Memory Construction and Emotion in India
Simpson Center for the Humanities
University of Washington, Seattle
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SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

Day 1: Gwalior: Memory Making In A Built Environment

PANEL 1. GWALIOR'S HISTORY AND (NOT SO) IDEAL KINGS
Respondent: Prof. Purnima Dhavan (History, UW)

A Persian Perspective: Sayyid Fazl Ali Shah Qadri's *Kulliyat-i Gwaliyari*

Shariq Khan (MA Student, South Asia Studies, UW)

I will be bringing in the Indo-Persian perspective on the history of Gwalior and the theme of the ideal king. I will do this by focusing on Sayyid Fazl Ali Shah Qadri's Kulliyat-i Gwaliyari, which is one of the early if not the earliest history of Gwalior written in Persian (begun in the late 16th century). This work was the also the first in a string of Gwaliyar-Namas which more or less follow Fazl Ali's version. Some of the questions I will be exploring in this text are: How is the Kulliyat's treatment of the political history of Gwalior (its treatment of the Tomars, for example) different from histories of Gwalior in other languages? Thus, what assumptions, prejudices and priorities come into play from the fact of this history's being written in Persian as opposed to other languages? How does a 'local' history such as the Kulliyat differ from 'official' court histories? Finally, what does an ideal king look like for Fazl Ali? As we will see, the Sufi context of Gwalior is central to Fazl Ali's idea of a good king, but not exclusively.

The Hammīradeva Ideal

Chris Diamond (PhD Student, Asian Languages & Literature, UW)

Why was the story of Hammīradeva and the siege of his fort by Allaudin Khilji such a popular subject for a wide variety of texts in different languages during the 15th century and afterwards? This paper will contextualize the content and importance of the Hammīra narrative by presenting a comparative reading of several texts from different regions and genres. By doing so, the emergence of more elaborate retellings of the story (such as Vimalasuri's *Hammīramahākāvya* (c. 1400) in Gwalior in the 15th century in the context of the Tomar court reveals new resonances and motivations. Texts to be consulting include Vidyāpati's Sanskrit *Puruṣaparīkṣā* (c. 1420) from Mithilā, the *Prākṛta-Paiṅgalam*, 'Isāmi's Persian *Futuḥ al-Salaṭin* (c. 1350), and several vernacular retellings including the *Hammīrāyaṇa*. Each of these texts provide a different regional, linguistics, and political perspective but all are relatively contemporary. Hopefully, this will also reveal much about the multilingual transmission of stories/narratives in Sultanate Period North India and the intersection between language and memory.

A Sanskrit Perspective: Glorifying the Chauhans in Early Tomar Gwalior? Constructing and Challenging Historical Memory in Nayacandra Sūri's *Hammīramahākāvya.*

Sander Hens (PhD Student, Gent University, Belgium)

In the early fifteenth century at the court of Vīrama Tomar (1402-1423) of Gwalior the poet Nayacandra Sūri presented his *Hammīramahākāvya* (HMK), a Sanskrit court epic about the heroic exploits of Chauhan king Hammīra of Ranthambhor and his defeat at the hands of the Delhi Sultan Alāuddīn Khaljī. Apart from narrating the life story of this widely popular hero, the poem devotes several chapters to describe the history of Hammīra's predecessors. This paper addresses one of the key questions the HMK evokes: why was the composition or patronage of a poem about the Chauhan rulers meaningful in the court of the newly established Tomar dynasty of Gwalior? I will first draw attention to the poem's unconventional content. Although the story of the Chauhans is composed in the format of a eulogy, Nayacandra seems to repeatedly undermine the heroic qualities of the protagonists. I argue that Nayacandra intended to alienate his audience from the popular Hammīra legend by linking Hammīra's portrayal to that of the wide-spread negative imagination of his famous predecessor Pṛthvīrāja as a foolish, immoral loser. I then reflect how Nayacandra's poem made sense in the context of his patron Vīrama Tomar's successful independence struggle and how the poet perhaps consciously exploited the presence of various, often conflicting, imaginations of the Chauhan kings and their relation to the Tomars. Arguably, within the context of the (re-)emergence of the Tomars as a dynastic power, it made good sense that Nayacandra's poem about the powerful but ultimately unsuccessful Chauhan dynasty often reads more as an explanation for defeat in the guise of eulogy. This paper aims to highlight the role of the individual, the poet, in constructing and challenging historical memory.

PANEL 2. PERFORMANCES: PAST AND PRESENT

Respondent: Prof. Christian Novetzke (Jackson School of International Studies, UW)

Transcreating the Mahabharata in the Vernacular

Dr. Raj Kumar (Department of Hindi, Benares Hindu University, India)

A significant characteristic of the Indian "Vernacular Millennium" (term of Sheldon Pollock) is the transcreation (not translation) of Sanskrit texts, in particular the epics. This paper studies three such vernacular Mahabharata reworkings – Vishnudas' *Pandavcarit* from Gwalior (1435), *Pandun ka Kada* (1695), *and Sabal Singh Chauhan's Mahabharat* (17th-18th C). By transcreating the Sanskrit Mahabharata, into the vernacular, these authors created a Mahabharata of their own according to contemporary and (at times) regional requirements / expectations, simultaneously retaining / connecting to cultural memories and transforming them. At the same time, these vernacular texts are intertextual and foregrounding this intertextuality serves to underscore an Indian way of constructing cultural memory. This paper will focus on the episode of *Kicaka-vadha* in order to illustrate the dynamics of vernacularization.

Pandavani: A Text of One's Own

Dr. Archana Kumar (Department of English, Benares Hindu University, India)

Cultural narratives like Mahabharata and Ramayana are the filaments with which Indian psyche can be said to be intricately interwoven: they are not things external that can be wrenched out but rather stories that have swayed and held the Indian mind and imagination in grip for millennium. Singing of 'Pandavani' in Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh is a relatively new phenomenon. Pandavani is usually sung by the unprivileged (in terms of caste primarily) who are denied the right to recite sacred texts. They take the Mahabharata to be their source text but during performance create their own texts. In recent years, many women performers too have entered this hitherto male bastion. Singing of Pandav Katha elevates the status of the singer to that of a 'vyasa ' or a 'Kathavaachak'. Its singing in public acts as a catalyst for the audience to recall/recast their racial/cultural memories. When these stories are memorialized during public performance, contemporary meanings do creep in. The present paper will focus on varied intended/received meanings of episodes—in particular Kichak Vadh—of Pandav Katha during performance/enactment by the Pandavani performers/audience.

Patronage of Performing Arts by Rājā Mān Singh Tomar, Ruler of Gwalior (1486-1516): An Homage to Dr Harihar Nivas Dvivedi (1912-1987)

Prof. Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris)

Rājā Mān Singh Tomar, the outstanding ruler of Gwalior from 1486 to 1516 is remembered for the attractive buildings he had constructed in Gwalior and around, such as the Man Mandir Palace in the Fort, the Gujari Mahal at the base of the hill, and the Rācch of Barai, at c. 30 kilometers to the South West of the city [cf Saarthak Singh's presentation]. His intellectual curiosity, connoisseurship and innovations in music theory and performing arts are attested in architectural artefacts and a wide range of texts. Indo-Persian chronicles and musicological treatises, and vernacular literary sources highlight Rājā Mān Singh's patronage of the poet-composers (*vāggeyakāra*) and performers of Madhyadesh. Among them, Nāyak Bakhshū stands as the foremost court artist in the emerging poetical and musical form in *gvāliarī bhāṣā*, a poetic language noticed for its musicality, called Dhrupad, of which Rājā Mān Singh is regarded to be the legendary "inventor" through the Mughal period and onwards. The descendants and disciples of Mān Singh's protégés, such as Miyān Tānsen (d. 1589), were the main vocalists of the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605). Hundreds of lyrics attributed to them on a wide thematic range were collected in anthologies attesting the new aesthetic trends which contributed to the historical construction of memory of the vibrant artistic life of Gwalior in the early 16th century.

PANEL 3. MATERIAL CONTEXTS: PLEASURE PALACES, INSCRIPTIONS, AND THE ART OF THE BOOK

Respondent: Prof. Richard Salomon (Asian Languages & Literature, UW)

The Place of Performance in a Landscape of Conquest: Mānsingh's *akhāḍā* in Gwalior

Saarthak Singh (PhD Student, New York University)

Some 30 km from the Gwalior citadel is an unpretentious structure featuring a circular stage enclosed by bastioned walls. Though constructed from local materials, the open-air theatre is designed as an acoustically- and visually-compelling ensemble, with orchestral platforms in cardinal directions of the stage ringed by an audience pavilion along the rampart. It is described in Khaḍgarāy's c.1630 chronicle as an *akhāḍā*, an arena for dance performances, which lay at the edge of a lake at a short distance from a hunting lodge. Here, in this wilderness landscape away from the palace, the Tomar prince Mānsingh (r. 1489-1516) is said to have delighted in novel aesthetic traditions (*naī rasarītī*), which were to become fashionable at both temple and court. When the Mughals remember Gwalior, it is no longer as the infidel's jungle refuge (*mawāsāt*) but as a sphere of cultural refinement (*sudeśa*) where provincial musical forms were brought into the mainstream. This 15th century theatre thus provides a rare opportunity for examining the emergent aesthetic sensibilities of pre-Mughal north India within a geographically definable space. My presentation identifies architectural precedents for Mānsingh's *akhāḍā* and places it within a context of performance, interpreting it as part of a complex engagement with the landscape where the concept of *līlā* ('play') is harnessed at multiple levels, from evening entertainments to Kṛṣṇa's dalliance, from the staging of hunting sports to that of military campaigns.

Installing the Jinas: Jain Monuments and Manuscripts in Medieval Gwalior

Corbett Costello (PhD student, Asian Languages & Literature, UW)

In my paper I examine the role of the Jain community in the context of religious and cultural production in the geo-political zone of medieval Gwalior. Here I look at the close link between the emerging status of the Gwalior capital as an important cosmopolitan center and its epic cosmographic construction as a Jain sacred site. For example, the important sculptural-inscriptional project executed on the cliff-face of Gwalior Fort (or Gopālcal) throughout the period of 1440-1473 CE was largely under the sponsorship of upwardly-mobile Agravāla Jain merchants with the poet-scholar Raidhū appointed as chief supervisor of the work and image-consecrator. As this monumental project served to inscribe the milieu of Gwalior in Jain religious and cultural memory as a sacred site with cosmological significance, my paper attempts to examine the individual agents and larger agencies (religious, courtly, and mercantile) involved in its production. By taking a textual and cultural inventory of this provincial polity from the perspective of the Jains, I will situate their productions into a wider inter-textual and inter-material framework incorporating alternative narrative formats and modes of visual representation from the region. An analysis of both the textual and epigraphic record in this case can furnish valuable information with regard to both praxis and patronage in this strategic cultural center as well as their relationship to trends traceable in concurrent forms of

communicative media. Thus in my paper I seek to more fully understand how literary, scriptural, and inscriptional text-artifacts functioned in a diverse socioaesthetic context such as Gwalior. In this way, an examination of Jain literary and inscriptional discourse can here perhaps provide a set of material models through which the space of Gwalior's epic past has been reproduced in terms of cultural memory.

OUTREACH EVENT AT SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM (Evening September 15)

Black Cobras and Free Gypsies: the Recent Creation of Rajasthani Kalbeliya Dance as Intangible UNESCO Heritage
Dr. Ayla Joncheere (Gent University, Belgium)

Being enlisted as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO since 2010, Kalbeliya dance from Rajasthan is nowadays generally conceptualized as an ancient tradition of India. However, this same dance practice, also known as a form of "Indian Gypsy" or "snake charmers' folk" dance, appears to have originated as recently as the 1980s. During this lecture-demonstration, we will interactively unravel the underlying dynamics/discourses behind the recent creation of this popular dance form. On the basis of my ethnographical material (stories with their associated pictures and videos) collected in Rajasthan and my experience as a dancer, I want to take you on an alternative route to understanding the contemporary practice of Kalbeliya dance.

Day 2: Emotional Regimes: Variants On Warrior Epics

Mahabharata Retellings in Apabhramsha

Prof. Eva De Clercq (Gent University, Belgium)

Like many other pan-Indian stories, the story of the Mahābhārata and the Pāṇḍavas too was adapted by Jain authors to fit the specific Jain world view and ideology. Although the episodes from the Jain Mahābhārata are already found in the Śvetāmbara canon, complete and unabridged Jain versions of the Mahābhārata story became popular from the 13th c. onwards, both by Digambara and Śvetāmbara authors. Yaśaḥkīrti, a Bhaṭṭāraka or Digambara Jain cleric, who was an important character in the Jain merchant community of 15th c. Gwalior, composed no less than two full versions of the Mahābhārata in Apabhraṃśa, a *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* and a *Pāṇḍavapurāṇa*. In addition, he completed the version of Svayambhūdeva (9th-10th c.) that had been left unfinished at the death of the poet, testifying to the immense popularity of this story among the Digambara community at that time. In this paper I focus on Yaśaḥkīrti's reworking of the episode known as *Kīcakavadha* in his *Pāṇḍavapurāṇa*. I examine Yaśaḥkīrti's transformation of this – traditionally very heroic-- episode, and look at the emotions evoked in it, granting comparison to older Jain versions, on one hand, and to the contemporary reworking in early vernacular of Viṣṇudās' Pāṇḍav Carit, on the other.

The Power-Politics of Lust and Revenge in an Old Hindi Performance at the Tomar Court of Gwalior

Prof. Heidi Pauwels (Asian Languages & Literature, UW)

Broadly, this paper aims to interrogate the relation between literary performance and emotion at the moment the vernacular emerges as a mode of literary expression. The narrower focus is Viṣṇudās' *Pāṇḍav-carit,* created and performed in 1435 at the Tomar court in Gwalior, which is the first known retelling of the *Mahābhārata* in Old Hindi. This warrior epic is often characterized as expressive of Hindu assertion after an interlude of Sultanate-installed overlordship. Indeed, the patron had requested a story explaining how the few Pāṇḍavas managed to defeat the powerful Kauravas, seemingly referring to his own situation. The author in response privileges Bhīma's martial exploits, among which the *Kīcaka-vadha* (Bhīma's murder of Kīcaka in revenge to his sexual assault on Draupadī). I first highlight the performative features in the text and analyze what emotional regimes are mobilized in performance to what end. Further, I explore how that resembles and differs from performances in Sanskrit and Apabhramsha in roughly the same period and place, in particular how the Kīcaka episode is resonant with the critique of lust and violent revenge in the adventures of Prithvīrāj as related in the *Hammīra-mahākāvya,* performed at the Gwalior court just a few years earlier (studied by Sander Hens) and the sermons of non-violence in the Jain *Mahābhārata* (studied by Eva de Clercq). Finally, I search for clues as to how this martially deployed early Hindi, designated as *Zabān-e Gvāliar* or "the language of Gwalior," evolved into the idiom that became known as *Braj-bhāṣā,* "the language of Braj," which unabashedly celebrated Krishna's sexual exploits.

Followed by selected readings from relevant texts in the original Apabhramsha, Sanskrit, Persian, and Old Hindi.