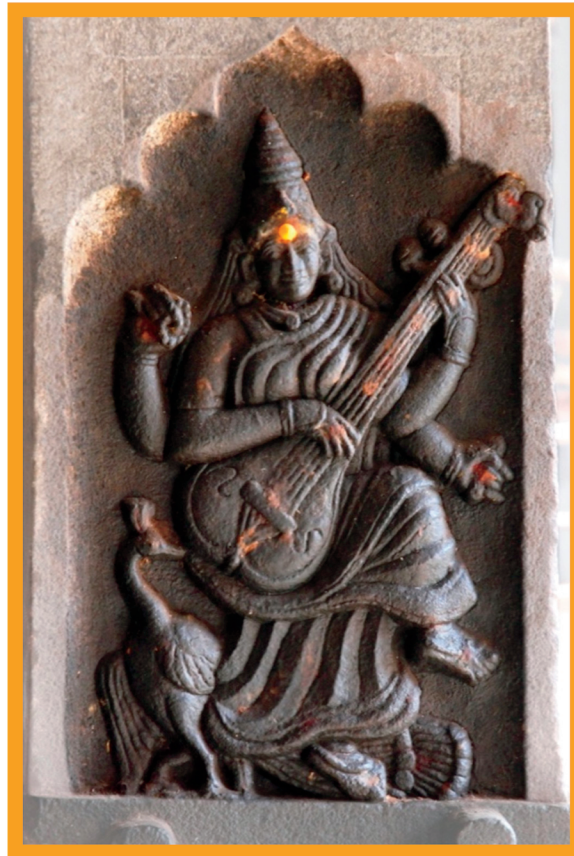


«Bhūtārthakathane...Sarasvatī» Reading Poetry as a History Book



International Conference
15th-16th December 2022

Śivadharma Project @ University of Bologna

📍 Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna, Via Zamboni 31
&

🔗 Online on Zoom

Organisers: Prof. Marco Franceschini, Dr. Alessandro Battistini, Dr. Chiara Livio

Discussants: Prof. Florinda De Simini, Dr. Kengo Harimoto, Dr. Csaba Kiss,
Dr. Martina Dello Buono, Prof. Saverio Marchignoli

Wednesday, 14th December 2022

20:30 Welcome dinner

Thursday, 15th December 2022

9:00-9:30 Guests arrival and opening speeches

Session 1 Chair: Dániel Balogh

9:30-10:15 **Yuko Yokochi:** The *Kapphiṇābhyudaya* in its historical background.

10:15-11:00 **Ofer Peres:** Real places imagined: The historical value of Tamil *Talapurāṇams*.

11:00-11:30 coffee break

Session 2 Chair: Judit Törzsök

11:30-12:15 **Dominic Goodall:** Khmer history through *kāvya*?

12:15-13:00 **Alessandro Battistini:** Why we should read the *maṅgala* verses. Reconstructing the history of the Ummattūr dynasty from the incipit of Maṅgapa's *Bhāvadīpikā* on Utpreṣāvallabha's *Bhikṣāṭanakāvya*.

13:00-14:30 lunch break

Session 3 Chair: Yuko Yokochi

14:30-15:15 **Harunaga Isaacson:** Notes on the works of Amaraçandra and their influence.

15:15-16:00 **Csaba Dezső:** Temporality and realism in early Buddhist narrative *kāvya*.

16:00-16:30 coffee break

Session 4 Chair: Alessandro Battistini

16:30-17:15 **Luther Obrock:** The good, the bad, and true poets: Ethical subjects and literary history.

17:15-18:00 **Andrey Klebanov:** Once again on Prakāśavarṣa, an early commentator on the *Kirātārjunīya*.

20:30 dinner

Friday, 16th December 2022

Session 1 **Chair: Csaba Dezső**

9:30-10:15 **Diwakar Acharya:** t.b.a.

10:15-11:00 **Dániel Balogh:** Thematic analysis techniques and royal representation in copperplate grants.

11:00-11:30 coffee break

Session 2 **Chair: Lidia Wojtczak**

11:30-12:15 **Whitney Cox:** History through allusion in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.

12:15-13:00 **Andrew Ollett:** Patron as character.

13:00-14:30 lunch break

Session 3 **Chair: Whitney Cox**

14:30-15:15 **Judit Törzsök:** Murāri's aerial view of India.

15:15-16:00 **Lidia Wojtczak:** Building Brahmaṣṭetra: The Keralan literary landscape in *dūtakāvya*.

16:00-16:30 coffee break

Session 4 **Chair: Luther Obrock**

16:30-17:15 **Sander Hens:** Waking Pṛthvīrāja: Historical vs. poetic role models in the pre- and afterlife of Jayānaka's *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*.

17:15-18:00 **Tancredi Padova:** Poeticizing history, historicizing poetry: literary borrowing as a narratological device in South Indian historical *kāvya*.

20:30 dinner



Book of Abstracts

Acharya, Diwakar. *t.b.a.*

Balogh, Dániel. *Thematic analysis techniques and royal representation in copperplate grants.*

Many of us have sought to find substantiation in texts for historical insights or theories. Such support is commonly based on intuition arising out of a researcher's familiarity with a body of texts, and may be illustrated by cherry-picked examples. While the underlying expertise is not to be undervalued, the approach necessarily involves a great deal of subjectivity and is prone to overlooking details that do not fit one's preconceptions. It may be possible to reduce the ensuing potential bias, at least for certain kinds of research questions, by adopting methodology more solidly grounded in the textual evidence. This paper applies the method of thematic analysis or qualitative content analysis, widely used in the social sciences, to studying the way rulers represent themselves and others in the copperplate grants of the Eastern Cālukya dynasty. The concise style and highly formalised structure of such praśastis makes these documents very amenable to "coding," the backbone of thematic analysis. Coding consists in the assignment of thematic labels to assertions made in the texts. Initially assigned codes may be revised repeatedly as the work progresses, and may be organised into hierarchies or levels of abstraction. Further analysis may go in various directions such as exploratory close reading guided by the identified themes, or quantitative comparisons of the frequencies with which specific themes occur in specific subsets of the text corpus. "Coding" in this sense is unrelated to "encoding" a text in a digital markup system such as TEI, but the latter (among several computer-aided methods) can facilitate the former, and becomes increasingly feasible with the growing availability of digital corpora. Nonetheless, one must neither hope for, nor dread the possibility that the computer can just do its magic instead of the researcher. On the one hand, thematic analysis, especially when involving premodern texts in a language such as Sanskrit, requires meticulous human work (and still involves human subjectivity) at the coding stage. On the other hand, positive deductions concern the level of "what is there in the texts," and inductive hypotheses as regards the world of meanings constituted in and by the texts remain firmly in the domain of the human mind.

Battistini, Alessandro. *Why we should read the maṅgala verses. Reconstructing the history of the Ummattūr dynasty from the incipit of Maṅgapa's Bhāvadīpikā on Utpreṣāvallabha's Bhikṣāṭanakāvya.*

Paraphrasing the title of an important contribution devoted to literary beginnings, this talk will present to the public the introductory stanzas of Maṅgapa's commentary on the Poem on the mendicancy of Śiva.

Maṅgapa, a rather obscure ruler from 16th century Karnataka, wrote an extensive commentary on the masterpiece of Utpreṣāvallabha, filled with acumen and erudition. He prefaced to it thirty dense stanzas in which he provided a detailed yet sometimes problematic family tree for his dynasty. This long praśasti follows the conventions of kāvya, and already introduces us to Maṅgapa's inspirations and method for his commentarial work. Thanks to these verses, now edited for the first time, we are able to fill the gaps in the succession of the Ummattūrs, whose only other records lay scattered in epigraphical reports. By reconstructing Maṅgapa's courtly environment, and especially trying to outline the figure of his spiritual teacher, the elusive Vīraśaiva guru Pañcākṣara, we can broaden and deepen our view on the motivations behind the composition of his commentary, and on the cultural and religious life of premodern South India.

Cox, Whitney. *History through allusion in Bilhaṇa's Vikramāṅkadevacarita.*

I take as my starting point a peculiar absence within the domain of Sanskrit *kāvya*: despite abundant evidence of poets borrowing, reworking, and travestyng the words of their predecessors, there is practically no attention to the nature of literary allusion (or homage, reference, or renvoi) within *kāvya*'s immense and sophisticated theoretical and commentarial apparatus. Despite the clearly generative nature of such a practice of borrowing, what little discussion there is of it seems almost entirely negative: Ānandavardhana cautions poets to be judicious about when and where they choose to borrow from others, while Rājasekhara, in his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, speaks of *śabda-* and *arthaharaṇa*, the 'seizing' or even 'abduction' of other poets' words and meanings. Echoing this in the preamble to his *mahākāvya*, Bilhaṇa writes darkly of how *kāvya*rthacaurāḥ *praguṇībhavanti*, 'thieves of poems' meanings, ever at the ready'. After a brief review of the prospects for understanding the nature of literary allusion in Sanskrit *kāvya*, I will examine its operation in the poem of Bilhaṇa's, the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*. Notwithstanding his protests, Bilhaṇa was a master at such borrowings. I will demonstrate how close attention to Bilhaṇa's allusions helps us better understand this work in at least three interrelated historical contexts: those of literary history, the history of political competition, and finally in the personal history of this émigré Kashmirian poet of the late eleventh century.

Dezső, Csaba. *Temporality and realism in early kāvya.*

Following the lead of Daud Ali's study ("Temporality, narration and the problem of history" in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 50, 2 (2013): 237–259), this paper is going to examine the role of temporality and realism in early Buddhist narrative *kāvya* (Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* *Drṣṭāntapañkti* and the *Jātakamālā*s of Āryaśūra and Haribhaṭṭa). Some topics to be discussed: styles

of narration, realia, temporal framing, supernatural elements, conventionalised narrative strategies, recurrent tropes, etc.

Goodall, Dominic. *Khmer history through kāvya?*

The only surviving written sources produced in Khmer-speaking regions for the early history of the Khmers are their stone inscriptions, about 1500 of which survive that date between the sixth and the fourteenth centuries CE. Almost all of these are written in Sanskrit or Khmer or both, with the Khmer texts dealing typically with legal and administrative matters, and the Sanskrit typically providing flowers of rhetoric in praise of the deities whose installations and endowments they record and in praise of the kings and dignitaries who presided over such acts of pious generosity. Orotund eulogies in Sanskrit can seem hollow and repetitive, thus making every figure praised into a paragon of virtues seemingly devoid of individual characteristics and achievements. This has led several scholars to express impatience with the deficiencies of these documents as historical sources. In this paper, a few instances will be presented of the kinds of information that can be drawn specifically from passages in high kāvya style, in other words from the sorts of passages that are sometimes dismissed as void of historical significance.

Hens, Sander. *Waking Pṛthvīrāja: Historical vs. poetic role models in the pre- and afterlife of Jayānaka's Pṛthvīrājaviḷaya.*

The genre of historical *kāvya* has attracted significant interest from historians who have used these texts to gather all kinds of information about historical realities outside the text. This paper attempts to explore to which extent such texts were also read or used by premodern readers as historical sources. What kind of historical knowledge were the authors and audiences of these texts predominantly interested in (re)constructing and passing on? I discuss the case of Jayānaka's *Pṛthvīrājaviḷaya-mahākāvya* (1192-3?), the first literary and historical account of the (in)famous Chauhan king Pṛthvīrāja, now more popularly known as the 'Last Hindu Emperor' who was defeated by Muhammad Ghori in 1192. My interest lies in the unsettling portrayal of Pṛthvīrāja's sleepiness in the final extant canto. Jayānaka, a Shaiva poet from Kashmir, seems to be playing with the idea of Pṛthvīrāja as a reincarnation of a not so ideal Rāma/Viṣṇu, who needs to wake up as from his latest 'passive' incarnation as Buddha, but ultimately doesn't. There's a remarkable continuation of this theme in nearly all the literary texts about this king in subsequent centuries, including the much later *Pṛthvīrāja-rāso*, ascribed to his legendary court poet Cand Bardai, traditionally regarded as the first vernacular *mahākavi*. It would seem that contemporaries of the Chauhan king, witnessing his downfall, had founded a tradition of historical poetry about a tragic king, whose fatal sleepiness was offered as the 'historical' explanation for this turning point in Indian history, which in turn was linked to the very beginning of a new, vernacular and historical literature in North India. Yet, from a more literary-historical perspective, Jayānaka's mythical-historical explanation for the nascent defeat of his heropatron can be seen as a continuation and elaboration of an important meta-poetic theme going back to the beginnings of *kāvya* literature: the court poet's critical role as someone who intervenes into his

political present to 'wake up' kings. This paper considers how the unprecedented growth of historical literature from 1000 CE onwards appears to crystalize around the new figure of the critical poet-historian who inserts himself as a character in his own text, something that may have been pioneered by Bāṇa and was passed on by poets like Bilhaṇa, Jayānaka, and the legendary vernacular poet Cand Bardai.

Isaacson, Harunaga. *Notes on the works of Amaraçandra and their influence.*

An extraordinary author of the thirteenth century, belonging to the circle of the famous Vastupāla, Amaraçandra has left us among other works an extraordinary work on *kaviśikṣā*, the *Kāvyaikalpalatā* (the verses of which were written partly by Amaraçandra's teacher Arisimha), and an extraordinary poem, the *Bālabhārata*. These works have been rather neglected by modern scholars, but can be seen to have had very considerable popularity and influence for centuries. I shall offer some observations on these two unusual works, their relationship, their remarkable author, and their influence on later Sanskrit poetry and poetics.

Klebanov, Andrey. *Once again on Prakāśavarṣa, an early commentator on the Kirātārjunīya.*

In my PhD thesis, have discussed the identity of someone Prakāśavarṣa, a presumably early Kashmiri commentator on the *Kirātārjunīya*. Based on listings in secondary literature, I observed that there were four different authorities by this name known in the history of Classical Sanskrit literature, and I tried to establish their relation to the author of the commentary which I studied. In doing so, I hypothetically postulated that it was likely a single scholar Prakāśavarṣa who composed commentary styled the *Laghuṭikā* on the *Kirātārjunīya*, tutored the famed commentator Vallabhadeva in several subjects, and wrote a number of Sanskrit verses preserved in several collections, above all in the 15th-century *Subhāṣitāvalī* compiled by another Vallabhadeva.

In my talk, I will reaccess the above analysis and present additional primary material that provides further evidence for the correctness of my earlier hypothesis. After discussing the identity of the author of the *Laghuṭikā*, I will present a few further findings concerning the textual history of the commentary based on the discovery of about twenty stray leaves of a manuscript written in the Śāradā script, which transmits Prakāśavarṣa's text on several verses of the poem.

Obrock, Luther. *The good, the bad, and true poets: Ethical subjects and literary history.*

This paper looks to the theorizations of poetry and audience within *mahākāvya*s to trace out a history of poetry in Sanskrit literature. Concentrating on two fascinating but understudied texts, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* of Maṅkha and the *Prthvīrājavijaya* of Jayanaka, I will argue that the poems themselves address their audience as an ideal ethical and political subject. Each of these poems has a complete chapter devoted to poetic appreciation and the history of *kāvya* (chapter 2 in the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, chapter 1 in the *Prthvīrājavijaya*). Each of these chapters explicitly theorizes poetry in terms of the poetic

appreciation of good people (*santaḥ, sajjanāḥ*) and the denigration of works by bad people (*khalāḥ, durjanāḥ*). This typology of the ideal audience forms the basis of a theory of poetry in the world and similarly a theory of literary history.

Both the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* and the *Prthvīrājaviṅyaya* are embedded in their historical world to a far greater extent than many other canonical *mahākāvya*s. The *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* embeds its telling in the history of Maṅkha's family in Kashmir and the visit of a Śīlahāra ambassador from the Konkan coast. The *Prthvīrājaviṅyaya* centers around the defeat of Muhammad Ghūr and sacred site of Puṣkara. Each of these poems clearly reaches out into the world (although in perhaps different ways) and each of these poems demands to be set in a particular literary history determined by specific criteria. Each of these poets makes specific arguments about their place and reception through their appeals to the good.

While this appeal to the good as a framing device goes back to at least the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, each of these two poems present ways of being in the world very particular to their second millennium contexts. A careful reading of these chapters will provide ways to frame theories of literary history from within the Sanskrit literature itself.

Ollett, Andrew. *Patron as character.*

It is widely accepted that at least some Javanese poems (*kakavin*) of the eleventh and twelfth century involve a “conflation” of the hero and the patron of the poem. It is also well known that Kannada poets of the tenth century pursued a similar strategy in their adaptations of the *Mahābhārata*. J. E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw already put these pieces together in an article of 1956 where she argued that the idea of writing one's patron into one's poem must have been one of the techniques Javanese authors adapted from Indian models. This hypothesis raises several questions in itself about the details of the circulation of literary culture across the Bay of Bengal, but in this paper I will confine myself to a comparative analysis of the technique in Kannada literature (*Vikramārjunavijayam* and *Sāhasabhīmavijayam*) and Javanese literature (*Arjunavivāha*, *Smaradahana*, *Bhāratayuddha*), with a few other examples from Apabhramsha (*Mahāpurāṇu*). My goal is to come to a clearer understanding of how this “conflation” works in each set of cases and to therefore begin to establish what would have been available at any given time for adaptation across linguistic and geographic boundaries, in terms of texts, models, techniques, and ideas.

Padova, Tancredi. *Transient moments, eternal images: Poetic borrowing as a narratological device in South Indian historical kāvya.*

Starting from the 11th century, South India witnessed a growing production of Sanskrit *kāvya* works dealing with biographical or hagiographical subjects. This trend points to the development of a distinct “historical” subgenre of *kāvya* literature, which in turn reflects a renewed sensibility for historical narration.

In this paper I will focus on a specific feature of South Indian historical *kāvya* works, namely their tendency to quote or paraphrase expressions, images, and even whole narrative structures from previous poetic works. Whereas the creative reworking of ideas and expressions is common within

Sanskrit literature, in historical *kāvya* this practice seems to take on a more complex meaning. The borrowing of structures and images from previous works represented a way to project the recounted events into a universal narrative framework; at the same time, drawing on specific works implied tracing a link with their subject, their author, and their artistic and ideological legacy. Thus, literary borrowing played both a structural and an ideological role.

In the first part of this paper, I will analyse some aspects of the practice of literary borrowing as it appears in Gaṅgādevī's 14th century *sargabandha Madhurāvijayam*, with the aim to assess how it influenced the audience's understanding of the work's historical narration. In the second part, I will attempt to trace the philologic development of this practice within Indian historical *kāvya* from the 11th century to the early Vijayanagara Era, to show how it contributed to formally shape a mode of historical narration in premodern South India.

Peres, Ofer. *Real places imagined: The historical value of Tamil Talapurāṇams.*

Talapurāṇam is a genre of Tamil poetry that parallels, in terms of content, the Sanskrit *sthala-māhātmya* or "temple legends," but which stylistically belongs to the category of Tamil high literature. Tamil *talapurāṇas*, which were mostly composed between the 16th and 19th century, are large-scale poetic works in high literary Tamil register, featuring a variety of meters and poetic figures, and designed for an elite audience. One unique feature of this genre, which differentiates it from its Sanskrit counterpart, is that the texts are prefixed with one or two lyrical chapters that precede the purāṇa's actual narration and that depict the land and town where the temple (to which the text is dedicated) is located. These chapters are structured in a conventionalized manner; they use well known themes and literary patterns from earlier Tamil and Sanskrit poetry, and can generally be said to depict an ideal reality. Nevertheless, these ideal depictions reflect an actual social and religious reality, and, moreover, they are sections in which the poets speak in their own voice about their own time. In this paper, I zoom in on the preliminary descriptive chapters of several sixteenth-century Tamil *talapurāṇams* dedicated to the major śaiva temples at Tiruvaṅṅmalai and Tiruvārūr. In my analysis of these sections, I ask how can we distinguish the "real" from the "ideal," and what can we learn from these texts about life in sixteenth-century Tamilnāṭu.

Törzsök, Judit. *Murāri's aerial view of India.*

The last act of Murāri's "Rāma Beyond Price" (*Anargharāghava*) includes the description of a flight in an aerial chariot, from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā. The description, which takes up the major part of that act, gives a bird's-eye view of major cities and regions of India covered by the flight. While many of the verses are based on stereotypical or conventional descriptions, some may contain information about these places in Murāri's time. This paper proposes to look at this long series of verses and attempts to see whether or to what extent one may be able to disentangle reality from poetic conventions. To do so, Murāri's descriptions are examined in comparison with some similar geographic or pseudo-geographic descriptions in Indian literature. Finally, some tentative conclusions are proposed concerning Murāri's origins, based on the verses presented.

Wojtczak, Lidia. *Building Brahmakṣetra: The Keralan literary landscape in dūtakāvya.*

The first thing that tends to come to our minds when we hear the word *dūtakāvya* ('messenger poetry') is the great classic, Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* – we think of the fantastical premise of the love-maddened *yakṣa* begging a cloud, merely a whisp of smoke and wind, to take his desperate message to his abandoned lover. However, in pre-modern Kerala, *dūtakāvya* became a genre which could have an altogether more mundane and practical purpose. As Rich Freeman notes, the *dūtakāvya* of Kerala was "a celebration by [the] elite of itself and its own basis of socioeconomic power." (Freeman 2003: 472). South Indian poets, in their unique and fragmented political reality, realised the power of the crucial *dūtakāvya* motif that was describing the messenger's route. These literary itineraries encourage the readers to draw maps of journeys in their imaginations, yet they are more than simple geographical charts. As poets plotted out the course of the messenger through areas with varying social, religious, cultural, and political features, the resulting literary landscapes express the creative *re-imagination* of real space. *Dūtakāvya* presents that rare opportunity in the study of Indian *belles lettres* to explore the matter of the arrangement and classification of space in the pre-modern Indian imagination, to link these findings to a chronology and geography, as well as to investigate how individual and group identity was created and presented in relation to space.

In my paper, I will focus on how the area of what is modern-day Kerala was mapped out in this way in two pre-modern Sanskrit messenger-poems, Lakṣmidāsa's *Śukasandēśa* ("Parrot-Messenger" – 14c. CE) and Uddaṇḍa Śāstrī's *Kokilasandēśa* ("Koel-Messenger" – 15c. CE). These two poems, which complement each other in charting out a northern and southern route respectively from Kañcīpūram to central Kerala, strike us with their regional and historical specificity. The messengers pass through areas teeming with distinct individuals, observe activities of import for the local history of the area and show us a 'real' and very concrete pre-modern Kerala – where wealthy Brahmin land-owners could have just as much to say as established rulers – and are often cited as important historical sources by modern scholars. In these poems, as in real life, Kerala functioned as the 'cognitive region' of Brahmakṣetra – the land over which Brahmins had sanctioned right to rule.

Yokochi, Yuko. *The Kapphiṇābhyudaya in its historical background.*

The *Kapphiṇābhyudaya* is a mahākāvya composed by Śivasvāmin, who flourished under the reign of Avantivarman (r. 855/6–883 AD), the first king of the Utpala dynasty in Kashmir. Reading the historical situation of their compositions in the literary works is risky because it cannot be proved and tends to be an over-interpretation. On the other hand, it is also true that all the literary works are also products of their time and may reflect the atmosphere of the time when they were composed. In this paper, after introducing the current condition of research of the *Kapphiṇābhyudaya*, I try to find in it an echo of Avantivarman's reign described in the *Rājataranginī*, bringing into focus that the martial expedition of the king Kapphiṇa, the protagonist of the poem, ends in failure.