

Summer 2014
Intro to Newar

Course number: RLG498

Time and place: TBA

Instructor: Christoph Emmrich

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Office: Centre for the Study of Religion, 170 St. George St.,
Jackman Humanities Building, Room 303

Office hours: on appointment

Description and guidelines

Objectives:

This course will introduce students of Buddhism and Hinduism, of Sanskrit, Tibetan and Modern South Asian languages, or whoever is interested in the Himalayan region more generally, to the language of the Newars, - the community that shaped the culture and the society of the Kathmandu Valley, who produced a unique form of Buddhism while developing a rich Hindu heritage, who contributed like few others towards building Buddhism in Tibet, preserving Hindu and Buddhist Tantric manuscripts and practices, and who keep supplying the Buddhist world with the most exquisite visual artifacts. Their language, Newar (also known as Newāḥ Bhāy, Nepāl Bhāṣā, or Newārī), still spoken by just below a million people, is, with Burmese and Tibetan, the third Tibeto-Burman language to have produced, since about the 12th century, a written literature, - one of the richest and most fascinating in South Asia. Its texts range from Hindu dramas to Buddhist birth stories, from ritual manuals to sacred historiographies, from Sanskrit-inspired kāvya and song to contemporary poetry and the modern novel. The main objective of this course is to enable students to translate from a variant of Newar used in 19th century texts, historically a linguistic stratum that will give students a robust basis to either pursue further studies of contemporary literary and particularly spoken Newar, or to explore the vast and still mostly unexplored literature of medieval Newar.

Methodology:

Students will be translating sections of the *Maṇicūḍāvādānoddhṛta*, - the Newar version of the most well-known of Buddhist birth stories of a prince who, out of generosity, gives away everything, including himself. Alongside the translation, they will have to prepare and discuss in class sections of Jørgensen's grammar relevant to those aspects of the grammar appearing in the Newar source text. Students will thus familiarize themselves with the grammar (the fascinating verb-centred syntax of Newar, or the peculiar Newar system of classifiers, in which words for e.g. round and flat, or long and thin objects, receive specific endings), the lexic (the breathtaking hybridity of which will make students learn Sanskrit, Hindi, Persian and Maithili words and have them question linguistic identity), script (there are more than 10 different systems - but, no worry, we will be focusing only on two, and only later in the course), and manuscripts (- visually, some of the most

beautiful in the world!). By the end of the course, students will be able to independently translate 19th century Newar texts.

Evaluation:

- (1) Oral contributions in class, incl. translations and discussions of grammar and vocabulary: 40% (ongoing)
- (2) In-class translation of an unknown piece of the text: 20% (due date: penultimate session of class)
- (3) Written protocol of the translations done in class: 20% (due date: one week after last session of class)

Course grading scheme

Undergraduate

A+	90-100%	B+	77-79%	C+	67-69%	D+	57-59%
A	85-89%	B	73-76%	C	63-66%	D	53-56%
A-	80-84%	B-	70-72%	C-	60-62%	D-	50-52%
F	0-49%						

Graduate

A+	90-100%	B+	77-79%	F	0-69%
A	85-89%	B	73-76%		
A-	80-84%	B-	70-72%		

Interaction with the course instructor:

Address all your requests and queries about the course to the course instructor. Though incoming mails are viewed on a daily basis and though the course instructor will try to address your issues as swiftly as possible, it may take up to three days for the instructor to reply to your mail, so do wait for that period before reacting and do mail in time if you have any urgent requests. Always prearrange meetings, also those during office hours, by email or in person.

Recommended preparation:

Courses: None, but any level of Sanskrit, Tibetan, Burmese, or Nepali is helpful.

Readings:

- Malla, Kamal P. *Classical Newari Literature. A Sketch*. Kathmandu: Educational Enterprise, 1982.
- Malla, Kamal P. *The Newari Language. A Working Outline*. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1985.

Textbooks:

- Jørgensen, Hans. *A Grammar of the Classical Newārī*. København: Einar Munksgaard, 1914.
- Jørgensen, Hans. *A Dictionary of Classical Newārī*. Reprint, Kathmandu: Tiwari's Pilgrim's Book House, 1989.
- Lienhard, Siegfried. *Mañicūḍāvādānoddhṛta. A Buddhist Re-birth Story in the Nevārī Language*. Stockholm; Göteborg; Uppsala, Almquist & Wiksell, 1963.

All recommended and required readings will be made available by the instructor. Please contact Christoph Emmrich in time to obtain your copy of the texts.