

History and Society as Described in Indian Literature and Art

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Abstracts

Maria Angelillo, University of Milan, Italy

Caste in the making, dance in the making

This communication is based on fieldwork in Rajasthan with Kalbelia's caste: traditionally associated to snake charming, the caste has been turning its own musical and dance heritage into a distinguishing feature of Rajasthani folklore. This paper, through the description of the ethnohistory of the Kalbelia's dance, leads to some considerations concerning the social status of female professional dancers in modern Indian society. The present social status of female professional dancers will be here described as an outcome of the past British colonial presence in India. The analysis will prove how the colonial past continues to haunt the Indian social and cultural present. Besides, through this case study, the paper will argue that caste is not the unchanging, historically frozen structure that ethnographic imagination has largely presented it as. On the contrary caste will be considered to be the product of a dynamic balance ruled by economic, ideological and cultural requests.

Arasu Veerasami, University of Madras, India

**Cankam Corpus as Resource for Writing Art History of Tamil –
Problems and Perspectives**

The uneven development in Tamil Society as revealed through Cankam corpus has been established by scholars. However, tinai as grammatical category does not permit us to take into account the variations in socio-economic formation. The paper attempts to write

the history of art in Tamil in different social stages. The tribal communities, nomadic groups, communities in settlements of agrarian society, fishing and artisanship and early state formation have had different modes of production and circulation of art. It is important to take into account the uneven development of Tamil society and the classificatory concept of *tinai* in writing the art history of Tamil. The paper hopes to provide a blue print of such a methodology with a few illustrations.

Gautam Chakrabarti, Freie Universität Berlin/ RLA College University of Delhi

The Bhadrakok as Truth-Seeker: Towards a Social History of the Bengali Detective

The role of the Bhadrakok in crystallizing and articulating pre- and post-Independence Indian societal-cultural developments and aspirations cannot be gainsaid: viewed as a class, the Calcutta-based and Raj-educated Bhadrakok located themselves in an arc of anglophiliac leisure, despite their well-entrenched and often-radical opposition to British colonialism. Thus, despite the occasionally-aggressive manifestation of anti-British sentiments and politico-ideological posturing, the early-twentieth-century Indian, especially Bengali, intelligentsia remained an avid consumer of socio-cultural Anglophilia. However, this expression of cultural choice was often mediated through the operation of transcultural subalternity and hybridisation, as is exemplified in the manner in which many popular Bengali fiction-writers of the early twentieth century based their fictional hero/ines on English prototypes. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of detective fiction, in which genre Bānglā literature has had a rich corpus: from Kiriti Roy to Jayonto and dārogā Banka-ullah to Feluda, Bengali fictional detectives have succeeded in creating a dedicated universe of readership, which is incrementally ahead of similar figures in other Indian languages, for themselves. In the proposed paper, an attempt will be made to look at Satyānveṣi (Truth-Seeker) Byomkesh Bakshi, a quintessentially-bhadrakok private investigator, who spurns that designation and prefers to call himself a truth-seeker, a character created by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, as a fictive representation of an autonomous, proto-postcolonial identity-forming urge. In the words of Sukumar Sen (1900-92), in his *Crime Writers' Chronology* (1988), an authoritative diachronic study of “western” and Indian crime fiction, “[h]e is not a scientist, violinist or an addict. He is a typical Bengali gentleman of the 1930s-- educated, intelligent, shrewd, reserved and sympathetic. Apart from his intellect and sedate serenity, he has got no other quality to distinguish himself

from the average Bengali youths.”

The present writer seeks to locate this personal non-extraordinariness in the intra-societal angst to dissociate culturally-hybrid phenomena and products from those of the colonial Oppressor, while acknowledging and even cherishing the acute polysemy inherent to the transcultural process of borrowing and transcreating; thus, the English private eye becomes, in the Calcutta of the Thirties, a somewhat-crypto-nationalistic, somewhat-Anglophiliac intersectional figure, who represents the target audience's deeply-ingrained societal-cultural roots, in the throes of its modernist and proto-postcolonial desire to negotiate the world out there. The cheroot-s, teapots and solah topee-s of the Sāhib-s have their keen interest for such truth-seeking Bengali sleuths, who, however, retain the leisured slow-moving old-world “charm” of the high noon of the Calcutta-based bhadralok, soon to turn into their own lyrical twilight.

Sabrina Cioffi, University of Milan, Italy

Bollywood narrates history: An old tradition, a new trend

Historical movies have fascinated film-makers and cine-goers in India almost from the very beginning and even more in the current days. Such movies are based upon historical events and characters, notwithstanding common allegations of distortion of facts. With plot usually revolving around poignant love stories, historical films create grand visions of romance, power, intrigue and empire-building. At the same time, they allegorically address key areas of tension and attempt to envision the possibility of reconciling conflicting forces. The most crucial of these issues is the Hindu-Muslim relationship, as well depicted, for instance, in the recent Bollywood hit *Jodhaa-Akbar*.

Tatiana Dubyanskaya, Visiting Professor, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Portraying “the Other”: the Reflection of Hindu-Muslim Relationship in the early Hindi Narratives

This paper seeks to look at the early prose-fiction, published in Hindi in the Northern Provinces of India in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, from the view-point of contemporary religious controversies and communal development. The period concerned is known for visible depression and unrest in socio-political life, largely factored by the Mutiny of 1857; it, also, brought important changes in educational policy, in

high-class culture and everyday life-style, which ultimately set a new system of aesthetical and existential values. Novel socio-cultural patterns, which emerged from the Post-Mutiny turbulences, found immediate manifestation in printed literature and performing arts and, by the beginning of the 20th century, largely contributed to the development of a powerful cultural phenomenon, today known as “classical Hindi literature”. As it has been repeatedly pointed out by a number of research-scholars (e.g., Meenakshi Mukherjee, Vasudha Dalmia, Stuart Blackburn, Harish Trivedi), the Post-Mutiny India was all about (re-)creating and (re-)establishing “multiple identities” (mainly, in social and religious spheres). Nearly all social groups and communities in India were involved in this process: thus, the matters of religious and communal identity formed the main trajectory in socio-cultural development of the cities and towns in and around the Gangetic plain, and the tendency was getting more and more pronounced with every passing year. By the 1880s, the literary and linguistic culture of the region was experiencing a very clear communal pressure: the line, separating Devanagari-based sanskritised Hindi and Persian-script-based Urdu was being deliberately broadened, and the differences between these “two registers” of one language (Francesca Orsini) were pointed out rather bluntly. As a result of this “Great Divide”, Hindi and Urdu “became the languages of ‘communal identity’” (Alok Rai): the first one was clearly marked as the language of the modern “Indic tradition”, the second was proclaimed as the mainstream language of the “Muslim community”.

These are the fictional and non-fictional texts - news-paper articles, essays, pamphlets, plays and, of course, novels - that represent the whole process of identity-making, with all its nuances, in the best way. Hence, the litterateurs of Delhi and Benares, Aligarh and Patna, Lukhnow and Allahabad were, each in his/her own manner, daily contributing to creating one or another aspect of their relevant communal identity. At the same time, many of them, also, were productively engaged in portraying the neighboring communities: literary texts in Hindi tended to create a blown-up image of Islamic population (as individuals and/or as a group), while Urdu authors were relevantly interested in portraying Hindus/Sikhs/Jainas and their communities.

In the present paper, I am suggesting a closer look at a few representative Hindi texts by three Hindi authors, who were actively publishing their works between the 1880s and 1910s—namely, Kishorilal Goswami, Lajjaram Sharma and Devakinandan Khatri. These writers made a very special effort to point out religious and communal background of the fictional characters and, thus, to create a general impression about the role of Hindus and

Muslims both in contemporary Indian society and in historical perspective. Being non-secular Hindus themselves, they not only pointed out certain negative sides of “the other” community but, also, severely criticized the Islamic rulers of India (especially in historical novels, where the theme of Hindu-Muslim relationship normally served as the ground for the main conflict). However, it seems that the hostility between the two leading communities, as mirrored in Hindi novels, was more of social than purely religious origin; more importantly, it became more pronounced at the very last decades of the 19th century. Why was the task of portraying Muslims so crucial for Hindi litterateurs, especially at the time of serious socio-political and religious turbulences; how this interest goes along with the identity-making agenda of the epoch; what are the ways to structure and generalize the relevant attitudes of the authors and to explain them from the point of view of historical development of the Post-Mutiny society in the Northern India—these are some of the questions to be approached in this paper.

Alexander Dubyanskiy, Moscow State University, Russia

Royal attributes as reflected in Caṅkam poetry

In the famous Tamil treatise *Tolkāppiyam* there is a sutra (III, 9, 71) describing things that belong to kings ‘with a just sceptre’: army (or a weapon), banner, parasol, drum, horses, elephants, chariot, garland, crown and others. These objects play a significant role in Tamil heroic poetry and many poetical images are based on them. Sometimes this or that object is chosen as the main spring of a poem (for instance, in the poem *Puṛaṇāṅṅūru* 50 a chieftain is praised by a description of his noble behavior towards a poet who was found sleeping on a cot prepared for a royal drum). Some natural symbols of royal power (particularly characteristic for Tamil culture) should be specially mentioned – garlands made of leaves and flowers of certain plants and the so called tutelary trees (or protected groves), which were supposed to accumulate the life-energy of the king. The plants were chosen for different kings and chieftains and were considered as their personal royal insignia. To describe all paraphernalia of a king (such as his court, ministers, counsellors etc.) is not the aim of this paper but one object will be touched upon – a special place where the king met his subjects. It is called *irukkai* and in the context of the Tamil poetry it is especially important because exactly there the king encountered wandering performers (poets, singers, dancers) and listened to their songs. In a way of a suggestion we can say that this place was a prototype of an assembly out of which later a notion of a poetical

academy – caṅkam – developed.

Danielle Feller, Lausanne University, Switzerland

Nuns involving in the affairs of the world

In a number of Indian plays (Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava*, Harṣa's *Priyadarśikā*, etc.) we see nuns or holy women holding positions at the court, as personal advisors to the Queen, getting involved in courtly intrigues and affairs, or even functioning as go-between for lovers. The context makes it clear that these holy women are often Buddhist nuns (*parivrājikās*), dressed in reddish nun's garb. Their presence is of course surprising, since Vinaya texts abundantly state that nuns (and monks too, of course) should stay clear of the affairs of the world and live a retired life, dedicated to meditation, study and teaching.

In this paper I will try to determine the exact function of these religious characters in these plays, and try to evaluate whether or not this in deed corresponded to a social reality, or whether it was a fiction invented by the play-wrights, corresponding to then-current clichés on such personages.

Adalbert J. Gail, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

"Cosmogonical Indian myths - their pictorial versions and their importance in the Khmer Empire"

In Milano/Gargnano I submitted a paper on the migration of a Buddhist image type from India (Amaravati) via Sri Lanka to the Khmer empire in Cambodia: the Buddha, protected by the naga-king Mucilinda. I would like to extend this line of thinking on Hinduism by selecting two Vaisnava myths - Visnu's waking up and creation of the world (*Anantasayana*) and the churning of the ocean of milk (*amrtamanthana*) - that gained central importance both in Hindu and Buddhist temples, greater importance than in their homeland. Not only the subject itself, cosmogony, is the reason for their incorporation into the national heritage during the Angkor period, but the major role of serpents (*naga*) in them that represent the dominant symbols of water on which the Khmer empire was dependent and through lack of which it probably vanished.

Cezary Galewicz and Lidia Sudyka, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

The eightfold gymnastics of mind: preliminary report on the idea and tradition of aṣṭāvādhana

In his *Prabandhacaturviṃśati Rājaśekhara* draws a sort of portrait of an intellectual milieu composed of a circle of poets and literati patronized by king Visaladeva (c. 1271). He claims one of them to be certain *Vīśalanagarīya Nānāka*. Incidentally an inscription dated to 1271 discovered in the *Koṭeśvara Mahādeva Temple of Koinār* contains a regular *praśasti* eulogising apparently the same person. The hero of the *praśasti* is among else said to be exceptionally versed in the art of Vedic recitation, having memorized the whole of the *Ṛgveda* as well as the ancillary *vedāṅgas*, to be versed in grammar and the lore of drama as well as epics and *purāṇas*. He seems to have been a veritable polymath. However, the person of the author of *praśasti* is of greater importance for us. In the formulations of the *praśasti* (v. 36 *praśasti* I) he is described as *aṣṭāvadhanaparituṣṭahrd*. The exact reference of this compound has not been explored by the Garde who turned our attention to this *praśasti* sometime ago.

A field study initiated in 2008 in contemporary Karnataka and Andhra aims at drawing a preliminary image of the art of *aṣṭāvādhana*, its history, social setting and tradition of performance.

Elisa Ganser and Daniele Cuneo, La Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

The Actor's Social Status and Agency Fame or Misery?

The position of the actor in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the first and foremost Indian treatise of dramaturgical principles, is ambiguous, to say the least. Although the actor represents the practical focus of a large number of chapters (all those treating of representation, *abhinaya*) and the veritable centre of any conceivable theatrical representation, the actors are cursed to be degraded to the status of *sūdras* in the thirty-six chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, because they have misused their histrionic abilities to mock the *ṛṣis*. The lowermost social status of the actors in ancient Indian society is confirmed by passages of the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, such as 4.214, 9.225 or 10.22. However, the last chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* leaves the possibility for the actors to redeem themselves from their condition

and win back their original status of brāhmaṇas. This is indeed achieved through their own acting activities, provided they are based on the śāstra's instructions, and through the initiation of new pupils to the theatrical art. Moreover, in other passages the Nāṭyaśāstra seems to envisage even the possibility for the actor to achieve liberation, mokṣa, through their very activity. The commentary of Abhinavagupta, generally quite informant about the social and cultural background of the performing arts of his time, presents us in its turn with various figures of performers, who seem to have, if not necessarily different social statuses, different moral statures. An inquiry into these figures and into the aforementioned curse-and-atonement episode might be the occasion to try to assess the general ethics of the profession. Therefore, this paper will focus on the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra, especially in the light of Abhinavagupta's commentary, in order to assess the social ratio underlining the story of the actors' curse and to account, therefore, for the ambiguity of their status on both the social and the mythological level.

Klara Gönc Moačanin, University of Zagreb, Croatia

“Indian society as depicted in the Caturbhāṇī and in Mahendravikramavarman's prahasanaś”

In the classical Indian theatre or nāṭya two rūpakas, nāṭaka and prakaraṇa, represent the most valued rūpakas or dramatic varieties. Nāṭaka with its mytho-heroic-love subject and idealized representation of life does not give a realistic picture of Indian life as prakaraṇas, profane in its character, do describing urban life (Śūdraka's Mṛcchakaṭikā) or courtly life (Kālidāsa's Mālavikāgnimitra). The third preserved prakaraṇa, Bhavabhūti's Mālatīmādhava, with its love story, gives also some socio-religious background (tantrism). But the most plastic picture of everyday social life in ancient India is to be found in two other rūpakas which are bhāṇa and prahasana. Bhāṇas are exemplified in Caturbhāṇī in the texts of Śyāmilaka, Vararuci, Śūdraka and Īśvaradatta and prahasana are best represented in the work of Mahendravikramavarman. Lively description of city life is achieved by bringing on the stage persons from different strata of society in a kaleidoscopic range of interesting characters.

Martin Hříbek, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Rivers of separation, roads to hope: cultural identity in post-independence Bengali cinema

Bengal has been an important centre of Indian nation building since the nineteenth century Bengali Renaissance. The National anthem and National song of India stem from there as well as many mutually contradicting, peaceful as well as violent, imageries of the path towards her independence as expressed in early modern works of Bengali literature and art. Bengali authors moved with surprising ease from one layer of collective identity to another - from Bengali to Indian to universally human. The independence of India came as a rupture to Bengali cultural identity. On the one hand, the long-cherished goal was achieved, on the other the partition and horrors that followed it left the Bengali community divided and deeply scared. This paper examines the expressions of cultural identity in post-independence Bengali cinema from the modernist project of Satyajit Ray's *Song of the Road* to contemporary social critique, e.g., *Herbert* (2005) by Suman Mukhopadhyay.

Vera Lazzaretti, University of Milan-Turin, Italy

Constructing the eternal city of light through history and society: images of *kāśī* between historical reality and mythical transmission in the 18th-20th centuries “picture maps” and the case of replicated sacred places

No account or discourse on *Kāśī* goes without claiming the extraordinary status of the place; the city, for example, is considered the eternal *īrtha* where all notable places of Indian sacred geography are represented by local replicas; moreover, according to Puranic tradition *Kāśī* is said to dwell on Lord Śiva's *trīśūla*, surviving the universal dissolution for it exists outside space, beyond time. The perception of the historical place gets often confused with the mythical image forged by the *māhātmya* tradition and supported by different actors in the course of time (sacred specialists, “new hindus”, nationalists, orientalist and tourists). The paper deals with the image of *Kāśī* beyond time and space and analyses its construction through history and society. As an introduction, the promotion of the city mythical status will be presented in historical perspective by analysing the steps of construction and reconstruction of its sacred geography. Afterwards, the paper will focus on the contribution of 18th- 20th centuries “picture maps” by showing the ways adopted by these visual sources to forge and transmit the eternal image of the

city through the combination of physical reality (historical survey) and visionary elements (beyond history and society). Finally, touching on the evolution of the practices of representation in contemporary Banāras popular views, the paper will concentrate the presence of replicas in the maps. Thus, focusing our attention on jyotirlingas, which converge in one of the major groups of deities representing the all-encompassing quality of the city, the paper aims at showing how visual sources portray and promote the mythical image of Kāśī between local reality, source evidence and imaginary space.

Natalia Lidova, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

Vṛttis in the Nāṭyaśāstra: Stylistic Devices or Means of the World Creation.

According to the Nāṭyaśāstra, drama should be enacted with the help of the devices, named Vṛttis. As many other categories of the Ancient Indian drama theory, the term Vṛtti has no precise equivalent in the European languages, but it is most often interpreted as the manner or style of the performance. To all appearances, the Vṛttis originated at a very early stage in the formation of the Nāṭyaśāstra system of categories. Oblique confirmation of this point can be found in the legend on the origin of Nāṭya (Ch. I). According to it, the new knowledge of the Fifth Veda, created by Brahma at the watershed between the Kṛta and Tretā Yugas in order to improve morals and rescue the degrading world, was put in practice (prayoga) by sage Bharata. He resorted for that to the three primary Vṛttis - bhāratī, sāttvatī and ārabhaṭī, to which god Śiva eventually added the fourth one, kaiśikī. In this paper I attempt to reconstruct the earliest formative stage of the Vṛttis, analyzing it within the concept of cyclic time, which I consider to be a crucial key for the interpretation of the Nāṭyaśāstra mythological complex. According to the legend about the origin of Vṛttis (Ch. XXII), they emerged long before Nāṭya. In times immemorial, none other than Brahma, the supreme god, established the Vṛttis in four Vedas as the universal pillars of Being and the basic divine activities. At the time of another Creation, when the Universe was reborn after a long period of non-existence (Mahapralaya), Viṣṇu, in Brahma's presence and with his assistance, re-created them anew. Initially he needed the Vṛttis for practical reason (to vanquish two demons - Madhu and Kaiṭabha), but eventually they became the basis of his divine Game, that being equal to the Creation, resulted in restraining Chaos and reviving the cosmic creative powers. As for the worldly Vṛttis, that since Bharata were practiced in the earthly theatre, they had

to be created anew for a third time by wise Brahmins on the base of the scenic idioms, gestures and other devices known as abhinaya. They virtually imitated divine activities performed by Brahma and Viṣṇu, the same way the earthly theatre could re-enact and imitate the divine Game of the gods. It is noteworthy that the bearers of the tradition were well aware of the sublime ontological status of the Vṛttis. Therefore, the authors of the Nāṭyaśāstra referred to them as the Mothers (mātrka) of the Nāṭya, regarding them as the basis of the poetic composition (kāvyabandhāśraya) and the principal criterion for the systematization of the ten canonical types of Sanskrit drama. However, this concept of Vṛttis, just as the sacral hierarchy underlying it, lost much of its topicality already during the formative period of the Nāṭyaśāstra. As in the other similar instances, this led the theoretical system of the treaty to outer redundancy, and made the Vṛttis an analogue of the abhinaya, thus allowing the later theorists to regard them as mere manners or styles of acting.

Monika Nowakowska, University of Warsaw, Poland

Are there any profits coming from religious activities?

While śāstraic Sanskrit texts often brim over with lofty discussions of a theoretical nature, they never pretend to be composed for the sake of composition only. They usually point out their objective in their very first statements. They have their prayojana, for nobody would undertake any activity without a purpose (as some authors state explicite), even if the main aim (or one of the pursued results) might just be the appreciation of the learned. We can detect the same pragmatic approach in connection with religious activities in Indian society, especially in the light of some texts situated at the crossing of śāstra and kāvya. While enjoying either philosophical debates or satirical descriptions of religious communities by, for example, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (a 9th century nyāya scholar and very talented writer), we can not help noticing that religion seems to him, or according to him it seems to many people, to be a simple exchange of services. There is always there a hidden assumption that investment in religious ceremonies has to be reasonable and profitable. We can find similar sentiments in the texts of other Indian traditions, too (Buddhist, for example), which allows us to conclude that such an understanding might have been more general in India. We might however be sometimes surprised by the honesty and straightforwardness of its expression in the texts. In the paper I will try to analyze and illustrate this phenomenon with (often ironic or satirical) examples drawn mainly from Jayanta's philosophical and literary compositions.

Katarzyna Pażucha, Chicago University, USA

Meet the poet; the world of the Sanskrit kavi as presented in Rājaśekhara's Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā

Consider the poets - who are they? How does one become a poet? What are the main factors of poetic creativity? What is the role of pratibhā (genius) compared with that of vyutpatti (training)? What is pāka (poetic maturity) and how does one acquire it? Why do poets need kings, or kings poets? What is the relationship between a poet and his or her critic?

Although these questions seem basic to any consideration of poetics, they did not occupy early theoreticians. Over the centuries most Sanskrit theorists of poetics were concerned with the final product of poetic activity – the kāvya (poem), rather than with its maker - kavi (poet). It was only at the beginning of the tenth century that the court poet of the Pratihāras, Rājaśekhara, set forth to write an encyclopedic text covering all the topics relevant to the making of poetry. He entitled it Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā, “Investigation in Poetry”. It is the first text dealing almost exclusively with the main participants in poetic activity – in particular, a poet and his critic, as well as with a poet's proper work – the composition of a poem. It is the work that became an inspiration and template for the later genre of kaviśikṣā (“handbook for poets”). It is also often the only authority on the topics related with training of poets such as plagiarism, poetic conventions, or typologies of poets and critics.

This paper, using Kāvyaṁīmāṁsā as the main text, will try to answer the questions pertaining to the profession of the poet. We will look into poet's workshop, examine various types of poets, witness a poet at work, learn his daily schedule, visit his mansion, meet his servants, scribes, companions and patrons. We will also try to find out how the poem gets made: what are the necessary ingredients, how to “cook” it, and who is qualified to savor it. Rājaśekhara, himself an acknowledged poet, will take us to his atelier and help us understand what it is the poets do, how and why they do it, and what we need to know in order to participate in the cultured world of Sanskrit kāvya.

Mariola Pigoniowa, University of Wrocław, Poland

The Topos of the Four Ages of Humankind and the Question of Rāma's Divinity

The paper develops Sh.I. Pollock's discussion of Rāma's divinity presented in his paper

“Divine King of the Rāmāyana”. Attention is drawn to the topos of the four ages of humankind and the connection between the idea of the golden age and the divine character of Rāma.

Tiziana Pontillo, University of Cagliari, Italy

The debate on asceticism as a permanent choice of life: some late clues from Mahākāvya

In the first Chapter of the Buddhacarita e.g., before learning of his son’s real fate from ṛṣi Asita, King Śuddhodana solemnly wishes that his son become Lord of the Earth, as foreseen, and expressly that he does not retire to the forest before reaching old age (bhūyād ayaṃ bhūmipatir yathokto yāyāj jarāṃ etya vanāni ceti). Analogously in the fifth Chapter of the Kumārasambhava Queen Menā talks to her daughter Parvatī in order to prevent her becoming an ascetic: she makes her notice how far the tapas-way is actually from her tender body (tapaḥ kva vatse kva ca tāvakaṃ vapuḥ) and above all she tries to recall her the orthodox feminine choice of life: manīsītāḥ santi gṛhesu devatās. This paper aims at inquiring into some passages of Mahākāvya such as these quoted above, which independently of the religious context of single works seem to bear witness to a still current socio-religious debate on asceticism as a permanent alternative (in the sense e.g. of Olivelle 1974 and Tsuchida 1996) to the Brāhmaṇical inclusivistic varṇāśrama-system, although ahiṃsā, abhayadāna and saṃnyāsa are perfectly integrated into Hindu ideology and favoured by royal patronage in the Kāvya-poetry itself (Boccali 2010).

Cetthiarthodi Rajendran, Calicut University, India

Myths and facts. Representation of Kerala history in Atula’s Musakavamsa

Musakavamsa,(also known as Muṣikavamśa) is a historical Mahakavya written by Atula, who was a court poet of King Srikantha , alias Rajadharma who lived in 11th Century AD . The work antedates even Rajatarangini of Kalhana, which is regarded as one of the earliest historical Mahakavyas in Sanskrit. The work deals with the history of the Musaka dynasty, which ruled the Kolathunadu kingdom of North Kerala. The earlier parts of the Mahakavya deal with legendary matters like the mythical origin of the work; but as the work progresses, it deals with much historical data including details of the kings of the lineage, geographical data, temples and other centers of culture, various religious sects,

art, literature and architecture, commerce and shipping. The work is a virtual storehouse of knowledge regarding the history of Northern Kerala. An interesting amalgam of myths and facts an analysis of the work will yield rich insights into ancient Indian historiography. The present paper is an attempt to investigate the historiographical aspects of the text and to evaluate the work as a historical Mahakavya.

Elena Restelli, University of Milan, Italy

Adoption, adaption, transformation: the Mahiṣamardinī imagery in pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa art

The origin of the goddess killing the buffalo-demon is very obscure. Sculptural evidence starts with the beginning of the Common Era. The early specimens of Mahiṣamardinī motif are dated in the pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa periods (c. II century B.C. – II century A. D.) and are found mainly in North Central India. This paper deals with the study of the icons of the goddess coming from Mathurā and belonging to this period. Here the Devī is shown while pressing the hind part of the buffalo with one of her hands and breaking the animal's neck with another. By analysing the distinctive features of the icons we will show their composite nature. The multiple arms of the goddess give strong indication that there is much in the nature of the deity that relates to the indigenous traditions; however, the goddess displays in her attire some traits which can be at home in more than one culture. We will assume that, due to the specific historical and cultural period, the goddess has absorbed into her iconography few motifs originating from non-indian areas but sufficiently familiar in the local traditions so as to be assimilated; in fact, during the pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa ages, the pathways between the territories beyond the Northwest frontiers and North India were more than connective routes carrying goods. Ideas and cultural innovations also travelled. Adoption, adaptation, transformation. These may be the hallmarks characterizing the vitality and creativity of pre-Kuṣāṇa and early Kuṣāṇa art, as can be represented by our goddess. In an attempt to understand where the notion of the multi-armed goddess with buffalo comes from, we will analyze the iconographic units and stylistic idiosyncrasies of her imagery explaining why this occurs only in the Doab and how the components merged together in the iconography of the goddess. This process will be treated as being representative of the cultural and political climate fostered by pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa rulers who were evidently interested in integrating motifs and foreign prototypes and in transforming them into new artistic idioms affecting the indigenous output.

Daniela Rossella, University of Potenza, Italy

**Ahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇam “[that one] I call a brahmin”... Buddhism
and society as they are reflected in the Vajrasūcī attributed to
Aśvaghoṣa**

Abstract: The purpose of my short paper is to present the contents of the Vajrasūcī attributed to Aśvaghoṣa: the text strikes a harsh attack against the social and religious primacy of the brāhmaṇa class, arguing that there is only one and undifferentiated varṇa. The substance (and the tone) of this text is perfectly in line with those of the oldest part of the Buddhist Canon, and in this way it confirms - after centuries - the contents of the latter: thus, the Vajrasūcī can help to illustrate the contribution offered by Buddhism on the social (and not only spiritual) level at the time when the dharma of the Enlightened One was born and flourished.

**Danuta Stasik, Chair of South Asian Studies, Faculty
of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland**

**Following the Path of One’s Duty: Tulsīdās’s Rāmcaritmānas as a
Socio-Cultural Code**

As I have noted in my previous publications (esp. in *The Infinite Story. The Past and Present of the Rāmāyaṇas in Hindi*, Delhi: Manohar, 2009), the significant role of Tulsīdās’s magnum opus, the Rāmcaritmānas (1574), cannot be overestimated in the ethos of north Indian culture. The story of Rām’s deeds interpreted by the poet in agreement with the spirit of his times not only vocalizes its author’s ideas and is one of the best testimonies of the world-view of those times but, what is especially significant in this context, it unhesitatingly supports the core values of the Hindu varṇāśrama dharma / baranāśrama dharma. As a result, throughout the centuries since its inception, the poem has enjoyed high moral status among Hindus, for whom it has set the model of life to be followed. In my presentation, I will make an attempt at exploring the Rāmcaritmānas as a socio-cultural code that sets out the boundaries of “how things should be done” and the important term maryādā / maryādit lit. ‘limit, boundary’ / ‘limited, restricted’ will be first referred to. The focus of my analysis will be the rules of conduct formulated in the poem, which aim at regulating the life of society, and the consequences caused by their observing or breaking them.

Lidia Szczepanik, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Prisons in Sanskrit literature: a comparison of Arthaśāstra and Vāg- maṇḍana-guṇa-dūta-kāvya descriptions.

The topic of prisons is not observed in Sanskrit literature very often. The most information can be found in normative texts like the Arthaśāstra, where incarceration is described as an unpopular penalty for those not able to pay the fines imposed upon them. Jails themselves are portrayed as a place where the welfare of the prisoners is of the utmost importance.

Prison life is definitely not a topic we would expect to be portrayed in a kāvya poem, keeping in mind the traditional definitions that kāvya should treat about grand things like battles and heroic deeds or about love. Yet that is not entirely true in the case of the Vāg-maṇḍana-guṇa-dūta-kāvya by Vīreśvara. Not much is known about the text, other than it was most likely composed in Bengal before the 12 century. In 4 ślokaś of his dūtakāvya the author shows the reality of prison life and it is something completely different than the idealised depictions of the Arthaśāstra. This very interesting clash of theoretical norms and “reality” is the subject of my presentation.

Anna Trynkowska, University of Warsaw, Poland

Political metaphors in the mahākāvya

Politics is one of the subjects most frequently dealt with in Classical Sanskrit literature (kāvya), which, naturally, reflects, in its own specific manner, the most important aspects of the reality of life in its predominantly courtly milieu. In Sanskrit court epic poems (mahākāvya, sargabandha), stanzas on politics figure prominently especially in descriptions of ideal rulers, as well as in speeches of characters forming part of the scenes of councils (mantra) and the dispatch or reception of envoys (dūta). The paper employs the methods of cognitive linguistics, which have proven to be highly applicable in literary criticism, including the analysis of Vedic and kāvya texts (see, e.g., Joanna Jurewicz, *Fire and Cognition in the Ṛgveda*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warsaw 2010; and Linda Covill, *A Metaphorical Study of Saundarananda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi 2009), as well as in research into politics and social issues, to study in detail the political metaphors and similes in the relevant passages of four mahākāvyaś: Kālidāśa’s Raghuvamśa, Bhāravi’s Kirātārjunīya, Bhaṭṭi’s Rāvaṇavadha and Māgha’s Śīsupālavadha.

Jaroslav Vacek, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Old Tamil kings and chieftains as described in Sangam literature

Old Tamil Sangam literature can offer some very concrete information about a number of local chieftains (Pāri, ōri, āy, Nallī, Pēkaṇ etc.) and occasionally also their relation with the three great dynasties Pāṇṭya, Cōḷa and Cēra. The three dynasties use special symbols, which are partly derived from nature: tiger (puli) – emblem of the Cōḷa Kings; fish (mīṇ) – symbol of the Pāṇṭyas. The Western Cēras use a ‘military’ symbol, viz. the bow (vil). Chieftains (vēḷir) are referred to on various occasions, they fulfil various roles, among other things also that of ‘sponsors’ of the poets. References to chieftains and other ‘political’ figures in Sangam literature are made with regard to war and partly other social functions as can be seen in the standard formulas appearing with these figures. They possess strong or quick bows (val vil, 33x), long lances (neṭu vēl, 29x) or sharp lances (kūr vēl, 10x), (great) moving chariots (iyal tēr, 21x) or strong chariots (tēr vaṇ, 8x) and strong horses (mā vaṇ, 11x) or big horses (neṭu mā, 5x). Their hands are wide (taṭam kai, 46x) and strong (kai vaṇ, 18x) and they perform good battles (nal pōr, 7x), enjoy a great fame (urai cāl, 19x) or a strong fame (vaṇ pukaḷ, 5x), and experience a strong joy (vaṇ makil, 14x). The paper will discuss some of these ‘qualifications’ and show to what extent they refer exclusively to these ‘men of war’ or to some other figures.

Tomasz Winiarski, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Women's Town - Ghost Town. A Picture of a Dying City in the Raghuvamśa

In Raghuvamśa XVI, 9-21 Kālidāsa portrays Ayodhyā dying of anarchy. It is peculiar that this image lacks descriptions of the city being plundered by raging hordes or destroyed by a civil war or even a simple crime, which we could expect in an arājaka situation. Kālidāsa concentrates on women instead. For the poet, the city itself is a woman, it lives in and through women, who are manifestation of its 'soul'. The distortion and destruction of their presence in Ayodhyā slowly turns it into a ghost town, haunted by images of its glorious past.

Jacek Woźniak, University of Warsaw, Poland

Tirumaṅkaiyālvār's maṭal Poems and Social History of Early Medieval South India

One of the important means of promoting new ideas and creating new social formation during the emergence of the so-called bhakti movement in Early Medieval South India was undoubtedly literature, and indeed we can see the outburst of innumerable devotional hymns that appeared in that period of time. Tirumaṅkaiyālvār (ca. 9th century C.E.) is one of the most prolific Tamil Vaiṣṇava bhakti poets. Besides his magnum opus, i.e. Periya tirumōḷi, he is also the author of few minor poetical compositions, all of them being later included in the collection of Nālāyira tivviyaḥ pirapantam ('The Four Thousand Divine Poems'), a holy scripture of Tamil Vaiṣṇavas. Among his shorter pirapantams two hymns are of special interest for us here, namely his maṭal genre poems – Ciṛiya tirumaṭal ('Short Holy Maṭal') and Periya tirumaṭal ('Long Holy Maṭal'), both "based on the ancient erotic theme belonging to the setting of one-sided love" (Zvelebil 1974: 106). Referring to the poetic conventions of Old Tamil caṅkam poetry, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār in his highly allegorical and devotional maṭals presents most of all a religious outlook of his times, but also, although to a lesser extent, draws a picture of social conditions in the Early Medieval South India. Thus, we can learn from his maṭals about daily life and social customs (eg. riding a palmyra-stem horse (maṭal ūrtal) by rejected and desperate lovers or the methods of divination used as a medical treatment), religious practices (pilgrimage, temple worship) and theological disputes on the ways leading devoted souls to salvation (pakti and pirapatti). Interestingly, the considerations on the four puruṣārthas (and their refutation), the position and importance of women, the aspects of God's attributes and other issues that are mentioned in the Tirumaṅkaiyālvār's maṭal poems undoubtedly resulted in later philosophical and theological debates of the śrīvaiṣṇavism (or tiruvaiṇavam), a distinct South Indian Hindu religious tradition.