

# Raja-mandala: In the Kings' Circle



**Court Society as Paradigm in India**

**International Conference**

**June 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

June 8 | EHESS, 54 Boulevard Raspail 75006 Paris, salle 737

June 9 | musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 75007 Paris, salle de cinéma

**★ MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY  
JACQUES CHIRAC**

**ceias**  
centre d'études - Inde | Asie du Sud  
centre for South Asian studies  
*Nadia Guerguadi*

**JUNE 8 | 54 BD RASPAIL 75006 PARIS, SALLE 737**

22<sup>e</sup> Journée du CEIAS

9 | *Welcome coffee*

9.30–10 | Welcome address by the CEIAS direction  
Introduction by the organizers

**1<sup>st</sup> session | Discussant: Arlo Griffiths**

10–10.45 | EMMANUEL FRANCIS (CEIAS)  
Usages of *Meykkīrttis* in Cōla Period (10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> c.)

10.45–11.15 | *Coffee break*

11.15–12 | TIZIANA LEUCCI (CEIAS)  
Srī-Lakṣmī, Apsaras and the Indian Courtesans/Artists  
as Symbols of Royal Power, Prestige and Charisma

12–12.45 | GRÉGORY MIKAELIAN (Centre Asie du Sud-Est)  
Silhouette du *devarāja* après Angkor

12.45–14.30 | *CEIAS open buffet*

**2<sup>nd</sup> session | Discussant: Jean-Claude Galey**

14.30–15.15 | MARIE LECOMTE-TILOUINE (Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale)  
Le roi démocrate, au Népal des Panchayat (1961-1990)

15.15–16 | UWE SKODA (Aarhus University)  
Deities, Alliances and the Power over Life and Death:  
Exploring Royal Sovereignty in a Former Princely State in Odisha

16–16.30 | *coffee break*

16.30–17.15 | RAPHAËL ROUSSELEAU (Université de Lausanne)  
“Forest Dwellers” Vs. Court Culture:  
The ‘Savages’ of Urban Indian Society

17.30 | *Cocktail*

**JUNE 9 | MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY – JACQUES CHIRAC**

9.45–10 — Welcome address by **JULIEN CLÉMENT**  
(adjoint au directeur du département de la recherche et de l'enseignement,  
musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac)

**1<sup>st</sup> session | Discussant: Pierre-Yves Manguin**

10–10.45 | **DAUD ALI** (University of Pennsylvania)  
**The Spread and Appropriation of Courtly Technologies in Medieval India**

*10.45–11.15 | Coffee break*

11.15–12 | **HERMANN KULKE** (University of Kiel)  
**Convergence of Kshatriyaization and Tribalization:  
Courtly Rituals in Odisha**

12–12.45 | **PREMINDA JACOB** (University of Maryland Baltimore County)  
**The Semiotics of Kingship in South India:  
Images of Jayalalithaa Jayaram as God Queen**

*12.45–14.30 | lunch break*

**2<sup>nd</sup> session | Discussant: Corinne Lefèvre**

14.30–15.15 | **ALI ANOOSHAHR** (UC Davis)  
**The King of Hearts:  
The Role of Emotions in the Early Mughal Empire**

15.15–16 | **BLAIN AUER** (Université de Lausanne)  
**A Culture of Royalty and the Image of the Persian King  
in the Delhi Sultanate**

*16–16.30 | coffee break*

16.30–17.15 | **AUDREY TRUSCHKE** (Rutgers University)  
**Prithviraja's Kingship on the Eve of the Indo-Muslim Rule**

# Raja-mandala: In the Kings' Circle

**EMMANUEL FRANCIS (CEIAS)**

Usage of meykkīrttis in Cōla period (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c.)

In using ancient Indian sources, whether epigraphical or archaeological, partly overlapping distinctions can be made between royal and non-royal/local, public and private. In many cases the royal seem to have the status of an archetype, invented in the first place for royal uses, then adopted and adapted by agencies other than royal. Such a dichotomy operates quite clearly in Tamil Nadu for the late Pallava period (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> c.). My aim here is to test the validity of this distinction when applied to the Coḷa period (10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> c.) with a special focus on the *meykkīrtti*, Tamil epigraphical genre of royal praise standardised under Rājarājacōḷa I (r. 985–1014), which originated in the royal chancellery but was also resorted to by non-royal agencies.

**TIZIANA LEUCCI (CEIAS)**

*Srī-Lakṣmī*, *Apsaras* and the Indian Courtesans/Artists as symbols of royal power, prestige and charisma

In India, until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the women courtesans and artists played an important role in the legitimate representation of the royal authority, particularly during the kings' consecration and crowning ceremonies, as testify numerous sculptures where they appear as attendants, as well as the texts mentioning their 'auspiciousness'. Yet, their role was considered with prejudice in the colonial and then nationalist historiography, as proof of the « Oriental despot's luxury and lust ». In the 1980s, other interpretations insisted upon the possible links of the courtesan-dancers with supposed previous fertility cult. In my paper I will report some of the data collected during my fieldworks in South India, which included the interviews to some members of the royal families and to those aged courtesans attached to the previous kingdoms of Mysore (Karnataka), Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu) and Puri (Orissa). I will then analyse the courtesans' symbolic dimension as the heartly counterparts of the goddesses *Srī*, *Lakṣmī*, and the celestial courtesans/artists *Apsaras*, by focusing on their specific status and duty (*dharma*) within the 'royal' political and socio-religious order. I will then show that this status has much more to do with the monarch's legitimate 'prestige, charisma, pomp and splendour', than just to fertility.

## GRÉGORY MIKAELIAN (Centre Asie du Sud-Est)

### Silhouette du *devarāja* après Angkor

D'anciennes et de plus récentes études sur le processus d'indianisation du Cambodge soulignent chacune à leur manière la profondeur sociale de ce phénomène, qui ne saurait se restreindre au cercle étroit d'une élite palatiale (Au Chhieng, Saveros Pou, Ang Chouléan, Éric Bourdonneau). Véritable 'procès de civilisation', il s'appréhende plus aisément sur une temporalité longue, laquelle recoupe en partie les rythmes de fondation et de refondation de la royauté khmère, du Funan à la veille de l'époque contemporaine. L'illustre de façon paradigmatique le culte tutélaire du roi et de la royauté, le fameux *devarāja* – en khmer : *kamrateñ jagat ta rāja*. Institué au X<sup>e</sup> siècle à Koh Ker, ce culte à Śiva devenu pilier de la société de cour angkoriennne va se maintenir en contexte bouddhique au cœur du palais royal, mais sous des atours renouvelés, tout en exerçant plus largement son emprise sur la société politique, le monde des élites provinciales et parfois sur le quotidien de la société paysanne. Le sens même de cette emprise aura alors changé. L'intervention s'attachera à tracer les contours évolutifs de ce culte durant la période post-angkoriennne (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle).

## MARIE LECOMTE-TILOUINE (Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale)

### Le roi démocrate, au Népal des Panchayat (1961-1990)

Les rois du Népal, réduits à un rôle rituel durant plus d'un siècle, sous le règne de leurs premiers ministres Rana (1946-1951), ont été associés à la démocratie, au socialisme, voire à la révolution à leur retour au pouvoir dans les années 1950. Nous utiliserons ici une approche éliasiennne pour dessiner la « configuration » de la royauté en cette période spécifique, et étudier les relations entre les deux ensembles pyramidaux qui s'y dessinent: l'un, qui part du Premier Ministre et s'étend jusqu'aux plus humbles fonctionnaires, l'autre, qui part du souverain et s'étend aux plus humbles représentants du peuple.

## UWE SKODA (Aarhus University)

### Deities, alliances and the power over life and death: Exploring royal sovereignty in a former princely state in Odisha

Looking at kingship in the former princely state of Bonai, claims to sovereignty, always (re-)negotiated in interactions, go beyond any narrowly defined political sovereignty, involve various deities and are often constructed in the form of privileged access to or exalted roles in the cult of gods and goddesses. Expressed

in rituals, but also in texts and temples, lordship and authority emerge and are renewed through links between ruler and powerful deities, like Goddess Durga, on the one hand and kings and communities or subjects, especially also Adivasis / Scheduled Tribes, on the other hand.

The paper based on long-term field research in the area proposes a multi-dimensional approach, i.e. such claims to (and forms of recognition of) sovereignty are, firstly, elaborated on in royal chronicles describing, for example, the initial conquest; are secondly manifested in idols, temples and other monuments in a sacred landscape surrounding the ruler and marking territories; and thirdly, are performed and renewed in rituals such as Dasara as the primary kingship ritual in Bonai – all of which express or hint at a power over life and death as ultimate rationale of sovereignty. Taken together this approach offers insights in the tenacity of royal sovereignty, however reduced nowadays after the formal abolition of kingship with the final political authority clearly resting with the Indian nation state.

### **RAPHAËL ROUSSELEAU (Université de Lausanne)**

#### **« Forest dwellers » vs. court culture: The ‘savages’ of urban Indian society**

The starting point of my paper is a remark by Daud Ali in his *Courtly Culture* (2006: 101, 226) about the “behavioural continuum” between the good manners of the courtiers and the violence of the forest/hill peoples as displayed in the literature of the time. Drawing firstly from medieval sources, I will demonstrate that the depiction of Forest dwellers (*sabara*, *nishada*) both negatively mirrors and enhances the royal civilization ideals. Then, shifting to more contemporary sources (focusing on examples from Odisha, but not only, if time permits), I will show that the representation of the same Forest groups reflects another kind of relation. If the conceptual framework of the court society remains pregnant in some local/regional contexts, the main “social formation” is now the Nation-State, carrying with it modern—and colonial—‘requalifications’ of the identity: ‘rustic’ Forest dwellers have become ‘tribes’ with ‘racial’, ‘natural’, etc. overtones.

### **DAUD ALI (University of Pennsylvania)**

#### **The Spread and Appropriation of Courtly Technologies in Medieval India**

This essay will explore how modes of royal and courtly power were replicated and appropriated by political subordinates and corporate groups in moments of political recession and collapse. Examining late and post-Chola times (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) in the Kaveri Delta, the paper argues that political technologies of

the 'state' were used by local actors to form pacts and agreements to constitute local forms of power.

### **HERMANN KULKE (University of Kiel)**

#### **Convergence of Kshatriyaization and Tribalization: Courtly Rituals in Odisha**

In previous publications I highlighted the gradual integration of tribal deities/goddesses and rituals into the courtly culture of emerging chieftaincies and 'little kingdoms' of Odisha. In the present paper I am trying instead to bring out more clearly the two-sidedness of these processes as a convergence of kshatriyaization and tribalization. I shall illustrate this by the "legendary history" of few tutelary tribal goddesses (ista-devata/kula-devata) of former Feudatory States and by Jagannatha, the "imperial deity" (rastra-devata) of Odisha's great Gajapati kings.

### **PREMINDA JACOB (University of Maryland Baltimore County)**

#### **The Semiotics of Kingship in South India: Images of Jayalalithaa Jayaram as god queen**

The philosophies, rituals and functions of kingship have, to a large extent, shaped the development of civilization in South Asia. Despite variations in the concept of kingship at different historical periods and in different regions, key elements of the tradition were continually revived due to the authoritative status of ancient literary sources that were instrumental in establishing an enduring form of monarchy as the principal form of governance throughout the sub-continent. Pre-colonial notions about kingship have persisted into the present period, penetrating all levels of political culture in India and influencing contemporary expectations about leadership. My paper will focus on Jayalalithaa Jayaram (1948-2016), a political tactician who astutely deployed the signifiers of royalty and religion to capture and hold power in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu for a quarter century. Jayalalithaa's political portraiture melded symbolic imagery — lions, scepters, the sun, temples and icons — with text that hailed the leader as a god queen. My visual analysis of representative images, prominently displayed in urban public spaces, will focus on their localized resonance for an audience well versed in Tamil, specifically Dravidian (as opposed to Aryan or Sanskrit) history and culture.

**ALI ANOOSHAHR (UC Davis)**

## **The King of Hearts: The Role of Emotions in the Early Mughal Empire**

This paper studies how the early Mughal empire operated on the basis of intense emotional relationships among the elites and the emperor. Strong passions such as love, loyalty, honor, anger, and despair are portrayed by Indo-Persian chroniclers as central to the events and decisions made by the emperor, his immediate family, his extended family, and further down by chief commanders and even low level soldiers. My paper will investigate how successful kingship required the proper addressing of these emotions, while failure of course implied the incorrect approach to the emotions of one's allies and subjects.

**BLAIN AUER (Université de Lausanne)**

## **A Culture of Royalty and the Image of the Persian King in the Delhi Sultanate**

Royalty, as a political and cultural expression, was perpetuated by rulers and literate members of the court at Delhi and demonstrated through literature of a historical and epic nature, either in prose or poetry, that engaged with references to the pre-Islamic Persian past. The pre-Islamic Persian past is best illustrated in a large body of kingly myths describing events from the lives of the Persian heroes and kings such as Jamshid, Anushirvan, Rostam and Bahram Gur. The use of the Persianate imaginary exerted great influence on kingship as it developed and was propagated over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in South Asia. Kings proudly claimed descent from pre-Islamic Persian royalty as well as members of the courtly class. The transmission of the Persian mythic and kingly worldview was achieved through the courtly culture. But what is Persianate culture and royalty in the Delhi Sultanate? Does it change over time? How is royalty created and consciously maintained?

### ***Culture de la royauté et image du roi perse dans le Sultanat de Delhi***

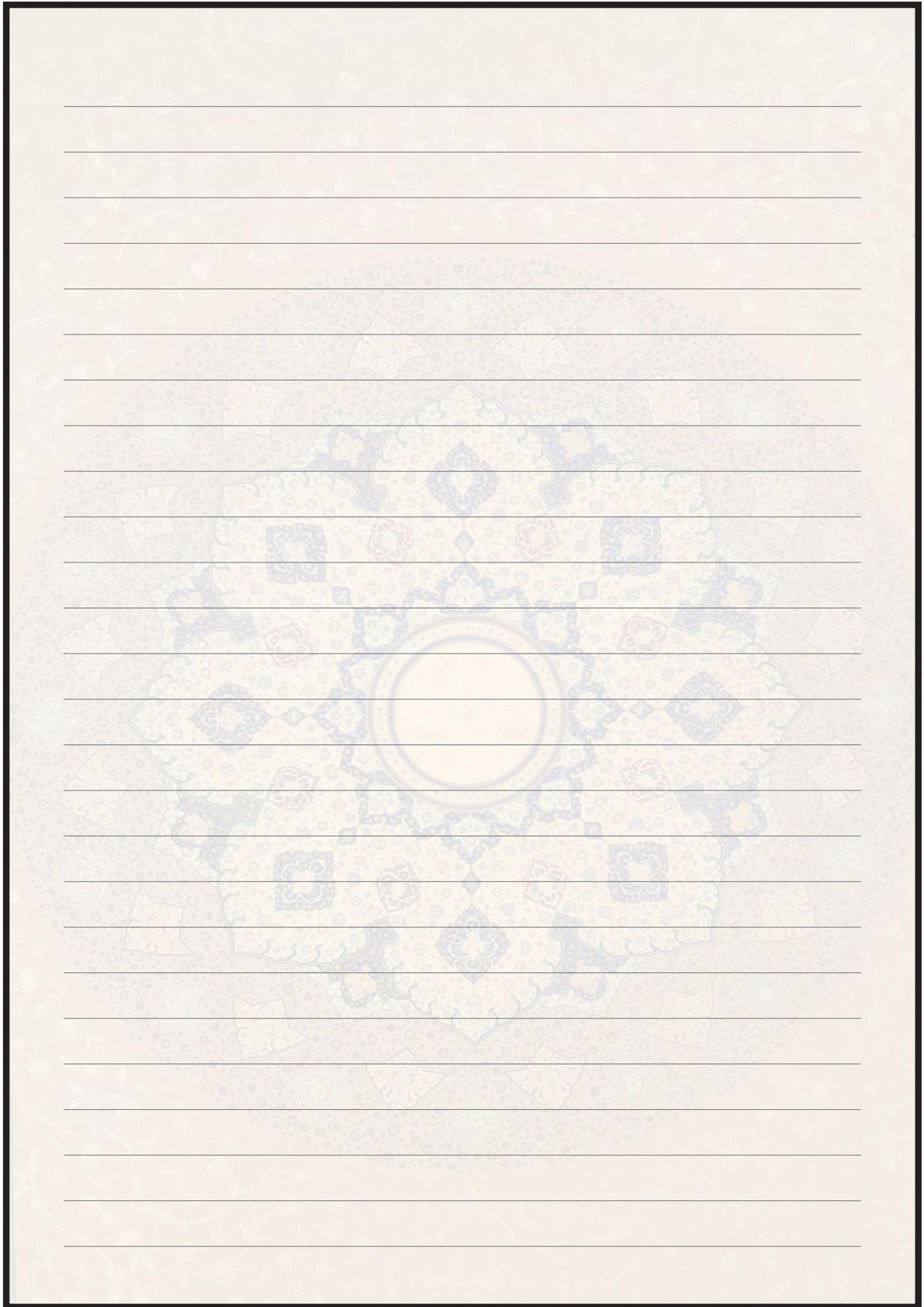
*La royauté, en tant qu'expression politique et culturelle, a été cultivée par les dirigeants et les lettrés de la cour de Delhi et illustrée par la littérature historique et épique de cette époque qui, sous forme de prose ou de poésie, faisait constamment appel aux références de l'histoire pré-islamique persane. Ce passé pré-islamique trouve son expression la plus illustre dans un grand nombre de mythes royaux décrivant des événements de la vie de héros persans et de rois tels que Jamshid, Anushirvan, Rostam et Bahram Gur. L'utilisation de l'imaginaire persan a exercé une grande influence sur la royauté telle qu'elle s'est développée et s'est propagée au cours des treize et quatorzième siècles en*

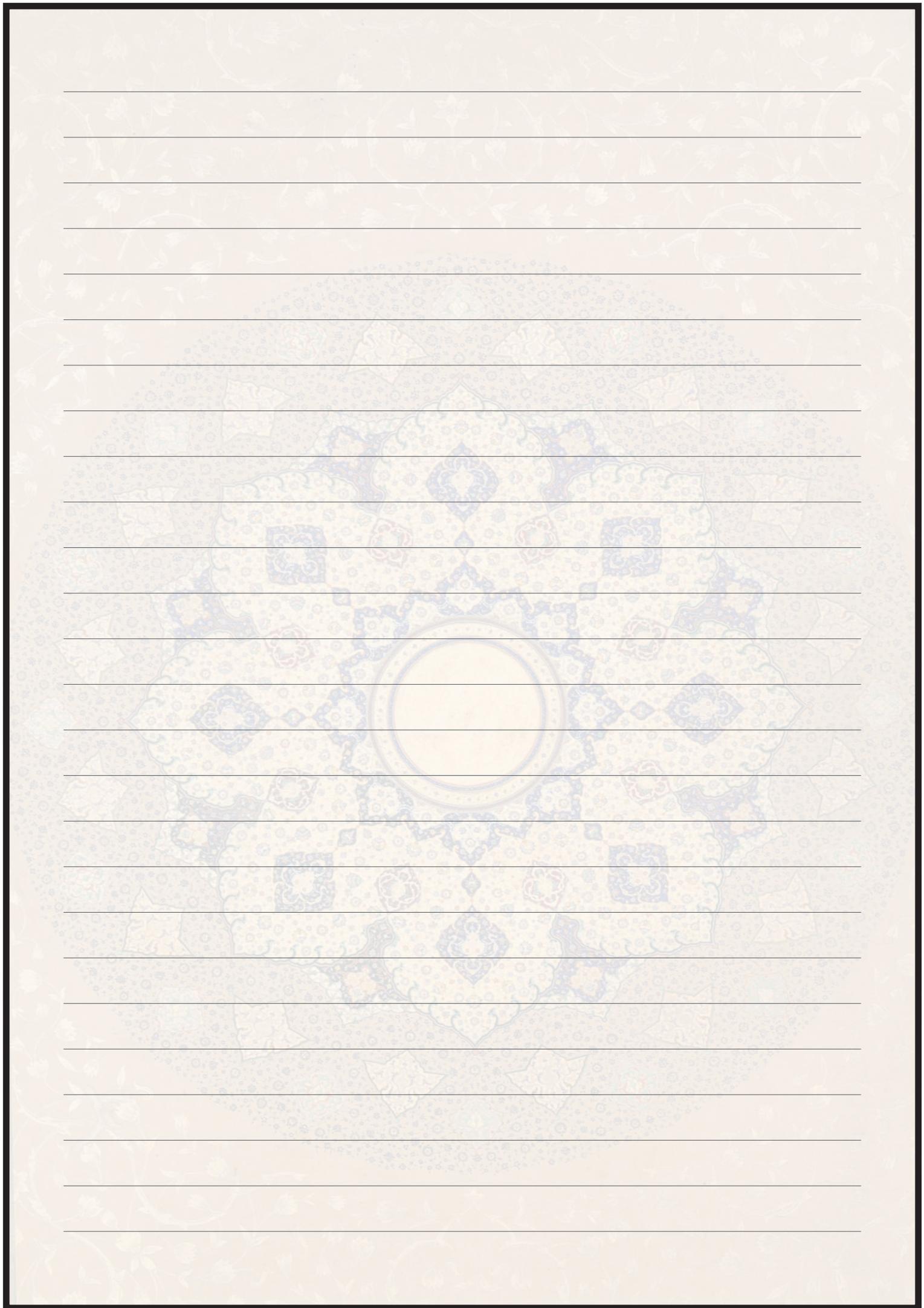
Asie du Sud. Les rois comme les membres de la noblesse ont fièrement revendiqué être les descendants des plus éminents représentants de la royauté persane. La vision du monde mythique et royale de la Perse ancienne a donc été transmise à travers la culture de cour de cette époque. Mais quelle fut exactement la place et la signification de la culture persane et de la royauté dans le Sultanat de Delhi ? Ont-elles changées avec le temps ? Comment cette notion de royauté fut-elle créée et sciemment maintenue ?

**AUDREY TRUSCHKE (Rutgers University-Newark)**

### Prithviraja's Kingship on the Eve of the Indo-Muslim Rule

In the final decade of the twelfth century CE, the Chauhan king Prithviraja, the so-called “last Hindu emperor,” fought a few battles against Muhammad Ghori, a Muslim invader. Such conflicts were quickly becoming part of the standard landscape of Indian kingship, but more unusual was the decision of one of Prithviraja's court poet's, Jayanaka, to write about the clash between the two men. Jayanaka's poem, the *Prithvirajavijaya* (*Prithviraja's Victory*), is noteworthy for being the first Sanskrit work that discusses Indo-Islamic incursions and political figures, both Ghurid and Ghaznavid, in any depth. The work primarily addresses Prithviraja's kingship and describes his kingdom against the backdrop of pressure from Ghurid invasions in particular. Jayanaka also situates Prithviraja as a king by praising his ability to restore a particular sacred landscape in part of north India. The *Prithvirajavijaya* has long been ignored in modern scholarship, largely because of a false presumption that Sanskrit authors wrote no historical texts. In this paper, I take up the long-neglected historical poem, *Prithviraja's Victory*, in order to investigate how Jayanaka constructed Prithviraja's kingship using time-honored Sanskrit conventions—sometimes in innovative ways—against a new political backdrop of Ghurid incursions into north India.





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## **Court Society as Paradigm in India**

*A conference organized by Emmanuel Francis (CEIAS) and Raphaël Rousseleau (Université de Lausanne) with the support of the CEIAS and the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac (département de la recherche et de l'enseignement).*

In Western perception, Indian Rajas often call to mind a faded luxury, while the Indian society continues to be grasped mostly through castes inequalities or the textual Hindu tradition. Hindu kingship has been abundantly investigated, notably the relationship between kings and Brahmins (Jan Heesterman), or, from a wider perspective, between political power and socio-religious institutions and values (Louis Dumont).

With the development of regional studies, the debate shifted towards the nature of the state in ancient India. Several models have been put forward: feudalism (R.S. Sharma), bureaucratic state (K.A.N. Sastri), segmentary state and ritual sovereignty (Burton Stein, Richard Fox), integrative state according to a processual model (B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Hermann Kulke), imperial formation (Ronald Inden). Moreover, as a counterpoint to structural perspectives, anthropological and ethno-historical researches stressed the pivotal role of kingship in Indian society (Nicholas Dirks, Jean-Claude Galey), by “rediscovering” the works of Arthur Maurice Hocart.

More recently, Daud Ali opened a new avenue for research, in testing the relevance of Norbert Elias' concept of *court society* to India while acknowledging Michel Foucault's contributions about the state apparatus. These have helped placing the research on Indian kingship “against wider historical processes, social, economic, and religious.”

The aim of the present conference is not to revive debate about the nature of kingship in India, but rather to approach the court society (beyond the king) as a set of relations and practices, in other words to consider kingship as a *civilisation model*.

