

Cultures of South India: three lectures

Professor Heidrun Brückner, Head of the Chair of Indology at Würzburg University, has been invited by IKOS to lecture on three topics related to cultures of South India

1 Folk Culture and Modernity: The Case of Goddess Renuka-Ellamma and her Special Devotees (with slides and video clips)



The presentation introduces the South Indian goddess Renuka-Ellamma and her temple at Saundatti in North Karnataka. The lecture will be illustrated by slides and film clips. Special groups of devotees are dedicated to the goddess and initiated at her temple. Over the last few decades, some of the folk-religious practices in the area have been questioned and criticized as not fitting either the self-image of India as a modern nation or the rapidly spreading middle-class values. The lecture discusses the impact of “modernization” on “folk” or popular religious culture, taking the so-called “Devadasis” and their abolition as an example.

Wednesday, 5. May

10.15 – 12.00

Eilert Sundts hus, B-blokka, ROM 551

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2 Between Ghosts and Gods: Tulu Oral Traditions and Ritual Performances from the West Coast of South India (with slides and video clips)



The presentation will introduce a set of interrelated oral traditions from the Tulu-speaking west-coast region of South India and the ritual performances connected with them. The lecture includes slides and film clips. Some of the documentation was carried out by Würzburg students as part of a workshop in the region in 2007. The focus will be on three major traditions originally belonging to non-Brahmin rural communities and the different ways in which they cope with the modern, globalized world:

- The “Princely deities” of the Bant agriculturalists
- The epic tradition of the deified twin heroes Koti and Cennaya of the palm-grower community
- The epic tradition and female “possession cult” of the deified heroine Siri and her twin daughters.

Thursday, 6. May

10.15 – 12.00

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3 Sanskrit Drama and Theatre in South India: The Kutiyattam of Kerala (with slides and video clips)



The lecture introduces the manuscript and performance traditions of Sanskrit drama and theatre in Kerala, South India. The main features of the elaborate performance style will be illustrated by video clips. Kerala has preserved older, classical performance traditions, and has developed them in a distinctive, regionalised way over a whole millennium up to the present day. In the course of the 20th century, this unique theatre left the temples, to which it had been confined, and started a new career as “national heritage” of Kerala as well as of India at large. This development culminated, in 2001, in its being awarded the title “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO.

Friday, 7. May

10.15 – 12.00

Eilert Sundts hus, B-blokka, ROM 551