



Teaching activity: "Teorie e metodi della ricerca negli studi sul subcontinente indiano e Asia centrale"

State of the Art: South Asian Studies Today

Edificio Marco Polo – Circonv. Tiburtina, 4 – Aula 109 (1st floor)

28 January 2025

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/eqt-fise-fcv>

Morning session – Chair: **Bruno Lo Turco**

- 9,30-11,30 **Igor Spanò**, University of Palermo:
"Companion species: Humans and cattle in the Vedic rite of *gosava* from the neo-animist and multispecies perspectives"
- 11,30-13,30 **Paola Maria Rossi**, University of Milan:
"Vedic Studies: Translating the *Atharvaveda-Samhitā*"

Afternoon session – Chair: **Sanjukta Das Gupta**

- 14,30-16,30 **Monika Browarczyk**, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan:
"Narratives of Violence against Women in Hindi and Punjabi Literatures – Methodological Framework and Hypotheses"
- 16,30-18,30 **Tommaso Bobbio**, University of Turin:
"Unpacking the post-secular nation: Heritage sites and national consciousness in postcolonial India"

Scientific coordination: **Mario Prayer**

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State of the Art: South Asian Studies Today is a Doctoral Seminar providing an overview of and promoting discussion on the most recent developments in various disciplines of South Asian Studies, with a special focus on research methodologies.

Igor Spanò is Assistant Professor (RTDa) of Philosophies and Religions of India at the University of Palermo. He is a scholar of the religious phenomena of ancient and contemporary India, with a perspective that combines the investigative tools of the historical-religious, anthropological, and philosophical sciences with the philological analysis of Sanskrit texts. His latest publications include the monograph *Umani in gioco, giochi divini. Scenari ludici nella ritualità śrauta dell'India brahmanica* (Firenze, 2024).

Abstract – Within the broader framework of the so-called Ontological Turn, both recent neo-animist theories aimed at overcoming the nature-culture dichotomy, in particular the ‘perspectivism’ of Viveiros de Castro, and theories on the construction of a multispecies sociality through the relations between human and non-human animals (Haraway) can be profitably used in Ritual Studies. In interpreting the ancient *gosava* ritual, these theoretical approaches allow new horizons to be developed for rethinking the relationship between human and non-human animals in ancient India.

Paola Maria Rossi is Associate Professor of Sanskrit Language and Literature at the University of Milan. She works on Vedic texts and culture, especially about sovereignty between ritualism and *śramaṇa* context. Her interests range from Indo-European Studies, in particular Indo-Iranian linguistic and cultural milieu, to Prakrit languages especially correlated to early Buddhism.

Abstract – This presentation aims to give an account of the recent developments of Vedic Studies, with particular emphasis on the renewed interest in the Atharvavedic collections, that is the *Atharvaveda-Paippalāda* and *Śaunakīya* recensions. In fact, on the one hand, the critical edition of the *Paippalāda-Saṃhitā* (PS) has been in progress since the 2000s, and on the other the project of refreshing Whitney’s English translation of the *Śaunakīya* recension (ŚS) is currently being carried out by a research group (PRIN 2022). Examples of what this new translation work entails will be illustrated, especially in the light of the interpretations of the parallel Paippalāda version.

Monika Browarczyk is Associate Professor of South Asian Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her research interests include Hindi literature, women’s writings, life writing studies and translation studies. In addition to various research articles in internationally acclaimed journals, she has published the monograph *Narrating Lives, Narrating Selves. Women’s Autobiographies in Hindi* (2019) and has co-edited three volumes of *Cracow Indological Studies* (with Lidia Sudyka and Piotr Borek) on narratives of history and women’s writings in Hindi. In 2023 she was awarded the Vishva Hindi Samman at the Vishva Hindi Sammelan in Fiji. She is the Project Leader of Hindi for You, an online self-learning platform (<https://hindi4u.web.amu.edu.pl/en/>).

Abstract – In the last two decades, regrettably, aggression against women occurs globally. To make sense of this phenomenon in the Indian context, a complex set of interlinked factors has to be taken into account. On the one side, these factors are rooted in India-specific differences and divisions: ethnic, religious, linguistic, political, economic, but also, those based on caste, gender, age, etc. On the other, rapid transformations related to modern technological thrust and globalisation have brought significant social and economic change, often colliding with traditional values and models among segments of Indian society. As violence against women has become a catalyst for movements calling for social and legal reforms, its depiction in literary texts may change the very nature of the Indian society’s narration about itself. The paper will address two literary public spheres in northern India, i.e., those of Hindi and Punjabi, and trace new voices and strands outside English speaking elites, with a focus on methodological frameworks and hypotheses.

Tommaso Bobbio is Associate Professor of Indian History at the University of Turin. His studies focus on issues concerning collective violence and the construction of identities in public space, especially in urban areas, in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods. He has published numerous articles in major international journals, in addition to the monograph *Urbanisation, Citizenship and Conflict in India, Ahmedabad 1900-2000* (Routledge 2015, 2018²); his *Storia dell’India Contemporanea* will appear with Morcelliana Scholé later in 2025.

Abstract – In the construction/identification/preservation of heritage, conflicting notions of state and nation come into confrontation. The value ascribed to heritage items is debated for its potential to promote forms of collective identification or, conversely, to carry divisive notions of the historical past into the present. Ideas of state and nation, secularism, inter-communal and caste frictions, intolerance and conflict are under constant renegotiation in order to present narratives about the present. With the rise of Hindu ethno-nationalism in the past four decades, a stereotyped and static vision of the subcontinent’s history, devoid of all forms and experiences of dissent, has been promoted. What happens, then, when one is confronted with highly divergent and contradictory ideas about nation and state, or inclusion and marginalization? What places, practices, buildings and monuments become emblems of these contradictory ideas?