Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to investigate and interpret the position and meaning of the remnant of oblation (ucchiṣṭa, śeṣa, or vāṣtu) in the system of classical Vedic mythology and ritual. The inquiries begin by a brief survey of used primary sources, secondary literature and methodology. Afterwards, the terminology used for the leftover is examined together with its mythical connotations found in Brāhmaṇas. The pivot of the thesis is its central part which treats the manipulation of the phenomenon of the leftover in the Vedic ritual literature describing the system of solemn (śrauta) rituals, non-sanguinary oblations (iṣṭi) and ancestor worship (piṇḍapitryajña).

The last chapter is dedicated to the interpretation of the phenomenon.

Following the analysis of primary sources, the thesis claims that the remnant of the offering is not a ritual waste but a creative element of the ritual action. It is interpreted as one of the framing ritual acts which surround the central ritual performance and which are understood as associated with the household, its fertility and continuity. The domestic sphere is also a theme of the myths in which is found the phenomenon of the remnant. Based on the discussion on the mythology and ritual manipulation of the phenomenon, the leftover of the offering is interpreted as an element which affirms the aim of the Vedic sacrificer, that is the prosperity, wealth and continuity of his family and culture.

Key Words

Vedic religion, ritual remnant, śrauta rituals, interrituality