VORTRAG
IM RAHMEN DES ABTEILUNGSKOLLOQUIUMS:
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Sanskrit, Tamil and Tradition: Current Discourses in Tamil Saiva Siddhanta

Abstract:
Tamil Saiva Siddhanta has long been neglected in the study of Indian religions. In recent years, some historical accounts have been presented, dealing with the late 19th and early 20th century period – a time that had considerable impact on the framing of modern South Asian religions. Naturally, the discourses on Indian religions at the time, particularly on „Hinduism“, resulted in strong reactions among Tamil elites, who tried to contest dominant views of a Sanskrit-biased, Brahman, Advaita-centered Hinduism and introduce a South Indian school of Saivism, namely Saiva Siddhanta, as its „true“ form. My study, however, focuses on current forms and discourses of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu. The presentation tries to link up empirical data with post-structuralist theoretical approaches to (re)present the recent religious scenario. Strikingly, this scenario shows involvement in discussions about the role of Sanskrit, Tamil and tradition – seemingly quite similar to those at the turn of the century.

Datum: 29.01.2013, 18:15 Uhr
Ort: SAI, Raum 316