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# INHALTSVERZEICHNIS – TABLE DES MATIÈRES CONTENTS

## *Aufsätze – Articles – Articles*

JOHANNES BRONKHORST .....265  
Against Methodological Positivism in Textual Studies

JOHANNES BRONKHORST .....275  
Who is Liberated? The Notion of Liberation While Alive  
in Some Selected Indian Texts

VINCENT ELTSCHINGER .....291  
On a Hitherto Neglected Text against Buddhist Personalism:  
*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* 18.92–103 and its *Bhāṣya*

ISABELLE RATIÉ .....341  
“A five-trunked, four-tusked elephant is running in the sky” – How Free  
is Imagination According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta?

SANDRA SMETS .....387  
Les fausses couches dans la littérature āyurvédique

FRANÇOIS D. VOEGELI .....415  
Sur un démon mineur de la religion védique

## *Rezensionen – Comptes rendus – Reviews*

M.-L BARAZER-BILLORET, BRUNO DAGENS, VINCENT LEFEVRE (Eds.) .....435  
*Dīptāgama. Tome III (Chapitres 63-111). Appendice et Index. Édition  
critique.* (Marion Rastelli)

BERND EBERSTEIN .....437  
*Hamburg – Kanton 1731. Der Beginn des Hamburger Chinahandels.*  
(G. Lehner)

MARK EDWARD LEWIS .....	438
<i>The Construction of Space in Early China.</i> (Hans van Ess)	
KLAUS MYLIUS .....	441
<i>Wörterbuch Deutsch – Pāli.</i> (Andreas Bock-Raming)	
BARBARA SCHULER.....	445
<i>Of Death and Birth. Icakkiamman, a Tamil Goddess, in Ritual and Story.</i> (Eva Wilden)	
JAKOB STUHLIK.....	447
<i>Der arische Ansatz. Erich Frauwallner und der Nationalsozialismus.</i> (Walter Slaje)	
WU XIUJIE .....	463
<i>Ein Jahrhundert Licht: Eine technikethnologische Studie zur Beleuchtung im chinesischen ländlichen Alltag.</i> (Jacob Eyferth)	
Autoren – Auteurs – Authors.....	469

Deutschen ins Pāli enthält. Soweit dem Rez. bekannt, gibt es nur englischsprachige Werke dieser Art, z. B.: A. P. Buddhadatta Thera: *The New Pali Course*. Part I. Fifth Edition. Colombo 1954. Part II. Fourth Edition. Colombo 1956.

Andreas Bock-Raming

SCHULER, Barbara: *Of Death and Birth. Icakkiamman, a Tamil Goddess, in Ritual and Story*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009 (Ethno-Indologie, Heidelberg Studies in South Asian Rituals; general editor: Axel Michaels, Vol. 8), xvi+501 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-05844-5.

This voluminous study of the mythology and cult connected with the Tamil goddess Icakkiamman (otherwise Nīli) contains a survey of textual sources, an edition and translation of the main narrative, an apparatus cross-referencing the available parallels, a description and interpretation of the *koṭai* festival in the village of Paḷavūr, photos and a DVD documenting both the bow-song performance of the narrative and the ritual conducted on that occasion. The book comes in three parts of uneven length, general prolegomena being followed by textual material (part one pp. 7–217), interpretation of the text (part two, pp. 221–230), the ritual context (part three, pp. 233–343), final conclusions, extensive appendixes, a glossary, a bibliography and finally an index.

The text, entitled Icakki Katai (“The story of Icakki”), an orally performed epic transmitted also in writing, comes down in two recensions (Northern and Southern) with variations on the same story of violation and revenge: Nīli in a former human birth has been killed by her husband/lover out of avarice, in consequence of which her brother commits suicide. Both brother and sister come back to life as avenging spirits. While the brother is killed again, this time by 70 land-owning Veḷāḷas felling his tree abode, Nīli takes revenge on her former husband, reborn as a Ceṭṭi merchant. She takes the form of his wife, transforming the Kaḷḷi plant that had witnessed the old murder into his child and demands to be recognised by him. He refuses, and the quarrel is brought before the 70 Veḷāḷas, who take the couple in for the night and guarantee the frightened merchant’s life with their own. Locked up in a room with him at night Nīli kills him and escapes. The next day, she comes back in the guise of the merchant’s

mother and claims him back from the Veļālas, who have to honour their promise and give their lives for his. To complete the destruction, the goddess poisons the entire Veļāla clan.

The author has consulted altogether 7 manuscripts (mostly paper copies based on earlier palm-leaf versions) and 6 editions. 10 of these sources have found entry into the text as presented and translated in the book. The printed text follows one manuscript version (N1), while the others have been used, in varying degrees, to correct and complement that defective manuscript. A more extensive and satisfactory manuscript (N10) has come to the notice of the author only at an advanced stage of her work and has basically been represented in the “Encyclopaedic Apparatus” (appendix C) that assembles variations and parallels from other versions. A number of these sources are still in use in the oral performance of the narrative in the Southern Tamil bow-song tradition (*villuppāṭṭu*).

The Tamil edition gives the 2485 lines of N1 in non-standardised form and in an order partly re-arranged on the basis of the more plausible narrative sequence of events found in other versions. Extensive footnotes record standardised forms for graphic and regional variations, corrections, as well as word explanations, and numerous word glosses. It is not clear whether the latter represent the interpretations of the author, oral commentaries given by the scholars/bards consulted, or corrections/interpretations adduced from parallel versions. There follows an extensively annotated English translation, fairly faithful and readable, which is, as the author points out, the first of its kind for the Icakki Katai. The concluding interpretation of the text focuses on the themes taken up by the story and their anthropological dimension, such as the rôle of women in Tamil society. There is little consideration of the linguistic and poetological issues and the interrelation between the different versions invoked. This is one reason why the introductory collection of references to the Nīli/Icakki story in Tamil literature looks to some extent arbitrary (and less than convincing in certain details, for instance, when of the four references to the Kaḷḷi plant in Kāraikkālammaiyaṛ’s decades on Tiruvalaṅkāṭu only one is cited). The basic idea of that collection is to locate sources for the various and partly heterogeneous strands and motifs that make up today’s Katai. This heterogeneity is exemplified in the double name of the goddess Nīli (“the blue one”) and Icakki (Skt. *yakṣī-*), a composite figure discussed in chapter 7, which functions as a link between the textual and the ritualistic part of the book.

The last major section, then, is devoted to the ritual context in which the epic is performed, in particular to an account of the two-day *koṭai* festival held

in honour of Icakki in Paḷavūr in spring 2002. The translocal legend of the goddess is complemented by a local version according to which the village priest had maltreated Icakki and was in consequence destroyed by her. The purpose of the rites is to effect the transposition of the goddess from her aggressive and dangerous form as an avenging spirit into her benevolent form that will help the childless couples of the village to procure children. (Appendix A adduces a tabular summary of the ritual sequence.) To quote from the author's conclusions (ib. p. 346):

My ethnographic and textual analyses have revealed that the ritual strives for harmony and a culture of consensus, while the narrative portrays an individualistic culture, grounded in mutual tension and argument. In one sense, the ritual rewrites the two fatally tragic stories of Icakki in positive terms and towards practical ends. This shows that the aim of the ritual is to master the future rather than the past. Whereas the text offers us a cultural understanding of instability [...] and plainly also of *memoria*, the ritual creates an alternative reality in response to the texts. It carries us from death to human fertility.

In summary it can be said that this broad and carefully documented study offers ample material and scope for reflection to philologists, historians of religion and anthropologists alike.

Eva Wilden

STUCHLIK, Jakob: *Der arische Ansatz. Erich Frauwallner und der Nationalsozialismus*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2009 (ÖAW. Philos.-hist. Kl. Sitzungsberichte. 797), 202 pp. ISBN 978-3-7001-6724-2.

Die eigentliche Verortung der zu besprechenden Arbeit verbirgt sich in Stuchliks knapp gehaltenem Vorwort (S. 7–10).<sup>1</sup> Eine kurze Analyse, die der

1 Das dem Buch entzogene Vorwort Ernst Steinkellners wurde online publiziert, da der Autor mit der Sichtweise Steinkellners "nicht einverstanden" war (<[http://ikga.oeaw.ac.at/Mat/steinkellner\\_vorwort\\_stuchlik\\_2009.pdf](http://ikga.oeaw.ac.at/Mat/steinkellner_vorwort_stuchlik_2009.pdf)>). Diese Vorgehensweise der Ausgrenzung abweichender Meinungen wirft zugleich ein bezeichnendes Licht auf Stuchliks unkonventionelles Verständnis von wissenschaftlicher Objektivität und seinen Mangel an historischen Methoden (s.u.). Zu Letzteren gehört, im Rahmen intersubjektiver Überprüfbarkeit auch abweichende Meinungen zu dokumentieren und ihre Plausibilität zur Diskussion zuzulassen.