



## The Siddhantasundara of Jñanaraja

By Toke Lindegaard Knudsen

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A treasure for anyone interested in early modern India and the history of mathematics, this first English translation of the Siddhantasundara reveals the fascinating work of the scholar-astronomer Jñanaraja (circa 1500 C.E.). Toke Lindegaard Knudsen begins with an introduction to the traditions of ancient Hindu astronomy and describes what is known of Jñanaraja's life and family. He translates the Sanskrit verses into English and offers expert commentary on the style and substance of Jñanaraja's treatise.

The Siddhantasundara contains a comprehensive exposition of the system of Indian astronomy, including how to compute planetary positions and eclipses. It also explores deep, probing questions about the workings of the universe and sacred Hindu traditions. In a philosophical discussion, the treatise seeks a synthesis between the cosmological model used by the Indian astronomical tradition and the cosmology of a class of texts sacred in Hinduism. In his discourse, which includes a discussion of the direction of down and adhesive antipodeans, Jñanaraja rejects certain principles from the astronomical tradition and reinterprets principles from the sacred texts. He also constructs a complex poem on the seasons, many verses of which have two layers of meaning, one describing a season, the other a god's activities in that season.

The Siddhantasundara is the last major treatise of Indian astronomy and cosmology to receive serious scholarly attention, Knudsen's careful effort unveils the 500-year-old Sanskrit verses and shows the clever quirkiness of Jñanaraja's writing style, his keen use of mathematics, and his subtle philosophical arguments.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

The book is an important contribution to a long scholarly tradition, and the author's effort and expertise are both first-rate. Translation and commentary projects like this one are the indispensable contributions that most influence and enable future progress in better understanding this ancient history and culture.

(Dennis W. Duke, Florida State University)

This book is a very important contribution to the history of mathematics. The author deserves compliments for his efforts and expertise. The book also demonstrates the knowledge and wisdom of ancient Indian mathematicians and their mathematical skills. There is an urgent need to preserve original manuscripts in Sanskrit. The reviewer strongly recommends Knudsen's book to all those who are interested in the history of astronomy and mathematics.

(Girish Kumar Ramaiah *Zentralblatt Math*)

This is a scholarly yet readily readable work of great merit... In this text the multi-layered complexities have been superbly unpicked with the author's crystal clear writing giving interpretations in a rigorous yet accessible style. The original poetry is often crafted by the translator into a pleasing English verse... This is a fascinating well written scholarly text which acts as a welcome reminder that the Indian astronomical tradition is of great mathematical value independent of its parallel applications in Indian astrology.

(Kevin J. Davis *Mathematical Gazette*)

Opens new doors of research, understanding and challenges for the scholarly community.

(S.L. Singh *Mathematical Reviews*)

... this is an admirable piece of work and a very welcome addition to the English-language literature on Indian astral sciences.

(*Journal for the History of Astronomy*)

#### About the Author

**Toke Lindegaard Knudsen** is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University of New York at Oneonta.

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