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DE NOBILI RESEARCH LIBRARY –
ASSOCIATION FOR INDOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION

cordially invites you to its 17th annual lecture:

Associate Prof. Pär Eliasson

(University of Stavanger)

Early Jesuit Use of Hindu Scripture: The Case of Marathi

Date: Friday, 8 May 2026, 15:00–17:00 (UTC+2), hybrid

Place: Seminar room 1, Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies (ISTB), Campus of the University of Vienna, Section Tibetan Studies, Spitalgasse 2, Entrance 2.7 1090 Vienna

Registration for online participation:

<https://univiennea.zoom.us/meeting/register/y4j012C1RgqoeJaC-IW-jw>



After the lecture, the association will offer some light refreshments.

Early Jesuit Use of Hindu Scripture: The Case of Marathi

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Jesuits in western India produced a rich literature in Marathi, culminating in the massive Christian epics known as *Kristapurāṇa* (1616) and *Peter Purana* (1634) by Thomas Stephens and Étienne de la Croix respectively, and the shorter *Sancto Antonichy ziuitua Catha* (1655) by Antonio de Saldanha.

For Konkani, the smaller Goan sister language of Marathi, dictionaries and grammars were written as a part of the missionary endeavour in the 16th century. For Marathi, however, we have no evidence of similar systematic linguistic projects prior to the composition of Christian epics. The lack of early missionary linguistic works on Marathi is conspicuous given that sometimes one and the same person contributed substantially to both Konkani linguistics and Marathi literature. This implies that the question of how Marathi was studied by early Jesuits must be answered in other ways than studying grammars and vocabularies. Fortunately, there are several extant manuscripts with Hindu texts in Marathi, showing clear evidence of having been carefully studied by early modern Jesuits.

In this lecture, I will examine how these Hindu texts were studied and used in the early modern Jesuit mission in India. I will discuss marks, commentaries and glosses in the margins and between the lines of the manuscripts itself, and trace references to the Hindu texts in works written by Jesuits, as well as stylistic influence on Marathi Christian literature.

Pär Eliasson is associate professor in religious studies at the University of Stavanger in Norway. He finished his PhD in Indology at Uppsala University in 2022 with the dissertation *Towards a New Language: Christology in Early Modern Marathi, Konkani, and Hindustani*. The focus of his present research is the theology and stylistics of early modern vernacular transcriptions of classical Hindu texts.