

Sub-project B04

Dividing Texts: Conventions of visual text-organization in North Indian and Nepalese manuscripts up to ca. CE 1300

Prof. Dr. Harunaga Isaacson

Bidur Bhattarai, M.A.

Description of the project

This sub-project studies the ways in which scribes of Sanskrit manuscripts visually demarcate a text which they are copying from paratexts (such as introductory matter, or concluding colophons) or from other texts (such as texts preceding or/ and following in a multiple-text manuscript, or from a commentary or commentaries transmitted together with a text). Such demarcation may involve the use of space(s), variation in the size or/and the style of writing, symbols, colours (rubrication), or a combination of these.

Particular attention will be paid to what the study of such scribal practices shows about how textual knowledge is organized and structured (on several levels, including those of the division of individual texts and of chapters within texts), made use of, and indeed conceived of.

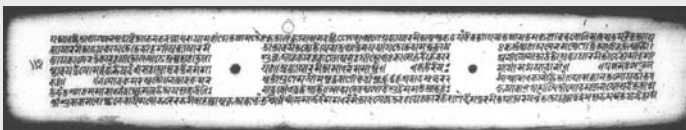
Sanskrit manuscript culture may well have been the most productive, as well as one of the most wide-spread and longest lasting, of all manuscript cultures worldwide. Since the extant materials are vast, and largely unstudied, the present project concentrates on earlier manuscripts, which are less numerous, with a cut-off date at 1350 CE, from Northern India and Nepal. Within these restrictions, manuscripts from a variety of regions, and transmitting a variety of textual genres, will be selected.

Objectives

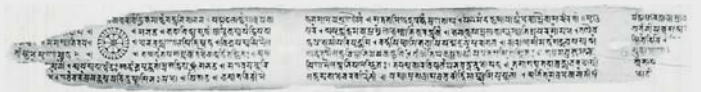
The aim of this sub-project is to survey and analyse practices of scribes of Sanskrit manuscripts in demarcating texts from paratexts or from other texts, as well as sections of a text from each other, and to contribute to a broader understanding of such practices in manuscript cultures, as well as to the working out of more precise, non culture-specific, terminology for their description.

Cooperation with other subprojects

This sub-project plays an important role within General Area B, since the devices by which texts of works, or sections thereof, are visually distinguished is one of the main sub-areas within the larger field of visual organization of manuscripts; within that area, it has particularly close affinity with B05, in which form and function of layout in Arabic manuscripts of religious texts is studied. Since in many cases, the demarcation is between texts and paratexts (such as colophons), the sub-project will cooperate closely also with General Area A; and since many of the manuscripts studied are multiple-text manuscripts, the sub-project is likewise linked with General Area C.



Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1648, *Sādhanaśamuccaya*, f. 115v



National Archives, Kathmandu, MS 4-2260, *Skandapurāna*, folio number uncertain



Kaiser Library MS 128 = NGMPP C 14/6, *Hevajratantraṭīkā*, f. 58r