by

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**Title: Jain Language Use in Early Modern Western India: Examining the Trajectory of Tellings of the *Narmadāsundarī Satī Kathā***

The story of the *satī* Narmadāsundarī inspired many tellings during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries CE, the period in which Jain intellectuals began to write in the emerging linguistic register now recognized as Old Gujarati. In this period, Śvetāmbara monks composed the story in several languages and genres, often included in larger collections of didactic stories. This paper analyzes three versions of the story—the Prakrit telling of Mahendrasūri (12th c.), the Apabhramsa *sandhi* of Jinaprabhasūri (13th c., Āgama Gaccha), and the Old Gujarati prose telling of Merusundaragaṇi (15th c.)—in order to argue that the choice of language was influenced by the genre of literature in which the story was included and by the site of its performance, rather than dependent upon a chronological development of the vernacular language frequently regarded as inevitable or natural. Focus on this single story opens a vista to view the registers in which Prakrit, Apabhramsa and the nascent Old Gujarati languages operated in this period. Further, despite an apparent correspondence between vernacular language usage and chronology, the number of works in Old Gujarati actually fluctuated from century to century. That is, Old Gujarati declined somewhat among Jain intellectuals in the fourteenth century, when the *prabandha* narrative genre—usually composed in Sanskrit and Prakrit—dominated Śvetāmbara literary production. It reemerged in the fifteenth century with the first major explosion of literature in this language. Focusing on genre and register allows us to understand this fluctuation. Drawing upon recent work on Jain story literature collections by Paul Dundas and building upon recent work by Daud Ali on narrative and temporality in *kathā* and *prabandha* genres, the paper sees the languages of these tellings as a function of the various purposes of each genre in which the stories were included.