

Preface

This book marks the end of a long journey. It constitutes a revised and shortened English version of my published German PhD thesis (A. Zotter 2013), which itself goes back to the original thesis submitted in 2009. In 2011 a three-month scholarship, the Michael Coulson Visiting Research Fellowship in Indology at Wolfson College, Oxford, enabled me to start working on the English text seriously. The outcome then was a revised version of the Sanskrit text together with my English translation of it as well as parts of the other chapters. From then on work proceeded only slowly with large temporal gaps, the final revision having been made in the years 2021–2024. The present book differs from the published German thesis in some regards. In order to make it more accessible for readers not comfortable with the IAST transliteration scheme, the text has been converted into the Devanagari script and, to impose a more conventional arrangement upon the book, been relegated from the beginning to the end of it. The introductory chapters have been revised, with some passages merely translated from the German, and others reworked, streamlined and supplemented with references. There has, however, been no systematic update in the light of new publications.

This publication is long overdue, and probably even outdated in some respects, and I would not dare to still publish it, were it not for the people who devoted their time and effort, and to whom I feel indebted for their gifts of knowledge. Without them the book would not exist. My doctoral adviser, or to use the more fitting German expression “doctoral mother” (Doktormutter), Catharina Kiehle, initially entrusted me with studying the use of flowers in *pūjā*. With her enduring confidence and support she kept the work going over all these years. At her recommendation I met Bijay Narayan Mishra, former librarian at the Sampūrṇānanda Saṃskṛta Viśvavidyālaya, who first introduced me to the topic, and indeed to the *Puṣpacintāmaṇi*, during a stay at Benares and Allahabad in 2001/2002. This led to my master’s thesis (Krause 2005). When I was doing research in Nepal between 2006 and 2008, Kashinath Tamot read the Newari text with me. Mani Adhikari, Binod Raj Rajopadhyaya, the late Aishwaryadhar Sharma and others answered my questions regarding ritual matters. Mahesh Raj Pant introduced me to Nepalese history and provided references and hard-to-find source material from his impressive knowledge, library and archive. The late Laxminath Shrestha enabled me to use Nepali as the primary means of communication in Nepal. The Nepal Research Centre became a second home. In 2011 at Oxford, Wolfson College not only provided board and lodging, but also a welcoming and thoroughly inspiring

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atmosphere. During my stay, James Benson and Alexis Sanderson spent many hours reading and revising the English translation of the PuCi. Moreover, Alexis read large parts of other chapters and improved it by his insightful comments. Douglas Fear and Philip Pierce revised the English. I want to thank all of them from the bottom of my heart. Further, I am grateful to Ute Hüsken and Axel Michaels for accepting the book as part of the Ethno-Indology Series, to the anonymous reviewer for constructive feedback and to the Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP) team for their professional support and friendly guidance throughout the publication process.

Last but not least, my family comes in for well-earned praise. My parents, brother and mother-in-law saw me grow over this work, and with their unconditional love and support made this journey possible. It is a privilege to have Christof as a better half, best friend and dearest colleague. Our sons, Ben and Samuel, joined us along the way and keep on blessing us in ever new and unforeseen ways.