



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

Why the Shutting Down of the Meaning?
Sphoṭa and Śabda in the Yogaśāstra of Patañjali
by Rocco Cestola (IIAS, Leiden)
Thursday March 12, 2020

Time: 16.00h—17.00h, drinks afterwards

Place: Leiden University, Matthias de Vrieshof 3, room 104 (“Verbarium”)

Why the Shutting Down of the Meaning? Sphoṭa and Śabda in the Yogaśāstra of Patañjali

The current lecture introduces a topic termed as “*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* Philosophy of Language”. It is precisely concerned with the exposition of philosophical-linguistic themes occurring in the literature of *Pātañjalayogadarśana*. Among these, the disclosure of meaning (*sphoṭa*), word (*pada*) and phonemes (*varṇa*) are the key-concepts. In the context of verbal communication, the *sphoṭa* theory explains how the meaning is conveyed, and why the sentence is regarded as the meaningful linguistic unit. Initially formulated as a semantical and phonological theory by Sanskrit grammarians, the term *sphoṭa* is also and curiously included in the *Yogadarśana* of Patañjali. The *sphoṭa* is just one among many other theories of verbal reference and is fundamentally conceived as a speech act, and a psychic entity taking place in the mind of both speaker and listener. Considering that in order to progress towards higher levels of meditation the Yoga practitioner has to shut down mental state and function, what is then the use of the *sphoṭa* theory in the *Yogaśāstra* of Patañjali?

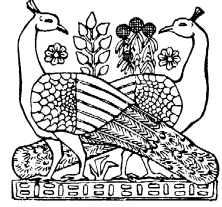
VERENIGING 'VRIENDEN VAN HET INSTITUUT KERN'

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Rocco Cestola

Rocco Cestola obtained his Ph.D. in Indology from the Sapienza University of Roma. He has prepared a critical edition grounded on manuscript sources, the first English annotated translation and a study of the first *Pāda* of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa's (17th-18th AD c.) *Vṛtti on Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. Currently, he is an IAS fellow thanks to the fellowship provided by the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). His main project proposal is committed to linking the field of Yoga studies with Sanskrit philosophy of language. In particular, this research project proposes to study a marginal topic concerning the overall role and function of language (*śabda*), the *sphoṭa* theory and the linguistic-philosophical arguments as formulated in the text entitled *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and its relative literature of explanation.