



Indian History, Culture and Heritage Series

Department of Humanistic Studies

Indian Institute of Technology (BHU), Varanasi

Organiser: Prof. Vinita Chandra



Prof. Ute Hüsken

Between Stone and Story

Integrating Tangible and Intangible Heritage
in the Study of Kanchipuram Temple
Legends

3:00 PM, 26 March 2026

**Hall 2D, Dev & Vardhana Lecture Complex
IIT (BHU), Varanasi**

Abstract: This presentation introduces an Academy research project examining the multi-modal transmission of temple legends (sthalapurāṇa) in Kanchipuram, one of South India's most significant pilgrimage centers. Using the narrative of the Yathoktakārī temple as a case study, I demonstrate the project's interdisciplinary methodology that integrates the analysis of Sanskrit and Tamil manuscripts, temple architecture and iconography, mural paintings, ritual practices, and oral narratives maintained by temple communities.

The project addresses a fundamental methodological challenge in the study of Hindu temple cultures: how to analyze the complex interrelationships between textual traditions, material culture, and performative practices. We are developing a digital database that creates structured linkages between these diverse materials, enabling new analytical possibilities for understanding how temple legends function within their ritual, architectural, and geographical contexts.

This presentation will introduce our research team's collaborative approach, demonstrate the interpretive potential of our integrated database through the Yathoktakārī example, and discuss the broader implications of this methodology for the study of Indian temple traditions and the conceptual frameworks we use to understand tangible and intangible heritage.

Ute Hüsken is currently Director, South Asia Institute, and Professor and Head of the Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University (Germany). Hüsken's main research fields are Buddhist studies, Hindu studies, Ritual and Festival studies, Gender studies, and the study of South Indian temple cultures. In most of her recent work she combines methods of textual research (Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil) and anthropology. Ute Hüsken is also head of the long-term project Hinduistische Tempellegenden in Südindien / Hindu Temple Legends in South India, funded by the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences.

Scan the QR for Registration

