



Sammlung De Nobili –  
Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Indologie  
und Religionsforschung

Der Verein

SAMMLUNG DE NOBILI – ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT FÜR INDOLOGIE UND RELIGIONSFORSCHUNG

lädt herzlich ein zum 16. Jahresvortrag:

**Prof. Gavin Flood FBA**

(Campion Hall, Oxford University)

# **The Symbol of Ascent in Brahmanical and Christian Discourse**

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**Zeit:** Freitag, 16. Mai 2025, 15:00 s.t. (UTC+2), hybrid

**Ort:** Seminarraum 1 des Instituts für Südasien-, Tibet- und  
Buddhismuskunde, Bereich Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde  
Campus der Universität Wien, Spitalgasse 2, Eingang 2.7  
1090 Wien

**Anmeldung zur Online-Teilnahme:**

<https://oeaw-ac-at.zoom.us/meeting/register/NeqJPAsCRsierOPwRXDUAQ>

Im Anschluss an den Vortrag lädt der Verein zu kleinen Erfrischungen ein.

## **The Symbol of Ascent in Brahmanical and Christian Discourse**

The symbol of ascent has been a persistent theme in the histories of Brahmanical and Christian religion, representing human striving for transcendence. This lecture will examine the symbol, taking two examples from Christian and Śaiva religious literature, and arguing that the symbol of ascent articulates a redemptive understanding of human persons. The examples taken will be from the *Netratantra* along with Kṣemarāja's commentary and Hugh of St Victor's *The Mystic Arc* (*De arca Noe mystica*). I have chosen these works because they were both culturally resonant in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is a prima facie parallelism in their symbols of ascent, but also because there is a vast difference in conception of what such a hierarchical symbol comprises. Moreover, we might take both texts to be exemplars of a wider intellectual culture in which faith in transcendence was understood to involve the whole person and engagement with the created order. Such comparison has philosophical implication and raises methodological and hermeneutical questions about why one would wish to compare in the first place, how we go about it, and what this tells us about how we understand human persons across cultures.