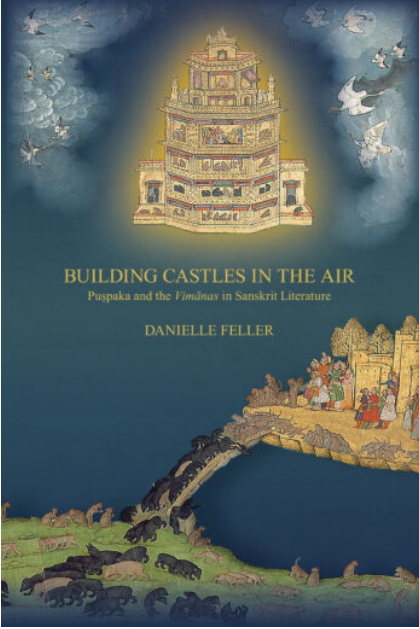


Building Castles in the Air: Puspaka and the Vimanas in Sanskrit Literature



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About the Book

The term *vimāna* is difficult to translate, as both its conception and representation

undergo a remarkably multifaceted evolution over time.

Derived from the verbal root *vi-M-* “to measure, mete out, pass over, traverse”,

vimāna initially carries,

in the Vedic corpus, the sense of “measuring out” or

“Traversing,” as well as that of a “measure.”

In later Sanskrit literature – including the epics, the *Purāṇas*, fairy tales, and architectural or technical treatises – the term acquires a wide range of meanings with relevance across multiple disciplines. These include an urban palace; a divine flying palace, foremost among which is *Puṣpaka*; heaven; a temple or temple spire; a small-scale structure supporting the images of deities; a man-made flying machine; and even an aircraft.

Although the original sense of “measuring” recedes after the Vedic period, its conceptual significance endures, insofar as all such forms of *vimāna* consistently presuppose precise measurement in their construction.

Throughout their extended historical development and across their various manifestations, *vimānas* bear witness to humanity’s enduring aspiration toward transcendence, functioning as vehicles that mediate contact between the divine and the human.

About the Author

Danielle Feller teaches Sanskrit language and literature in the Department of Slavic and South Asian Studies at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Her research focuses primarily on Indian mythology and religion, the Sanskrit epics, and *kāvya* literature.

The present volume, devoted to representations of Pu?paka and *vim?nas* in Sanskrit literature, combines her various fields of expertise and brings together the results of many years of scholarly research.

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