

# BUDDHIST CONVERSION & LITERARY GENRE



Early medieval kings and poets writing in Sanskrit often made competing or ambiguous overtures to religious communities. In order to interpret these claims and identify a religious identity for these actors, many modern scholars have relied on unexpected content and genre deviations as evidence of religious conversion. This class explores what is at stake in constructing narratives of conversion or imagined conversion to Buddhism for two actors: The poet-king Harṣa (c. 606-646 CE) and the scholar-poet Kṣemendra (c. 990-1070 CE).

The class will read biographical accounts of both authors and examine the circulation and retelling of the story of a bodhisattva (a near-enlightened individual) named Jīmūtavāhana. The narrative of Jīmūtavāhana is based on a Buddhist *jātaka* story and appears in the literary works of both Harṣa and Kṣemendra.

Readings in Sanskrit Literature | Fall 2023

SKRT 1000/6000

MF 1:45-3:14

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