

ITALIAN SCHOLARS ON INDIA

Classical Indology

The aim of this book is to give an account of the Italian scholarship on classical India by presenting some of the most significant research articles come out in recent years. The articles cover a variety of subjects ranging from Vyākaraṇa to Kāvya, Mīmāṃsā, Buddhism, Pratyabhijñā, Hindu Tantrism, Philosophy of Language, Aesthetics.

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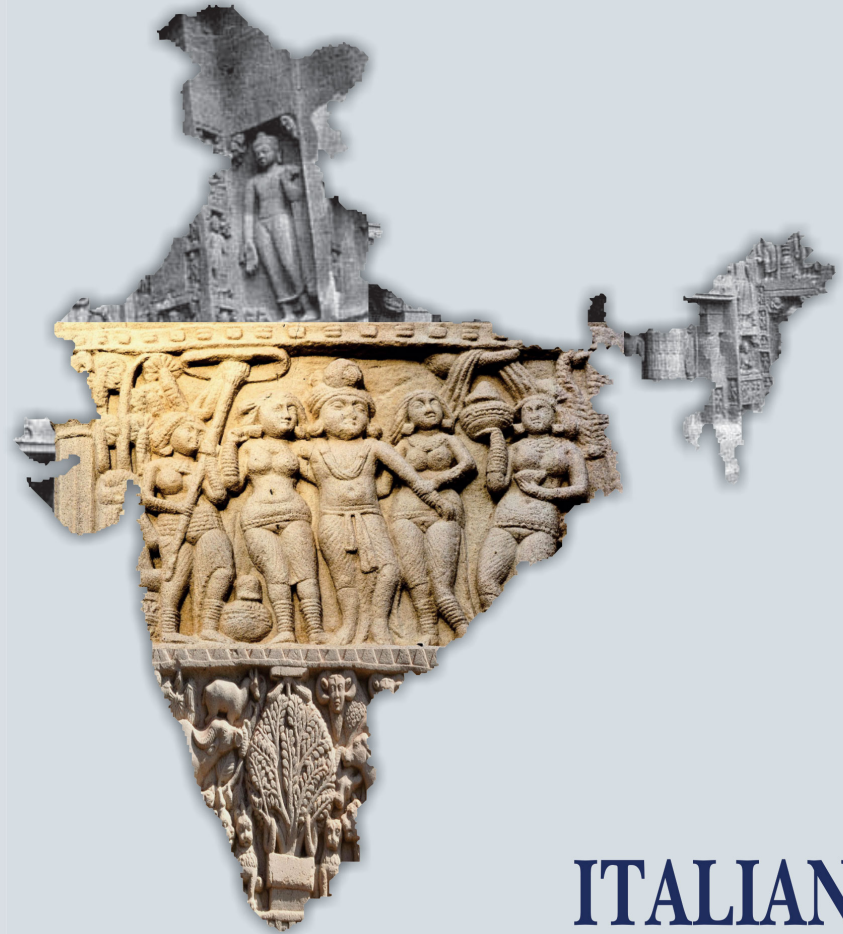
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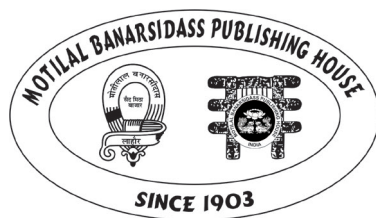
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FOREWORD

Vincenzo de Luca

Ambassador of Italy to India

The pages that follow are the result of an idea that sparked in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic in late 2020. With this work, we wanted to collect the most important studies produced in recent years by Italian scholars on India and transform them into a series of volumes that, eventually, the Indian and International audience would appreciate and value.

This is the first volume of a series that will follow. Once completed, the whole project will cover the main fields of Italian scholarship on India: classical Indology, India's history and economics, arts. The work will be completed with the translation into English of the biography, by Alice Crisanti, of one of the most important Indologist of the XX century, Giuseppe Tucci.

It gives me great pride to see the first part of the initiative come to life. This achievement was made possible thanks to the efforts of Professor Raffaele Torella, Chairman of the Italian Association of Sanskrit Studies, whom I would like to thank personally for curating and following the development of the work step by step. I would also like to recognize the work of the coordinators of the single volumes, Elisabetta Basile, Michelguglielmo Torri, Laura Giuliano, Ciro Lo Muzio.

The Indian and Italian civilizations have interacted for over 2000 years. Our ports were connected through the spice route, missionaries like Roberto de Nobili travelled to India and got well acquainted with local customs and languages. This promoted a dialogue between our classical languages, whose first evidence dates back to the XVI century. Filippo Sassetti, for instance, a merchant from Florence that established himself in Goa in 1583, noted similarities between Sanskrit and Italian in words with the same meaning: *deva/dio* 'God', *sarpa/serpe*

‘snake’, *sapta/sette* ‘seven’, *aṣṭa/otto* ‘eight’, *nava/nove* ‘nine’. It is also to be noted that the first Sanskrit grammar, by Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo, ever printed in the West was published in Rome (in 1790).

I believe this project, an innovative and highly qualified one, will be of great use not only in the academic circles interested in Sanskrit studies, but also for the more general public. It is a testimony of how much India has nourished the hearts and minds of Italian scholars and the tradition behind the long history of Italian Indology.

This is yet another example of the deep bonds that – through culture, tradition, philosophy, religion, art – bring Italy and India closer together. They are two incredibly rich and diverse countries, strongly attached to their tradition but in a constant pursuit of innovation. This is also why they stand as prominent actors of soft power in the world.

PREFACE

Raffaele Torella

The aim of this book is not to give an account of the history of Italy's scholarly interest in India, since the history of Italian Indology is indeed a very complex and fascinating subject, but too vast to be treated here. Suffice it to say that, apart from isolated forerunners - such as the Florentine merchant Filippo Sassetti, the XVI c. author of a copious correspondence from India in which we find the first steps of scientific Indology - the first chair of indological subjects was established at Turin University in 1852 and entrusted to Gaspare Gorresio. The fame of Gorresio remains linked to an incredible enterprise, the first ever critical edition of Gauḍa recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (carried out by a single scholar!). The study of Indology and Sanskrit was then established at Florence University in 1859 and at Rome Sapienza in 1866.

Among the eminent scholars who were the remote ancestors of contemporary Italian indology, we should mention at least Angelo De Gubernatis, Luigi Sualì, Luigi Pio Tessitori and Carlo Formichi.

Behind the current generation of Indologists stands a group of influential scholars, such as Oscar Botto (Turin), Carlo Della Casa (Milan), Giorgio Renato Franci (Bologna), Anna Radicchi (Cagliari), Paolo Daffinà (Rome), Maurizio Taddei (Naples), Mario Bussagli (Rome), Raniero Gnoli (Rome), along with the towering figure of Giuseppe Tucci (Indologist, Tibetologist, archeologist, etc.). If I had to select only one name from them, I would have no hesitation in indicating Raniero Gnoli as the most prestigious exponent of XX c. Italian Indology, one of the leading figures of international scholarship on India.

Faced with the embarrassing task of selecting a forcedly limited number of contributions I have ended up adopting a rather "extrinsic"

criterion, addressing the members of the Scientific Committee of the Italian Association of Sanskrit Studies (Associazione Italiana di Studi Sanscriti, AISS) of which I am currently Chairman (former Chairmen were Oscar Botto and Giuliano Boccali). The AISS comprises most of the Italian Sanskritists and Indologists, mainly (but not only) working at university. In this way, a wide range of Italian universities has been represented: University of Milan “Statale” (Giuliano Boccali and Cinzia Pieruccini), University of Cagliari (Tiziana Pontillo), University of Naples “Orientale” (Francesco Sferra), University of Venice “Ca’ Foscari” (Antonio Rigopoulos), University of Rome “Sapienza” (Raffaele Torella).¹

A significant feature of Italian Indology is represented by the great number of young, often very brilliant, scholars working at foreign universities or research centres, the so-called Italian indological diaspora: Vincenzo Vergiani (Cambridge), Elisa Freschi (Toronto), Daniele Cuneo (Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle), Florinda De Simini (ERC), Claudio Cicuzza (Bangkok), Marco Ferrante (Vienna), Elisa Ganser (Zurich). I have decided to include a significant number of them in this volume in order to give a more comprehensive picture of Italian indology as a whole. Thus, in a sense, this volume is devoted to the current Italian indology, as well as that of the near future.

The articles included in this volume deal with a variety of subjects, ranging from *vyākaraṇa* to philosophy and religion, ornate poetry, Buddhism, aesthetics, all focusing on pre-modern India. While most of the articles are derived from recent publications (no more than 5-7 years old), there are four original articles especially written for the present volume (Sferra, Vergiani, Freschi, Cuneo-Ganser).

Rocca Priora/Bochnia, Oct. 15th 2021

¹ Regrettably, this “extrinsic” criterion leaves out one of the oldest seats of indological studies, the University of Turin (with Alberto Pelissero and Gianni Pellegrini). Another seat of illustrious tradition, the University of Pisa, is however some way present, since Tiziana Pontillo’s article is co-authored by the Pisa Sanskritist Maria Piera Candotti.