

Call for a Postdoctoral Appointment

with the project



CEEMSA

CHANGING EPISTEME IN EARLY
MODERN SANSKRIT ASTRONOMY

Period:

One year, starting no later than 1 September 2022

Funded by the

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

Grant Agreement № AZ 21/F/21

Principal Investigator:

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Hosted at:



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The project *Changing Episteme in Early Modern Sanskrit Astronomy* (CEEMSA) invites applications for a **one-year postdoctoral fellowship** (starting no later than 1 September 2022) **to study Indo-Persian astronomical texts from early modern Mughal India.**

The project CEEMSA is a Gerda Henkel Stiftung funded research project (Jan 2022–Dec 2023, 24 months, Grant Agreement №. AZ 21/F/21) that evaluates the reception of Islamicate (Arabic and Persian) astronomical theories from the Marāgha and Samarqand schools in Sanskrit astronomy of early modern Mughal India. The aim of this project is twofold: to understand the language, logic, and structure of some of the earliest arguments in Sanskrit that appropriate, assimilate, or approximate Islamicate astronomy; and to understand the sociocultural, geopolitical, and historical forces that influenced the epistemic standards of the societies where these arguments were made.

Historical Context & Motivation

Under the rule of Mughal emperors (1526–1857), Sanskrit astronomy truly begins to engage with the astronomical theories from the Marāgha and Samarqand schools of Islamicate astral sciences. The complex discourses that followed were shaped by the power struggles of language, culture, and identity as medieval Islamicate astronomy was now cast into the language of Sanskrit. At the court of Emperor Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–58), the Hindu Pandit Nityānanda (fl. 1630/50) worked alongside the Muslim scholar Mullā Farīd (d. ca. 1629/32) to translate into Sanskrit the latter’s Indo-Persian *zīj* (a handbook of astronomical tables), the *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī* (ca. 1629/30), itself based upon the famous *Zīj-i Jadīd-i Sulṭānī* (ca. 1438/39) of Mirzā Ulugh Beg. Nityānanda’s *Siddhāntasindhu* (ca. early 1630s), like the *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī*, is an enormous work that includes theoretical discussions on hermeneutics, logic, metaphysics, mathematics, and astronomy, along with a large number of astronomical, calendrical, and geographical tables. It remains the largest (and among the earliest) Sanskrit presentation of Islamicate astronomy known to us; however, neither the Persian nor the Sanskrit text has ever been edited, translated, or studied in its entirety.¹

Action

Over the course of two years, the project CEEMSA aims to survey the contents of Mullā Farīd’s Persian *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī* and its Sanskrit recension in Nityānanda’s *Siddhāntasindhu*, and produce comparative critical editions and English translations (with annotations) of select chapters from (the canons of) both these texts. It is expected that **the postdoctoral fellow will read Mullā Farīd’s Persian *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī* from primary sources (manuscripts)** in close association with the project PI (Anuj Misra), who would also read Nityānanda’s Sanskrit *Siddhāntasindhu* concurrently.

By working in tandem, the project PI and the postdoctoral fellow will first survey the contents (canons and tables) of both these works, and then focus on select chapters (from the canons of both these texts) to edit and translate them into English, with apposite technical annotations. It is anticipated that the project PI and postdoctoral fellow will jointly publish the survey and the critical editions

¹Recent publications with the project *Early Modern Exchanges in Sanskrit Astral Sciences* (EMESAS, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant № 836055, 2019–21) have examined parts of Mullā Farīd’s *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī* and Nityānanda’s *Siddhāntasindhu* as a preliminary study. See Misra, Anuj (2021) ‘Persian Astronomy in Sanskrit: A comparative study of Mullā Farīd’s *Zīj-i Shāh Jahānī* and its Sanskrit translation in Nityānanda’s *Siddhāntasindhu*’, *History of Science in South Asia*, 9: 30–127; and Misra, Anuj (forthcoming Jan 2022) ‘Sanskrit Recension of Persian Astronomy: The computation of true declination in Nityānanda’s *Sarvasiddhāntarāja*’, accepted to appear in *History of Science in South Asia*, 10, 101 pages.

(with annotated translations) as two separate journal articles during the course of the project, and will present these results at the project conference (in late 2023).

There will be continual opportunities to discuss the findings of this project with other research groups dedicated to the study of astronomical tables; for example, the groups *Alfonsine Astronomy* (ALFA, Observatoire de Paris, France) and *History of Astronomical and Mathematical Sciences in India* (HAMSI, University of Canterbury, New Zealand), as well as with other members on the project's advisory board. The wider ambition of this project is to understand better the processes of transmission and translocation of astronomical knowledge in late medieval and early modern cultures.

Towards this end, the project CEEMSA invites applications for a **one-year postdoctoral position in Indo-Persian astronomy from early modern Mughal India** to start no later than **1 September 2022** or as soon as possible after the selection is made.

Qualifications Sought

The position is open to candidates who have completed their PhD (**graduated or qualified to graduate before 15 March 2022**) in either the history and philosophy of science, medieval and early modern studies, language and cultural studies, or in other exact scientific disciplines (like mathematics, astronomy, physics, etc.) with an emphasis on historical studies. The position involves working with primary sources in Islamicate astronomy and hence **attested competences in Arabic and Persian philology and manuscript studies are minimally required**, along with an interest in the history of astronomy and mathematics in early modern societies. The successful candidate will also need to possess strong verbal and written communication skills in English to participate in the publications and dissemination goals of the project.

Appointment Details

1. The position is **remotely based**, i.e., the fellow need not relocate to Copenhagen (Denmark) where the CEEMSA project is hosted. The fellow may continue to work from their country of residence, with the possibility of making short research visits to Copenhagen over the course of their fellowship (subject to budgetary approval).
2. It is expected that the postdoctoral fellow will work towards the action of the CEEMSA project (outlined above) in close association with the project PI and other project partners. Towards this end, the fellow will be required to commit to **being available for weekly remote meetings** (via zoom) at mutually agreeable times, **for up to several hours a week**.
3. The fellow is expected to be committed towards the publication and dissemination goals of the project CEEMSA on a **full-time basis**, and may not hold any other full-time salaried employment or external research funds concurrently. The fellow may take up related employment (e.g., teaching) up to a maximum of five hours per week.
4. The position is funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation as a 12-month research fellowship associated with the project CEEMSA. The fellowship amount is set to a fixed monthly payment of **EUR 2875**.

NOTE: The fellowship is granted by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung under the German Income Tax Act § 3 № 44 EStG and is accordingly exempted from tax in Germany; however, the fellowship amount may be subject to income tax based on the recipient's country of domicile. It remains the recipient's responsibility to check their own tax liability.

5. The Gerda Henkel Foundation will make monthly payments to the recipient with no employment relationship between the foundation and the recipient. Also, the foundation will not make any social security contributions, and recommends that fellows get private medical insurance (if deemed necessary) at their own cost.
6. The foundation will need to approve the appointment before the fellowship can begin, and accordingly, the successful candidate will need to **be in possession of their PhD degree certificate by 1 August 2022, at the very latest.**

Application Procedure

Applications should be sent to anuj.misra@hum.ku.dk **no later than 15 March 2022, 12:00 Central European Time.** Please include the following documents (as a **single PDF, not exceeding 15MB**):

- a short CV including a list of your most recent publications (if applicable), not exceeding three pages;
- a motivation letter describing your qualifications, interests in this project, and demonstrated capacity for independent and sustained research (including any previous remote collaborations or employment), not exceeding two pages;
- sample of written academic work (e.g., thesis and/or a recent paper)

Please also arrange for two letters of recommendation (on official stationery) to be emailed to the project PI at anuj.misra@hum.ku.dk with the subject line "Reference letter: <Applicant's full name>" by **15 March 2022, 12:00 Central European Time.**

The review of the applications will begin **16 March 2022** and the result will be announced on **15 May 2022.**