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Guest Editorial

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This special issue of *Religions of South Asia* brings together five selected papers presented at the International Indology Graduate Research Symposium (IIGRS) at SOAS, University of London, in September 2018. It was the tenth anniversary of the annual Symposium, which showcases the research of postgraduate students and early career researchers who work on the primary sources of South Asia. The IIGRS is a platform that supports developing scholars to present and discuss their work with peers and experts, to build professional networks and, very often, to publish their first academic papers—opportunities that are sorely lacking for researchers wanting to step into the world of indology and South Asian studies. The atmosphere of the IIGRS has always been one of encouragement, and it has been inspiring to see the Symposium continue to thrive in different locations around Europe every year since 2009.

The SOAS IIGRS in 2018 featured 21 speakers, from the UK and globally, presenting papers on a wide range of topics, as well as a large audience of established academics and graduate students. In this issue of *RoSA* we have collected five of these papers, which represent the richness and vibrancy of

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2. Lidia Wojtczak is lecturer in Sanskrit at SOAS University of London. Her publications and teaching centre on Sanskrit poetry and aesthetic theory, the intellectual traditions of the Indian subcontinent, and menstrual taboos in South Asia. She is the secretary of the International Indology Graduate Research Symposium.

the IIGRS as a platform for the exchange of ideas on historical South Asian religion, philosophy and culture.

In an academic environment in which there is increasing pressure on doctoral students and early career scholars to produce high-quality journal publications in order to be eligible for postdoctoral funding and the job market, it is timely for the editors of *Religions of South Asia* to be supporting this work. We are also grateful to the peer reviewers who gave generously of their time in reading these articles and supporting the revision, extension and refinement at various stages. The article authors have benefited from this professional mentoring and guidance.

When read together, these papers form an interconnected set of textual studies, which explore related themes from different perspectives, such as theism in Nyāya and Yogācāra; *karma* theory in Pāśupata Yoga and the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*; and narrative analysis of the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Skandapurāṇa*. The articles weave through Hindu and Buddhist thought, engaging in religion, literature and philosophy—but they all share strategies of close reading and translation, and examine sources from the early first millennium of the common era. In a research environment in which the humanities face constant funding threats, these articles demonstrate the unique skills and value of the historical study of religions. Our authors' global spread—across Europe and Asia—reflects the relevance of South Asian studies in academia worldwide, and showcases some of the best emerging scholarship in the field.

Mingyuan Gao enters into the longstanding debate of whether Vasubandhu was a secret Yogācāra when he wrote the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*—as defended by the Kritzer-Harada hypothesis—or whether his Yogācāra affiliation arose only in later works. By homing in on the key concept of *vāsanā*, the perfuming of the mental substratum, Gao picks up on the scholarship of Changhwan Park to argue that Vasubandhu's use of *vāsanā* is derived from earlier Sautrāntika-Dārṣṭāntika frameworks about how *karma* operates—and not from the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*. He discusses how the technical understanding of *vāsanā* in most of the *Maulī Bhūmi* of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* is different from the developed Yogācāra theory of the perfuming of *dharma*; furthermore the discussion of *vāsanā* in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*—an independent text, but also embedded in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*—conveys a distinct understanding of the perfuming of verbalization. Having traced different layers of meaning to *vāsanā* in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra,* Gao then turns back to Vasubandhu to refute the claim that the philosopher was aware of the discussions of *vāsanā* in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, arguing rather that Vasubandhu drew on ideas circulating in the the Dārṣṭāntika-Sautrāntika tradition.

Keiki Nakayama examines the Buddhist Yogācāra critiques of theism and how logic was used to deny the necessary existence of a creator god. In particular, he focuses on the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, most likely the oldest section of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, asserting that the techniques of refutation undertaken

by the yoga practitioner are not just formal reasoning but also constitute a path of practice, specifically the practice of impermanence. Through analysis of a two-part anti-theistic argument in the *Śrāvakabhūmi,* Nakayama contrasts this doctrine with the atheist position in the *Savitarkasavicārādibhūmi* (another of the books or layers of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*), suggesting that the latter argument may be derived from the former. This article offers an insightful discussion not only of the doctrinal basis in Yogācāra of anti-theism as anti-eternalism, but also of the link between reasoning and the practice of impermanence as a means to liberation.

Sándor Pajor's paper on the Nyāya arguments against the Pāśupata concept of God explores in great detail the possible interpretations of the notoriously tangled textual history of *Nyāyasūtra* 4.1.19–21. These verses, as Pajor notes, constitute the only truly theological discussion in the *Nyāyasūtra*, and have been the topic of robust debate in commentarial texts. Pajor takes his readers through a series of interpretations, both the modern proposals of Bulcke, Ingalls, and Ruzsa, as well as those proposed on the basis of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* and Udyotkara's *Nyāyavārttika* to show how differently these important *sūtra*s proving the existence of God have been read. Based on a philological analysis, Pajor's paper shows how the commentarial texts consist of at least two different layers composed in different time periods, and discusses the timeframes for when Nyāya became a theistic philosophical school. Finally, he emphasizes and builds on Bulcke's hypothesis that these theistic *sūtra*s could be interpreted as a *naiyāyika* argument against a Pāśupata concept of God. This reading creates a dialectic within the three *sūtra*s, with a Pāśupata opponent speaking the words of 4.1.19, whereas 4.1.20 constitutes the Nyāya objection and 4.1.21 the *siddhānta*. Pajor brings out the vibrancy of the philosophical passage in the context of the larger theistic debate in South Asia.

Arinde Jonker also writes about Pāśupata textual history and practices in her paper on 'Pāśupata Yoga and the Art of Dying'. Thanks to a study of Pāśupata sources, mainly the *Pāśupatasūtra*, the *Ratnaṭīkā* and the *Skandapurāṇa*, Jonker traces the development of the concept of liberation imagined as union with Śiva (*śivasāyujya*), which seems to necessitate the yogi's self-induced death as a prerequisite. After an overview of Pāśupata textual sources, Jonker delves into other Sanskrit texts which discuss the connections between yoga, death and liberation and shows that liberation has commonly been tied to both a metaphorical and literal releasing of the body. In the Pāśupata context, as Jonker illustrates, there are clear instructions for how the last moments of an ascetic's life are to play out. After living on the cremation ground the ascetic moves into the final, fifth, stage of his life when he is able to reach the end of his suffering. By complementing her readings of the *Pāśupatasūtra*s with the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* and the *Ratnaṭīkā*, Jonker demonstrates that this union with Rudra and release from suffering was to take place during meditation on the god and, perhaps as a result of the meditative practice, especially in the restraint of breath. An in-depth reading of the *Skandapurāṇa* from the

perspective of the lesser-known *Kṣurikā Upaniṣad* illuminates these practices more literally.

Péter Száler's contribution on the mythology of Mahākāla delves into the intricate literary history of the thousand-armed divinity, now based in the Mahākāla shrine in Ujjain as a form of Śiva. As Száler shows, in the earliest textual sources, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bṛhatkathāślokasaṃgraha*, Mahākāla and Śiva are distinguished from one another, the former being an attendant of the latter, which could suggest that Mahākāla was an independent deity that became part of the Śaiva pantheon at a later date. Száler takes his readers through numerous purāṇic passages as he traces the possible origins of this 'pre-Śaiva' Mahākāla. One convincing thesis is that Mahākāla is based on the character of the thousand-armed demon Bāṇa, an antagonist in the Kṛṣṇa cycle. Another potential and striking connection lies with Kārtavīrya Arjuna, Paraśurāma's enemy and hero of two *Mahābhārata* episodes. Száler also investigates the local histories and legends of Ujjain and shows that the Jain Kālaka cycle, which is perhaps historically inspired by the arrival of the Shakas into north-west India, could have also played a role in shaping the image of Mahākāla in the city. Finally, in his investigation on thousand-armed characters, Száler brings our attention to the legend of Sūrya who was anthropomorphized by the divine architect Viśvakarman so that his daughter Samjñā would find it bearable to become the Sun's wife. This trope of decreasing an unbearable power, combined with the severing of hundreds of arms in order to make the character more human, is, as Száler shows, a distinct common thread connecting all of these mythological accounts, and sheds some light on what could have been a shared mythological source in a pre-Śaiva Mahākāla.

Individually and taken as a whole, this collection of articles reflects interesting directions in early-career scholarship and the strength of research interest in indological, historical and textual approaches to Indian religions.