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Rudragaṇikās: Courtesans in Śiva's Temple? Some Hitherto Neglected Sanskrit Sources*

SUMMARY: Much ink has been spilt on the status and rôles of the Devadāsī in pre-modern times, but some Sanskrit works that contain potentially useful nuggets of information have until now, for various reasons, been neglected. To cite one instance, some scholars have drawn passages about dancers from an edition of what purports to be a Śaiva scripture called the *Kāmikāgama*. In 1990 however, H  l  ne Brunner denounced that ‘scripture’, as a late-19th-century forgery concocted

* This paper has developed out of a contribution to a day-long interdisciplinary conference dedicated to the historicisation of dance repertoire in South India entitled “Temple, Court, Salon, Stage. Crafting Dance Repertoire in South India”, which was organised in Paris at the Maison des Cultures du Monde on 9th June 2015 by Tiziana Leucci (CNRS-CEIAS), Davesh Soneji (McGill University) and myself. I am grateful to Tiziana for involving me in that event after we had read a few of the passages together with enthusiasm in the context of my regular lectures at the EPHE in 2014, which took the theme “Cherchez les femmes! D  esses, d  votes et courtisanes dans le Śaiva-siddh  nta”. Because of a pending visa application, I was not actually able to be present on the occasion, and in consequence I am now doubly grateful to Uthaya Veluppillai, first for offering to present the material I prepared at the time, and secondly for thereby obliging me to leave rather more detailed written traces of what I had gathered than I usually do when putting together a conference paper! Leslie Orr made several useful observations and saved me from several howlers at the eleventh hour. Finally, I am grateful to Elisa Ganser for patiently encouraging me (in spite of computer crashes and delays) to submit an article for this volume.

for the purpose of winning a legal case, and thereby called into question the value of the text as evidence for much of what it had to say about, for instance, the initiation of dancers in pre-modern times. Meanwhile, hiding, so to speak, in plain view, passages from a rather older *Kāmikāgama*, one that has been published by the South Indian Archaka Association and that appears to survive in many South Indian manuscripts, actually also contain information about the status of Rudraṅṅikās in medieval times. But these seem not to have been examined to date by historians of dance and dancers. The purpose of this paper is to draw into the debate some hitherto unnoticed passages of relevance that are to be found in pre-modern Sanskrit texts.

KEYWORDS: Sanskrit poetry, Śaivism, temple-liturgy, courtesans, temple-dancers, Khmer epigraphy, *āgamas*, Rudraṅṅikās, South Indian cultural history, *Nāṭyaśāstra*

1. Did dancing courtesans always belong to temples?

While studying the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, or “The Bawd’s Counsel”, an 8th-century novel by the Kashmirian Dāmodaragupta set in Benares and in Patna, which Csaba Dezső and I have recently re-edited and translated into English (Groningen 2012), we were struck by the wealth of deliberate echoes of the chapter of the *Kāmasūtra* that deals with courtesans. Some passages indeed seemed to be freely adapted and versified scenarios lifted from Vātsyāyana.

One might easily be led to imagine that Dāmodaragupta was describing essentially the same *demi-monde* of early urban India as Vātsyāyana; but there is a very important dimension to the milieu of courtesans that Dāmodara alludes to repeatedly and that appears to be absent from Vātsyāyana’s lengthy and detailed treatment. Many of the courtesans woven into Dāmodara’s tales and sketches are plainly working as temple-dancers; the *Kāmasūtra*, on the other hand, makes no mention of temple-service at all.¹

Numerous passages that suggest the employment of courtesans as dancers to temples have long been known. Perhaps the most

¹ This list of types of courtesans (*Kāmasūtra* 6.6, p. 363), in which temple-servants do not figure, is already suggestive of their absence throughout Vātsyāyana’s text: *kumbhadāsī paricārikā kulaṭā svairiṅī naṭī śilpakāriṅī prakāśavinaṣṭā rūpājīvā gaṅṅikā ceti veśyāviśeṣāḥ*.

celebrated is this allusion in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, where the women in question, who sound rather tired of dancing, are referred to with the expression *veśyā*, 'courtesan'. The mention occurs at the moment when the cloud is imagined arriving at the temple of Mahākāla (Śiva) in Ujjain in the evening (*Meghadūta* 35):

*pādanyāsaiḥ kvaṅṅitaraśanās tatra līlāvadhūtai
rainacchāyākhacitavalibhiḥ cāmaraiḥ klāntahastāḥ
veśyās tvatto nakhapadasukhān prāpya varṣāgrabindūn
āmokṣyante tvayi madhukarāśreṅṅidīrghān kaṭakṣān 35*

Belts tinkling as they plant their feet,
hands weary from daintily waving
fly-whisks with handles
encrusted in lustrous gems,
the dancing girls there,
on receiving from you
the first drops of rain
to soothe their scratches,
will throw you side glances
as long as a line of bees. (Mallinson 2006: 45)

I will not linger over this passage, except to indicate that Mallinson (like most other translators of the poem into modern languages) must have hesitated over how to translate *veśyā* before plumping for a bowdlerism ("dancing-girls"). Every word that one might be tempted to pick—danseuse, slave-girl, prostitute—is so laden with questionable or downright impossible connotations, some liable to provoke visceral reactions, that it is hard to find reasonable language to talk about this subject!

In the earliest known commentary, that of the 10th-century Kashmirian Vallabhadeva, the exposition of this stanza begins *tatra mahākāla-dhāmi veśyā bhagavadṅṅikāḥ*... "There, [namely] in the temple of Mahākāla, the courtesans, [namely] the courtesans of the Lord". This expression recalls the term Rudraṅṅikā, used, as we shall see below, in several Śaiva sources.

We also know of very many allusions to the donation of human beings, both male and female, to the deities of temples from across

the Sanskritic world. By way of example, an early 7th-century inscription from Cambodia (K. 13) records that a certain Vidyābindu² built a brick temple for Śiva in 526 *śaka* and a tank in 546 and endowed it with riches, including male and female slaves.

XI. (11) *rasadasraśaraiś śakendravarṣe padam aiśam vinivaddham iṣṭakābhiḥ
rtuvārinidhīndriyaiś ca tūrthe (sa)lilasthānam*³ *akāri tena bhūyaḥ*

XII. (12) ° *ārāmadāsīdāsās ca paśavaḥ kṣetram uttamam* •
yathāsti svadhanan dattaṃ śivapādāya yajvanā •

He constructed with bricks a temple of Śiva in the *śaka* year [measured] by [6] tastes, [2] Aśvins, [5] arrows [of the god of Love], and he further created a tank (*salilasthānam*) at [this] sacred place (*tūrthe*) [in the year measured] by [6] seasons, [4] oceans and [5] senses. The founder (*yajvanā*) also (*ca*) gave to Śiva's feet gardens, female and male slaves, cattle, [and] excellent cultivable land (*kṣetram*) such that it is [now Śiva's] property.

Here is not the time for a discussion of the definition of slavery and the varied forms in which it manifests in different cultural contexts: suffice it to say for our purposes that what appears to be recorded here and in many other places is the gift of human beings as *property*.⁴ Now

² His name, for metrical reasons, is stated thus in the first quarter of stanza VIII: *vidyādivindvantagrhītanāmnā*, which led Barth (Barth 1885: 33) to suppose that his name was Vidyādivindvanta. For other Cambodian names that begin with Vidyā°, see Goodall forthcoming A; for other Cambodian names that end with °vindu, see Goodall forthcoming B.

³ °*sthānam*: °*sthāpanam* Barth 1885 (Barth's reading was corrected by Bhattacharya 1991: 76, § 334).

⁴ As mentioned in Goodall 2015 (p. 42, fn. 58), Silk's exclusion of "the *devadāsī* tradition" entirely from his bibliography on ancient Indian slavery (Silk 1992: 278) on the grounds that "there is nothing to connect this institution sociologically or historically with slavery proper" seems to me unjustified. For a brief and lively discussion of slavery among the ancient Khmers, see Vickery 1998: 225ff. See also the detailed typology presented in Vickery 1999 and the essay that constitutes chapter 3 of Jacques 2014, entitled "La question des «esclaves»", pp. 44–70. For a defense of the use of the term 'slave' here, and for an exploration of what a handful of unpublished Sanskrit

although inscriptions speak of humans as the property of temples, one might expect to find detailed information about such 'slaves' in the prescriptive literature of *Dharmaśāstra*. But this, as far as I am aware, is not the case, presumably because that literature has little to say about temples in general.⁵ Little noticed until rather recently (presented in Goodall 2015: 41–42), the *Śivadharma* corpus of literature does provide some further information, in particular a passage of the perhaps 7th-century *Śivadharmottara* (2.163–166), whose entire second chapter has recently been published by De Simini (De Simini 2016).⁶ On the topic of paid servants, who are distinguished from slaves, it has this to say:

ye cāpi vṛttibhṛtakāḥ śivāyatanakarmināḥ |
te 'pi yānti mṛtāḥ svargaṃ śivakarmānubhāvataḥ ||2.163||

And those who, for their livelihood, are servants working in Śiva's temple, they too, when dead, go to heaven, because of the power of the work done for Śiva.

śivadāsatvam āpannā naranārīnapuṃsakāḥ |
te 'pi tannāmasamyogād yānti rudrapuraṃ mahat ||2.164||

Those men, women and eunuchs who have become slaves of Śiva, they too, by virtue of bearing His name, go to the great world of Rudra.

The passage then continues with these remarks specifically about the status as property of Rudraṅṅikās.

sources reveal about the status of slaves, see Sanderson 2004: 395–400. For a discussion of slavery in medieval South India, see Orr forthcoming.

⁵ Cf. Olivelle “...the temple is conspicuous by its absence or insignificance in the legal literature of ancient India” (Olivelle 2010: 193).

⁶ De Simini does not say much about the date of the *Śivadharmottara*, but refers instead (De Simini 2016: 43) to one published and one still unpublished discussion of the matter by Bisschop (the published one being Bisschop 2010: 483, fn. 35). A longer discussion on the subject that takes into consideration the existence of the 9th-century manuscript that transmits the text (NGMPP A 12/3) is to be found in: Goodall 2011: 232, fn. 33.

*dattāḥ krītāḥ praviṣṭāś ca daṇḍotpannā balāhṛtāḥ |
vijñeyā rudraṅṅikāḥ śivāyatanayoṣitāḥ ||2.165||*

Those who have been given, bought, have entered [voluntarily], or who have been produced [at the temple] as payment of a fine,⁷ or who have been brought by force—they are to be known to be courtesans of Rudra (Rudraṅṅikās), [i.e.] women of Śiva’s temple.

*yā rudraṅṅikotpannā putrapautṛādisantatiḥ |
śāpi yāti mṛtā svargaṃ mātur evānubhāvataḥ ||2.166||*

Such offspring—sons, grandsons and so forth—as is born to a Rudraṅṅikā also goes to heaven after death by the power of [her as] their mother.⁸

One of the problems of the various pieces of evidence just considered is that none of them gives us all the elements that we require together to convince those who are sceptical about the antiquity of a tradition of *devadāsīs* in the Indian world. Kālidāsa tells us that there were courtesans dancing in the temple of Mahākāla, and adds that they had incurred scratches, presumably from bouts of love-making, but he does not tell us whether or not they belonged to the god—that information is rather suggested by the 10th-century commentator Vallabhadeva; inscriptions of many periods and regions, on the other, tell us that women were given to the god, but they typically do not also tell us what those owned women then did; the probably 7th-century *Śivadharmottara* fills out the picture a bit, for it tells us that women owned by the Śiva of a temple were called Rudraṅṅikās, one of several terms later commonly used in South Indian Temple Āgamas, and it suggests, as we would expect, that there were many different ways of ending up as the property of god. The element *ṅṅikā* suggests that they were courtesans, and this is perhaps further implied by the allusion

⁷ This is one of the few points on which my translation disagrees substantively with that of De Simini, who translates *daṇḍotpannā balāhṛtāḥ* with “procured by violence [or] taken by force” (De Simini 2016: 390).

⁸ Here De Simini translates “on the sole authority of her mother” (*ibid.*: 390). What I assume to be meant is that the power of the service of Śiva rendered by her mother is sufficient to save them.

to their offspring, but arguably that allusion does not with certainty preclude the possibility that, although owned by Śiva, a Rudraṅṅikā might also have been married to a man or in a relationship with one man who was not a husband.⁹ As for any other sort of employment, such as dancing, the *Śivadharmaṅṅara* gives us no direct information, other than implying that they did some sort of work for Śiva.

I have mentioned that there are inscriptions from several regions and periods that allude to women who belong to the gods of temples or who dance in them, but I have so far only quoted one 7th-century example from Cambodia. It is well known that many relevant Cōla-period inscriptions from the Tamil-speaking South are relevant, for these have been discussed, notably by Leucci (e.g. Leucci 2016), and of course by Orr (Orr 2000), even if Orr's work calls into question the equation of dancing courtesans with the various 'temple women' who figure in Tamil inscriptions. There are less well-known cases elsewhere, as well as probably many as yet undiscovered ones; but they are often similarly inconclusive. In an inscription of 900 CE from the Neḍumpuṅṅam temple in Kerala, for example, we are informed of quantities of food-provisions that are to be given to three classes of *naṅṅaikaimār* (superior, middling and inferior),¹⁰ and a note of the editor, Puthusseri Ramachandra, suggests that these may have been Devadāsīs and that they were dancers.¹¹

⁹ Orr refers (Orr 2000: 156 and in her 2015 article on "non-wives") to inscriptions that refer to temple-women (*tevaraṅṅiyār*) who are identified "in terms of relationships with men who were neither their husbands nor their kin" (Orr 2000: 156), as well as to six inscriptions that identify temple-women as wives (*ibid.*: 155).

¹⁰ The inscription appears under the heading "Neḍumpuṅṅam taḷi kṣetrarekha 1" on p. 28ff of Ramachandra 2015, and the women are mentioned in line 13: ... *naṅṅaikaimārkuṅṅuttamamadhyama adhamattiṅṅāl niyatippaḍi* ..., "...to the dancing-women(?), in fixed proportions, in accordance with their being superior, middling or inferior...". I am grateful to S. A. S. Sarma of the EFEO for his help in interpreting this reference.

¹¹ He makes these suggestions with bracketed glosses, the first followed by a question mark: "naṅṅaikaimārkuṅṅam (devadāsikaḷ ?) (nartakikaḷ)" (Ramachandra 2015: 28).

For Karnataka, a few epigraphical mentions of women assigned to temples are referred to by Tosato (Tosato 2017: 83–84, fn. 11). For Java, there has been speculation about whether the women known as *talèdhèk* (/ *taledhek* / *talèdèk*) belonged to the same tradition of temple-dancing (see, e.g., Acri 2014: 36–42). Certainty is impossible here, as in the other hitherto mentioned pieces of evidence, and scholars tend to be divided into those inclined not to believe that the various practices associated with ‘Devadāsīs’ (notably dancing in temples and prostitution) can be projected into the distant past (that of the Cōla period, for Orr), and those who are inclined to believe that, even though we lack any source that paints the whole picture for us, there are just too many scattered clues from the length and breadth (in time and space) of the Indic world that point towards such practices (doubtless with many variations) having long been widespread. That evidence includes, for instance, epigraphic allusions, such as we have seen above (see also, e.g. Leucci 2016: 269ff); European travellers’ accounts from the 16th century onwards (for references to several of these, see, e.g., Kersenboom 2013 and Leucci 2016: 266ff); literary sources in Tamil and Sanskrit (to some of which we shall return presently, but see also, e.g., Kersenboom 2013 and Leucci 2016: 274ff); the wave of legislation that culminated in the “Bombay Devadasis Protection Act” of 1934 and the “Madras Devadasis (Protection of Dedication) Act” of 1947 (for which see, for instance, Kersenboom-Story 1987: xxi and Soneji 2012, who reproduces the act as his appendix 2); colonial-period archives (Soneji 2012); and recent ethnography and interviews with dancers and others who recall life before such legislation (Appfel-Marglin 1985; Kersenboom-Story 1987; Manet 1995;¹² Vishwanathan 2008; Leucci 2016, and of course, once again, the insightful, often lyrical, and poignantly illustrated book of Soneji 2012) or in places where the practices are still current, etc.

¹² I am grateful to Dr. Nallam, of Nallam’s Clinic in Pondicherry, for informing me about this book and for presenting me with a copy.

2. Clear 7th–8th-century evidence of temple-owned dancing courtesans

Another Khmer inscription is therefore worth introducing at this juncture: an imposing pedestal in sandstone inscribed on three of its four faces stands in front of the Stone Restoration Workshop of the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.



Fig. 1. Pedestal from Angkor Borei.

This object, assigned the number K. 600 in the inventory of Khmer inscriptions, is the oldest known dated inscription in Old Khmer.¹³

¹³ I am grateful to my colleague Bertrand Porte for drawing my attention to the pedestal and for mooted the idea of drawing up together a Museum notice to describe it for visitors, upon which I have drawn here.

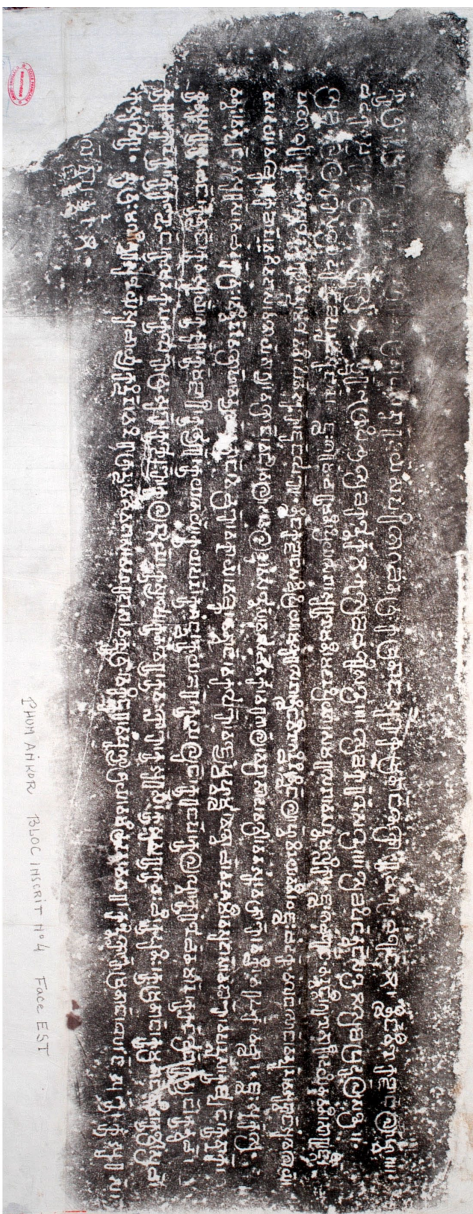


Fig. 2. Estampage of face of K. 600 recording names of dancers and musicians.

It was found on the right bank of the river at Angkor Borei next to the current site-museum and the text that it bears, written in Old Khmer, lists the servants, rice-fields and animals given to a small group of deities who must have occupied temples in the 7th-century city there. The date 533 *śaka* (611 CE) is spelled out in Sanskrit at the top of what was the pedestal’s northern face, and this is followed by a list of servants offered to a god referred to as Kpoñ Kamratāñ Añ, then one of servants offered to Mahāgaṅapati (Gaṅeśa?). The face with the longest text (15 lines) details the gifts made to Mañīśvara and to another Śiva (of whose name only the syllables *-śvara* have survived).

Coedès, who published a text and a summary translation in 1942 (*IC* II: 21–23), observed that “among the servants, we note the presence of a certain number of musicians and dancers, all but two of whose names are in Sanskrit; this is in marked contrast to the other servants, whose names are almost exclusively Khmer ones, often strongly pejorative.”¹⁴

Indeed we find here a Vasantamallikā (‘Spring Jasmine’) and a Madanapriyā (‘Dear to Love’) among the dancers and instrumentalists, as well as three names with a particularly telling ending: Samarasenā (‘Army for the Battle [of Love?]’), Priyasenā, and Madhurasenā (‘Sweet Army’).¹⁵

¹⁴ “Parmi les serviteurs, on notera un certain nombre de musiciennes et de danseuses dont les noms sont tous sanskrits (sauf deux), à la différence des autres dont les noms sont presque exclusivement khmèrs et souvent fort méprisants” Coedès *IC* II: 21.

¹⁵ A brief discussion of these is to be found in Chhom’s thesis (Chhom 2016: 69). I am not aware of many other instances of such names ending in *-senā* in the Khmer epigraphical record, but that may be because research over the last century and a half has, naturally enough, not hitherto prioritised the lists of names of slaves, which tend to get left out of translations and sometimes also of editions. Cf., on this point, Soutif 2009, vol. 2, p. 401: “En effet, le corpus des anthroponymes a souvent été négligé et il nous semble que bien des listes, parmi les plus longues, devront être relues ou corrigées avant

This type of name, ending in °senā (‘army’) and beginning typically with an element that suggests love or sweetness or spring, marks out courtesans in courtly Indian literature. One thinks, for example, of Vasantasenā, the rich, noble and generous courtesan who is the heroine of one of the oldest and most celebrated Sanskrit dramas, the *Mṛcchakaṭika*.¹⁶ Well-off and respected, the bearers of such

d’essayer d’en tirer des enseignements. Ceci ne souligne donc peut-être que la nécessité de compléter la lecture des interminables listes d’esclaves encore inédites.”

Recent work is reversing this trend, e.g. Jacques 2016; Chhom 2011 and Chhom 2016.

One curious instance of a name in °senā is the 13th-century inscription K. 540, whose entire text reads • *vraḥ anaṅgasenā* (IC III: 193). Cœdès records (*ibid.*) that it is on an isolated stone “trouvée dans le pavillon de l’angle nord-est de la galerie extérieure” at the temple known as the Bayon. The honorific preceding the name perhaps rules out one or two otherwise conceivable interpretations, but it is still wide open what might have been meant. Could it have been, for instance, a label-inscription intended to identify a sculpture depicting a legendary courtesan? Or an image of a deity installed and therefore named after a wealthy courtesan? This is perhaps the possibility imagined by Chhom, who includes the name in her appendix of Indic proper names in Cambodian inscriptions followed by the terse observation “dieu” (Chhom 2016: 481).

¹⁶ Prescriptive dramaturgical literature also frequently reminds us of this naming convention. Viśvanātha’s 14th-century *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, for example, has a few remarks on the names to be given to personages in a drama, including the following (6.141ab): *dattāṃ siddhāṃ ca senāṃ ca veśyānāṃ nāma darśayet*, “One should give [the endings] °dattā, °siddhā, and °senā as names for courtesans”. As prose commentary on this, he merely observes: *veśyā yathā vasantasenādih*, “A courtesan, for instance, [will be called] Vasantasenā or the like”. Several such prescriptions can be found in dramaturgical literature, typically featuring varying lists of possible name-suffixes, but always including °senā among them. The earliest is presumably that of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (17.98cd): *dattā mitrā ca senā ca veśyānāmāni vojayet*, “One should use °dattā, °mitrā and °senā [as] courtesans’ names”. Abhinavagupta’s commentary here consists in three example names: *devadattāvasantasenāvidagdhamitreyādi veśyānām*, “For courtesans, such [names] as Devadattā, Vasantasenā and Vidagdhamitrā”. It is clear how those given or sold into slavery, as well as being assigned the technical term *dattā*

names could apparently nonetheless be the property of a deity: a dozen courtesans mentioned in the *Kuṭṭanīmata* have names of this type,¹⁷ and several of the courtesans in this novel are explicitly said to be attached to temples, as we shall see below.

The text of this early 7th-century Cambodian inscription, though little more than a list in Old Khmer, explicitly reveals that some of the women given to divinities in Angkor Borei were employed to dance or play music, and it strongly suggests, by the use of a well-established Sanskrit naming convention, that they belonged, in spite of their status as divine property, to a class of wealthy and educated courtesans.

Perhaps the first known Indian text that explicitly brings all these disparate elements together is the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, the 8th-century verse novel mentioned at the beginning of this article. Although it is a work of imagination, and although it draws heavily on earlier writings such as, as we have seen, the *Kāmasūtra*, it can and ought to be used, judiciously of course, as a source for social history. But although there have long been two very good editions of the Sanskrit text, as well as a monograph exploring the work for the light that it throws on cultural history (Shastri 1975), the difficulty of the work, its supposedly scurrilous subject-matter, and the absence, until our publication of 2013

(as we shall see below in a passage attributed to the *Kāraṅṅama*), might naturally acquire a name ending in °dattā too.

¹⁷ A Madanasenā is mentioned in stanza 36 of the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, Kesarasenā in stanza 38, Harisenā in 348, another Madanasenā in 350, Kāmasenā in 360, Candrasenā in 364, Suratasenā in 366, Sundarasenā in 505, Śaṅkarasenā in 520, Mādhvasenā in 526, and Manmathasenā in 537. Of the other suffixes appropriate for courtesans's names that are mentioned by Viśvanātha, only °dattā seems to be represented, and that only in the name Vāsavadattā (802 and 896). Other early dramas provide further instances of courtesans with suggestive names ending in °senā: e.g. Mādhvasenā, Madanasenā, and Ratisenā in the *Dhūrtaviṭasaṃvāda*; and another Mādhvasenā ('daughter' of a Viṣṇudattā), a Rāmasenā, another Ratisenā (Rāmasenā's 'daughter'), and a Priyaṅgusenā in the *Ubhayābhisārikā*. Both the *Dhūrtaviṭasaṃvāda* and the *Ubhayābhisārikā* appear, with translations, in Dezső and Vasudeva 2009.

(Dezső and Goodall 2013), of an intelligible English translation,¹⁸ have meant that the book has tended to be overlooked.

Dāmodara's work includes numerous passages of imagined dialogue which involve prostitutes and their clients, including, for instance this one.

*gambhīreśvaradāsyāṃ lagnaḥ kila tava vayasyako vīraḥ
prāpsyati sāpi durāśāvarṣatritayena yanmayā prāptam 743*

It seems your little hero friend
Has gone and hitched himself with her,
That girl from Gambhīreśvara:
He'll get as much as I attained
In three full years of thwarted hopes.

Here we see one prostitute being described as Gambhīreśvara-dāśī, the Dāśī of the Śiva called Gambhīreśvara. Furthermore, a large part of the poem is devoted to narrating the tale of a particular courtesan called Mañjarī who, along with a troupe of other courtesans, is described as acting the celebrated play *Ratnāvalī* in a temple to Śiva for the entertainment of a prince, whom she ultimately seduces and fleeces of all his worldly wealth. This is the verse with which the tale of Mañjarī is first introduced.

*śṛṇu suśroṇi yathāsmīn kalaśeśvarapādamūlamañjaryā
pravaraścāryaduhitrā rājasutaś carvitaś ca muktaś ca 736*

Hear this, you callipygean girl,
About a certain Mañjarī,
A *garland* garnishing the feet
Of Śiva 'Kalaśeśvara',
The 'daughter' of sage Pravara,
And how she gorged upon the prince,
Then spat him out again.

¹⁸ That of Bedi of 1968 does not, in our view, qualify: it often makes little sense as English and does not reflect the ideas of the stanzas it purports to translate.

Here we learn that the heroine Mañjarī belongs in some sense to a temple-god, namely the Śiva called Kalaśeśvara. The expression used is ambiguous: Kalaśeśvara-pādamūla-Mañjarī. We have translated this with “A garland garnishing the feet of Śiva Kalaśeśvara”, but this is quite evidently not the only level of meaning that can be discerned, for Mañjarī is not only a ‘garland’, but also the name of the heroine, and the term *pādamūla* is well-attested elsewhere as a term whose exact significance varies from one context to another, but which can be used of temple servants.¹⁹

Here, for example, is a mid-9th-century inscription in which *pādamūla* occurs, apparently referring to servants or slaves or attendants.

(19)*punye hani [ut]tarāyaṅasa[m]kr[ā]ntau gandha-puṣpa-dhūpa-dīpo-
palepana-naivedya-vali-caru-nṛtya-geya-vādyā-satṛādi-pravarttanāya
khaṅḁasphuṅṅita-saṅskaraṅāya abhinava-karma-karaṅā(20)ya ca bhṛtya-
pādamūla-bharaṅāya ca ...*

for providing perfumes, flowers, incense, lights, ointments, offerings of eatables, sacrifices, oblations of rice &c., dancing, singing, music, charities, &c., for the repair of what may be damaged or broken, as well as for the execution of new works, and for the maintenance of servants and attendants, ...²⁰

¹⁹ Our regular dictionaries are not of much help here, but three accounts of epigraphical vocabulary throw some light. Sircar proposes four meanings, with inscriptional attestations, of the expression *pādamūla*, literally ‘foot-root’, namely: ‘an attendant’, ‘foot-prints’, ‘a sanctuary’, ‘a temple attendant’ (Sircar 1966: 224). Subbarayalu’s entry for the derived Tamil word *pātamūlam* (Subbarayalu 2003: 419) adds a further meaning: he explains that it refers to the chief of the priests in a Śaiva temple. Bhattacharya, after noting that *pādamūla* is used as a formula of respect in Indian sources, adds several attestations in Khmer-language inscriptions and explains that it is used often in Cambodian epigraphy as the title of chiefs of temples and *āśramas* (‘hermitages’) (Bhattacharya 1991: 61).

²⁰ From the “Pandukesvar Plate of Lalitasuradeva”, an inscription of 853 AD from Garwhal District, edited and translated by Kielhorn (Kielhorn 1896: 180 and 183).

And here is another from the same period (although examples from earlier centuries could also be cited²¹) but a different area.

(50)...*devakulaṅ kārītan tatra pratiṣṭhāpita-bhagavan-N[un]na-nārāyaṇa-bhaṭṭārakāya taipra(51)tipālaka-Lāṭadvija-devārccakādi-pādamūla-sametāya pūjopasthānādi-karmmaṇe caturo grāmān atratya-haṭṭikā-talapāṭaka-(52)sametān dadātu deva iti*

... To the holy lord Nunna-Nārāyaṇa who has been installed there (by us), and to the Lāṭa Brāhmaṇas, priests and other attendants who wait upon him, may it please your Majesty to grant four villages, with their *haṭṭikā* and *talapāṭaka*, for the performance of worship and other rites.²²

3. Gaṇikās in South Indian Temple Āgamas: Nandin and the daughters of Rudra

Moving a few centuries later and to the South of India, there is another corpus of literature from which further scraps of information can be gleaned about Rudraṅikās. The ‘South Indian Temple Āgamas’ that began to be composed in the 12th century are quite different from the liberation-centred early scriptures of the Śaivasiddhānta, for their purpose appears rather to prescribe every detail of the social and religious life of large Cōḷa-period and post-Cōḷa temples in such a way as to justify the entitlement of certain castes (mainly Śaivabrāhmaṇas / Ādiśaivas) to certain rôles in ritual and thereby naturally to certain privileges.

As we would expect, Rudraṅikās are prominent in all sorts of accounts of religious processions and spectacles, not only in Śaiva

²¹ As Elisa Ganser has pointed out to me, Annette Schmiedchen (Schmiedchen 2014: 199, fn. 744) quotes an early 7th-century occurrence of the expression *pādamūlaprajīvanāya* (“for the livelihood of [temple-servants who are at] the soles of the feet [of the deity?]”) in an inscription from Western India (published by Banerji 1932). A few other 7th-century examples of this expression are mentioned in Schmiedchen 1993: 590–591.

²² From the “Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapaladeva”, a 9th-century inscription from Bhagalpur, again edited and translated by Kielhorn (Kielhorn 1897: 250 and 254).

contexts (see, for instance, the references listed in *Tāntrikābhīdhānakośa* II, s.v. *gaṅḡikā*) and Vaiṣṇava ones (where they are of course *gaṅḡikās* of Viṣṇu rather than of Rudra), for instance wherever dance is mentioned (see, for instance, s.v. *nṛtta* in *Tāntrikābhīdhānakośa* III), but also in connection with temples of other deities, such as Skanda (see, for example, *Kumāratantra* 13.224, and note also that a certain Kamalā, the *nartakī* who seduced the 8th-century Kashmirian king Jayāpīḡa, according to Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 421ff, had been dancing in a temple of Kārttikeya), and their participation evidently continued right up until the wave of legislation that outlawed this in modern times.

But there is another Rudraṅḡikā-related subject for which we find scriptural prescriptions from the 12th century onwards, namely that of the regulation of post-mortuary impurity. Discussion of the periods of impurity to be observed by a *devadāsī* or a Rudraṅḡikā, or to be observed by others on the occasion of the death of one among such groups of women, would have made no sense in the older liberation-centred scriptures of the Mantramārga, whose injunctions are by default addressed to initiated brahmin males.²³ But in the hierarchical world of the busy economic power-house that was a South Indian temple-city, it is clear that such social details cried out for regulation by those who had arrogated authority over the temples to themselves. What such passages incidentally appear to tell us is that there were of course complex internal hierarchies among the women attached to the temples, for the conflicting accounts of the prescriptive literature seem to be attempts to respond to what were doubtless constantly shifting social realities.

²³ For a reminder of the division of the canon of the Śaivasiddhānta, the long dominant strand of the Mantramārga, into 1) a body of scriptures of the second half of the first millennium that are primarily about the salvation of individual seekers of liberation and 2) a body of 12th- and post-12th-century scriptures preoccupied with public liturgy in large South Indian temples, see the preface to Goodall 2004.



Fig. 3. The Devadāru myth is a popular one in literature and sculpture in the Tamil South. This panel in the Kailāsanātha temple in Kancheepuram shows Śiva among the ascetics' wives, with an ascetic behind.



Fig. 4. The Devadāru myth is frequently inflected in the South for other purposes. Here, in one of the ceiling-paintings of the *maṅḍapa* in front of Śiva’s consort in Chidambaram, Śivakāmeśvarī, the story involves not only the seduction of the sages’ wives by Śiva, but also the seduction of the priapic sages themselves (not shown in this photograph) by Viṣṇu as Mohinī, all as part of a legend justifying the sacredness of Tillai (now Chidambaram).

In the following list, for example, which we find at the top of a long quotation attributed to the *Kāraṅṅagama* (but not found in either of the printed editions of that text) in Vedajñāna’s 16th-century *Āśauca-dīpikā* (“Lamp illuminating [the rules of] Impurity”), we read of numerous grades of women belonging to Śiva, culminating in those with the most prestigious name, Rudrakanyā.

dattākrītābhṛtābhaktāhṛtālamkārādāsikāḥ
rudrakanyās ca saptaitā mama karmaniyojitāḥ

Given, Sold, Servant, Devotee, Brought [from another temple], Alamkāradāsikā, ‘Daughter of Rudra’—these are the seven [types of women] who are engaged in performing my works.

We should note that the term Rudrakanyā, ‘daughter of Rudra’, becomes in this period interchangeable with the term Rudraṅṅikā, ‘courtesan of Rudra’ (a development that we shall return to below).

For whereas in the ‘forged’ 19th-century version of the *Kāmikāgama* and in some relatively recent rituals and rhetoric presented in S. Kersenboom-Story’s book *devadāsīs* are often presented as ‘wives’ of the god, the older, probably 12th-century *Kāmikāgama* contains an aetiological myth that shows how women who dance in Śiva’s temple are rather daughters of Rudra (cf. the label *tevaṇār makaḷ*, ‘daughter of god’, frequently attested in Tamil inscriptions of the Cōḷa period and discussed at length by Orr, e.g. 2000: 57ff). It consists in a creative retelling of the Devadāru myth according to which Śiva enters as a naked beggar among the wives of the ascetics of the Deodar forest (we shall quote the opening of this account below).

The ascetics’ wives are so enraptured that they become pregnant merely by exchanging looks with Śiva. Their offspring are born on the spot and Śiva assigns them the rôle of dancers in his temple. I will not present the whole initiation account in detail here, since I have recently published it in an introduction to a book on *Śaiva Rites of Expiation*,²⁴ but there is one detail worth drawing special attention to, namely the rapid initiation that Śiva gives these women. Śiva, it seems, calls his watchman Nandin to him and asks for Nandin’s stick or staff, a detail that can be seen in Southern sculptural representations of the form known as Adhikāranandin (see, for example, the two images forming Figure 17 in our edition of the *Pañcāvaraṇastava*) and that Kālidāsa mentions in his *Kumārasambhava*.²⁵ Taking this staff, he touches each woman upon the head and gives her the name Nanda or a name that begins or ends with Nanda, as well as the title *śirodaṇḍinī* (*Kāmikāgama*, *Uttarabhāga*, 73.12c–14b):

²⁴ See Goodall 2015: 37–48.

²⁵ *Kumārasambhava* 3.41: *latāgrhadvāragato ’tha nandī vāmapra-koṣṭhārpitahemavetraḥ / mukhārpitaikāṅgulisaṃjñāyaiva mā cāpalāyeti gaṇān vyanaiṣīt*. “Then Nandin, standing in the doorway of the hut of plants, a golden staff propped up in the crook of his left arm, disciplined the Gaṇas not to be skittish merely by the sign of raising one finger to his mouth”.

vetraṃ tasmāc chirāṃsya āsāṃ spr̥ṣṭāni dvijasattamāḥ 12
 tataḥ prabhṛti vartante bhuvī nandākhyasamjñayā
 yato daṇḍena saṃspr̥ṣṭāḥ śirodaṇḍinya ity api²⁶ 13
 vikhyātās tatkulothābhīḥ śuddhanṛttaṃ pravartyatām

From then onwards, they go by the name Nandākhyā on earth, and they will be well known also by the name *śiro-daṇḍinī*, since they have been touched [on the head (*śirasi*)] with a stick (*daṇḍena*). May pure dance be performed by ladies born of their lineage!

I have no conclusions to propose regarding the name in Nanda,²⁷ but the other title, *śirodaṇḍinī*, provides a link to Tamil inscriptions of the Cōla period. Dancers in a number of inscriptions receive the Tamil title *talaikkōli*, a literal Sanskrit translation of which would be *śirodaṇḍa*. Now Orr has discussed the title *talaikkōli* at some length, pointing out that it has its origins in the baton referred to as the *talaikkōl* that is venerated before Mātavi's dance in the Tamil literary epic the *Cilappatikāram*, where *talaikkōl* is also conferred as a title upon Mātavi in recognition of her skill as a dancer (Orr 2000: 61–3, 148–9, 220–1, 248), and the same title is used elsewhere in the text for Urvaśī (*ibid.*: 221, fn. 38). The *talaikkōl* venerated before

²⁶ saṃspr̥ṣṭāḥ śirodaṇḍinya] C; saṃspr̥ṣṭam śiro daṇḍinya S.

²⁷ Verse 73.36ab, later in the same chapter, suggests that Nanda is a prefix: *nāmoktvā nandapūrvaṃ tu saṃbuddhyantaṃ yathā bhavet*, “stating a name that begins with Nanda, such that it ends in the name with which they are to be addressed”. This is the reading of the two editions consulted here (C and S), but the manuscripts are far from unanimous: T, for example, reads *namoktvā ratnipūrvaṃ tu*, T. 298 has *nāmoktāgneya-pūrvaṃ tu*, and RE 39814 has *namoktyā nandipūrvaṃ tu* for *pāda* 36a. The manuscripts thus far consulted are similarly unhelpful in 13b: RE 39814 omits the passage entirely, whereas both RE 32518 and RE 30551 read *nātyasya saṃjñayā* and T. 298 has *nātyasya saṃkhyayā*, readings that I cannot interpret. Kersenboom-Story 1987: 28 records the use of other prefixes and titles (*nakkaṇ*, *tēvaraṭṭiyār*, *patiliyār*, *māṅikkam* and, as we shall see below, *talaikkōli*), but not Nanda-: perhaps further searches in the epigraphic corpus will one day turn up instances of the prefix (whatever it should be) that is referred to here.

Mātavi's dance is doubtless the *jarjara*, the magically protective staff of Indra whose worship before a performance is prescribed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.²⁸ The Rudraṅnikā-initiation of the *Kāmika* thus cunningly draws together a tradition reaching all the way back through old inscriptions and the *Cilappatikāram* to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and it reinvests that tradition with a Śaiva layer of symbolism, for now the *jarjara* has become the staff of Śiva's chief watchman, Nandin.

Aside from being Śiva's watchman, a role we see him play in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, and one that makes the staff a distinctive emblem for him, we also find Nandin associated with Śiva's dance in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (4.252), after the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice,²⁹ and in sculptural representations from Pallava times onwards.

The initiation by the touch of a *jarjara* that is at the same time Nandin's staff confers of course a special status upon the Rudraṅnikā in the *Kāmika*; no initiation is there mentioned for the women referred to in that work as *dāsīs*, whose status, from what is said about their periods of ritual impurity, is clearly lower, and whose occupations are unspecified. But even this initiation by the touch of a staff could also be said to be one of a class of initiations for persons of relatively low status, from the perspective of the Śaivabrāhmaṇas, since it is an initiation that requires no direct physical contact with the officiating *ācārya*.

²⁸ The aetiological myth about the *jarjara* appears in *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.64–94 and its worship is prescribed in 3.11 ff.

²⁹ I am grateful to Elisa Ganser for pointing this passage out to me.



Fig 5. Kailāsanātha, Śiva and Nandin dancing.

4. Gaṇikās in South Indian Temple Āgamas: Rudra's wives?

Let us turn now to a passage to which I have alluded above, namely the presentation of the types of Dāsīs in the 16th-century treatise on ritual impurity, the *Āśaucadīpikā*.³⁰

atra tāsām rudraṅgaṇikānām devadāsīnāṅ ca svarūpaṃ tāsām karma ca tāsām āśaucaṃ ca vistareṇa kāraṇe pradarśitam |

tāsām rudraṅgaṇikānām | E; rudrakanyānām T1 • devadāsīnāṅ ca | T1; devadāsīnām E • svarūpaṃ tāsām karma ca tāsām āśaucaṃ ca | E; svarūpakarma cāśaucaṅ ca T1 • pradarśitam | T1; pradarśitam yathā E

In this regard, the nature of Rudraṅgaṇikās and of Devadāsīs, their work, and their periods of impurity have been expounded at length in the *Kāraṇa*:

dattākṛitābhṛtābhaktāhṛtālaṃkāradāsikāḥ

rudrakanyās ca saptaitā mama karmaniyojitāḥ 1

• **1ab** dattākṛitābhṛtābhaktāhṛtālaṃkāradāsikāḥ | E; dattā kṛitā mṛtā bhaktā hṛdālaṃkāradāsikā G; dattā kṛitābhṛtā bhaktāhṛtālaṃkāradāsikā T1 (unmetrical); dattā kṛitā dṛtā bhaktā hṛdālaṃkāradāsikā T2 • **1c** rudrakanyās ca saptaitā | T2,E; rudrakanyās ca sapteto G; rudrakanyā ca saptaitā T1

Given, Sold, Servant, Devotee, Brought [from another temple], Alaṃkāradāsikā, ‘Daughter of Rudra’—these are the seven [types of women] who are engaged in performing my works.

yārpitā mama kṛṣyādīviṣaye bhaktimajjanaiḥ

sā dattā iti vikhyātā kṛitāyā lakṣaṇaṃ śṛṇu 2

• **2a** yārpitā mama kṛṣyādi° | G,T2; yā svadāmakṛṣyādi° T1; yārpitā mama kṛtyādi° D • **2b** bhaktimajjanaiḥ | T2,E; vibhaktimajjanaiḥ G (unmetrical); bhaktimajjane T1 • **2c** sā dattā iti | G,T1,T2; sā tu datteti E • **2d** kṛitāyā | T1,E; yā G,T2 (unmetrical)

She who is offered by devoted people for doing such things as working the fields for me is called ‘Given’. Listen to the characteristics of the one who is ‘Bought’.

³⁰ The text here is based on a collation of four rather corrupt sources, the edition of the *Āśaucadīpikā* (=E), two paper transcripts, namely IFP T. 370 (=T1) and T. 281 (=T2), and a Grantha-script palm-leaf manuscript from the IFP: RE 43643 (=G). Two of these (namely T. 281 and RE 43643) figure only intermittently in the apparatus, since they transmit a text in which some of the Sanskrit passages have been replaced with Tamil paraphrase. I am grateful to the help of R. Sathyanarayanan for the study of these passages, for the two of us presented some of them in a NETamil workshop in Pondicherry in 2016.

*dāsyārthaṃ mama bhaktena dravyalobhena vā punaḥ*³¹
vittaṃ grhītvā yā dattā sā hi krīṭeti kīrtitā 3

• 3a dāsyārthaṃ | E ; dāsyārthaṃ T1 • 3cd dattā sā hi krīṭeti | em.; dattā
 sā vikrīṭeti T1; datā sā hi krīṭeti E

One who is taken in exchange for wealth and given to me for service
 by a devotee or by someone greedy for money is proclaimed to be 'Bought'.

³¹ From verse 3 through verse 9, the Sanskrit stanzas have been replaced in G and in T2 with Tamil prose paraphrase. Since the paraphrase actually also covers verses 1–2 (which G and T2 both transmit), it seems likely to me that whoever produced it might have intended to give the whole passage in Sanskrit, followed by the Tamil gloss. Although it diverges in any respects, there is almost no information in the Tamil gloss that is not already in the Sanskrit, but a small detail about branding appears at the very beginning of the gloss, and so I give it here below in the two orthographically very different versions of the two sources.

T2 (T. 281, p. 26):

*tāsīviṣayattil ēlvitām. etu tattai, krītai, mrutai paktai hrutai,
 alaṅkāratāsikai, atil pratānatāsikai 2 peṅkaḷaik koṅṅu vantū sannitīyilē
 tāsikaḷaik koṅṅu maṅṅaḷ pāl koṅṅuttu mutrātāraṅṅam aṅṅaintavarkaḷukkup
 pēr tattai ·*

Here is the same sentence as it appears in G (RE 43643, f. 13r, beginning line 7):

*dāsīviṣayattil · 7 · vidham · etu / dattai krītai mṛtai bhaktai hr̥dai
 alaṅkāradāsikai / atil pradhānadāsikai u · peṅkaḷaik koṅṅu van tu
 sannadhiyile dāsi-kaḷaik koṅṅu maṅṅaḷap pāl koṅṅuttu mudradhāraṅṅa
 aṅṅaintavarkaḷukkuper dattai.*

In the matter of female slaves, there are seven varieties. Which? Given, Sold, 'Dead', Devotee, Brought, Alaṅkāradāsikā. Among those, [these are] the principal female slave[s]. If someone comes with women, brings them into the sanctuary [as] female slaves, gives turmeric milk (?) and brands [them], the name for these [women is] 'Given'.

It will be noticed that the gloss here omits the category of Rudraṅṅikā, perhaps because she may not have been branded (on this point, neither the Sanskrit text nor the Tamil gloss give a clear pronouncement). It will also be noticed that *bhṛtā* (= *bhṛtakā*) 'Servant', has been misunderstood as *mṛtā*, 'Deceased', a point to which we shall return below.

*kuṭumbabharaṇārthāya yā gatvā mama mandiram
jīvanāya bhaved dāsī cihnītā bhṛtakocyate 4*

- **4a** kuṭumba° | E; kuṭumba° T1 • **4b** yā gatvā | E; gāyantī T1
- **4d** bhṛtakocyate | E; bhībhūtakocyate T1 (unmetrical)

One who comes to my temple in order to support her family, [or] for her livelihood, and becomes a branded (*cihnītā*) slave is called ‘Servant’ (*bhṛtakā*).³²

*yā bhaktā svayam evāhaṃ dāsī syām iti śāmbhave
ālaye ’rpitacihnā syāt sā hi bhaktābhīdhīyate 5*

- **5b** syāmiti | T1; syāmīti E

A devotee who comes to a temple of Śiva herself with the thought “I must be a Dāsī” and is branded (*arpitacihnā*) is called ‘Devotee’.

*yā pūrvaṃ mama gehe tu dāsīkrtye pratiṣṭhitā
āhṛtā kutrācit kṣobhakālāc cānyatra deśikaiḥ
āsaktair arpitā dāsī sāhṛtā kathyate ’dhunā 6*

- **6b** krtye pratiṣṭhitā | E; kanyātra niṣṭhitā T1 • **6cd** āhṛtā kutrācit kṣobhakālāc cā° | E; āhṛtā kutrācit kṣobhā kālārcā° T1 • **6f** sāhṛtā | E; samṛtā T1

One who has previously been employed in the work of a Dāsī in a house of mine and because of a period of troubles somewhere is summoned and offered by *ācāryas* who are attached elsewhere is now called ‘Brought’.

³² From the point of view of both sense and metre, the name *bhṛtakā*, ‘servant’, would clearly fit here more smoothly than *mṛtā*, which is nonetheless what the Tamil gloss repeats here:

T2 (T. 281, p. 26):

*mṛtaikku lakṣaṇam taṇṇuṭaiya kuṭumparaḥṣainimittam ākak kōvililē
vantu aṭimaip paṭṭu mutrātāraṇam aṭaikirāḷ avalukku mṛtai eṇru pēr.*

G (RE 43643, f. 13r):

*mṛtaikku lakṣaṇam / taṇṇuṭaiya kuṭu (f. 13v)mbaraḥṣainimittam
ākak kovilile vantu aṭimaip paṭṭu mudrādhāraṇam aṭaiyirāḷ aviḷukku
mṛtai eṇru pēr*

The definition of the ‘Deceased’: one who comes into the temple, adopts slavery and receives the branding mark in order to protect her own family; for her the term is ‘Deceased’.

Perhaps the Tamil gloss was produced after the corruption of *bhṛtakā* to *mṛtā* had already crept into the Sanskrit text:

*kāritā yā naṅair gānanṅttayor atisīkṣitā
rājanātakaśālāyām śikṣayanī tathāparā
sā śikṣālamkṛtā vastrabhūṣaṅair atisundarī 7
toṣaṅārthaṅ mameśasya mandire bhūbhṛtā punaḥ
nihitā kṛtacinḅā syāt sā hy alamkāradāsikā 8*

- **7a** yā | E; rā T1 • **7b** °sīkṣitā | E; °sīkṣitāḥ T1 • **7d** °parā | T1; °parāḥ E
- **7e** sā śikṣālamkṛtā vastra° | E; sā śiṣyālamkṛtā vastu° T1 • **8c** kṛtacinḅā | em.; kṛtacinḅā T1; nihitā ḥṛtacinḅā E

One who is trained by actors to be extremely skilled in singing and dance, and also one who trains [others] in the king's theatre, is called Śikṣālamkṛtā ('Adorned by training'); she is very beautiful in her dress and ornaments. When she is further placed by the king in the temple to please Me, the Lord, and branded, she is called Alamkāradāsikā.

*ṛṣibhāryā varārohā mama saṅparkataḥ punaḥ
tais tyaktā mama gehe tu tāḥ smṛtā rudrakanyakāḥ 9*

- **9c** tais tyaktā | T1; tais tyaktvā E • **9d** tāḥ | E; tā T1

Now the Rudrakanyakās are held to be the fine-hipped wives of the sages whom those [sages] abandoned in My temple, because of their contact with Me.³³

*evam proktā bahuvīdhā drśyante mama mandire
dāsyāḥ puṅyādhikā loke mama karmaparāyaṅāḥ 10*

- **10c** dhikā | G,T2,E; °dhike T1 (The testimony of G and T2 resumes with 10a.)

Such are the many varieties of Dāsī found in My temple. They are great in merit in this world, being devoted to My works.

*yāḥ paramparāyā dāsyas tāsām puṅyāvadhīḥ kutaḥ
yās tu saṅkarajātīyāḥ śuddhās tās ca varāṅganāḥ
mama mandirakarmāṅi vidadhyuś cihnitāḥ punaḥ 11*

- **11ab** dāsyas tāsām puṅyāvadhīḥ kutaḥ | E; dāsakadāsyām mudāpnyām puṅyāvadhīḥ kutaḥ G (unmetrical); māsas tāsām puṅyāvadhīḥ kutaḥ T1; dāsakadāsyomam udāḥṛtāḥ puṅyāvīdhīḥ kṛtāḥ T2 (unmetrical) • **11c** °jātīyāḥ | T2,E; °jātīyā G,T1 • **11d** śuddhās tās ca | T1,E; śuddhyāstāṅna G; śuddhās tā na T2 • **11f** punaḥ | T1,T2; parāḥ E

For those who are Dāsīs by heredity, how could there be a limit to their merit? As for those of mixed descent, they also [become] pure ladies: they should further be branded and do work in My temple.

³³ Unlike in *Uttara-Kāmika* 73, it seems that the ascetics' wives themselves (and not their offspring) are here the first generation of Rudraṅṅikās!

*āsām lakṣaṇabhedah syān mama dīkṣāvidhānataḥ
tathaiṅcārabhedaś ca tāsām karmānurūpataḥ 12*

• **12a** °bhedah syān | T2,E; °bhetaśyāt G; °bhedan T1 (unmetrical)

They are differentiated in types in accordance with [the different kinds of]
My initiation; similarly they are differentiated as to behaviour in accordance with their work.

*yā rudraṅgaṅikās tāsām mārjanādi na vidyate
ārātragūtanṛttādīkarma tāsām vidhīyate 13*

• **13a** yā | G,T2,E; °T1 • **13b** mārjanādi | T2,E; jananādi T1 • **13c** °nṛttādi° | T2,E;
°nṛttāni G,T1 • **13d** tāsām | T1,T2,E; tādāsāma G (unmetrical)

For the Rudraṅgaṅikās, there is no scrubbing and such; the work enjoined for them is waving lamps,³⁴ singing, dancing and the like.³⁵

*anyāsām devadāsīnām tattatkarmāni me śṛṇu
mārjanaprokṣaṅālepacūrṅakarmāni deśika 14
taṅḍulānayanam pātraśodhanam gānanṛttayoh
sevanam venuvīṅādivādanam caivam ādikam 15*

• **14a** anyāsām | T1,E; anyadhān G; anyathā T2 • **14b** tattatkarmāni | T1,T2,E; tattam karmmaṅi G • **14d** deśika | E; deśikah G,T1,T2
• **15a** taṅḍulānayanam pātra° | T1,E; taṅḍalānayanam patra° G,T2

Listen as I tell you the tasks of the other Devadāsīs: scrubbing, sprinkling, smearing, grinding, O Teacher. Bringing rice, cleaning vessels, being of service to the singing and dancing, playing such instruments as the flute and the veena, and other such tasks.

³⁴ One might be tempted to interpret this to mean that their work consisted in singing and dancing and such ‘until nightfall’ (*ārātra*°); but *ārātra*, although not attested in this sense in any dictionary known to me, is probably intended as a synonym of what South Indian Temple Āgamas commonly express by *ārātri*/*ārātri* (also not lexicalised) or *ārātrika*, which Apte, for instance, records (1957–1959) as meaning “Waving a light (or the vessel containing it) at night before an idol” or as “The light so waved”. Today, this lamp-waving is widely referred to by the Hindī term *ārati*. The only hitherto published instance of *ārātra* used in this sense that is known to me occurs in *Kumāratantra* 3.222.

³⁵ At this point, before verse 14, G and T2 give a few lines of Tamil commentary summarising loosely the preceding verses.

*saṅkayā vābhimānena vaṃśajenānyato 'pi vā
vidadhyaḥ sarvakarmāṇi rudrakanyā viśeṣataḥ* 16³⁶
*yās ca saṅkaraḥjātīyā mama dāsya iti smṛtāḥ
dhautavastrāḥ kariṣyanti sarvakarmāṇi tāḥ striyaḥ* 17

- **16a** vābhimānena | T1,E; vābhimānena G,T2 • **16c** vidadhyaḥ sarvakarmāṇi | T1,E; vidhanvadhyaḥ sarvakarmāṇa G; vidadhyaḥ evaṃ karmāṇi T2 • **16c** rudrakanyā | T1,T2,E; rudrakanyā G • **17c** °vastrāḥ | G,T2,E; °vastrā T1 • **17d** tāḥ striyaḥ | T1,T2,E; tāsṭriyaḥ G

Out of fastidiousness or out of pride of lineage or for other reasons, [hereditary] Rudrakanyās may perform all [such] tasks, and so too, in particular, those who are born of mixed unions: they are held to be my Dāsīs. These women will perform all these tasks wearing washed clothes.³⁷

*yā bhavet tatra sarvāsu mama dāsīti viśrutā
tatputrīpatrikāḍīnāṃ vihitam karma tac chṛṇu* 18

- **18a** yā bhavet tatra | G,T2,E; yābha * * tra T1 • **18b** dāsīti viśrutā | T1; dāsī tu viśrutāḥ G; dāsī tu viśrutā T2,E • **18c** tatputrī° | T1,E; apuṭrī° G; āpuṭrī° T2 • **18d** tac chṛṇu | T1,T2,E; taśṛṇuḥ G

Whoever may be proclaimed to be My Servant among all these women (*sarvāsu*?), listen to the task decreed for her daughters, granddaughters and further.

*māṅgalyasūtradharaṅam kartavyam śivasannidhau
pāraṃparyāgatānāṃ ca navānām aviśeṣataḥ* 19
*brāhmaṅīṭulyatā vastradhāraṅādiṣu kalpyate
tripuṅḍradhāraṅam caiva śivadīkṣāpurassaram* 20
sūtake mṛtake 'nyonyam āśaucaṅ cārdhamāsakam

- **19a** māṅgalyasūtradharaṅam | em.; māṅgalyasūtram karaṅam G; māṅgalyasūtradhāraṅam T1 (unmetrical); māṅgalyasūtrakaraṅam T2; māṅgalyasūtradharaṅam E • **19d** navānām aviśeṣataḥ | E; narānām aviśeṣataḥ T1; mānavānām viśeṣataḥ G,T2 • **20b** °ṣu kalpyate | T1,E; °ṣa kalpyate | keśotbandhaṅ ca vastrāṅam ataḥ kāntya ca dhāraṅam G; °ṣu kalpyate||

³⁶ Further Tamil commentary is inserted between verses 16 and 17 in G and T2.

³⁷ I am not sure what these verses are intended to convey. Is the point that those who belong to the seventh sub-division, namely the Rudraṅṅikās, may choose to perform all of these tasks? (We have learned in verse 13 that there is no obligation for them to do so.) Could the point of 17b (*mama dāsya iti smṛtāḥ*) rather be that they are to wear clean clothes for all their tasks on the grounds that “it is to be remembered that they are My servants”?

keśodbandhanañ ca vastrāṇāṃ madhaḥkāntya ca dhāraṇam T2 (unmetrical)

• 21b cārddhamāsakam | T1; cārddhamāsikam G,T2; tv arddhamāsakam E

The Māṅgalyasūtra [indicative of marriage] must always be worn in the presence of Śiva, both by those who are there by heredity and by the new ones, without distinction.

In the way they dress and such, they should be the same as Brahmin ladies and they should, from the moment of receiving Śaiva initiation, wear the triple bar of ash. They should respect half a month of ritual impurity on occasions after a birth or a death amongst them.

Numerous are the allusions in the South Indian Temple Āgamas of the Śaivasiddhānta and the Pāñcarātra to a distinction between the categories of (Rudra)*gaṇikā* and *devadāsī*,³⁸ but this passage actually sets out some distinctions in dress, status, and obligations. Even if these distinctions are not all clear to us (verses 16 through 18, for instance, could be variously interpreted, and it is possible that textual corruption has rendered them opaque), it is at least clear that there is the intention to distinguish a group of cultivated women who dance, sing and wave lamps and who have no obligation to perform such menial physical tasks as scrubbing and grinding (verse 13), these being called Rudra*gaṇikās*, from another group of women who may help with music-making but whose primary tasks are menial, this second group being made up of ‘other’ Devadāsīs (verses 14–15). This is the sort of distinction that one might expect to find emerge spontaneously elsewhere among groups of women belonging to temples, and it is indeed arguably reflected in the early-7th-century Khmer inscription K. 600 that we considered above, where the musicians and dancers bore elegant Sanskrit names typical of wealthy courtesans, and the menial workers did not.

³⁸ We shall see a Śaiva instance, in the 12th-century *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, in the very next paragraph. Among Pāñcarātra sources, a distinction between *gaṇikās* and *devadāsīs* may be seen (though not explained), for instance, in *Īśvarasaṃhitā* 6.46, 11.228, 11.358, 12.19, 12.38, 12.55; *Pādmasaṃhitā*, *caryāpāda* 11.241, 12.78, 18.102; *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, *kriyākāṇḍa* 7.393, 17.60, 17.138; *Mārkaṇḍeyasaṃhitā* 22.46.

I have referred to distinctions of status and yet there is not much about these in the above verses; but the passage actually continues with stipulations about the differing periods of impurity to be observed in the case of the decease of one or other of the women belonging to Śiva's temple, and those stipulations do reflect ideas about the relative purity, and thus also prestige, of the women in question. I have not quoted the rest of the passage because it is not smooth reading and it draws us into a domain of complexity (that of post-mortuary observances) that is beyond the scope of this article. But some prescriptions of this sort are to be found in Trilocanaśivācārya's 12th-century *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* (582–586), which we have recently published. That passage is particularly intriguing because it is another of those rare snap-shots that alludes (like K. 600 and like the *Kuṭṭanīmata*) to prostitution. For it distinguishes periods of fifteen days of impurity to be observed in the case of the death of a Rudrakanyā (584–585), twenty days for a Devadāsī (586), but no period of impurity for prostitutes (*sādhāraṇānām ca strīṇām*), on the grounds that they were not in the first place pure (582). Now of course one could read this latter verse as simply an injunction to the effect that no period of impurity is to be observed in the case of prostitutes generally, regardless of context. But Trilocanaśiva's text is addressed primarily and by default to initiates of the Śaivasiddhānta and such an injunction would make no sense with respect to them unless these women were part of their world. The reason that they indeed share the same world must be that all these women, like the various men mentioned in the same passage, all belonged in one sense or another to the temple.

This brings us to the question of the relationship between the terms Rudrakanyā and Rudraṅṅikā.³⁹ It is clear, both from their being used interchangeably and from the aetiological myth that traces them back to the daughters of the wives of the sages of the Deodar forest, that they were used as synonyms in the *Uttara-Kāmika*

³⁹ This is also touched upon in Goodall forthcoming C, s.v. *rudrakanyā/rudrakanyakā*.

(quoted by Trilocanaśiva in the latter half of the 12th century), as also in the 16th-century *Āśaucadīpikā*, from which we have just been quoting. Now the *Tamil Lexicon* distinguishes neatly between *uruttira-kaṇikai*, “Dancing girl of a Śiva temple” and *uruttira-kaṇṇiyar* “Damsels who are among Śiva’s attendants”, but the two terms, particularly when partly Tamilised, are rhythmically sufficiently similar to lend themselves to at least a mental conflation of the two, to the point where they can be used interchangeably. In the two distinct but related versions of a Tamil commentary on the *Āśaucadīpikā* that are transmitted in manuscripts of the IFP (T. 281 and RE 43643), we find that the spelling of the words is not stable: whereas T. 281 uses Tamil letters but does not fully Tamilise words to the degree that the *Tamil Lexicon* does, RE 43643 tends to retain more Grantha letters. Thus the word *rudrakanyā* in T. 281 (e.g. on p. 26) tends to become *rutrakannikai*, whereas in RE 43643 (in the same passage on f. 13v) it is *rudrakannikai* (bold for Grantha). The similarity with *rudraṇikā*, at least with in this orthographically fluid milieu (for this word T. 281, p. 27, writes *rutrakannikai* and RE 43643, f. 14r, has *rudraṇikai*), is not hard to see, or hear. This potential confusability presumably helped to prepare the ground for the mythological sleight of hand that enabled the Southern Āgamas to re-frame Rudra’s courtesans as both Rudra’s daughters and thereby also as a class of celestial nymphs. No trace of this identification was evident in the *Śivadharm*-corpus, where we encounter separately both *Rudraṇikās*, as female temple-slaves (in the passage of *Śivadharmottara* 2 discussed above), and also *Rudrakanyās* in the archaic sense of celestial damsels associated with Śiva, a sense attested already in the *Mahābhārata*.⁴⁰ In the *Uttara-Kāmika*, in chapter 73, as we have explained above, the myth is recounted of how temple-dancers were born from the wives of the disgruntled sages of the Deodar forest, who had been rendered pregnant merely by looking upon Śiva and by being looked upon by him. Here is the beginning of that chapter

⁴⁰ E.g. in *Mahābhārata* 13.110.40; for further references, including a passage in the *Śivadharmasāstra*, see Goodall 2015: 41.

(up to the point from which a short passage was quoted and translated in Goodall 2015: 44):⁴¹

*pratiṣṭhotsavakarmādāv ante nityotsavasya ca
saukhyakarma prakartavyaṃ yathāvac chṛṇuta dvijāḥ 1
saukhyam ca rudrakanyābhiḥ kartavyam tad dvidhā matam
sasarjāpsaraso rudraḥ kaiśikīvr̥ttikāraṇam 2
tāsāṃ cirantanam vaṃśam tad rudraṅṅikākūlam
aspr̥śyam pratilomādyair ajāyata sanātanam 3
tā eva rudrakanyāḥ syuḥ kathyante 'nyair dvijottamāḥ
devadāruvane pūrvam vinodārtham mayā purā 4
kalyāṇam vapur āsthāya praviṣṭam dvijasattamāḥ
tatrasthā munipatnyo māṃ dr̥ṣṭvā sādaram akṣamāḥ 5
viśliṣṭakeśavastrādyā jāyeraṇ madanāturāḥ
tathāvidhās ca tāḥ sarvā dr̥ṣṭāḥ khalu mayādarāt 6
madālokanamātreṇa dadhate garbham akṣayam
tattadgarbhābhavā yās ca tā rudraṅṅikā matāḥ 7
tāḥ sarvās tatra sambhūya kā no vr̥ttir bhaviṣyati*

- **2d** kaiśikīvr̥ttikāraṇam | T; kauśikapṛ̥ttikāraṇāt S; kauśikapṛ̥ttikāraṇam C
- **3a** cirantanam vaṃśam | C; va — vaṃśe T; cirantane vaṃśe S • **4b** 'nyair | C,S;

⁴¹ Here, as the bibliography reveals, S is the siglum for a more recent edition (1988) of the *Uttara-Kāmika* than C (edition of 1899). T is the siglum that marks the readings of IFP RE 30551. Several other manuscripts could and should one day be included in a critical edition of this interesting chapter, but this is beyond the scope of this article. Identifying the sources is not straightforward, since manuscripts that transmit the *Kāmika* do not all have exactly the same sequence of chapters (particularly for the *Uttara-Kāmika*, commonly referred to as the *uparibhāga* or *uttarabhāga*). Moreover, there are many more manuscripts that transmit just certain selected chapters of the *Kāmika* than manuscripts that seem to aspire to give a complete text of numbered and ordered chapters, and our chapter is thus more often than not absent from 'manuscripts of the *Kāmika*'. The nature of the genesis of the text found in the edition of 1899 and in several (but not all) subsequent editions is, needless to say, unclear, but may soon be illuminated by Michael Gollner, whose doctoral thesis (of McGill University) will explore the *Kāmika*'s reception-history. I have so far found the chapter on Rudraṅṅikās (no. 73 in both editions cited) in the following manuscripts of the IFP: T. 298, RE 32487, RE 32518 and RE 39814. These yield a distressingly large crop of unhelpful readings and an edition of the whole chapter must therefore be postponed.

tā T • 5d sādaram akṣamāḥ] C,S; sādarakṣamāḥ T (unmetrical) • 6b jāyeraṇ]
C; jāyante T,S • 7c tattadgarbhahavā] C,S; tatgarbha * * T (unmetrical)

On such occasions as installations and festivals, as well as at the end of the daily festival, one must perform a rite of diversion [for me, Śiva]; listen, o brahmins, to the way [it should be performed]. (1) The diversion is to be accomplished by ‘daughters of Rudra’; it is of two kinds. Rudra created celestial nymphs [as] the cause[s] of love’s passion/ the cause[s] of the “amorous style” [in drama].⁴² (2) Their long lineage is the family of ‘courtesans of Rudra’; not to be touched by those born of unequal parentage [in which the mother is of birth superior to that of the father] (?), it came into being [as something thenceforth] eternal. (3) It is they who are the ‘daughters of Rudra’; others call them superior [even] to brahmins!⁴³ Once upon a time, long ago, I went into the forest of deodars to amuse myself, adopting

⁴² We have assumed that the reading of manuscript T in 2d, namely *kaiśikīvr̥tti*^o, is original (which is incidentally shared by RE 32518 and echoed by T. 298’s reading *kaiśikīvr̥tta*^o), and we note that this could be seen as a partial acknowledgement that nymphs, and therefore also their descendants the temple-dancers, were intended to be seductresses. As Elisa Ganser has pointed out to me, it seems in any case certain that it is intended to allude to the origin of the Apsaras’ dance in drama as narrated in *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.41–46. After drama was created by Brahmā and practised by the sons of Bharata, Brahmā suggested that the *kaiśikīvr̥tti* be introduced as the fourth *vr̥tti*, for which the Apsaras were necessary vehicles. There it is Brahmā and not Rudra who creates them, from his mind, but Śiva appears nonetheless in 1.45 as the originator of *kaiśikīvr̥tti*, since Bharata recalls having seen it in Śiva’s dance. If, instead, the reading *kauśikapṛ̥ṭīkārāṇāt* were retained, then Kauśika could be taken to mean Indra. An allusion to Indra in the second verse would serve to remind us that the mythical first performance of dance/theatre took place on the occasion of a festival celebrating a victory of Indra (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.53–55) and that Indra was the first of the gods described as being pleased and as offering a gift as a reward to the *apsaras* (1.59). It could also be taken as a reminder of Indra’s long-standing association with celestial beauties, for, as well as being called *rudrakanyā*, celestial nymphs may be referred to also as *indrakanyā* (‘maidens of Indra’, e.g. in *Mahābhārata* 13.110.17).

⁴³ This is a surprising sentiment, but I assume that its being attributed to an unnamed group of people is intended to mark it as an exaggeration. The word *dvijottamāḥ* could instead be taken as another vocative, but in that

a beautiful body, o best of brahmins. The wives of the sages living there stared at me with focus and lost control of themselves. (5) Their hair and garments and such became dishevelled and they became⁴⁴ feverish with love, and I looked at them with focus while they were in this condition. (6) By this mere gaze upon [and of] me, they conceived an unending progeny. Those born of their various wombs are held to be Rudraṅṅikās. (7) Those [women], upon coming into existence [then and] there, all [asked me] “What will be our livelihood?”.

Chapter 73 of the *Uttara-Kāmika* is no doubt intended to raise the status of ‘Rudra’s courtesans’ partly by thus explaining them to be ‘Rudra’s daughters’, as well as explaining their initiation rite as a tradition that explains the title *talaikkōl* / *talaikkōli* and thus incidentally linking them to the *jarjara* of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, as we have touched on above.

By the time of the composition of the passage quoted in the *Āśaucadīpikā* as belonging to the *Kāraṇa*, however, we find an important shift, arguably a heightening, in the myth-assisted rhetoric intended to bolster the prestige of temple-dancers. We may note first in passing that the first temple-dancers we have here (verse 9) become the wives themselves of the sages of the Deodar forest, and not their mystically conceived daughters, but we further note that it is implied that they are now the spouses of Śiva, since they are always to wear the *māṅgalyasūtra*, a piece of jewellery that symbolizes marriage, whenever they are in Śiva’s presence (verse 19).⁴⁵ A word of caution

case we would have two contiguous main verbs, *syuḥ* and *kathyante*, to account for. The reading of T would also point to *dvijottamāḥ* as a nominative.

⁴⁴ The optative *jāyeraṅ* used as a past tense may well be an authorial feature.

⁴⁵ Marriage of Rudraṅṅikās, with no spouse mentioned and so presumably to Śiva or to some divine emblem, is to be found in other South Indian scriptural material that appears to postdate *Uttara-kāmika* 73. In an account borrowed purportedly from the *Sūkṣmaśāstra* (and containing the vocative address *prabhaṅjana* that is a distinctive feature of that text) a *Rudraṅṅikāvidhi* transmitted on ff. 21r ff. of IFP RE 39814 records that a ‘wedding’ (*kalyāṅa*: for the use of this word in this sense, see Goodall forthcoming C, s.v. *kalyāṅa*)

about the implications of such a theogamy is in order: Soneji (Soneji 2012: 39–42) points out an important parallelism between some such marriage rites and certain royal morganatic marriages, namely that they involved marriage to a weapon. Without going into further details here, quoting just these three sentences should make his point clear (once it is understood that the expression *poṭṭu* refers to the *māṅgalyasūtra*⁴⁶ and that the verb *kaṭṭu-tal* means ‘to tie’).

In many parts of South India, including Tanjore district and coastal Andhra Pradesh, *poṭṭukkaṭṭu* was literally performed as a ‘dagger marriage,’ with a dagger placed over the *dāsī*’s right shoulder while the *poṭṭu* was tied. Although the *poṭṭukkaṭṭu* is often imagined as a marriage to the deity himself, we should understand it as a metonymic act. A *dāsī* does not marry the god Murukan, for example, but marries his spear, just as a concubine does not marry King Śivāji, but his sword. Thinking through ‘dedication’ in this way allows us to see it as part of a larger category of atypical rites of passage that take the place of marriage in a woman’s life and also mark her as socially and sexually exceptional. (Soneji 2012: 40)

is to be performed for female dancers before their initiation (f. 21r–21v) *śubhanakṣatravāre ca sumuhūrte viśeṣataḥ / uttarāyaṇakāle tu kalyāṇam kārayed dvijaḥ / pañcasamvatsarād ūrdhvaṃ daśasamvatsarāntakam* (corr. *daśasamtarānnakam* MS) / *kalyāṇam kārayed vidvān dīkṣākar-māṇi kārayet*. “Under an asterism and on a day that is auspicious, and more particularly at a good moment, [or] at the time of the summer solstice, the brahmin [priest] should conduct the wedding. The competent [ritualist] may perform the wedding [for neophytes who are] more than five years [old] and up to ten years [old]. [After that] he should perform the initiatory rites”. (The *Uttara-Kāṇika*, by contrast, in 73.24, allows for the initiation of Gaṇikās of between the ages of five and fifty, implying that there is no need for them to be nubile.) The same text (f. 21v) refers to the wearing of a wedding necklace (*maṅgala/maṅgalya* [= *māṅgalya*]), an accoutrement symbolic of marriage that also features prominently in the wedding of the goddess to Śiva in *Sūkṣmaśāstra* 55 (see 55.33–35), before receiving initiation.

⁴⁶ The second meaning given in the *Tamil Lexicon* for *poṭṭu* is: “Gold ornament in the shape of small metal cups strung together and worn round the neck”.

Nonetheless, in the Sanskrit passage we have just examined, the women in question are to dress like brahmin ladies (verse 20), which is presumably no small consideration in a time and place where laws of sumptuary (or strong conventions) must have regulated the dress of different classes of society. Whereas neither the myth nor the initiatory rite described in the (probably 12th-century) 73rd chapter of the *Uttara-Kāmika* suggest that temple-dancers were 'married' to the god, or to some divine emblem, later sources do: the various testimonies cited by Kersenboom-Story in her chapter "Rites of Passage of Devadāsīs of Tamilnadu" (Kersenboom-Story 1987: 179ff), including that of Sadyojātācārya, said to be based on 'the' *Kāmikāgama*, all speak of some form of 'marriage'. It is this notion of being married to the god that lent Kersenboom-Story the title for her book, *Nityasumaṅgalī*, which describes one who is 'forever auspicious' in as much as her husband can never die.

5. Gaṅṅikās in South Indian Temples: can we gauge their importance and prestige?

Large numbers of dancers were presumably employed only by large temples: in the *Pūrva-Kāmika*'s chapter on regular obligatory daily worship (*nityapūjā*), the lowliest permitted options mention no dancing (*Pūrva-Kāmika* 4.379–388), but in the various sub-types of the optimal option, the text allows for troupes of 10, 24, 34, 50 or 216 dancing women (with further accompanying musicians!), ideally dancing three times a day and lasting in bouts for one or in some cases two watches (1 *yāma* = 3 hours!) (*Pūrva-Kāmika* 4.389–398).

Among the sources we have examined above, the *Kuṭṭanāmata* provides plentiful evidence that courtesans, whether attached to temples or not, could be despised, feared and shunned, but it is clear that they could nonetheless be cultivated, rich and autonomous. For many centuries, they were perhaps among the only wealthy, educated and independent women in Indian society, along with the widows of powerful men.⁴⁷ Furthermore,

⁴⁷ Of course the *Manusmṛti* is only prescriptive, not descriptive, but it was hugely influential and it has a famously restrictive view of women's

their participation in colourful sacred pageantry was not merely tolerated, but was actively encouraged by patrons, who donated them, and also repeatedly enjoined by South Indian Temple Āgamas, the scriptural works that prescribed public liturgy. True, these prescriptive works emphasise their dancing activity and do not allude explicitly to their sexual behaviour, but various literary sources show that this behaviour was never a secret.

A flash of contrast with, for instance, 12th- and 13th-century France is perhaps instructive. Nowacka 2010 cites evidence that prostitutes mingled with crowds in various public places in Paris, including at the cathedral, where they attended masses and regularly joined women who gathered to offer candles at vespers on Saturdays; but her account suggests, first of all, that they were perceived as forced into prostitution by poverty, and secondly that the typical response of church authorities was either to shun them or to encourage them to reform and escape their livelihood by joining religious orders. Various French cathedrals show courtesans (distinguished by yellow garments) in stained-glass depictions of the parable of the Prodigal Son, and it has been suggested that the glass showing this parable in the cathedral in Chartres might have been donated by the prostitutes of the town (partly since other narrative glass there is known to have been donated by other guilds in cases where the narrative depicted in the glass alluded to their activities), a speculation dismissed as “unlikely” by Guest (Guest 2006: 55, fn. 57). Whatever the circumstances in Chartres, Maurice de Sully, bishop of Paris

agency. Olivelle constitutes and translates the celebrated verses (9.2–3) on this subject thus (Olivelle 2004: 747 and 191):

*asvatantrāḥ striyaḥ kāryāḥ puruṣaiḥ svair divāniśam
viṣaye sajjamānās ca saṁsthāpyā hy ātmano vaśe
pitā rakṣati kaumāre bhartā rakṣati yauvane
rakṣanti sthavire putrā na strī svātantryam arhati*

Day and night men should keep their women from acting independently; for, attached as they are to sensual pleasures, men should keep them under their control. Her father guards her in her childhood, her husband guards her in her youth, and her sons guard her in her old age; a women is not qualified to act independently.

in the late 12th century, is known to have rejected the donation by prostitutes of a stained-glass window to Notre Dame because he did not wish to seem to condone their livelihood by receiving their money (Nowacka 2010). The *Kāmasūtra* could have offered the bishop a suggestion:

The making of temples, tanks and gardens, the construction of causeways (?) and fireplaces (?), giving thousands of cows to brahmins *through an intermediary recipient*, directing the worship and offerings to deities, giving money that can be spent on the above: these are [the expenses paid for out of] excess income for the best class of courtesans.⁴⁸



Fig. 6. Sculpture of dancing figures decorating the temple of Pullamangai. Photo: Charlotte Schmid.

⁴⁸ *Kāmasūtra* 6.5, p. 347: *devakulataḍḍāgārāmāṅṅam karaṅṅam, sthalīnām agnicaityānām nibandhanam, gosahasrāṅṅam pātrāntaritam brāhmaṅṅebhyo dānam, devatānām pūjopahārapravartanam, tadvyayasahiṅṅor vā dhanasya parigrahaṅṅam ity uttamagaṅṅikānām lābhātīsayah.*

Recourse to intermediary recipients in the case of gifts made to brahmins, as a later commentator reminds us, was a money-laundering provision necessary because courtesans' wealth could not be accepted.⁴⁹ The reason, however, though not stated, is plainly the brahmins' need to avoid ritual impurity, rather than any anxiety about encouraging the courtesans in their way of life. Far from it, for their participation in temple life was itself auspicious, as we learn, for instance, from numerous stipulations about the position they were to occupy in religious processions⁵⁰ or about their other ceremonial activities⁵¹ and from a number of passages about the sad consequences of slips or shortcomings in the musical entertainment (*saukhya*) that they offered. The *Kumāratantra*, for example, foretells men being afflicted by blindness in the case of any deficiency in the lamps at such a spectacle,⁵² a failure of crops in the case of deficiencies in the singing, flute-playing, conch-blowing or other instrumental music,⁵³ and danger for the organiser if a Gaṇikā should fall during the dancing.⁵⁴ And then there are the depictions of dancing women sculpted as part of the decoration of many temples.

⁴⁹ The *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary remarks (p. 347): *veśyādravyasyāprati-grāhyatvād anyahastena dānam*; "the gift [is to be made] by another's hand, since courtesans' wealth may not be accepted".

⁵⁰ E.g. *Dīptāgama* 86.18ff; *Uttara-Kāraṇa* 24.606–607; *Suprabheda, kriyāpāda* 14.113ff; *Kumāratantra* 13.223ff; *Mārkaṇḍeyasaṃhitā* 22.33ff.

⁵¹ Beautifully dressed Rudraṅgaṇikās figure, for example, among the devotees who ceremonially take up pestle and mortar for grinding powder for the *cūrṇotsava* in *Makutāgama* 4.230 and *Dīptāgama* 91.12; they hold up lamps and such (*Uttara-Kāraṇa* 52.10–11; *Makutāgama* 4.215; *Kumāratantra* 8.16, 40:14, 51:23; *Īśvarasaṃhitā* 4:224); and participate in decorative rites such as the *ḍolotsava*, 'swing festival' (*Uttara-Kāraṇa* 30.87) and the *vasantotsava*, 'spring festival' (*Īśvarasaṃhitā* 12.55).

⁵² *Kumāratantra* 14.163cd: *saukhyadīpavihīne tu netrarogaṃ bhaven nṛṇām*.

⁵³ *Kumāratantra* 14.164c–165b: *geyavaṃśavihīne tu vādyasaṅkha-vihīnake / sasyānām nāśanaṃ proktaṃ*.

⁵⁴ *Kumāratantra* 14.165c–166b: *nṛttakāle tu gaṇikāpatane tu viśeṣataḥ / kartā duritam āpnoti*. Cf. *Uttara-Kāmika* 30.189.

One could be wary of placing particular emphasis on such decoration, remembering, for instance, that yellow-robed courtesans figure in the stained-glass at Chartres, but the sheer volume and exuberance of such imagery is, I think, persuasive. Sometimes it has been produced with elaborate care and brahminical erudition, as in the case of the women sculpted to illustrate the 108 dance-postures of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the temple gateways of the temple of Chidambaram, each with the identifying Sanskrit verse carved in Grantha letters above it.⁵⁵

Truly understanding how courtesans lived and were perceived in 12th-century Paris or Chartres or Madurai, Chidambaram or Srirangam, is of course impossible. But the picture that Indian sources conjure up for me is one in which at least some courtesans were respected, wealthy and cultivated benefactress who were more at liberty to direct the course of their own lives than most other women contemporaries. This in spite of their being morally disturbing for many, ritually impure from the perspective of sticklers for orthopraxy, and, in some cases, 'enslaved' to a god. Such a picture is, it seems to me, consonant with the evidence of "The Bawd's Counsel", the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, which is, admittedly, an 8th-century novel produced in Kashmir and set mostly in Patna and Benares. Now it is true that the 12th- and post-12th-century South Indian sources look nothing like the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, but this is because they are not novels and are therefore not seeking to evoke atmosphere, to delight and divert, or to dramatise the moral choices of protagonists. Instead, they are works produced in order to lay down the rules of public liturgy in Southern temple-cities, and this invol-

⁵⁵ K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, who reproduces wood-block engravings of many of these sculptures cataloguing the *karaṅas* in his second edition (of 1956) of the first volume of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has a detailed account of them and of the confusions introduced by the earlier secondary literature before 1956 into their study: see pp. 33–51. For references to more recent decades of scholarship on these and other sculptural representations of the *karaṅas*, scholarship enriched by the realisation that the sculptures may represent only moments of what are intended to be dynamic dance movements (and not merely static postures), see Tosato 2017.

ved, at least to some degree, attempting to vindicate the rights and status of communities involved in maintaining this liturgy (primarily the *ādiśaiva* priests⁵⁶), which they partly achieve, as we have seen, through the rhetoric of origin myths.

This article has pointed up a few hitherto-neglected pieces of pre-modern evidence about temple-dancers; but I am aware of two principal shortcomings in this regard. First, it unfortunately does not furnish a complete edition and translation of either the quotation in the *Āśaucadīpikā* or of the whole of *Uttara-kāmika* 73, which remains a desideratum, since the editions can certainly still be improved upon; second, this article says nothing about scriptural prescriptions relevant to music and dance, regarding for instance the Rudraṅṅikā's

⁵⁶ The second chapter of the *caryāpāda* of the *Suprabhedāgama* is, for instance, devoted to a discussion of the rights of caste communities. Several terms defined in the *Tāntrikābhīdhānaśośa* reflect aspects of this need to defend the roles of particular communities in temple life (see, e.g., s.v. *devalaka*, *pāraśaiva*, *parārthapūjā*, *ādiśaiva*). The account of initiation of Rudraṅṅikās in *Uttara-Kāmika* 73 also insists upon the initiating priest being an *Ādiśaiva*:

*saṁsthāpya vetraṁ pūrvāgram uttarāgram athāpi vā
nandinam tatra sampūjya gandhapuṣpādibhir guruḥ 32
navavastrasraguṣṇīśaḥ sottariyaḥ sumālyakaḥ
śvetacandanalīptāṅgas tv ādiśaivo ṅgulīyadhṛk 33
saṁprāptadakṣiṇaḥ pañcāniṣkādyā dakṣiṇā api
tacchiṣyo vā tad ādāya mūrdhādi kramaśo nyaset 34
śivāya nama ity evaṁ samastaṁ śirasi nyaset*

Setting the staff down pointing towards the East or the North, the guru should venerate Nandin in it with scents, flowers and the like. [He should be] girt in fresh clothes, garlands and turban, with an upper-body-cloth, with a beautiful chaplet, his body smeared with pale sandal, wearing a finger-ring, an *Ādiśaiva*. He should have received his fee. And the fee should be of five *niṣkas* or more. He or his disciple should take that [staff] up and touch [each *ṅṅikā*-initiand with it] in due sequence upon the head and other [body-part]s. He should lay the whole [five-syllable mantra] *ŚIVĀYA NAMAḥ* upon her head.

repertoire (musical modes, rhythm-cycles and dance-types), which are widespread in South Indian Temple Āgamas, or about the other figures associated with the musical spectacles presented in temples. Some pointers to the whereabouts of passages about repertoire may be found in Goodall forthcoming C, s.v. *kollī* and *ḍhakkārī* (but also s.v. *kāmara*, *koṭika*, *cālāpāṇi*). As for discussions of the rôles of dance-masters, musicians and wrestlers, more is to be found in *Uttara-Kāmika* 73, but there are also further pointers in Goodall forthcoming C, s.v. *taṅṅimoravika*, *mardaka*, *mauravika*, as well as in *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* III, s.v. *pañcācārya*, a lemma that also has a relevant entry in Goodall forthcoming C.

6. Conclusion

Drawing the various threads together, the pre-10th-century passages that we have examined at the outset clearly suggest, I think, that the nexus of 1) temple-slavery, 2) dancing-acting and 3) prostitution is a phenomenon that has long been widespread across and beyond the Indian subcontinent. There must also have been plenty of variation over time and in different places, including instances of slaves who were not necessarily dancers or not necessarily courtesans, or dancers who were not necessarily enslaved, and so forth. All the possible permutations, taken together with other local and temporal variations, must also have meant shifting hierarchies. The 12th- and post-12th-century Śaiva sources that I have mentioned go some small way to filling out a picture of the various and doubtless shifting statuses of such women in the post-12th-century temple-cities of the Tamil-speaking South. Such accounts are without exception in works that have been poorly transmitted and of which we have no critical editions, so further labour is required not only to bring them to light, but also to pore over them and decide how to constitute, contextualise and interpret their texts. The longest passage we have examined, for example, a quotation in a 16th-century work that purports to be from the *Kāraṅṅāgama*, is not found in either of the printed works known to me that call themselves by that name. One might therefore assume that the quotation

is pseudepigraphal and dismiss the passage as ‘spurious’. But it may be that the 16th-century author of the *Āśaucadīpikā* had access to another *Kāraṇāgama*—since lost or mouldering in unidentified manuscripts—that was as old as any of the *Kāraṇāgamas* that have been printed.⁵⁷ Furthermore, perhaps it is worth observing that the notion of pseudepigraphy in the context of such scriptures is in any case moot: while some Śaiva tantras show little evidence of layers of composition and may well have been produced at a single go (the *Mṛgendra-tantra* and *Kiraṇatantra* might be examples of such unitary works), many others (such as the *Sūkṣmasāstra*, the *Kāraṇa* and *Kāmika*) circulate primarily in variously ordered fragments of varying size. It is therefore possible that the various larger manuscript-versions that have come down to us are the end-results of streams not only of transmission but also of processes of accretion and editorial reorganisation. In other words, in the case of the *Kiraṇa*, the manuscripts that transmit the text to us (the earliest of which dates to 924 CE) appear all to go back to a time when the basic shape of the text had already been settled; for some South Indian Temple Āgamas, however, such as the *Sūkṣmasāstra* and, in differing degrees, also the *Kāmika* and *Kāraṇa*, some manuscripts of the transmission may reflect different moments in a stop-start editorial process that never actually reached a smooth finish.

This brings us back to the question, mentioned in our opening résumé, of the version of the *Kāmikāgama* printed in 1916–1918 which Brunner condemns as a forgery (“tout simplement un faux Āgama, dont on connaît bien l’histoire”, Brunner 1987: 130) cobbled together in the 19th century to win a court case.⁵⁸ It now seems to me that

⁵⁷ A project to launch a critical edition of the *Pūrva-Kāraṇa* has recently begun at the French institutions of research in Pondicherry, sponsored by the generosity of the Murugappa Foundation, which will clarify the transmission of the *Kāraṇāgama*: two young researchers, Gowri Shankaran and Thirukumaran, have begun to seek out and order the many dozens of manuscripts transmitting the *Kāraṇāgama* or chapters attributed to it.

⁵⁸ Brunner 1987: 130: “Son auteur, Sadyojātaśivācārya, croyant probablement le KA perdu, a créé de toutes pièces, au XIX^e siècle, pour les

as well as in the fragment attributed to the *Sūksmāgama* in RE 39814, as we have seen above. That same fragment, by the way, goes some way to resolving the doubt expressed (*ibid.*: 126) as to whether there was any āgamic basis for referring to dancers as *nityasumaṅgalī*, for it begins with a list of attributes of which one is perhaps a corruption of *sumaṅgalī*.⁶⁰ In short, just in case Brunner's review should have given the impression, precisely because it is so erudite, careful and incisive, that the presentation of Rudraṅgikās in the South Indian Temple Āgamas was more or less settled in 1987 and that it was clear that it bore little relation to the lives of temple-dancers as observed by Kersenboom or as presented in recent centuries, this article should serve to assure readers that such a conclusion would be premature.

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⁶⁰ RE 39814, f. 21r, *rudrakannyāvidhiṃ vakṣye śṛṅṣva tat prabhañjana | sarvāvayavasampūrṇa* (corr.: *°pūrṇā*) *rudrakannyā kulodbhava* (corr.: *kulodbhavā*) | *sumamḷi* (correct, in spite of the metre, to *sumaṅgalī*?) *priyavādī ca susāntā buddhigocarā*.

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