

## FINNIAN M.M. GERETY

Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University  
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### EDUCATION

- 2015      PhD., Harvard University, Department of South Asian Studies.  
Dissertation: “This Whole World Is OM: Song, Soteriology, and the  
Emergence of the Sacred Syllable.”  
Committee: Anne Monius, Diana Eck, and Michael Witzel.
- Research and Teaching: South Asian Religions; Hinduism, Buddhism,  
Jainism; ritual studies; sensory studies; sound studies; performance  
studies; Sanskrit texts and philology.
- 1996      A.B. *magna cum laude*, Harvard College, Classics and Sanskrit.

### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2017-2018      Postdoctoral Associate, Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University
- 2015-17      Visiting Assistant Professor, Dept. of Religious Studies, Brown University
- 2016      Adjunct Lecturer in Hindu Studies, Harvard Divinity School
- 2015-17      Research Associate, Dept. of South Asian Studies, Harvard University
- 2012-14      Visiting Lecturer, Dept. of Religious Studies, Brown University

### PUBLICATIONS

#### **Books**

- In preparation *This Whole World Is OM: A History of the Sacred Syllable in India*.  
Under contract at Oxford University Press, delivery date: July 2019.
- In preparation *The Life of Contemporary Sanskrit: Dialogues between Tradition and  
Modernity*. Laurie Patton, Charles Preston, and Finnian Gerety, editors.  
“Dialogues in South Asian Traditions” Series, Routledge.

## Peer-reviewed articles

2017 “The Amplified Sacrifice: Sound, Technology, and Participation in Modern Vedic Ritual.” *Journal of South Asian History and Culture* 8.4: 560-578. DOI:10.1080/19472498.2017.1371505

“Vedic Oral Tradition.” *Oxford Bibliographies in Hinduism*. Ed. Tracey Coleman. New York: Oxford University Press.  
DOI:10.1093/OBO/9780195399318-0184

In press “Digital Guru: Embodiment, Technology, and the Transmission of Traditional Knowledge in Kerala.” Accepted for publication in *Asian Ethnology*.

## Chapters

In preparation “Embodied Sound.” In *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies*, edited by Suzanne Newcombe and Karen O’Brien-Kop, Routledge.

“Amateur Hour: Innovation, Instruction, and Identity in Sanskrit Dramas of Kerala.” In *The Life of Contemporary Sanskrit*, edited by Laurie Patton, Charles Preston, and Finian Gerety, Routledge.

2016 “Melody, Mantra, and Meaninglessness: Towards a History of OM.” In *On Mantras and Meaning: Essays in Honor of Frits Staal*, edited by George Thompson and Richard Payne, 185-225. Moraga, CA: Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America.

“Tree Hugger: the Sāmavedic Rite of the *audumbarī*.” In *Roots of Wisdom, Branches of Devotion: Plant Life in South Asian Religions and Culture*, edited by Fabrizio Ferrari and Thomas Dähnhardt, 165-190. Sheffield, UK: Equinox.

“Survivals & Revivals: the Transmission of Jaiminīya Sāmaveda in Modern South India.” In *The Vedic Śākhās: Past, Present, Future*, Harvard Oriental Series Opera Minora 9, edited by Jan Houben, Julieta Rotaru, and Michael Witzel, 443-474. Cambridge, MA: Dept. of South Asian Studies, Harvard University.

## Invited Book Reviews

In press Review of *Embodying the Vedas: Traditional Vedic Schools of Contemporary Maharashtra* by Borayin Larios. Accepted for publication in *Bulletin of SOAS*.

Review of *Homa Ritualis: Hindu Ritual and Its Significance for Ritual Theory*, by Axel Michaels. Accepted for publication in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.

- 2017 Review of *The Head Beneath the Altar: Hindu Mythology and the Critique of Sacrifice* by Brian Collins. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137.4: 868-70.
- 2016 Review of *Vedic Voices: Intimate Narratives of an Andhra Tradition* by David M. Knipe. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136.4: 853-56.
- 2015 Review of *Feeding the Dead: Ancestor Worship in Ancient India* by Matthew L. Sayers. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135.4: 869-71.

### **Popular Articles**

- In press “OM’s Early History: Mantra, Mind, and Multiformity.” *Pushpam*. <http://www.pushpam.co.uk/> Expected Spring 2018.
- 2016 “What does Trump have to do with the sacred syllable, *om*?” *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/what-does-trump-have-to-do-with-the-hindu-sacred-syllable-om-67435>

### **CRITICAL MEDIA PRACTICE**

**Selected Films:** <https://vimeo.com/user10256084/videos>

- In preparation “An Epic in Fragments,” feature-length documentary film about modern traditions of Sanskrit drama in Kerala, conceived and produced at the Film Study Center, Harvard University.
- 2016 “Ritual Marriage, Marriage of Rituals: Rama-Sita Kalyanam at a Vedic Sacrifice in Andhra Pradesh.” Short film on parallel ritual performances.
- 2015 “Digital Guru/Human Guru.” Two short films on technology and teaching in Kerala.
- 2013 “Making Up.” Short film on applying make-up for Sanskrit drama. Screened at the HDS Film Festival, Harvard Divinity School, 2018.
- 2012 “Survivals & Revivals.” Eight short films on the transmission of traditional knowledge in South India.

“Vidushaka.” Short film about comic performance in Sanskrit drama.

“Mantras 2 the Max.” Short film about amplification and sacred sound in Kerala.

## **TEACHING**

### **Yale University, Dept. of Religious Studies**

- Sensing the Sacred: Sensory Culture in South Asian Religions

### **Brown University, Dept. of Religious Studies**

- The History and Practice of Yoga in India and Beyond
- Karma, Rebirth & Liberation: Life and Death in South Asian Religions
- Experiencing the Sacred: Embodiment and Aesthetics in South Asian Religions
- Hindu Stories: Traditions of Narrative and Performance

### **Harvard Divinity School, Masters Program**

- Sensing the Sacred: Embodiment and Aesthetics in Hindu Traditions

### **Harvard University, Dept. of South Asian Studies, Committee on General Education**

- Hindu Worlds of Art & Culture
- Beginning Sanskrit
- Intermediate Sanskrit
- The Heroic & the Anti-Heroic: Greek Mythology and Ritual

## **FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS**

2007-15      Presidential Scholar, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Harvard University

2014              Graduate Study Grant, South Asia Initiative, Harvard University

2012-14        FSC-Harvard Fellowship, Film Study Center, Harvard University

2013              Merit/Term-time Fellowship, Graduate Society, Harvard University

2011-12        Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, Committee on General Scholarships, Harvard University

Fulbright-Nehru Research Fellowship, United States-India Educational Foundation, Fulbright International Educational Exchange Program

2011 Certificate for Distinction in Teaching, Derek Bok Center, Harvard University

Graduate Study Grant, South Asia Initiative, Harvard University

2010 Certificate for Distinction in Teaching, Derek Bok Center, Harvard University

Graduate Study Grant, South Asia Initiative, Harvard University

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Conference presentations**

2018 “The Leaves and the Pin: the Construction of OM in Vedic Prose Texts.” Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Pittsburgh.

2017 “Amateur Hour: Innovation, Instruction, and Identity in Sanskrit Dramas of Kerala.” Modernizing the Language of the Gods, joint panel of the Hinduism and the Religions in South Asia groups, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Boston.

“Mantras to the Max.” Exploratory Session of the Sound as Religion group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Boston.

“Singing Liberation: Vedic OM and the Jaiminiya Soteriology of Song.” Performing Liberation: Discourses of Salvation in South Asian Traditions, Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

“The Sacred Syllable and the Limits of Language: the Case of the OM.” Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Los Angeles.

2016 “ ‘This Whole World is OM’: Sonality and the Sacred Syllable in Vedic Texts.” Sounding the Sacred, joint panel of the Yoga Studies and Hinduism groups, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Antonio.

“The Amplified Sacrifice: Sound, Technology, and Participation at a Vedic Ritual in Modern Kerala.” Another Harmony: Symposium on South Asian Folklore in the 21st Century, Committee on Degrees in Folklore & Mythology, Harvard University.

- 2015 “The Embodied Archive, Digitization and Authenticity in the Transmission of Vedic Knowledge.” Netlore: Symposium of Digital Folklore and Mythology, Committee on Degrees in Folklore & Mythology, Harvard University.
- 2014 “This Whole World is OM: Jaiminīya Contributions to the History of the Sacred Syllable.” Sixth International Vedic Workshop, Calicut, India.
- 2013 “Mantras 2 the Max: Sensory Experience and Signification at a Modern Vedic Ritual. (A film response to Staal & Gardner's *Altar of Fire*).” Imaging the Ineffable Conference on Religion and Film, Mahindra Center for the Humanities, Harvard University.
- 2012 “Some Smārta Traditions of Kerala.” Brahmaswam Madham Seminar on Medieval Traditions of Kerala, Thrissur, India.
- 2011 “*Kirāta* in the Vedas and Purāṇas.” National Seminar on Vedas and Puranic Traditions, Kadavallur, India.
- “Survivals & Revivals: the Transmission of Jaiminīya Sāmaveda in Modern South India.” Fifth International Vedic Workshop, Bibliotheca Metropolitana, Bucharest.

### **Invited talks and symposia**

- 2018 “In Search of ‘Union’: Vedic OM and the Roots of Mantra Meditation in Yogic Traditions.” Yogic Traditions and Sacred Sound Practices in the United States Symposium, College of Fine Arts, Boston University.
- 2017 “‘This Syllable is the Sun’: the Construction of OM in Vedic Prose Texts.” Asian Religions Series, Department of Religious Studies, Yale University.
- “A Speakerful of Secrets: Amplification, Sanskrit mantras, and the Dissemination of Esoteric Knowledge in Hindu Traditions.” ISM Fellows Luncheon Series, Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University.
- “When Scripture Comes Alive: Aesthetics of Memory in Vedic Chanting in Kerala.” Program for Scripture and the Arts, Department of Religious Studies, Boston University.
- “The Amplified Sacrifice.” Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Pace University.
- 2014 “This Whole World is OM: In Search of the Sacred Syllable.” Department of Religious Studies, Northwestern University.

- “The Vedas and Vedic Sacrifice.” Committee on General Education, Harvard University.
- 2013 “Hindu Traditions of Narrative and Performance.” Brown Religious Literacy Project, Brown University.
- 2011 “Mantras 2 the Max: Sacred Sound and Technology at a Modern Vedic Ritual.” Sensory Overload Exploratory Seminar, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.
- “Notes on the Transmission of Jaiminīya Sāmaveda in Modern South India.” Hindu Studies Colloquium, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School.
- 2010 “*Kirāta*: Vedic Sacrificial Mythology and the Mythopoesis of Rudra-Śiva in the Mahābhārata.” Graduate Seminar on Comparative Mythology, Department of Sanskrit & Indian Studies, Harvard University.
- “Sex, Drums and Soma: the *Mahāvratā*, a Vedic Festival of the Winter Solstice.” Department of Sanskrit & Indian Studies Colloquium, Harvard University.

### **ACADEMIC SERVICE**

- 2018 Elected member, Hinduism Unit Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion.
- Member, Sound as Religion Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion.
- 2017 Member, Curriculum Development and Planning Committee for South Asian Studies Concentration, Center for Contemporary South Asia, Brown University.

### **FIELDWORK**

- 2014 Dissertation research (one month; Kerala)
- 2013 Film production and interviews (two months; Kerala)
- 2012 Dissertation research, text and language study, film production, and interviews (ten months; Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh)

2011 Dissertation research, text and language study, film production, and interviews (one month; Kerala)

2010 Dissertation research, text and language study, film production, and interviews (two months; Kerala, Tamil Nadu)

### **LANGUAGES**

**Sanskrit:** advanced reading; **Pali:** basic reading; Malayalam, basic reading and speaking; **Ancient Greek:** advanced reading; **Latin:** advanced reading; **Italian:** advanced reading and speaking; **French:** advanced reading, speaking proficiency; **German:** advanced reading; **Spanish:** advanced reading.