40th Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions

10th-12th April 2015
New College, University of Edinburgh

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Website: http://spaldingsymposium.org

Programme

Papers will be in the Martin Hall and refreshments in the Rainy Hall.
Both are on the first floor of New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh EH1 2LX.

Friday 10th April

3.00-4.15pm Registration, tea and coffee in the Rainy Hall

4.15-4.30 Welcome, announcements

4.30-5.30 Opening Keynote Lecture: Professor Stephen Berkwitz (Missouri State University) – 'So Near Yet So Far: Sri Lankan Strategies for Superseding Indian Cultural Forms'

5.30-6.30 Elizabeth Harris (Liverpool Hope University) – 'Art, Liturgy and the Transformation of Memory: Christian rapprochement with Buddhism in post-independence Sri Lanka'

6.30-7.30 Dinner

7.30-8.30 Jessie Pons (Ruhr Universität Bochum) – 'Visual Dialogues: The Archaeology of Inter-Religious Encounters in Pre-Modern India'

Saturday 11th April

9.00-10.00 Jonathan Geen (Western University, Ontario) – 'Dialogue through Myth: Jain Forays into 'Hindu' Mythology'

10.00-11.00 Brian Black (Lancaster University) – 'In dialogue with Krishna, in dialogue with the *Bhagavad Gita*'

11.00-11.30 Tea and coffee

11.30-1.00 Postgraduate papers:

James Morris (St Andrews University) – 'Hinduism and Japanese Religion'

Anja Pogacnik (University of Edinburgh) – 'The Changing Marital and Familial Lives of Leicester Jain Women'

Lucian Wong (University of Oxford) – 'Bhadraloka and Brāhmaṇical Polemics Against Vaiṣṇava Deviance'

1.00-3.30 Lunch and free time to explore the city

3.30-4.30 Martin Fárek (University of Pardubice, Czech Republic) – 'Christian or Colonial? Debates about the Nature of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Nineteenth Century India'

4.30-5.30 Deborah Nadal – 'Cows under crossfire: Interreligious debate on the economic exploitation of Indian cattle'

5.30-6.00 Tea and coffee

6.00-7.00 Keynote Lecture: Professor Uma Chakravarti (National Fellow, Indian Council of Historical Research) – 'Contentious Dialogues: Three Moments From an Argumentative Past'

7.00-8.30 Reception and dinner in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Spalding Symposium

Sunday 12th April

9.00-10.00 Lisa Wessman Crothers (College of Wooster, USA) – 'Testing the Good Woman: Dialogue, Deception, and the Marriage of Amarā in the Bodhisattva Career'

10.00-11.00 Nathan McGovern (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) – 'Brahmanical vs. Non-Brahmanical: Rethinking a Fundamental Dichotomy in Early South Asian Religion'

11.00-11.30 Tea and coffee

11.30-12.30 Hephzibah Israel and Matthias Frenz (University of Edinburgh) – 'Dialogue and Narrative: Negotiating Religion, Language and Identity in Conversions to Christianity in South India'

12.30-1.00 Closing discussion

1.00-2.00 Lunch, followed by departure

40ᵗʰ Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions

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Abstracts
(in alphabetical order)

Stephen Berkwitz (Missouri State University) – 'So Near Yet So Far: Sri Lankan Strategies for Superseding Indian Cultural Forms'

Sri Lanka's proximity to India has long exposed the island's residents to the powerful civilizational influences of its larger neighbor. During periods of intermittent contacts with South Indian armies and courts between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE, Sinhala Buddhists began to adopt and adapt certain Indic cultural forms linked with devotion to deities and highly aestheticized forms of literature. This paper will explore signs of the anxieties of influence shown by Sinhala Buddhist literati with respect to their Indic literary prototypes. It will discuss how cosmopolitan forms of Sanskrit court poetry (*kāvya*), eulogistic praise (*praśasti*), and messenger poetry (*sandēśa*) were translated into distinctly local cultural forms. In this process, Sinhala Buddhist authors sought to distinguish themselves and supersede the very Indian authors after which they patterned themselves in a rather one-sided dialogue.

Brian Black (Lancaster University) – 'In dialogue with Krishna, in dialogue with the *Bhagavad Gita*'

This paper will look at dialogues with Krishna in the *Mahabharata*. While I include his famous dialogue with Arjuna that comprises the *Bhagavad Gita*, I will focus my attention on Krishna's conversations with Gandhari, Balarama, and Utanka, as well as his post-war discussion with Arjuna, which comprises the *Anu Gita*. As I will argue, all four of these post-war dialogues have an intertextual relationship with the pre-war conversation between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield. As such, we can read these four conversations as various responses to and commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*. I will conclude by suggesting that these dialogues offer us different perspectives from which to view Krishna's teaching in the *Bhagavad Gita*, ones that suggest that Arjuna's dharmic dilemma before the war is perhaps not as resolved as it initially appears to be.

Uma Chakravarti (National Fellow, Indian Council of Historical Research) – 'Contentious Dialogues: Three Moments From an Argumentative Past'

The dialogues between the Buddhists and the Brahmanas have been contentious even if not always openly hostile. Since there are fundamental differences between the two, and the Buddha was located at a moment when the Brahmanas were already wielding power as well as seeking to wield that power, preferably in exclusive terms, the Buddhists had to cast themselves as countering the power of the Brahmanas, especially in terms of secular social dominance. Caste was therefore the major faultline in the positions each adopted and that has remained a powerful way to construct an oppositional imagination by the Buddhists. The idea of the sacred and the immutability of certain beliefs that the Brahmanas held has resulted in an ongoing debate between the two traditions which have continued into the present.

I will dwell on three moments: the first is contemporaneous with the Buddha's own life as compiled in the early Buddhist textual tradition; the second in the critique of caste in c. first century CE led by Asvaghosha in the Vajrasuci; and the third in the 19th and 20th centuries when anti caste movements across India formulated a critique of caste both using conventional Buddhist arguments and new ones derived from democratic humanism and critiques of caste based on the fundamental rejection of birth based differences as a principle of governing society today.

Lisa Wessman Crothers (College of Wooster, USA) – 'Testing the Good Woman: Dialogue, Deception, and the Marriage of Amarā in the Bodhisattva Career'

Indic texts presume times when one can and should deceive to meet one's aims. Deceptive tactics or lies have their occasions. For instance, in dharma texts such as Vasiṣṭha's *Dharmasūtra*, that seek to circumscribe the use of lies, the text nevertheless allows for deception in efforts to make successful marriage alliances. My paper is concerned with the prevarications that occur around marriage: particularly deceptive tactics involved in the courtship of the Bodhisattva Mahosadha of the woman Amarā in the Pali *Mahā Ummagga Jātaka*. In this *jātaka*, Bodhisattva Mahosadha uses disguise and tactical deceptions in relation to his marriage interest, Amarā, to determine her wisdom and social perspicacity (e.g. to behave with appropriate deference to family norms and loyalty to her spouse). Such deceptive tactics engaged in by the Bodhisattva have puzzled scholars, for his conduct's presumed conflicts with how an awakened being should behave. Rationalisations directed at preserving the Bodhisattva's 'ideal Buddhist' ethics in

spite of his behavior in a *jātaka* tend to explain his behavior away to his not-yet-enlightened status. I will not take this approach. Rather, in this paper I examine the courtship of Mahosadha and Amarā, a tactical encounter and dialogue through marriage norms, in order to gain insight into the *upāya* tactics of the Bodhisattva who would become Śākyamuni. In addition, to put this dialogue and relationship in a larger context, I examine related dialogues in Brahmanical and Buddhist texts that involve dissimulations in the service of effecting intimate relationships such as marriage.

The riddling dialogues between Mahosadha and Amarā are important indices of wisdom. Foremost of course is the wisdom of the Bodhisattva, but what is striking in these dialogues is Amarā's wisdom. While no one can match the wisdom and skill of the Bodhisattva, Amarā comes closer than others. The dialogues between them in the *Mahāvastu* serve to demonstrate the Bodhisattva's ability to win his wife Yaśodharā through 'skill' and in the *Mahā-Ummagga* to assess Amarā's skill, at the same time the Bodhisattva Mahosadha proves his own wisdom. These dialogues thus position both the skillful acts of deception and the place of a woman who seems near to being his equal, as important in the Bodhisattva career. Neither of these – the practices of deception, nor the presence of a skilled woman who is apparently as near to being an equal partner to the Bodhisattva as anyone – is part of the standard picture of renunciant moral perfection that governs much interpretation of the Buddha as Bodhisattva. Amarā comes closer than anyone else in recognizing his skillful deceptions and to being his equal. By examining closely both her skillful dialogic actions, and the Bodhisattva's deceptive dialogic tests of her, we gain a more complex picture not only of the Buddha as Bodhisattva, but of the complexities of dialogic encounters in these Indic texts, and the way that even deceptive encounters can forge intimate relations. The skill of deception in the Bodhisattva's upāya, and the active role of a near-equal partner who is a woman, turn out to be important dimensions of the path to Buddhahood.

Martin Fárek (University of Pardubice, Czech Republic) – 'Christian or Colonial? Debates about the Nature of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Nineteenth Century India'

There has been considerable debate about the nature of encounters between Europeans and Indians during the British colonial rule in South Asia. Ronald Inden, Richard King, Sharada Sugirtharajah and other scholars argued for a colonial nature of the dialogue between the British scholars and local people, mainly Brahmins. This dialogue led to the joint construction of Hinduism, according to the above mentioned post-colonial thinkers. Let us test these claims. What is specifically colonial about the questions that were asked by the British scholars and rulers?

Given the analyses of the Christian theological legacy in the Orientalist discourse, that was presented by S. N. Balaganga-dhara for the big historical picture, and by Urs App for the Early French and British Orientalists, we should reconsider the evidence of the sources. I will argue that despite the internal differences between missionaries, Orientalist scholars and general travelers, these Europeans shared common framework firmly rooted in Christian thinking. There is enough evidence for the existence of core questions that troubled European thinking long before Europeans had established colonial rule in India. Basically the same questions were asked by Europeans in India during the late 18th and the whole of 19th centuries. These questions were important in the process of discovery of particular Religions in South Asia. They make sense within a particular framework of thought. But how could Indian people understand what their European counterparts had in mind, when they discussed different concepts and practices of traditions in South Asia? I will show the difficulties of this kind of inter-cultural encounters on examples from notes, correspondence and other documents written by the early Orientalists such as William Jones and H. H. Wilson, by Christian Missionaries, mainly William Ward and Alexander Duff, and by some other less known personalities. But I will also analyze the responses from their Indian partners.

Jonathan Geen (Western University, Ontario) – 'Dialogue through Myth: Jain Forays into 'Hindu' Mythology'

A wide variety of Jain texts contain alternate versions of characters and stories well known from the Hindu epics and *purāṇas*. Such Jain variants are typically viewed as the result of a monolithic Jain response to a monolithic Hindu mythological tradition. A more nuanced examination of the Jain texts, however, suggests otherwise: they appear to represent a constantly evolving dialogue with Hinduism (as also evidenced in medieval Hindu *purāṇas*) and with the changing political and religious culture in which the authors found themselves, a dialogue embedded within the medium of mythological narratives. Here, I offer a few preliminary remarks on this dialogue, based upon a broad investigation of Jain mythological texts, including their authors, the geographical region and historical circumstances in which they were composed, their genre and intended audience, the literary context in which their narratives are set, their language, the sources used by their authors, and their use in negotiating the fluid boundaries separating Jains and Hindus.

Elizabeth Harris (Liverpool Hope University) – 'Art, Liturgy and the Transformation of Memory: Christian rapprochement with Buddhism in post-independence Sri Lanka'

In the middle of the twentieth century, a group of Christians, from a diversity of churches, sought rapprochement with Buddhism, in the context of long-standing Buddhist mistrust of Christianity. They included Yohan Devananda, Lynn de Silva, Michael Rodrigo o.m.i., Tissa Balasuriya o.m.i., Aloysius Pieris s.j., Vijaya Vidyasagara and Audrey Rebera. One face of this wish for rapprochement found expression in art and liturgy. Devananda devised a 'New World Liturgy' that included Buddhist readings. Vidyasagara, through the Christian Workers' Fellowship (CWF), helped create a Workers' Mass that, similarly, included Buddhist elements and encouraged a form of inter-religious art at CWF centres. Rodrigo, who was murdered in 1987 whilst he was living in a poor, entirely Buddhist village, expressed what he had learned from the Buddhists of this village in poetry. Pieris, at his research and dialogue centre in Kelaniya (Tulana), invited Buddhist artists to interpret Christian themes in sculpture and other art-forms. This paper will analyse specific examples of this art and liturgy, including the poems of Rodrigo, the New World Liturgy, and an artistic installation at Tulana completed in April 2014. It will then examine the extent to which such art and liturgy has been able to transform Buddhist memories of Christian aggression and dominance in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Hephzibah Israel and Matthias Frenz (University of Edinburgh) – 'Dialogue and Narrative: Negotiating Religion, Language and Identity in Conversions to Christianity in South India'

Religious conversion is a form of 'dialogue' involving conversations at various levels: between religions, between past and present and between the individual and their community. This joint paper will explore how these dialogues are narrativised through autobiographical writings of conversion accounts.

The first half of the paper will present some key ideas that underpin the investigation of conversion narratives of a two year AHRC-funded research project at Edinburgh titled, "Conversion, Translation and the Language of Autobiography", that began in November 2014. In this section Israel will broadly explore the kinds of conceptual conversations that can be developed between the disciplines of religious studies and translation studies through the study of conversion autobiographies. Although change is a fundamental aspect of both religious 'conversion' and 'translation,' both kinds of transformations are available to us only through language and narrative. Thus an analysis of shifts in linguistic terms from a translation studies perspective can reveal fundamental conceptual shifts in the

conversion between religious beliefs, the conversion of lived experience into textual narrative and the linguistic conversion from source to target languages. Taking anxieties regarding authenticity as a starting point, Israel will explore if it is possible to argue that anxieties regarding the sincerity of conversion and the authenticity of autobiographical narratives can be conceptually linked to and influenced by translation concerns regarding successfully 'carrying across' that first entered the Indian literary consciousness through Western translation practices from the early eighteenth century onwards.

In the second half of the presentation, Frenz will map out the discursive field within which Protestant missionaries introduced templates for the writing of conversion autobiographies in Tamil-speaking southern India. Sent by the king of Denmark to the Danish trading post Tarangambadi in 1706 to establish the first systematic Protestant mission in India, German missionaries initiated an intensive dialogue with factions of the local population in India. This dialogue was closely tied to religious debates of the time, and the publications of the missionaries' correspondence circulated in Europe and New England contributed to it substantially. From the rich source materials published in German and partly translated into English, French, Latin and Dutch, Frenz will present on some of the biographical and autobiographical narratives that offer a glimpse into the early history of dialogues on conversion. He shows how the missionaries initiated a dialogue within India and beyond, set the agenda and managed the discourse on Protestant conversion. The missionaries wrote about their own conversion experiences, on the conversion of the people they preached to and also translated and published autobiographical narratives written by Tamil converts to Protestant Christianity. Frenz will argue that this dialogue between missionaries, the local population and supporters in Europe sought to configure the 'genuine' convert and set parameters for representing conversion appropriately.

Nathan McGovern (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) – 'Brahmanical vs. Non-Brahmanical: Rethinking a Fundamental Dichotomy in Early South Asian Religion'

Discussions of early South Asian religion, and the origins of Buddhism in particular, typically begin by positing a fundamental divide between an older "Brahmanical" religion and newer religious movements, usually referred to as the "śramaṇa movements." These latter are portrayed, usually by quoting the famous grammatical example of Patañjali comparing Brahmans and śramaṇas to snakes and mongooses, as existing in inimical opposition to one another, with the corollary that Buddhism, my own focus of research, arose in opposition to Brahmanism. This model, while not entirely false, especially over the *longue durée*, ignores some

important features of the evidence found in Buddhist and Brahmanical texts from the mid- to late-first millennium BCE. On the one hand, while the Buddhist texts do make frequent use of the compound *śramaṇabrāhmaṇa* referred to by Patañjali, they do not treat it as an oppositional compound, and in fact do not present the Buddha in opposition to the category "Brahman" at all. On the other hand, the roughly contemporaneous Dharma Sūtras, while containing strong opinions about "proper" lifestyles that would exclude Buddhists and other celibate groups, do not couch these opinions in terms of an opposition between "Brahman" and "*śramaṇa*," and in fact do not use the latter as a category at all. In this paper, I attempt to negotiate the discrepancies between these two bodies of texts, with the aim of better understanding how religious identities were understood colloquially, polemicized, and in the process formed and reformed in ancient India. In the process, I argue that we should abandon the dichotomy between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical as a methodological starting point for studying early South Asian religion, and that instead we should focus on the processes of identity formation out of which such an opposition would have arisen.

In the first part of my paper, I examine the various uses of the terms *samaṇa* and *brāhmaṇa* in the Pali Canon, both individually and in compound, and show that the over-used quote from Patañjali does not apply in nearly all uses of the term(s) in that body of texts. I show that the early Buddhist texts treat *samaṇabrāhmaṇā* as a *single* category that, when differentiated at all, is done so according to divisions other than that between *samaṇa* and *brāhmaṇa*. Most often, however, it is used as a collective foil against which to construct Buddhist identity.

In the second part of my paper, I turn to the Dharma Sūtras, which I argue were written by proponents of what Bronkhorst calls "the new Brahmanism," that is, householder-supremacist, socially elitist Vedic specialists. I argue that they constructed the *āśrama* system to systematize *all* forms of actual religious practice, so as to reject all but one (their own). By comparing the evidence from the Pali Canon and Dharma Sūtras, I then conclude that we can triangulate what colloquial categories for religious practitioners were current in ancient India and better understand the process by which different groups appropriated these categories to their own polemical ends, creating *only through this process* oppositional identities.

James Morris (doctoral student, St Andrews University) – 'Hinduism and Japanese Religion'

Buddhism came to Japan from India being transmitted through China in the 6th Century. In so far as Buddhism introduced Hindu Gods, ideas and art to Japan, its arrival also marked the arrival of Hinduism in Japan. The Hindu religious forms

which it introduced eventually became incorporated into the Japanese religious world.

In this paper I attempt to make two points. Firstly that Hinduism has had a profound (although indirect) effect on Japanese religion in terms of its pantheon, thought and art. Secondly that Hindu religious forms brought to Japan underwent a process of integration which led Hindu Gods, thought and art to become ethnically Japanese in terms of the way they are thought about and the reality they have come to possess. Through comparison with studies on the hidden Christians (Kakure Kirishitan), I will also suggest that this integration was not a purposeful process, but that changes to Hindu religious forms resulted from the material and intellectual resources available in Japan, and to limited contact with foreign powers. Such change can be seen as an inevitable part of an attempt to make sense of a new faith within a particular ethnic and religious milieu. The result of this process was the genesis of a religious landscape and identity in which a multiplicity of ideas and gods could coexist, where religious ideas could be integrated rather than assimilated into a religious system that we now label Japanese religions.

Deborah Nadal – 'Cows under crossfire: Interreligious debate on the economic exploitation of Indian cattle'

This contribution seeks not to debate the sacredness of the cow in Hinduism. On the contrary, it focuses on the voices raised from Muslim, Christian and tribal communities on the highly sensitive topic of beef consumption in India. In other words, I aim to discuss the focal points of the interreligious debate on the economic exploitation of the cow which has taken place since the drafting of India's Constitution during the period 1947-1949. In this document India is defined as a socialist and secular country, but already in this text the Hindu portion of the population managed to obtain an important recognition of one of the most fundamental principles of Hinduism: the inviolability of the cow. As a matter of fact, article 48 of the Constitution prohibits "the slaughter of cows and calves and other milk and draught cattle". Consequently, the vast majority of Indian states currently forbid the slaughtering of cows.

Hinduism is the prevalent faith in India, amounting to 80% of the population. Despite this fact, the other religious groups of the country (Muslims, Christians and Animists) have not willingly accepted this constitutional concession towards Hindu religion. For these groups, the concession has been seen to discriminate their communities, not only from a religious point of view, but also in relation to their economical subsistence. Moreover, it is important to highlight that these minority communities are mainly present in the Indian states that traditionally represent the most resistant strongholds of the Communist Parties in India. In these states, a

policy soaked in religion is strongly deprecated and beef consumption is particularly welcomed due to the Islamic and Christian faiths not posing this restriction to the consumption of beef.

Consequently, Muslims disapprove of the anti-slaughtering regulations as it deprives them of the possibility of income in the industry of butchery, a traditional Muslim livelihood. For the Christians and Animists the concessions related to cattle that favor Hinduism are also strongly opposed due to the restrictions it places to their quality of life. In fact, with the exception of the relatively wealthy Christian population of the North-East of India, these minority groups are often the most destitute within the Indian population, with beef generally being the only meat affordable to consume. Therefore, if Hindu anti-slaughtering regulations prevent the consumption of beef, these communities are at risk not only of losing their livelihood but most importantly of losing an affordable and vital source of nutritional protein in their non-vegetarian diet. This last point is important not only for socio-economic reasons, but also on a symbolic level. Hindu or tribal minority groups whose poverty allow beef to be the only affordable meat source, have been traditionally declared as "untouchables" also on the base of their diet. Therefore, for those who have now converted to Islam or Christianity in order to escape from the lower and more underprivileged strata of Hinduism, it is understandable, that they demand now to have the right to freely choose what they wish to eat, without their social status being compromised.

Anja Pogacnik (doctoral student, University of Edinburgh) – 'The Changing Marital and Familial Lives of Leicester Jain Women'

Although Jain diaspora forms an important part of the religious landscape of contemporary UK, it has managed to avoid the limelight of academic investigation, with the last bigger study on British Jains being conducted more than three decades ago. A particularly hidden part of the Jain population are women, who are usually sidelined in studies of Jain diaspora and are predominantly foci of Indian ethnographies. This paper aims to shed light on the experience of Jain women living in Leicester, England, while focusing primarily on their changing marital and familial lives.

The findings presented are based on a five-week long fieldwork project with the Leicester Jain community in which I interviewed seven Leicester Jain women and conducted observations both at the local Jain temple and in more private settings. In my research I focused on exploring the generational and diasporic changes in the premarital, marital and familial habits of local Jain women. Contrary to well-documented Indian norms on premarital behaviour, the younger generation of Jain women living in Leicester is (somewhat reluctantly) allowed to engage in

premarital inter-gender interactions and occasionally even date, especially if she engages in dating during her time at university. Arranged marriages are also becoming rarer in the Leicester Jain community, as the social networks of parents are getting smaller and unable to yield enough potential marital matches, which leads to Leicester Jain women having to search for their future spouses by themselves. After marriage Leicester Jain women often do not live with their in-laws, as is custom in India and was common in Leicester a generation ago, but predominantly live in neolocal families, often because of labour opportunities outside of Leicester. Even relationships within the Jain families are changing, as women are gaining more power within the spousal couple and affinial joint families, due to their engagement in paid employment and consequential financial independence.

I argue that these changes can be interpreted as a consequence of the diminished power and reach of informal social control the Jain community is able to exhibit over its members due to its relative smallness within the English and even Leicester context. Certain norms and traditions otherwise guiding Jain women's lives (e.g., restricted premarital inter-gender interaction, arranged marriages, patrilocal joint families etc.) are therefore loosening and opening up to individual interpretations and English cultural influences, consequentially changing the lives of Leicester Jain women.

Jessie Pons (Ruhr Universität Bochum) – 'Visual Dialogues: The Archaeology of Inter-Religious Encounters in Pre-Modern India'

This paper presents the basic outlines of a prospective research project to be developed for a Junior Research Group grant proposal to the German Government. The general aim of this research is to examine the question of interaction between the main religious traditions in pre- modern India primarily through the gaze of visual material. While previous scholarship has fulsomely discussed beliefs and practices shared and/or contested by Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism and highlighted existing connections in their plastic productions, the issue of inter-religious "visual dialogues" has not been tackled systematically. This project hopes to provide a diachronic insight into the question by focusing on the multi-religious centres of Mathurā and Ellora which respectively reflect formative and maturing phases in the production of religious imageries.

The working hypothesis is two-fold. In the first place, some aspects of Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanic imageries may have been shaped in relation to each other, and the formation and development of their respective iconographies could be understood in terms of mutual influences, borrowings, and demarcation. In the second place, the formulation of the features that define a particular divinity may

result from the interaction between visual and written sources which mutually inspire or feed one another. In order to shed light on the relational mechanisms which underlay the representation of the gods of the respective religions on the one hand and their associated systems of beliefs and practices on the other, the investigation will be approached through the following thematic foci.

The first point considers the practical settings and modalities of encounters through the study of archaeological and epigraphic data as well as narrative accounts. What are the characteristic features of multi-religious centres and how did these change in time? How are buildings affiliated to the respective religious trends positioned in relation to one another? Who were the agents (patrons, individual donors, craftsmen) involved in the development of the sites' features? How are encounters between members and leaders of the various religious groups narrated and/or staged in visual and written accounts?

The second point concentrates on the visual and textual descriptions of the main gods of the three religious pantheons in order to track, characterize and typify patterns of interaction with respect to: a. the shaping and codifying of their physical and spiritual qualities (does the Buddha look the way he does because Śiva or Tīrtankaras look the way they do and vice versa?). b. the dissemination of divinities associated to one tradition into other pantheons.

While the first part of this paper will be dedicated to presenting the general research questions that this project hopes to tackle, the second part will focus on an illustrative case study taken from the centre of Mathurā. Although the formulation of this project proposal is still in its preliminary phase, I believe its conceptualisation would greatly benefit from interaction with specialists of the field of Indian Religions.

Lucian Wong (doctoral student, University of Oxford) – 'Bhadraloka and Brāhmaṇical Polemics Against Vaiṣṇava Deviance'

Though the Bengali or Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition is reported to have had significant numerical presence in Bengali society at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Vaiṣṇavas had become an increasing source of discomfort to Calcutta's indigenous elite, or *bhadraloka*, and their moral sensibilities. The tradition regularly came in for criticism by this social group on account of its perceived promotion of sexual and other forms of moral deviance. Yet by the latter half of the nineteenth-century a substantial section of the Bengali *bhadraloka* had begun to turn to Vaiṣṇavism as a source of religious and cultural inspiration.

The Bengali *bhadraloka*'s involvement with the tradition appears however to have been determined from the outset by its colonial moral formation. *Bhadraloka* Vaiṣṇavas thus made a concerted attempt to set apart an 'authentic' or 'pure'

tradition from all that did not meet the demands of their new moral framework. This dissociative undertaking took shape perhaps most notably in a broad polemical campaign against what are commonly designated Vaiṣṇava 'minor sects' (*upasampradāya*), which were often denounced as forms of Vaiṣṇava deviance on account their alleged sexual ritual practices and other forms of morally transgressive behaviour.

In this paper I propose to examine the nature of this late nineteenth-century polemic against the Vaiṣṇava *upasampradāya*s, tracing some of the key moral sources that inform it. I particularly seek to highlight the importance of reading this polemic in the light of brāhmaṇical trends displayed by the Gauḍīya tradition in the pre-colonial context. These trends appear to have persisted well into the nineteenth-century, finding a notable degree of affinity with *bhadraloka* morals. In sum, I aim to problematise the notion that the late nineteenth-century Vaiṣṇava polemic against the *upasampradāya*s can be taken as a definitive sign of colonial 'rupture' within the Gauḍīya tradition.