



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

Tracing the Early History of Yoga

by dr. Valters Negribs

Date : Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Time : 16.00h

Venue : Leiden University, **Herta Mohr Building, room 1.84.** The lecture will be followed by **drinks** in the LIAS common room of the same Herta Mohr Building (first floor).



The Death of Bhishma from a Mahabharata manuscript, 18th century, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh state, India (National Museum of Asian Art (Smithsonian))

Abstract

This talk will trace the development of some of the key trends in the early history of yoga. In particular, it will address such topics as different beliefs about the nature of the soul and the various religious goals of ascent to heaven (*svarga*), the world of Brahmā (*brahmaloka*), ultimate liberation (*mokṣa*), and union with God. It will argue that general beliefs about sages who voluntarily ascend to heaven and early yogic meditation aimed at directly seeing the luminous soul (*ātman*, *puruṣa*) were used to create theistic forms of yoga in the early centuries of the common era. This argument will predominantly rely on textual evidence from the Sanskrit epics while also referencing the Upaniṣads and early Buddhist and Jaina literatures.

Valters Negribs

Valters Negribs is a Gonda Fellow at the IAS, Leiden. His research concerns Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina ascetic and yogic literature in Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit. He obtained a DPhil in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford in 2022 with a thesis on “Ascetic Teachings for Householder Kings in the *Mahābhārata*”. He was then awarded the Leverhulme Study Abroad Fellowship to join the *Groupe de Recherches en Études Indiennes* in Paris to work on his project “Ascetic literature in early Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina traditions”. His work was also supported by the Post-doctoral research grant of the Colette Caillat Foundation of the Institut de France.