



EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



CSC-Tübingen PhD Scholarship Program

2026/2027 application round: prospective PhD positions at the University of Tübingen

Faculty: Humanities

Institute / Section / Subject: Social and Cultural Anthropology

Supervising Professor(s): Carola Lorea

About the Supervisor(s): *Carola Lorea is an interdisciplinary scholar of Asian religious movements and sonic practices. She holds the Junior Professorship "Rethinking Global Religion" at the University of Tübingen (2023 - 2026) and is now a Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology. She works on sound, oral traditions and popular religious movements in South Asia, particularly eastern India, Bangladesh and the Andaman Islands. Her research foregrounds the gendered body sensorium for the study of folklore, esoteric movements, Dalit religions and Tantric traditions.*

Within MANTRAMS, she leads Task Force 2 on sonic efficacy to explore the intersection of sound, religion, and media, examining how mantras' sonic dimensions are embedded in their social and cultural contexts.

Specification/Project title: MANTRAMS – mantras in religion, media and society in global southern Asia (<http://www.mantrams.eu>)

Topic Description:

Despite their importance, longevity, and variety, a study of mantras on their own terms and in their transcultural significance is still largely missing. Mantras have traditionally been studied by Indologists, philologists, and historians who work on elite Sanskrit traditions. Beyond these fields, mantras have rarely been the focus of academic research, and when they are, they often remain confined to specific religious frameworks such as Hinduism or Tibetan Buddhism.

We argue that mantra studies urgently need to expand, linking Indological expertise with anthropology, religious studies, sound studies, art history, and media studies. While previous scholarship has often treated mantras primarily as language, we place special emphasis on the body, the senses, materiality, performance, and oral and aural dimensions.

The MANTRAMS Project follows an **interdisciplinary approach**. We draw on diverse methodologies to explore mantras from multiple perspectives and to create comprehensive sonic, visual, and digital archives. These archives will document the transcultural and multisensory dimensions of mantras and will culminate in a museum exhibition and a wide range of publications and digital outputs. **TF2 – Sonic Efficacy – based at the University of Tübingen and led by Prof. Carola Lorea**, examines lived

practice, sonic experience, and social relationality through predominantly anthropological and ethnographic methods.

Intended Degree: Dr. Phil. (Social and Cultural Anthropology, or Religious Studies)

Type of the PhD Study: Full-time and/or Sandwich

Required Degrees and Qualifications: An MA in Anthropology; Folklore Studies; Religious Studies; Asian Studies; or Buddhist Studies.

Language Requirements: English (C1) and at least one modern Asian language.

Notes:

Invitation for Research Proposals: Sonic Efficacy in Global Southern Asia

The ERC Synergy Project **MANTRAMS – Mantras in Religion, Media, and Society in Global Southern Asia** invites proposals for collaboration with **Task Force 2: Sonic Efficacy in Global Southern Asia**.

Task Force 2 investigates how sounds, voices, chants, mantras, ritual utterances, recitations, songs, and other sonic practices are understood to produce effects in religious, therapeutic, social, political, and everyday life. We are particularly interested in ethnographic approaches to **sonic efficacy**: how people understand sound as capable of healing, protecting, transforming, blessing, disciplining, communicating with non-human beings, shaping environments, or generating forms of religious and social authority.

We warmly welcome proposals engaging with Chinese religious and cultural contexts, including—but not limited to—Buddhist and Daoist chanting, mantra and dhāraṇī practices, ritual recitation, healing sounds, spirit-mediumship, temple soundscapes, liturgical performance, vocal cultivation, meditation, martial or bodily practices, sound and medicine, digital religious sound, and the circulation of sonic practices across China, Tibet, Inner Asia, Southeast Asia, and transnational networks.

We are especially interested in projects based on **original ethnographic research**, including sensory and sonic ethnography, participant observation, interviews, audio or audiovisual documentation, and collaborative methodologies. Comparative projects connecting Chinese materials with South Asian or wider Asian traditions are particularly welcome.

Successful applicants may be invited to participate in MANTRAMS workshops, reading groups, research meetings, publications, and other collaborative activities. We also welcome proposals from early-career researchers, including advanced doctoral candidates and postdoctoral scholars. We look forward to developing new conversations on sound, ritual, efficacy, and religious practice across Asia.