in various realms such as the sacred spheres of Gods, deities and magic, ethics of good deeds and a cosmology of divine justice as well as a material reflection on the worker’s tough body.

My fieldwork is based on the intimate life of the Kalbelia community of Southern Rajasthan. The fate of several formerly nomadic or itinerant groups is such that they are landless and completely dependent on wage-earning. Pervasive chronic poverty and breakdown of age-old livelihoods around street entertainment and petty trading has resulted in a genealogy of dispossession. The deep history of the Kalbelia community is that they were formerly involved in the digging and transportation of raw materials needed to construct kutchha homes. With new forest laws and restrictions on nomadic mobility, they began to sedentarize and seek work in construction, mining and agricultural labor markets. As opposed to single adult male migration, whole families including child and women labor is mobilized and worksites are primarily in Western Rajasthan for cumin cultivation and Madhya Pradesh for soyabean reaping. There is a strong identification within the community of being ‘mazdoors’ or part of the world of labor and mobility which they share with other castes of the region. The working class in Southern Rajasthan have a clear understanding of their class position as there is a frequent use of the phrase ‘gareeb jati’ meaning ‘poor castes’ or ‘mehnat karne wale log’ meaning those who work hard doing manual labor.

Village life in Southern Rajasthan is spatially segregated along caste lines. ‘Gareeb jatis’ or poor castes often live in single-caste bastis or neighborhood which structures their social life and identity. As a poor and lower-caste neighborhood, even grocery stores opened by a member of the community are patronized within the basti itself. My ethnographic fieldwork is among three such bastis and in this paper, I reflect on their assertions of the sacred and secular forces that protected their basti against coronavirus. In particular, I bring out the role of the God Ramdev who is vernacularly referred to as the God of the Poor and his role in saving those who labor and earn an honest living. It reflects on the location of a moral cosmology in which the poor are given divine justice because they are hard-working. Their dismissal of the coronavirus is refracted through the ethics and values of being a ‘mazdoor’ or manual labourer.

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Diksha Narang is a PhD candidate at the Department of Sociology, South Asian University Delhi. Her PhD is on formerly itinerant social groups in Southern Rajasthan who are transitioning to forms of wage-earning and migrating to work-sites near and far. She is trying to understand forms of sociality within precarious labour worlds. Her research focuses on experiences of hope, aspiration and futurity. She is currently also a lecturer at the Centre for Writing Studies, OP Jindal Global University.

## **Disruption in Folklore: A Study Through the Context of “Vratakathās”**

Soumili Mondal

Department of English, Amity University, Chhattisgarh

Folklore and the traditions associated with it play an integral part in our everyday life as majority of the ‘vratas’ of the Hindu religion, are performed through rituals by the people in accordance to the prescribed tradition. A ‘vrata’ is a vow or promise observed by Hindu men and women – monthly, quarterly or annually which empowers the performer and gives certain divine capacity to obtain their objectives and the ‘vratakathas’ associated with these vratas derive from religious tales intended to inculcate discipline, virtue and rules of moral behaviour. In this manner, these vratas have become ingrained within us and their views and ideas of the culture reflect on the psychological orientations and prolonged belief as they supplement and complement each other. Any forms of disruption in these ritualistic practices are termed as inauspicious but the present pandemic situation has curtailed the performance of the vratas in both small and large scale. For instance, the Manasa vrata is followed with great pomp and grandeur in the rural areas of Bengal in the month of Shravana, but the pandemic situation has imposed restrictions and they are being performed in the courtyards of houses. Also, the demand of the materials required for the Mangal Chandi vrata followed in the month of Jyestha by the women-folk of Bengal for the well-being of their off-springs has reduced drastically because of the financial measures faced by most of the families.

Though the tendency of following vratas have decreased in domestic households for quite a few decades due to various reasons – scarcity of time and unavailability of materials being some of them, but this paper will attempt to narrate the exceptions which have been occurring for the past one and a half-year taking instances of vratas followed by the women of Bengal. This idea will be supported by the interviews taken of ‘vratinis’ (women performing vratas) belonging from various age-groups and their views on the socio-religious context of ‘vratas’ and how it is affecting the folklore and their lives as they are inter-twined with each other.

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Soumili Mondal is now Assistant Professor at Amity University, Chhattisgarh at Raipur. She submitted her thesis titled “Ritual, Gender, Narratives: A Study of Vratakathas of Bengal” at Banaras Hindu University. She has pursued her Masters in English from Presidency University and her graduation from Calcutta University. She has previously worked on Dalit studies, gender and woman studies and specifically on the women involved in Durga Puja of Benaras.

## Panel 2: A Perspective from History

### From 'Medieval' to 'Early Modern': The Disruption in the Historiography of South Asia

Humaira Afreen  
Presidency University

The periodization in South Asian history has strong roots in colonial as well as nationalist historiographical traditions, the ramifications of which linger in indigenous modern scholarships even today. The medieval period, often labelled as the 'Muslim period' (rather infamously) in colonial historiography, has long been treated as a phase of disruption marked by the invasion of Muslim rulers. Although the term 'medieval' has replaced the term 'muslim' in South Asian periodization, its historiographical traditions are still largely hamstrung by colonial influence. What underlies this older model of periodization is an approach that seeks to neglect the juxtaposition of historical developments of South Asia with the wider world on the one hand, and its accompanying methodological problems and divisive elements on the other. Despite some influential works challenging the notion of 'medieval' and thereby bringing up the relatively new term 'early modern' in South Asian historiography to do away with the flaws of the traditional model of periodization, the bulk of indigenous research continues to use the old model of periodization. In this paper, I attempt to delineate the problems as well as the dangers inherent in using the eurocentric notion of medievalism and modernism while taking up the question of periodization in South Asian history. It also attempts to explain the factors behind the neglect of the early modern period and its accompanying disruptions in indigenous South Asian historiography. The paper primarily focuses on the period of Greater Mughals for engaging with the question of the medieval and the early modern period. This is primarily due to two factors: the first derives from the obvious reason that the Mughal period roughly coincides with the time frame of the early modern period as witnessed in other parts of the world; second is the intriguing fact that while the older historiography marked this phase as being the stereotypical characterization of the 'medieval' in South Asia, the relatively new studies, ostensibly by scholars such as Sanjay Subramanyam, Sheldon Pollock, and others, associate this period with the 'early modern' by placing them at par with the historical developments of the other parts of the world. This paper, therefore, aims at de-emphasizing the role of older historiography by highlighting the methodological conundrums and disruptions that one experiences in perceiving the Mughal period from the prism of medievalism, and instead outlines the significance of the framework of early modern in fruitfully engaging with the history of the Mughals.

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I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of History in Presidency University, Kolkata (India). I have been awarded the Junior Research Fellowship for my doctoral research. My research titled 'Political Violence under the Mughals (1526-1707)' explores avenues from both history of ideas and political history. My research interests involve South Asian history during the early modern period, Mughal History, and Islamic history.

## **Disruption and Redefinition: Mishmis and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century**

Nabajyoti Ghosh  
Ashoka University

The concern of this paper is to demonstrate a disruption in the way the Mishmis were represented in the 19th century by the stakeholders of the colonial state and how that was simultaneously reflected in the administrative policies which came to rule their lives in the second half of the 19th century. By closely following colonial expeditionary reports, letters, circulars and descriptive accounts written on the frontier, it tells us that even though the hill populations of the North East Frontier of the British Empire were described as “savages” and “uncivilized” in the 1820s and 1830s, not all of them were yet imbued with the immobility with which ‘Tribes’ are later characterized after the 1860s. The community whose story this paper follows closely, the Mishmis in the 19th century, were seen to be a part of a complex network of trade between Tibet and the Brahmaputra valley and the Khamptis and Sangphos who inhabited the hilly tracts east of the Brahmaputra Valley at least till the fourth decade of the 19th century. However, as this paper seeks to argue, that in the second half of the 19th century, the advent of ethnology as a science with the capacity to theorise and that it becomes the exclusive tool to understand these populations causes a two fold disruption by which the representations of the Mishmis in official documents of the colonial administration became devoid of the tales of mobility, communal relationships and trade networks which once characterised them and then such understanding of the Mishmis manifests itself as frontier policies which guide the laying down of administrative boundaries between the hills and the plains disrupting these networks. While this story brings into the fore an episode of disruption of traditional networks between communities in the easternmost corner of the North East Frontier, it also seeks to demonstrate a disruption in the ways by which these channels were perceived and then represented officially. Both these parallel and codependent disruptions demonstrate a part of the long history of the evolution of the category of Tribe in the North Eastern Frontier of the British Empire in the 19th Century.

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Nabajyoti Ghosh is a PhD student in the Department of History, Ashoka University, Sonapat. His research interests lie in the history of administrative categories and their relationship with the process of frontier making in the British Empire. The subject of his PhD thesis is to write a genealogy of the category of “Tribe” in the North Eastern Frontier of the British Empire and to examine, if any, the relationship between the genealogy of the category of tribe and the making of the North Eastern Frontier.



## **A Challenge to Mūrti Pūjā—How to Avoid Disruption**

Anna Scarabel  
Heidelberg University

In his introduction to “Disruption: Why Things Change”, Potter (2021: 1-2) tells us that “The coincidence of an alternative ideological system with a period of community distress is the necessary condition for radical change”. This was the case of 19th-20th century India, at the time between British domination and Independence (1947). The foreign rule in India resembled an “encounter between tradition and modernity, i.e., an exposure to new forms of organization and administration, to unprecedented claims of universality and globalization, to rationalization, technology, and a comprehensive objectification of the world” (Halbfass W. 1988. *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*: 217). Above all, the establishment of English colleges and the activity of Christian missionaries prolonged the foreign influences long after the end of the British Raj. In this panorama, two main opposing tendencies arise, that of Neo-Hinduism and Traditionalism, which respectively aim at re-inventing the Hindu religious traditions and at preserving them. The tendency to ‘reinvention’ is dominant in Rammohan Roy and Dayānanda Sarasvatī, the leaders of the Brahmo Samāja and the Ārya Samāja, who shared the impulse to innovation and the aversion towards the widespread practice of mūrti pūjā. While briefly looking at possible connections and influences between the two, we will focus on Dayānanda’s disruptive positions on mūrti pūjā, which, according to him, is a recent habit, a sign of a decayed society that has forgotten the ‘true religion’ described in the Vedas. This position is eventually analyzed under the lenses of the traditionalist perspectives, wishing to prevent changes in the Hindu society. The Ārya Samāja’s “[...] condemnation of the old created an institutionalized opposition” (Jones K. 1976. *Arya Dharm*: 108). An example of such hostility is found in Svāmī Karapātrī, a traditionalist monk of Varanasi, who lived a hundred years after Dayānanda, and devoted several writings to commenting upon the Ārya Samāja’s tenets (e.g., *Vedārtha Pārijāta*). This paper illustrates a case study of the 19th-20th century debate on one of the most popular religious practice of the Hindu India, the mūrti pūjā, and aims at delineating how Svāmī Dayānanda’s positions are stemmed by Svāmī Karapātrī, who wishes to avoid the implementation of Ārya Samāja’s disruptive agenda.

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Anna Scarabel holds a B.A in Language, Culture and Society of Asia and Mediterranean Africa Studies from Ca’ Foscari university of Venice, and a M.A. in South Asian Studies with a major in Classical Indology from the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University. She is now a PhD student in the Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia of the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University. She recently joined a double doctoral degree with the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, and in 2019-2020, she was a visiting student at the Banaras Hindu University of Varanasi.

## Panel 3: Disruption in Literature

### How to Make a Religious Text Resistant to Disruption: The Case of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*

Dominik A. Haas  
University of Vienna

In this paper I use the example of the Gāyatrī mantra to outline a number of ways in which a religious text can be made resistant to disruption. Towards the end of the Vedic period, the Gāyatrī mantra (Rgveda III 62.10, also known as the sāvitṛī) was chosen as the primary mantra that inaugurates Vedic studentship in the context of the Upanayana ritual. In the last centuries of the 1st millennium BCE the Upanayana came to occupy the first position in a ritual system that accompanies an initiate throughout his life, and thereby also shapes his religious identity. Due to its position in this rite of passage, the Gāyatrī mantra became one of the most important emblems of Brahmanical orthodoxy. As such, it has followed a remarkably steady trajectory up to the present day. In my talk, I explore how it was possible for this mantra to persist as a religious text over more than two millennia. Drawing above all on the work of Timothy Lubin, I first describe the historical background of Brahminism and discuss how the Gāyatrī mantra became embedded within this ideology. I then identify the various mechanisms that made the mantra almost immune to disruption: its rank as the first and foremost Vedic verse, its regular repetition during the Sandhyā (a ritual performed on a daily basis), its employment as an almost universal means for purification, and its important role in defining and maintaining the initiate's ritual integrity and social identity.

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Dominik A. Haas received his MA in South Asian Studies from the University of Vienna in 2018. Since 2020 he has been a DOC fellow at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (Austrian Academy of Sciences). His research interests focus on the development of Vedic culture and religion, together with its reception and representation in later Hindu traditions. As a co-founder of the Initiative for Fair Open Access Publishing in South Asian Studies, he is also involved in promoting innovative forms of scholarly communication, and fair working conditions in the academic and publishing sector.

## **Literary Debts and Discontinuity in Devaprabhasūri's *Pāṇḍavacarita*: (De)constructing (Dis)continuities**

Simon Winant  
Ghent University

This paper aims to complicate the binary of disruption/continuity within literary traditions through a close reading of one particular Jain Mahābhārata adaptation in Sanskrit, the *Pāṇḍavacarita* (1213 CE) by Devaprabhasūri. Unlike prior Jain adaptations of the MBh narrative, the *Pāṇḍavacarita*, the first Jain composition in Sanskrit which presents the story of the Pāṇḍavas as its main narrative, deliberately echoes the Vyāsa Mahābhārata to such extent that it even includes verbatim sections found in the Vyāsa Mahābhārata. Precisely by seeking such direct continuity with a textual tradition associated with a different religious community, the *Pāṇḍavacarita* constitutes a clear break with preceding Jain MBh adaptations, which generally relegate the MBh narrative to being a brief subnarrative in the biography of the 22nd tīrthaṅkara Nemi.

Nevertheless, Devaprabhasūri's adaptation is still unmistakably Jain in its outlook and ideological thrust: the *Pāṇḍavacarita* includes narrative material from the *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacarita* by the 12th century Jain polymath Hemacandra and reinterprets well-known characters the MBh narrative as devout Jain exemplars. Depending on the particular lens through which one views the *Pāṇḍavacarita* and on which elements one privileges in their reading, the Jain adaptation can be read as a continuity as well as a break from tradition.

In this paper, I will demonstrate with a selection of miscellaneous episodes from the *Pāṇḍavacarita* how this Jain adaptation constitutes a break with its Jain predecessors and how it establishes continuity with prior established traditions such as MBh epitomes and intertextuality with kāvya works and tropes.

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Simon Winant is a PhD student at UGent working on Jain Sanskrit adaptations of the Indian epic Mahābhārata. His current project focuses on how Jains depicted the character of Kicaka, a sexual predator in the 'original' Mahābhārata of Hindu narrative tradition, either as an irredeemable villain or as a Jain renouncer. Besides Sanskrit epics and Jainism, Simon's research interests also include early Sanskrit kāvya authors, Prakrit, and historical linguistics.

## Resolving ‘Disruption’: Ukkaṇṭha-bhikkhu and Women as the ‘Objects’ of Deviation in the Buddhist Narratives

Chandrabhan P. Yadav  
Jawaharlal Nehru University

In several of the Buddhist texts we get the idea of *ukkaṇṭha-citta* (the *Theragāthā*) or *ukkaṇṭha-bhikkhu* (e.g. see the *paccupannavatthu* sections of the *Jātakas*). It is a kind of disruption in the usual state of mind of the bhikkhus which happens due to the presence of the female body. The paper seeks to examine the social contexts in which these moments of disruption in the lives, especially of bhikkhus, occur. The idea of celibacy is central to the Buddhist soteriological scheme and thus bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs are expected to practice it or in other words self-castrate themselves. But the discourse of *ukkaṇṭha-citta* does not feature in the Buddhist narratives in case of bhikkhuṇīs. How to read these disruptions in terms of gender dynamics? Is it a gender conundrum which is resolved through these narratives? How is the meaning and effect of these disruptions different for different genders?

I shall be analysing the narratives around the state of *ukkaṇṭha-citta* described in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* along with their commentarial sections as well as the *paccupannavatthu* section of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*. I shall also be reading those narratives along with the *Vinaya* rules. It is an attempt to see disruptions on several levels; (1) at the psychological level where bhikkhus are expected be celibate par excellence or in other words self-castrate themselves but they also want to retain their maleness, (2) at the social level where heterosexuality is a norm and bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs moved away from that norm. I shall also be analysing different meanings for different genders of the *ukkaṇṭha-citta*. Who is the subject and who is the object of attraction? Who disrupts whose state of mind? And how power operates at these junctures of disruption?

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Chandrabhan Yadav is a final year research scholar at Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. I am working on the Pali-Buddhist narrative sources to understand social dynamics in early historic South Asia.

## Panel 4: Disruption in Grammatical Traditions

### Broken Lines in the Process of Normalizing Languages: Two Cases of Discontinuity between Pāṇini and the Vedas

Anita Maria Borghero

University of Naples 'L'Orientale' / University of Cagliari

Within the field of grammatical and Vedic studies, the problem of identifying the language targeted by Pāṇini has been overtly discussed by the community of scholars throughout many years of academic debate. Just consider, among the major contributions, the studies of Liebich 1891, Bronkhorst 1982, Deshpande 1983, Rau 1985, Cardona 1999; 2002. Nonetheless, no definite answer has been found until now. « [...] little attention has been paid to one particular aspect of this general issue: the existence of forms or constructions taught by Pāṇini but unattested in the Vedic corpus [...] ». With this meaningful statement, Kulikov (2013: 60) returned to the challenging topic by focusing on the detailed analysis of specific passive forms (derived from the verbal roots *tan-* and *jan-*) which, despite being regularly taught in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, are not found in ancient texts. Such a surprising interruption of the continuum between the language and its scientific explanation raises more than one question: From where had these 'ghost' forms been taken? How can one interpret the concern in testifying linguistic facts that are not established as a current form of the best renowned literature of the Pāṇinian age? Are we instead dealing with still to be identified issues in textual traditions?

The present inquiry aims at observing the problem from the opposite side, by considering forms actually attested in Vedic literature and, vice versa, ignored by the teachings of Pāṇini. Two cases will be discussed in order to show this sort of inconsistency. In particular:

- (a) the attestation of the feminine dual of *matṛ-* in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā* with respect to its elliptic sense;
- (b) the copulative compound *āgnāvaiṣṇava-* (as attested in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*) that undergoes a *vṛddhi* derivation.

Given the chronological proximity between the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and the just mentioned corpus, Pāṇini unexpectedly gives no account of these specific formations, either in (a) the section which deals with the so-called *ekaśeṣa* (with reference to rule A 1.2.70) or in (b) the description of the substitution with *i-* of the last sound of *agni-* which appears as the *pūrvapada* in the domain of *devatādvandvas* (see A 6.3.28). The interest in tracking instances of discrepancy between the most ancient grammatical literature and the coeval literary experience opens new perspectives for wide-ranging research grounded on the scientific anchor of philology and linguistics.

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I gained a master's degree in Cagliari, where I started to study the special devices of coordination taught by Pāṇini. In 2020 I co-authored the article "Are the elliptic dual (and plural) provisions in Pāṇini's grammar substitution rules? *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.2.64-73" (IL 43) with T. Pontillo of the University of Cagliari. I am now enrolled at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' as a PhD student under the supervision of F. Sferra and T. Pontillo, with a research-project that aims at investigating the relation between Vedic texts and grammatical literature as far as copulative compounds and syntactic strings of coordination are concerned.

## Is the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī Still Navya Vyākaraṇa? The Analysis of Its Disruptions

Valentina Ferrero

University of Cagliari

With the designation of navya vyākaraṇa we usually mean something that is disruptive in respect to the previous tradition. As is well-known, the term navya is used to indicate a new and more recent grammar as opposed to the ancient one, the prācīna vyākaraṇa. The beginning of the “new grammar” is usually placed between the 16th-17th centuries, when Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita wrote the Siddhāntakaumudī. This work generated a new simplified model for analyzing the Aṣṭādhyāyī, without resorting to the most ancient commentaries such as the Kāśikāvṛtti and the Mahābhāṣya. With the same idea in mind, Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita’s disciple Varadarāja (17th century) abridged the Siddhāntakaumudī and composed three new versions of this text, namely the Madhyasiddhāntakaumudī (a medium version), the Laghusiddhāntakaumudī (a short version) and the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī (a super-short version).

Considering vākya as the linguistic unit, Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita’s disciple dealt with all the stuffs through which students become well equipped for interpreting ordinary or simple sentences. For this reason, his three kaumudīs begin with the presentation of saṃjñāsūtras, that are definitions and rules governing technical terminology, and with aphorisms focused on the several sandhi-phenomena: vowel-, consonant-, and visarga-sandhis. After that, there is the section dedicated to the subanta, i.e. to the nominal inflected words ending with sUP affixes, that is divided into different sections depending on the grammatical gender of the stems and on its final sound, whether it is a vowel or a consonant. This presentation will concentrate on the section about nominal (and pronominal) declension of masculine stems ending in vowel, beginning with those ending in short -a, aiming at singling out the specific features of these three Varadarāja’s texts. In particular, the research will concern the rules that have been removed, and sometimes also added, beginning with the definition of prātipadika and pratyaya, and subsequently in the inflection of the word rāma- (and of the pronoun sarva-). This analysis is intended to show a reasoned comparison between the Siddhāntakaumudī and the three following kaumudīs: the Madhyasiddhāntakaumudī, the Laghusiddhāntakaumudī, and finally the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī.

On the basis of such a research, the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī seems to be considered disruptive not only in comparison with the tradition of the prācīna vyākaraṇa, but also within the navya vyākaraṇa tradition itself. In fact, this latter work is completely different from the “new grammar” tradition started by Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita with his Siddhāntakaumudī. But one of the most intriguing details is that it also deviates from the previous kaumudīs of Varadarāja, such as the Madhyasiddhāntakaumudī and the Laghusiddhāntakaumudī. This change of perspective is much more evident in the first edition of the text written by Devasthali and entitled Sārasiddhāntakaumudī of Varadarāja. While translating and explaining the aphorisms, the author shows that he is aware that this is the last canonical grammar of the Indian tradition, but it remains to be understood how and to what extent it opens the way to new philosophical discussions and to other new non-canonical possibilities.

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Valentina Ferrero is a PhD student at the University of Cagliari. She is working with Professor Tiziana Pontillo on a research entitled “sarvanāmaprakaraṇam. Tracing the relevance of pronouns from navya vyākaraṇa to Mahābhāṣya”. The principal aim of her project is to establish the close relationship between these texts and the previous tradition, demonstrating the importance of navya vyākaraṇa in the study of Sanskrit grammar. Previously, she has obtained the BA in Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa and the MA in Languages and Civilization of Asia and Africa from the University of Torino.

## Vaiṣṇava and Śākta Grammars Facing Disruption

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The twentieth and twenty-first centuries presented early modern vaiṣṇava and śākta grammars of Sanskrit with new challenges, which more than ever before pushed them into oblivion. The sixteenth century vaiṣṇava grammar of Sanskrit of Jīva Gosvāmin, the Harināmāmṛtavyākaraṇa, was so popular in vaiṣṇava circles in the early twentieth century that, according to Haraprasāda Śāstrī, the vaiṣṇavas of Bengal ‘made the Calcutta Sanskrit Association adopt the Harināmāmṛta as an optional subject in grammar for the examination of Vaiṣṇava candidates.’ In 2009, I was one of the last students to pass a Harināmāmṛtavyākaraṇa examination before the Vangiya Sanskrit Shiksha Parishad discontinued the program, and it has not been included in any official program in India since. As for the eighteenth century śākta grammar of Balarāma Pañcānana, the Prabodhaprakāśa, its teaching was discontinued even earlier in the twentieth century, leaving the school in ruins and the manuscripts scattered and forgotten in archives around the world. In this talk, I will examine the socio-religious and political factors behind these events and particularly focus on the consequences of early Orientalist labelling of these grammars as ‘sectarian’, as well as judging them to be ‘dull’, ‘uninteresting’, and ‘of no scientific value, but rather a curiosity in the history of Sanskrit grammar’. This critique shaped public opinion as well as scholars’ attitudes towards these texts for the next two hundred years, but it is questionable whether it was ever justified. This discussion leads to complex questions about historical and ‘scientific’ value of a text belonging to a pre-modern intellectual discipline, about the criteria that have been applied in the past to deem something in the discipline of grammar as ‘significant’ or ‘insignificant’, and how these criteria may be updated to benefit contemporary scholarship. I will briefly discuss the debate about Sanskrit indeclinables (avyayas) and the role of Jīva’s and Balarāma’s grammars in it as a case study in grammatical innovation and diversity. These texts provide many missing links in a number of grammatical debates and, if ignored for ‘having no scientific value’, leave many blind spots in the history of Sanskrit grammar and of religion in South Asia.

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