



# **EurAsia Summer Academy of Art, Culture and History across the Himalayas**

Dates: 14-26 September 2026

Location: Chhahari Retreat, Budhanilakantha, Kathmandu

This event forms part of the EurAsia Summer Academy scheme of the Austrian Science Fund-funded Cluster of Excellence EurAsian Transformations and is organised in collaboration with the Sanskrit Text Society (Oxford) and local partners in Nepal. The participating institutions are Oxford University, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and University of Vienna.





## Description

This Summer Academy offers a deep and rigorous dive into the study of primary Sanskrit material for students and researchers. In line with the ethos of our successful Summer Academy 2024, the course aims to provide participants with hands-on experience in tackling Sanskrit texts found in manuscripts and inscriptions. Students will come away from the course with confidence and precision in handling original evidence.

The modules are designed to take advantage of the vast living and historic Sanskrit culture of the Kathmandu Valley. This includes the Valley's Buddhist, Vaiṣṇava, and Śaiva traditions, as well as its rich courtly culture. Participants will read inscriptions in situ and visit sites integral to the traditions recorded in the manuscripts studied in the classroom.

Participants will also be guided in engaging with non-textual material—such as the observation of rituals, iconography, architecture and issues pertaining to the preservation of cultural heritage—in order to develop an interdisciplinary approach to understanding texts and their cultural contexts and impact on modern societies.

Themes such as the Kathmandu Valley's position as a major conduit of communication between the Subcontinent and the Tibetan Plateau, its unique socio-cultural milieu and living cultural heritage, and its role in preserving texts and traditions lost to the wider subcontinent will be explored in four special lectures by distinguished scholars.

## Modules

The Summer Academy features four modules:

### Module 1:

The Avalokiteśvara Cult in the Kathmandu Valley: Excerpts from the Buddhist Lokeśvarasādhana, especially those of Khasarpaṇa  
Teachers: Diwakar Acharya, Nina Mirnig

### Module 2:

Early Vaiṣṇava Religious Culture: Excerpts from the Jayākhyasamhitā  
Teacher: Marion Rastelli

### Module 3:

History and Culture of the Early Licchavis: The Satya Nārāyaṇa Pillar Inscription  
Teachers: Diwakar Acharya, Nina Mirnig

### Module 4:

Medieval Courtly Literature: King Jagajjyotirmalla's works on the “Kāma world” (Excerpts from the Nāgarasarvasvaṭikā, the Ślokaśarasamgraha and inscribed paintings)  
Teacher: Pongsit Pangsriwongse

## Field Visits

The programme will include the following field visits to explore the historical context, the current heritage context and intangible cultural features, and living traditions connected to the texts under study:

1. Patan
2. Kathmandu Durbar Square
3. Bhaktapur
4. Hadigaon (site of the pillar inscription) and the Paśupatiṇāth heritage zone
5. Panauti and Namobuddha
6. Key Buddhist sites of the Kathmandu Valley, including several principal Lokeśvara temples
7. Budhanilakantha
8. Sankhu
9. National Archives, Kathmandu

## Course Requirements

Graduate or advanced undergraduate level of Sanskrit, with some familiarity with Indic scripts.

## Accommodation

Accommodation and classes have been arranged at Chhahari Retreat, in the lap of the Shivapuri Hills, a scenic forested area. The location benefits from being a short drive from Kathmandu city centre while providing a peaceful, nature-filled setting. The retreat is also within walking distance of Budhanilakantha, a site of considerable artistic and archaeological importance.

## Participation Fee

### 800 US dollars

The fee includes accommodation and full board for the duration of the programme (14 days; arrival 13 September, departure 26 September), field trips (including site entrance fees), and yoga/meditation sessions. This reduced fee is made possible through substantial subsidies provided by the Austrian Science Fund Cluster of Excellence “EurAsian Transformations”.

Participants are required to cover their own international travel and insurance costs.

## Bursaries

A limited number of EurAsia Academy travel bursaries and course subsidies are available for participants without sufficient institutional funding. Please indicate in your application if you intend to apply for a travel bursary and/or course subsidy.

## Application Procedure

Please send a CV and a short statement of motivation by 5 June 2026. There are 20 places available. If the number of suitable applicants exceeds the available places, they will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. If the number of applicants requesting single rooms exceeds availability at Chhahari, accommodation nearby will be arranged with daily transport.

Applications and queries should be sent to:

**Pongsit Pangsrivongse**

[pongsit.pangsrivongse@univie.ac.at](mailto:pongsit.pangsrivongse@univie.ac.at)

