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Tentative title: Manifold approaches to Kanchipuram's sacred geography

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The doctoral project studies the multi-faceted sacred geography of the South Indian temple town Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu) on the basis of glorifying texts in Sanskrit (māhātmya). These texts on Kanchipuram describe and construct particular notions of the city's space and many sacred places from different sectarian perspectives that reflect the diverse religious landscape of the city. These concepts about Kanchipuram are expressed in mythological legends telling of the origin of sacred sites, their ascribed powers and resident deities, which can contest each other but exist side by side and form a common pool of narratives.

The project both explores Kanchipuram's multi-faceted sacred geography in a broader perspective and focuses on individual sacred places or sets of sites to understand the structures, spatial orientations and means of inter- and trans-sectarian negotiation that shape the texts' design of Kanchipuram. It further analyses the constructs of the māhātmyas in relation with the city's sacred landscape on-site to uncover possible reciprocal dynamic relations.