

ISAS Public Lecture Series



NO ONE GIVES LIKE THE GURU

a talk by

JOHN E. CORT

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University

ABSTRACT: The theme of the saving power of the true guru is a common one in all of the religious traditions of India. In this talk, Cort explores early modern Digambar literature in Hindi that describes both the true guru and the false guru. In the Digambar case, this was not just a literary theme. In the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, the description of the false guru was applied to the landed semi-monastic bhattaraks, and the description of the true guru came to be applied to the revival of the tradition of naked munis. We therefore see ways that a pan-Indian concept plays out within one specific religious tradition, and also how bringing consideration of the Jains into larger investigations of South Asia enriches those investigations.

SPEAKER BIO: John Cort is Professor of Asian and Comparative Religions at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, USA, where he also holds the Judy Gentili Chair in International Studies. He is the author of many articles on the Jains, as well as *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (2001) and *Framing the Jina: Narratives of Icons and Idols in Jain History* (2010). He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2017-18. Prof. Cort's research focuses on the Jain traditions of South Asia, and religion, society, culture and history more broadly in western India, in particular Gujarat and Rajasthan. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in India. He is currently working on a book on north Indian Digambar Jain literary and devotional cultures in the early modern period, with the working titles of *Naked Devotion*. He is also researching Jain domestic shrines (known as *ghar derasars*) in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in museum collections in the U.S. He is co-editing two projects: the *Brill Encyclopedia of Jainism* (with Paul Dundas, Edinburgh University, and Kristi Wiley, University of California—Berkeley), and *Cooperation and Competition, Conflict and Contribution: The Jain Community, Colonialism and Jainological Scholarship, 1800-1950* (with Andrea Luithle-Hardenberg, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, and Leslie C. Orr, Concordia University, Montreal). His research has been supported by grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies, the American Philosophical Society, the Asian Cultural Council, Denison University, the Freeman Foundation, Fulbright-Hays, the Getty Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is very active in service to the profession. He is an elected member of the American Society for the Study of Religion. He has served as the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the American Institute of Indian Studies since 1998, and as a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Council on Southern Asian Art twice, in 2000 to 2003, and 2010 to 2014. He served as co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Religion in South Asia Section of the American Academy of Religion in 2008-11, and as co-chair of the Jain Studies Group of AAR in 2011-15.

Monday, February 5, 2018

5 - 7 pm

10 Stephens Hall (ISAS Conf. Room)

Event Cosponsor: Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies

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