



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

Woodworkers and farmers 3000 years ago: transitions from the Ṛgveda to the Atharvaveda

by dr. Carmen Spiers, Leiden University Centre for Linguistics

Date : Thursday, January 18, 2024

Time : 15.30h

Venue : Leiden University, Matthias de Vrieshof 4, zaal 0.05. The lecture will be followed by **drinks** in the basement of Matthias de Vrieshof 3.



At the workshop of Balaji, a wood-carver from the Vishwakarma community in Pondicherry (photo taken by Balaji and shared with the speaker, November 2012)

Abstract

Although Vedic ritual poetry might not be an ideal source for the socioeconomic history of ancient South Asia, the hymns of the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda do give meaningful information about agriculture and woodworking, two types of work still important in India today. If the information gleaned from each of these two hymn-collections is compared keeping in mind their relative chronology, a clear transition can be observed in the way agricultural labour is organized, and in the social identity and status of labourers. Woodworking seems to undergo less of an observable transition in its organization; however, the social status and attributed behavior of woodworkers becomes more complex. An examination of the relevant passages will show the nature of these developments and also some related issues which remain obscure.

Carmen Sylvia Spiers

After obtaining her PhD (2020) from the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris) and having lived four years in India affiliated with the French Institute of Pondicherry, Carmen is now a Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) post-doctoral fellow at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics. Her project "His Enemies, Her Rivals: Gendered Expressions of Hostility in Ancient Indian Ritual Speech and Action, 1000 B.C.E." (GHost) involves the edition from manuscripts of new Vedic curse hymns of the Paippalāda school of the Atharvaveda as well as a translation and study of the *abhicāra* or hostile ritual chapter of the Atharvaveda's oldest ritual manual, the *Kauśikasūtra*.

