



We are pleased to announce the next Friends of the Kern Institute lecture:

When the Rains Came: A Medieval Moment in South Asia

by prof. dr. Whitney Cox (University of Chicago)

Date : Thursday, April 2, 2026

Time : 15.30h

Venue : Leiden University, **Herta Mohr Building, room 0.16**. The lecture will be followed by **drinks** in the LIAS common room of the same Herta Mohr Building (first floor).

Abstract

The period ca. 850-1200 was marked by fundamental transformations in the histories of polity, culture, language, religious formation, and everyday life across the region now called South Asia. This same period also comprises the widely (if still controversially) accepted paleoclimatic phenomenon dubbed the Medieval Climate Anomaly (MCA). In the first steps toward a re-periodization of premodern South Asia, I propose to take the MCA as an outermost condition of possibility for a new interpretation of this time and place. How can awareness of the paleoclimate in any way influence or improve the work of a philologist or more conventional cultural or social historical scholarship? Presenting two entangled test-cases, drawn respectively from ninth century Kashmir and early eleventh century Tamilakam, I suggest that this is indeed possible, while also gesturing towards a wider scope of the region as a whole.

Whitney Cox is a Professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, focusing on Sanskrit and Tamil philology and the history of medieval South India. Besides numerous articles, he is the author of *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India: Moonset on Sunrise Mountain* (2016) and *Modes of Philology in medieval South India* (2017), and is presently completing an edition and translation of the Kashmirian Sanskrit poet Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.

