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## Technical Notes

### *Note on the audio-visual resources accompanying the contributions in this book*

In order to view the audio-visual resources supporting the written contributions in this book, please access the following URL online:

*[http://www.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/women\\_performers/welcome/](http://www.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/women_performers/welcome/)*.

### *Note on transliteration*

The contributors to this book have followed the generally accepted English spelling of words from Indian languages or the standard transliteration with diacritical marks.



## Foreword

This book highlights the involvement of women – real or through representation – in a range of performances found in different geographical areas and among different social groups in India. It is the outcome of the 3rd International Würzburg Colloquium on Indian Studies entitled *Changing Roles and Perceptions of Women Performers in Indian Culture* held at the University of Würzburg, Germany, in 2005, and aims to help us understand better the troubled relationship between women and public performances.

The format and the (limited) funding of the colloquium did not permit us to invite many participants from India. As the convener of the colloquium Heidrun Brückner decided to publish the papers together with Hanne M. de Bruin of Kanchipuram in India, and Heike Moser of Tübingen. The editors invited additional contributions to widen the scope of the publication.

Even though each essay focuses on a particular kind of ›performance‹ this book will not attempt to theorize the concept of ›performance‹. ›Performance‹ here is used loosely to refer to a number of cultural events, which are – in varying degrees – set apart from day-to-day life because they involve or create a ›special place‹, a ›special time (frame) and / or occasion‹ and use ›special people‹, for instance trained or initiated performers and ritual specialists. The cultural performances described in the following essays range from possession performed by women as a religious service to a deity or as medium of access to ›divine discourse‹ to on-stage performances by professional actresses representing different performance genres.

There is a regional focus on South India, especially Kerala and Karnataka. The authors of the essays are anthropologists (CLAUS, SCHÖMBUCHER, GUILLEBAUD), folklorists (RAI), Indologists (BRÜCKNER, DE BRUIN, MOSER, JOHAN, GRIEBL / SOMMER), sociologists (SCHULZE) and theatre scholars (DAUGHERTY, PITKOW) from India, Europe and the USA. The analytical style and subject matter of the contributions differ considerably. In SCHULZE'S essay the subjective, emotional voice of the author will be heard clearly, while CLAUS and SCHÖMBUCHER take more distant, analytical views offering theoretical frameworks for understanding the changing status of performance genres and the role of women performers therein. Two essays focus on the position of women performers in India's single surviving Sanskrit theatre, the Kutiyattam of Kerala, tracing their history and contributions (MOSER and DAUGHERTY). Others focus on the social context within which performances operate and the ways society looks upon these forms and their female practitioners (RAI, BRÜCKNER, GRIEBL / SOMMER, and GUILLEBAUD). The last two essays ana-

lyse in detail the representation of women in Kutiyattam and Kathakali through the interpretations of female roles by male performers (JOHAN, PITKOW). The essays have been arranged under three different headings on the basis of their subject matter and principal emphasis: Theory, Historical and Social Context, and Interpretation.

I and my co-editors hope that this volume will fill in a few fragments of our understanding of and appreciation for women performers in India – their fame and infamy, and the pleasures and perils of being visible – as a woman – in the public (performance) space. We also hope that the juxtaposition in the following essays about cultural performances, which differ widely in form, (geographical) location, performance conditions, social status of the performers and perceived efficacy (ritual, emotional and economic), will offer new leads for analyzing and understanding the relationships between performance, gender and the world.

The Colloquium received financial support from the Women's Office of the University of Würzburg. The main credit for conceptualizing and articulating the themes of the book goes to Hanne M. de Bruin who contributed the introductory essay. Heike Moser took charge of the technical production of the manuscript and the audio-visual materials published along with it on a website ([http://www.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/women\\_performers/welcome/](http://www.indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/women_performers/welcome/)). Some of the recordings of oral literature provided on the website are first-time publications of the respective genres. Creating the website was a major challenge that Heike Moser met with the support of Sina Sommer of Würzburg. The editors thank Ms. Sommer for her sustained and creative technical assistance. The publication of the book was, again, made possible by the University of Würzburg Women's Office whose funding we most gratefully acknowledge. We also thank our publisher, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, and especially Dr. Krauss, who did not hesitate to embark with us on a new, experimental mode of publication combining a printed book with an open-ended website.

*Heidrun Brückner, Würzburg*  
*1st November 2010*