



Cultivating Flowers

Dominik A. Haas and Vitus Angermeier*

The proceedings of the annual International Graduate Research Symposium (IIGRS) have been published in the series *Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient India Through Texts and Traditions: Contributions to Current Research in Indology* since 2013. *Puṣpikā* was initiated as a peer-reviewed series that gives young scholars a platform for sharing the results of their research on pre-modern South Asian cultures. Five volumes have been published so far, all of them with Oxbow Books, a traditional academic publishing company based in the UK and the US. The volumes are available as hard copies and e-books, both versions at the same price (£28.00 to £38.00). After publishing these five volumes, Oxbow decided against continuing the collaboration – a change that made the publication of further volumes even more challenging than it already was.¹

Due to its complex production process, each *Puṣpikā* – a Sanskrit word with the meaning “little flower” – is a delicate plant, easily disturbed by external influences. First of all, for each implementation of the preceding IIGRS, a reliable team of convenors has to be found, always in another European city. Then this team, generally consisting of graduate students or early-career academics, not only have to organise the event itself, but also turn into editors the moment the symposium is over. In contrast to many other collected volumes, each contribution in a *Puṣpikā* is reviewed

*  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8505-6112> (Haas) and  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5424-7824> (Angermeier).

1 For up-to-date information, see the *Puṣpikā* website: <https://iigrs.wordpress.com/proceedings-puṣpika/>.

individually by a reviewer approved by the Editorial Board of the series.² After organising the peer review, the team of editors have to meld the revised and collected papers into a book, which, too, has to be approved by the Editorial Board. In case the little *Puṣpikā* has developed thus far, a suitable bed is needed – a publisher willing to include such an exotic flower into their programme. If this bed disappears – because growing *Puṣpikās* is not profitable enough – or does not even exist anymore, the entire project is jeopardised.

As with most academic publications, the need of legacy publishing companies to maximise profit is most often disadvantageous to editors, authors, and readers alike. Editors and authors (or their institutions) often have to contribute to the printing costs, while they are also expected to take over much of the production process (proofreading, copy-editing, etc.). Prestigious publishers usually put high prices on their products, which is in conflict with the editors' and authors' desire for their works to be disseminated as widely as possible. It goes without saying that this practice is also not in the interest of the paying readers. In fact, as tax payers, those readers should ideally have free access to the results of the research – given that they are the source of funding for the researchers, their institutions, as well as the publishers' subsidies.

Digitization and the Open Access (OA) movement have made this free access possible. In the OA model, the individual reader does not pay (except, of course, in the case of printed works). Instead, the publication costs are borne by universities, libraries, scholarly societies, professional associations, or other scholarly institutions. While in the wake of this development a number of institutions have founded in-house publishing projects, many commercial publishers have started to offer OA as well. In order to compensate for the revenue losses resulting from the free availability of OA publications, however, some profiteering publishers have begun to calculate special fees – imposed on the authors or their institutions.

As a growing number of academic institutions – most of them in wealthy countries – demand that the publications of their employees

2 For a list of the current members of this board, see <https://iigrs.wordpress.com/proceedings-puṣpika/>.

be OA,³ they are willing to pay these fees. They even regularly schedule a special budget to finance the publishers. This also means that from a global perspective, only an elite few have access to the means to publish with prestigious publishers and make their work OA – an inarguably unequal and unfair situation.

While for modern academic publication projects, OA is virtually state of the art, it still is, in many cases, an exclusive endeavour. Not everyone can afford to make their work legally available to the public. To make OA truly open to all involved parties – not only the readers – it is necessary to make it fair, a publication model that has been termed Fair Open Access (FOA). What exactly FOA shall encompass is subject to open discussion, and may change over the course of time. A first step towards providing FOA principles was taken in 2017 by the Fair Open Access Alliance (FOAA, <https://www.fairopenaccess.org/>). In 2020, the Initiative for Fair Open Access in South Asian Studies (FOASAS, <https://foasas.org/>) was founded – a field concerned with a region of the world where many academic authors and readers do not have the means to overcome the high paywalls erected by profiteering publishing houses. To help scholars find FOA venues for their work, the Initiative's website curates lists of suitable publishers and journals. The Initiative's Manifesto, which until now has been signed by 140 scholars from the field, suggests a number of measures to realise FOA, specifying that these should be implemented whenever the circumstances permit (thus also recognising that there is not always an ideal FOA option).

Oxbow's termination of the collaboration was one such circumstance. It has given rise to the opportunity of transferring the entire series to an up-to-date publication model that is based on the FOA principles. For the present and all future volumes, the flowerbed of the *Puṣpikāś* will be Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP, <https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/>). Funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation), HASP is a full-fledged FOA publisher and does not charge excessive fees from authors for their work. All books are freely available on the internet and are generally published under Creative Commons license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>), which makes it possible

3 Complying, for instance, with Plan S, a European initiative founded in 2018 by the cOAlition S (<https://www.coalition-s.org/>), whose aim is to implement OA on a large scale.

to disseminate them freely, while also reserving certain rights. We hope that through this collaboration, many more *Puṣpikās* will be able to blossom for all to see.