Hinduism 1: Sources and Formation
Dr Rembert Lutjeharms
Weeks 1-8, Friday 10.00am-11.00am, Gibson Building, Faculty of Theology & Religion

These lectures offer a thematic and historical introduction to the sources and early development of ‘Hindu’ traditions from their early formation to the early medieval period. We will explore the formation of Hindu traditions through textual sources, such as the Vedas, Upaniṣads and Bhagavad--gitā, along with the practices and social institutions that formed classical Hindu traditions.

Sanskrit Prelims 1
Dr Bjarne Wernicke-Olesen
Weeks 1-4, Monday 2.00pm-3.00pm, Friday 10.00am-12.00am, OCHS Library

The course provides an introduction to Sanskrit for the preliminary paper of the Theology and Religion Faculty in Elementary Sanskrit. The class is designed to introduce students of Theology and Religion to the basics of Sanskrit grammar, syntax and vocabulary. By the end of the course students will have competency in translating simple Sanskrit and reading sections of the Bhagavadgītā and passages from other texts. The course book will be Maurer’s The Sanskrit Language.

Readings in Phenomenology
Prof Gavin Flood
Weeks 1-8, Thursdays 12.00pm-1.00pm, OCHS Library

Phenomenology is one of the’ most important developments in philosophy in the twentieth century, and it has also had a deep impact on other theoretical fields more widely conceived. This seminar series seeks to engage with some of the fundamental concepts of phenomenology, and has turned in the past to thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Peter Sloterdijk, Quentin Meillassoux, and others.

Lecture of the J.P. And Beena Khaitan Visiting Fellow

Is Yogic Suicide Useless? The Practice of Utkrānti in Some Tantric Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Sources
Dr. Silvia Schwarz Linder
Week 3, Thursday 26 October, 2.00pm-3.00pm, OCHS Library

The aim of this lecture is to discuss the practice of yogic suicide, as it occurs in some Tantric Vaiṣṇava sources, as well as in the Mālinivijayottaratantra, particularly as concerns the affinities between the latter and certain Pāñcarātra samhitā-s. After a summary account of the contents of the text-passages where this practice is either described or alluded to (passages which are given in
full in the Handout), some of the problems raised by these texts are discussed and provisional working hypothesis are put forward. In the first place, the question of how and why the practice of yogic suicide is treated in different ways in the texts where it occurs is examined. In the second place, the issue of whether and how this practice harmonizes with the visions of liberation advocated by the texts in question is discussed.

Dr Silvia Schwarz Linder has lectured in the past at the Leopold-Franzens-Universität in Innsbruck and at the University Ca’ Foscari in Venice, and is presently Research Associate at the Institut für Indologie und Zentralasienwissenschaften of the University of Leipzig. Her interests focus on the Tantric religious traditions of the Śrīvidyā and of the Pāñcarātra, specifically on the philosophical and theological doctrines expressed in the relevant South Indian Sanskrit textual traditions. She has also translated into Italian texts from the Sanskrit narrative and devotional literature, for editions aimed at a general readership. She is affiliated with the Śākta Traditions project at the OCHS led by Professor Gavin Flood and Dr Bjarne Wernicke-Olesen.

Lecture of the Shivdasani Visiting Fellow

‘Was the Muluki Ain of 1854 the first codification of Nepal a strategy of Hinduization?’

Dr. Rajan Khatiwoda
Week 5, Thursday 9 November, 2.00pm-3.00pm, OCHS Library

Most western scholars, as a result of their social anthropological and historical research, have interpreted and presented the Muluki Ain of 1854 as a strategy of Hinduization or establishment of supremacy of Hindu values, possibly also as reinforcement of Hindu norms or the re-establishment of stricter caste hierarchy. Nevertheless, a subtle philological approach is required to understand whether the Muluki Ain was a strategy of Hinduization or whether it represents, to a certain degree, an attempt to create a confessional type of theocratic state by bringing the pluralistic social and religious cultures and customs of pre-modern Nepal into a single legal framework in which a modified Hindu caste system and some explicit Hindu elements—which deviate vastly from the classical Brahmanical orthodoxy—were principally dominant. Therefore, the current presentation will deal with the relevant provisions of the code which will address the necessity of re-interpretation of the existing social anthropological theories.

Dr. Rajan Khatiwoda has a PhD in South Asian Studies (Heidelberg University) and MA in Classical Indology (Nepal Sanskrit University, Balmeeki Vidyapeeth). Dr Khatiwoda has been a Research Assistant and Cataloguer at the Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (NGMCP) at the Nepal Research Centre (NRC) in Kathmandu for 10 years (2003-2013) and is affiliated with the Śākta Traditions project at the OCHS led by Professor Gavin Flood and Dr Bjarne Wernicke-Olesen. His interests span widely from Śaivism to Indian Philosophy, Buddhist Logic, Manuscriptology and Epigraphy with a focus on Ancient Nepalese History, law and Śākta literature.

Other lectures

‘Soma, haoma, and ayahuasca’

Dr. Matthew Clark
Week 7, Wednesday 22 November, 3.00pm-4.00pm, OCHS Library
The ritual drink called soma/haoma, which can be traced to the late Bronze Age (c. 1600 BCE), is central to the religious practices of brahmans who perform Vedic ritual and also to Zoroastrianism. The three main theories currently endorsed by scholars are that soma/haoma was either fly-agaric mushrooms, ephedra or Syrian rue. The evidence seems to indicate that soma/haoma was a psychedelic/entheogenic drug of some kind (though not all scholars agree with this). I propose in my recent book (The Tawny One: Soma, Haoma and Ayahuasca, Muswell Hill Press, 2017) that soma/haoma was never a single plant but was instead a combination of plants that worked similarly to ayahuasca. I also propose that this kind of plant combination was most probably the basis of the ritual drink known as kykeon, which was used in Greek mystery rites.

Since 2004, Dr. Matthew Clark has been a Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), where he taught courses on Hinduism between 1999 and 2003. He has spent many years in India, which he first visited in 1977, and has travelled extensively throughout the subcontinent. He first engaged with yoga practices in the mid-1970s and since 1990 has been a regular practitioner of Ashtanga Yoga. Dr. Clark is a freelance researcher and lectures widely on religion and philosophy for yoga students and academics. Dr. Clark's publications include articles, a study of a sect of South Asian renunciates (sādhus) entitled The Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order (Leiden/Boston: E. J. Brill, 2006), and a short book on yoga, The Origins and Practices of Yoga: A Weeny Introduction (Lulu, 2007). More recently he has been researching the ancient Asian ritual drink known as soma/haoma. He proposes that this drink was most probably an analogue of ayahuasca. His book on the topic, The Tawny One: Soma, Haoma and Ayahuasca (Muswell Hill Press) was published in June 2017.

‘The Cult of Pūjā and the Genesis of Hindu Iconography’

Dr. Natalia Lidova
Week 4, Thursday 2 November, 2.00pm-3.00pm, OCHS Library

This paper is dedicated to the genesis of Hindu Iconography and brings together the results of the research project conducted at OCHS in 2015-2016. The circumstances of the emergence and use of the first cult images in Hinduism remain understudied in scholarship. It is extremely difficult to determine when, how, and in what ritual context the anthropomorphic canon was introduced in the Ancient Indian culture. However, it is certain that at the time preceding the rise of Hinduism, Vedic religion made no real use of anthropomorphic images of gods. Even if, notwithstanding the lack of any archaeological or textual evidences, we accept the possibility that the images of deities already existed, it is evident that they did not played any significant role in the ritual practices. The more probable scenario is that they appeared rather late, in the post-Vedic period, when new ritual – puja – replaced the ancient Aryan rite – yajña. The original and innovative element of pūjā-cult consisted in scenic representations of myths in the form of religious drama used as a visual preaching tool in the ritual ceremony.

In this paper, I will try to demonstrate that the affinity of image worship and theatre performance, as described in the Nāṭyaśāstra (the most ancient and authoritative text on Indian drama), is much more profound and multifaceted than has been hitherto acknowledged. In my view, the appearance of individual iconographic features in the anthropomorphic representations of various deities derives from the ritual drama performances that actualized before the eyes of the viewer the world of gods, demons, heroes, and numerous supernatural beings. Doubtless, the nature of scenic performance made the differentiation in appearance of various characters absolutely crucial, which led to the formation of a permanent set of individual features, including the elements of costume, make-up and hairstyles. I will try to substantiate a hypothesis that it was this...
scenic act that lay at the basis of anthropomorphic images of gods in Early Hindu Pantheon. This hypothesis is borne out by the evident proximity in approach of the *abhinaya* techniques, which helped the actors to feel as if really transformed into their characters, and artistic devices, employed to create pictorial and sculptural representations of gods. Sculptural renderings of Hindu deities on temple facades show them in postures, described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Statues and relief figures are endowed with gestures from the repertoire used in theatre practices, enabling experts up to this day to illustrate the theoretical precepts of the treatise with actual figures from temple decorations. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the paintings and sculptures of gods received their attire, make-up and postures from actors who played gods on stage.

‘The Pañcāyatanapūjā and the Problem of Aniconism’
*Prof. Mikael Aktor*
Week 8, Tuesday 28 November, 4.00pm-5.30pm, OCHS Library

The Pañcāyatanapūjā is a worship of five deities, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Ganeśa and Devī. It emerged as a ritual style within the Smārta movement and appeared both in temple architecture and as a domestic worship performed with small stones and/or figurines representing the gods. The worship which had almost died out in most parts of India has recently been revived among Smārta Brahmins in Tamil Nadu. An analysis of the ritual can proceed from different perspectives. There are the social-historical developments which may explain the revival in Tamil Nadu. But there is also the theoretical perspective of aniconicity as a deliberate choice of representation vis-à-vis the iconic, anthropomorphic forms of the gods. Together with a group of researchers with expertise in different religious traditions I have been examining this spectrum of visual and material choices. The seminar will present an overview of the results of this research.

*Mikael Aktor* is Associate Professor of History of Religions at the Institute of Philosophy, Education and the Study of Religions, University of Southern Denmark. He holds a PhD from University of Copenhagen, a part of which was carried out at School of Oriental and African Studies, London. His field of expertise is within the study of Dharmaśāstra, in particular with a focus on caste and untouchability. He has lately been engaged in research on North Indian Śaiva temple ritual and temple sculpture as part of a general interest in ritual studies and religious aesthetics.

Śākta Traditions Symposium

*Week 8, Monday 27 November, 10.00am-4.00pm, OCHS Library*

Hinduism cannot be understood without the Goddess (*Devi/Śakti*) and the goddess-oriented Śākta traditions. The Goddess pervades Hinduism at all levels, from aniconic village deities to high-caste pan-Hindu goddesses to esoteric, tantric goddesses. Nevertheless, these highly influential forms of South Asian religion have only recently begun to draw a more broad scholarly attention. Taken together, they form ‘Śāktism’, which is by many considered one of the major branches of Hinduism next to Śaivism and Vaishnavism. Śāktism is, however, less clearly defined than the other major branches and sometimes surprisingly difficult to discern from Śaivism in its tantric forms. These sometimes very complex and challenging forms of Śākta religion provide a test case for our understanding of Hinduism and raise important theoretical and methodological questions with regard to the study of religious traditions in South Asia as well as to the more general and comparative study of religion.

This Śākta symposium is a contribution by a number of scholars to the Śākta Traditions project and
its endeavor in tracing developments in the history of goddess worship among the orthoprax brahmans, among the tantric traditions and at village level in South Asia. Thus, the symposium acts as a historical exploration of distinctive Indian ways of imagining God as Goddess (and goddesses), a survey of important origins and developments within Śākta history, practice and doctrine in its diversity, as well as an insight into the fascinating Śākta religious imaginaire and ritual practice that may be considered distinctive and thus sets ‘Śāktism’ apart from other forms of South Asian religion.

**The Representational Spectrum of the Goddess: Anthropomorphism, Aniconism, Physiomorphism**
*Prof Mikael Aktor*

‘The Poetry of Thought’ in the Theology of the Tripurārahasya
*Dr Silvia Schwarz Linder*

‘Śākta-narratives in 19th-Century Nepalese Chronicles’
*Dr Rajan Khatiwoda*

‘Yogic Theoria cum Praxi: Embodied Memory in the Śākta Anthropology of Kuṇḍalinīyoga in Medieval India’
*Dr Bjarne Wernicke-Olesen & Dr Silje Lyngar Einarsen*