

Birds, Bards, Buffoons and Brahmans : (Re-)Tracing the Indic Roots of some Ancient and Modern Performing Characters from Java and Bali

Oiseaux, bardes, bouffons et brahmanes : en retraçant les racines indiennes de certains personnages de spectacle anciens et modernes de Java et de Bali

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Birds, Bards, Buffoons and Brahmins: (Re-)Tracing the Indic Roots of some Ancient and Modern Performing Characters from Java and Bali²

Introduction

On the basis of evidence gathered from Old Javanese textual sources—most notably the 9th-century Old Javanese *Rāmāyana kakavin* (RK) and the early 13th-century *Sumanasāntaka*³—and Central Javanese temple reliefs, I have elsewhere proposed to identify some figures of itinerant ascetics-cum-performers (e.g. the *vidus*, Old Jav./Skt. *vidu*)⁴ as localised counterparts of Indic prototypes, namely low-status,

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2. (1) The spelling of Old Javanese words follows the system used in Acri 2011b, discussed in Acri and Griffiths 2014 (e.g. *v* for *w* and *ə* for *ě*). References to entries in the *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (OJED, cf. Zoetmulder 1982) and *Kawi-Balinesch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* (KBNW, cf. van der Tuuk 1896–1912) retain the spelling as in the original; Modern Javanese and Balinese words are spelled in accordance with the standard modern convention. (2) I wish to thank Elisa Ganser and Roy Jordaan, as well as the reviewers Arlo Griffiths, Peter Worsley, and an anonymous scholar, for their useful comments on a draft of this article. Elisa Ganser, Roy Jordaan and Sugi Lanús are to be credited for providing me with the photographs that have been included here as figs. 1, 10 and 16 respectively. I am also grateful to Margaret Coldiron for having kindly shared with me the unpublished draft of a paper on Sidha Karya that she presented at the 5th EuroSEAS Conference in Naples in 2007.

3. On the dating of these two texts, cf. Acri 2010:476–477, and Worsley et al. 2013:21–22 respectively.

4. *Vidu* = “intelligent, wise” (Monier-Williams 1899 [henceforth MW]: 963); compare *vidvat* “learned” and *vidvas*, “one who knows, [...] learned, intelligent, wise, [...] skilled in, [...] a wise man, sage, seer” (MW 964).

antinomian practitioners belonging to the Atimārga stream of Śaivism (e.g. Pāśupatas or Kārukas).⁵ Here I take up additional passages of the two Old Javanese *kakavins*, and point at some tantalising similarities between the performances described there and those enacted by 19th-century Javanese and contemporary Balinese performers. In so doing, I aim to “historicize” these figures and the performances linked to them, and pinpoint their connections with, if not trace their origins to, analogous figures and milieux—at once performative, ritual, and/or ascetic—known from the South Asian Sanskritic tradition.⁶

Various attempts to trace genres and players in the rich and diverse tradition of Javano-Balinese performing arts—including dance, masked performance, recital, and puppetry—to an Indic past have been made so far. Stutterheim (1956a [1935]), followed by Becker (2004 [1993]),⁷ linked some modern Javanese performers to premodern counterparts, whose pedigree they traced to religious figures known from the South Asian Śaiva tradition; although their approach is rigorous and their hypotheses are convincing, their conclusions need to be fine-tuned in the light of newly available textual and visual evidence, and especially of our better historical grasp of Śaivism in both South Asia and Nusantara. Studies by Sedyawati (1982) and Lopez y Royo-Iyer (1991, 1998, 2003) on dance performances portrayed on Central Javanese temple reliefs did not go beyond the identification of the formal features displayed by the dancing characters and their links to *karana*-poses as codified in the Sanskrit *Nāṭyaśāstra*.⁸ Soedarsono (1984) convincingly traced the origin of Modern Javanese shadow play (*wayang*), dance drama (*wayang wong*), masked-dance (*matapukan*, *raket*), as well as analogous Balinese forms, to the ancient Central and East Javanese kingdoms (9th–15th century AD) on the basis of

5. Cf. Acri 2011a. For wider-ranging studies on the enigmatic allegorical sections of Sargas 24 and 25 of the RK, cf. Acri 2008 and 2010. On the Atimārga and Mantramārga traditions of Śaivism, cf. Sanderson 1988, 2006, 2009:45. My use of the adjective “antinomian” throughout this article refers to the taboo-breaking practices (and the ideologies underpinning them) ascribed to Atimārga asceticism and the “left-hand” Tantric traditions of the Mantramārga, which consciously transcended the rules of purity and the socio-ritual conventions asserted by the Brahmanical ideology among the Indicized societies of premodern South and Southeast Asia.

6. I do not intend to rule out the possibility that the origin of these complex and multifarious characters may have been pre-Indic, insofar as Indic styles of performance and religious fashions were adopted by preexisting local practitioners, whom scholars have tended to call “shamans”, without taking much trouble to explain that category. But the fact remains that we simply have no evidence apart from the Indic one; moreover, it is often the case that the “shamans” of the (modern) Malay-Indonesian world, whether in “tribal”, rural, or urban contexts, display Indic features.

7. Cf. also Holt (1967:113–115).

8. Sedyawati (1982) divides the dances depicted on the Borobudur and Prambanan reliefs into the two categories of “Indic” (i.e. Sanskritic, mainly *Nāṭyaśāstra*-based) and “local/indigenous/popular”, on the basis of (1) their stylistic adherence or deviance to “common standards” and criteria of beauty codified in Indian classical texts, (2) their seemingly comical character, (3) their connection with “folk” or rural settings. This distinction, as well as the criteria on the basis of which it is conceptualized, is problematic. As we will see, there is a high degree of permeability and entanglement between “Indic” and “local” traditions, which are often bridged in the case of performance.

the occurrence of this terminology in epigraphic and manuscript documents,⁹ yet he did not provide concrete text-historical evidence linking with specific groups and traditions. The same critique could be directed to the otherwise excellent studies by Emigh (1984, 1996) and Coldiron (2005a, 2005b, 2007), who limited themselves to posit a common, and rather generic, “Tantric root” for South Asian (i.e. Orissan) and Javano-Balinese masks and masked performers.

As concluded by Coldiron (2005b) in her discussion of the Balinese Sidha Karya and the Japanese Okina (among others), although information concerning the sources of these masks is “lost in the murky world of myth and legend” and hampered by “the paucity of documentary records concerning ritual and theatrical performance” (p. 243), there is “a growing body of iconographic and archaeological evidence that points to an Indic origin [...] but there are still some significant gaps” (p. 228). The aim of this article is to fill some of the remaining gaps by linking dispersed fragments of evidence from literary texts and temple reliefs from the 9th–15th century Central and East Javanese kingdoms, ethnographic accounts from the late 19th century Muslim courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, and modern Balinese temple-centred performances. My concern here is primarily to provide scholars of Indonesian (and Indian) performance traditions with additional textual data that may open up new directions for comparative research taking into account the historical, religious, and ritual aspects of these phenomena from a supralocal perspective.¹⁰ Even though I will not uphold any specific theoretical framework, I will nonetheless briefly characterise the philosophical and ritual rationales underpinning many of the performances discussed here, and individuate the socio-cultural trajectories behind the localised developments of the performers, who adapted to changing circumstances and external influences (e.g. Islamization and/or Western “modernization”) by adopting new modes of engagement with audiences, patrons, and prevalent religious and/or ritual fashions. Further, engaging with the view that such fringe Śaiva ascetic groups as the Kāpālikas were no institutionalized orders but mainly the product of the “prescriptive imagination” of South Asian landscapes (White 2005:9), my contribution will offer a preliminary answer to the vexed question as to whether, and to what extent, textual accounts and visual documents from the premodern Indic world did ever reflect actual social realities.

Peacocks and Pigeons, Bards and Dancers

Starting from the hypothesis that playful allegory was extensively used in ancient Javanese textual and visual documents as a means to criticize rival religious and

9. On which, cf. also Holt 1967:281–289.

10. As such, my discussion is to be considered still provisional; a larger and wider-ranging project that I hope to be able to pursue in the future will have to take into account the vast amount of data from Tantric Buddhist traditions of South, Central, and East Asia (cf. below, fn. 98 and 117), as well as from the (early) modern Javanese antinomian traditions of performances that have been regarded as Sufi in nature and origin, but which perhaps may also be traceable to pre-Islamic (that is, Indic) “prototypes”.

political factions, I have analysed RK 24.111–115 and 25.19–22 as a satire of the *kuvon*, an enigmatic bird that is linked with the no-less enigmatic figure of the *vidu* (Acri 2011a). Given their religious function, vagrant and unattached lifestyle, and leaning toward performance, singing and buffoonery, I argued that the *vidus* represent a localized development of Indic ascetic figures, possibly belonging to the Pāsupata or Kāruka division of the Śaiva Atimārga.

I begin my analysis by taking up once again Sargas 24 and 25 of the RK, and focus on two avian characters portrayed there as dancers and performers respectively, namely the peacock (*mrak*) and the wild pigeon (*ḍarapati*). The latter is explicitly linked to the *pirus* (Old Jav.), a performer who will be discussed throughout this article. Stanzas 105–106 of Sarga 24 describe a scene involving some sort of dance enacted by a *ḍarapati* and a peacock:¹¹

*kəmbañ niñ jambu kerir sumavur i valakañ niñ mrāk ya mañigəl
yāñkən jənvanya madyus riya makin agirañ darpān kararaban
lilābhāvān vuḡatnyāñjirini mañicipir yan keḍak akəcək
nāñ nəp mās tulya mañliñ kadi pamugari niñ kayvāra kabharan*

The flowers of a *jambu*-tree were blown and spread over the back of a dancing peacock. These [flowers] were like its *jənu*-unguent [worn by dancers]; it bathed in them, and became more and more joyful and excited as they fell all around.

In a playful mood it raised its tail, moving swiftly back and forth while [simultaneously] shaking¹² and chattering.

The [fruits of the] *nəp*-tree were like gold, murmuring like the missiles [falling down from] an overladen fig-tree.¹³

*jāṭikañ pārijātānaravata marurū riñ kuṇḍi kanaka
simsim gantiñ magantiñ gagana kadi hudan n̄kā tulya sumavur
byaktāveh bhūṣaṇā niñ mrak agələm aṇigəl tavvañnya sugəma
məñin mamrih mamaṇḍak ḍarapati vəlu vok yekāpipuruṣa*

Naturally the *parijāta*-trees dropped down in golden vessels, rings and earrings alternately in the sky, as rain they were spreading out there.

Manifestly these provided embellishments for the peacock, which was never tired of dancing; its call was like that of the *sugəm*-bird.¹⁴

Filled with desire, a *ḍarapati* made an effort to bend low [in a dancing-position]; it was [like] a dwarf, [the] bearded [one], wishing to act like a *pirus*.

11. As Old Javanese third person pronouns do not have the category of number, it is difficult to determine whether the characters described in these stanzas form a couple or a larger group; here I have opted for the former scenario.

12. This is a hapax of uncertain meaning; cf. OJED (859) s.v. *keḍak*: “(from *iḍak*?) shaken?”

13. Cf. OJED 2321, s.v. *pamugari*: “Does the *kayw āra* (see *hara*; here rendered with *kalpataru* by Bal. com.) ‘bombard’ with flowers?”

14. *Sugəma*, which occurs only in 24.106 and *Rāmaparaśuvijaya* 8.8 (a late *kakavin* from Bali), is glossed in OJED (1833) thus: “Is it arealis to *sugēm*? Is *sugəma* perhaps the female (male?) of the male (female?) *hadawa* or *darapati*?”; as Zoetmulder suggests, on the unique basis of the late *Sri Tañjuñ* (1.10), *sugəm* would be the “name of a big wild pigeon (green with brown breast).” If irrealis to *sugəm*, the expression could convey the sense that the peacocks are trying to imitate the call of the wild pigeons, implying that the peacocks are inviting them to join the dance. For an alternative explanation, cf. below, footnote 23.

The similes evoked in the stanzas revolve around the trope of “peacocks dancing for rain,” which is well attested in both Old Javanese and Sanskrit literature.¹⁵ Here the “rain” is metaphorically characterized as a shower of flowers and fragrant unguents, which “embellish” the excited dancing peacock as if they were the typical “offerings” bestowed upon dancers by patrons, namely golden ornaments, and a cosmetic unguent (Jav. *boreh*).¹⁶ The association of peacock with dance (and dancers) is well established in both the Indic and Javano-Balinese traditions. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (prob. 200 BC–200 AD) codifies the “posture of the peacock” as one of the *karaṇas* (*mayūralalita*); a link between the peacock and certain Javanese dance styles may be detected (cf. below: 26–28).¹⁷

The peacock is associated with a Śaiva milieu, as it is both the vehicle (*vāhana*) and banner of Siva’s son, the warrior-god Kumāra (also known as Skanda or Kārttikeya). The link between the peacock and a category of devotees of that god is made explicit in the “sister stanza” to RK 24.105–106, namely RK 25.24cd:¹⁸

aji sañ kumāra aji niñ mrak arūm
majule makuñcir aḡaləm mañigəl

The teaching of the illustrious Kumāra is the teaching of the graceful peacocks;
They act thoughtlessly, wear a tuft on the top of the head, and are never tired of dancing.

These lines may allude to the sect known in Sanskrit sources from South Asia as the Kaumāras, who worshiped Śiva’s son as their paramount deity. This group, especially popular in the southern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, was one of the six theistic Brahmanical cults (*śaṅmata*) approved by the non-dualist Vedāntin Śaṅkara around the 8th century.¹⁹ The reference to the strenuous practice of dance apparently alludes to the dances of ritual or devotional character performed in honour of Kumāra—possibly by Kaumāra practitioners. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*,

15. According to various Old Javanese texts studied by Zoetmulder (1974:200–201), “when it hears the rumbling of thunder in the distance, announcing the coming rains and the blossoming forth of flowers, the peacock starts dancing and ‘shouting’ for exuberant joy.” A verse in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* (16.14) presents the image of sporting peacocks (*krīḍāmayūra*—compare *līlābhāva* in KR 24.105c) fond of dancing at the sound of drums (*mṛdāṅga*).

16. Cf. OJED (739) s.v. *jēnu*: “a cosmetic unguent, *boreh*. The ingredients include flowers, and it is fragrant. It is also used by men (before battle, dance; it can fall out of the air like rain).”

17. Cf. also Holt 1967:97: “Of dance movements which discernibly derive from the imitation of animals, the most widespread perhaps are postures and motions based on those of birds and other winged creatures.”

18. On the relationship or “concordance” between certain allegorical stanzas of Sarga 24 and 25 of the RK, cf. Aciri 2010:481.

19. These included (mainstream) Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Śāktas, Gāṇapatyas, Kaumāras, and Sauras.

a prob. 6–7th century Caṅkam Tamil poem devoted to the worship of Skanda/Murukaṅ, describes the *kuravai*²⁰ dance as follows:

“... hillmen dance the *kuravai* to the *tonṭaka* drum, inebriated by the liquor made from honey, which matured in the long bamboos” (194–197, see Hardy 1983:618).

As Hardy points out, the *kuravai* is in the poem implicitly linked to Murukaṅ; the *Kalittokai* makes an explicit reference to the religious significance of the dance, which is done “to please the god who lives on the mountains.” On the basis of his analysis of the early and later strata of the Caṅkam poetic corpus, Hardy (1983:620) expressed the opinion that “the poetry is dealing with a *real* dance form of the ancient Tamils, or better, that behind the poetic coding a real dance may be assumed.” He deduced that at least three varieties of *kuravai* were danced by priests and laity of both sexes, and that the sources

agree on the whole on the orgiastic, wild and ecstatic character of the dance. We hear constantly of liquor, and sometimes of “wild, fiery, frenzied.” Moreover, the first two types are both connected with Murukaṅ.

Hart (1987:470–471) documents the curious fact that in ancient South India many different categories of performers as well as the priests of Murukaṅ were regarded as belonging to lower groups, who lived at the margins of society, and were associated with wilderness, possession, and fierce rituals. According to Venkataraman (1956:312),

[Kumāra] was believed to induce violent passions of love in the minds of girls, and was propitiated by magic rites. His priests and priestesses, wearing clusters of *veṅgai* flowers (*Pterocarpum marsupium*) dripping with honey, sang and danced the *veriyāṭṭam* or the *kuravai* [...]. The great town of Kaveripattinam, near the mouth of the Kāverī, witnessed numerous festivals in His honour, when women danced to the accompaniment of the flute, harp, and drum.

Many elements of the Tamil dances described above resonate with the image portrayed in stanza 25.24 of the RK. The word *arūm* in line c, beside “beautiful, elegant,” can also mean “sweet, fragrant” (OJED 1569), which in this context may allude to both the beauty of the peacock and the clusters of flowers “dripping with honey” worn by Kaumāra devotees (compare also the “liquor made from honey” inebriating the dancers described in the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*). *Kuñcir*, a rare Old Javanese word that is only attested in RK 5.65 and 25.24, means “crest” (compare Bahasa Indonesia *kuncir*, “cowlick”), being perhaps related to *kuñcit*, “a crest or tuft on the back of the head”? (OJED 927); it might thus allude to the crest on the head of the peacock and, at the same time, to the “crest-hair” or tuft worn by Kaumāra

20. In modern Tamil, *kuravai* means “chorus of shrill sounds made by women by wagging the tongue, uttered on festive occasions”—compare Malayalam *kurava*, “shouting (especially of women)”; among the Todas, it means “shouting dance” (Hardy 1983:621).

practitioners.²¹ The form *majule* “inattentive, thoughtless, frivolous, empty-headed” (OJED 752) may refer to the cliché behaviour of “drunken” or “intoxicated” peacocks, and to the fact that the Kaumāras danced thoughtlessly—as if in a trance, probably under the effect of the “violent passions of love” induced through possession by the God (or some excitant substance?).²²

Let me now turn to the other avian figure portrayed in Sarga 24.106 of the RK, i.e. the *darapati* or “wild pigeon,” which seemingly joins the peacock’s dance. *Darapati* was translated as “turtle-dove” by Hooykaas (1958:275) and “wood-pigeon” by Santoso (1980:801). Curiously, the word is not listed in OJED; Zoetmulder apparently connected it to the (itself obscure) form *sugama*, occurring in 24.106c, about which he noted: “Is it arealis to *sugēm*? Is *sugēma* perhaps the female (male?) of the male (female?) *hadawa* or *darapati*?” (OJED 1833).²³ *Haḍava* (= *harava*, *kaḍava*), attested only in RK 25.11 and *Rāmaparaśuvijaya* 8.8, is glossed by OJED (570, 592) as “wood pigeon” and (762) “a kind of wood-pigeon (Juynboll: *Columbia Aenea*).”²⁴ Whatever the identity of this bird may be, the line under discussion depicts it with evident comical traits, i.e. while trying to bend low in a particular dancing position (*mamaṇḍak*),²⁵ thereby looking like a “dwarf” (*vəlu*),²⁶ and being “bearded”

21. The *kuravai* dance is in Tamil Caṅkam poems often connected to “hillmen” (*kuriñci*) and to a mountainous setting. That (*ma*)*kuñcir* might constitute a playful anagram evocating the Old Tamil word *kuriñci* is not without the realm of possibility; in fact, the whole Sarga 25 abounds in double-entendres and other sophisticated figures of speech.

22. The image of “drunken peacocks” in connection with another mainstream Śaiva congregation is documented in Sanskrit inscriptional evidence, which attests to the existence of the Mattamayūras (meaning precisely “drunken peacocks”) in various parts of the Indian Subcontinent by the 11th century. Given their seemingly “orthodox” status, Davis (2000:133) argues that “The monks of the Drunken Peacock lineage gained their name from the monastic center Mattamayūra, apparently, and not by emulating the kind of wild behavior we might expect of inebriated peacocks.” The other way around, however, might also have been the case, namely that the monastic, Saiddhāntika embodiment of the 11th-century Mattamayūras represents a “domesticated” version of an in origin ascetic, performance-oriented group of Śaiva anchorites, whose practices may have been related to those of the Kaumāras. Further research is needed to clarify the matter.

23. A Balinese legend explaining the origin of the different types of rice used in the ceremony of the masked-dance of Sidha Karya (on which, cf. below) links the yellow *sugam* bird to yellow rice (coloured with turmeric, also used for the *boreh* unguent), and the black *dara* (pigeon) to black rice (Rubin and Sedana 2007:111). Interpreted in this light, the connection between the *sugama* of stanza 106c and the peacocks may be that the latter have become yellow (due to the rain of *jənu*-unguent, made of turmeric) like *sugam* birds.

24. *Harava* is a hapax, attested only in RK 24.108; *kaḍava* occurs in a passage quoted in KBNW, s.v. *bhāradwāja*, along with *vuru-vuru* (dove), which the Balinese commentary glosses as *sugam*. The *Navaruci* (31.24) describes the *kaḍava* as a bird living in trees (*pakṣi riñ kayon*) and having a loud cry (*śabda aguñ*).

25. Cf. OJED (1251), s.v. (*ma*)*maṇḍak*: “(a position of the body in dancing) to bend low, stoop?,” from *paṇḍak*, “short, low, dwarfish.”

26. Cf. *wəlu* II (OJED 2241): “(among the physical defects) suffering from a hernia or rupture”; compare *wəlu* I “girth, circumference,” *awəlu* “round, full, curved, bent, drawn (of a bow),” *mahawəlu* “to bend (draw) to its full extent (bow),” and *wəlu* III = *wwal* “dwarf”; compare Hooykaas 1958:275, and Proto-Austronesian Glossary (Wolff 2010:899) *luŋ*, **eluj*, **beluj* “curved, bent” (cf. Mod. Jav. *mε-lung* “bend, be bowed”).

or “hairy” (*vok*).²⁷ The verbal form *apipirūṣa* occurring in stanza 106 of the RK attracted the attention of van Naerssen (1937:460), who traced it to the root *pirus* and suggested translating it as “trying/wishing to act like a *pirus*.” According to OJED (1368), *pirus* denotes “a certain type of performer or musician (but which?).” Van Naerssen argued that the *pirus* was a reciter and puppet-master. In support of this argument he referred to the gloss of the Sanskrit *kuśīlava* (“a bard, herald, actor, mime,” MW 297) as *piruṣ* in the Sanskrit-Old Javanese lexicon *Amaramālā*, part of the larger grammatical and poetological work entitled *Caṇḍakiraṇa*.²⁸ Indeed the Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakośa* (2.8.1421) associates the *kuśīlavas* with actors, dancers, and mimes (*bharatā ity api naṭāś cāraṇās tu kuśīlavāḥ*). It appears that the line of the RK under discussion conveys a parody of a practitioner who is playfully equated to a pigeon (*darapati*), and associated with a comic performer known as *pirus*, arguably on account of the comic gait and/or postures that he assumes when joining the dance of a peacock. The elements and context of this parody will become clearer below.

A community of low-caste bards called *kuśīlavas*, also known as *vālmīkis*, existed in various regions of the Indian Subcontinent until recent years.²⁹ The word *kuśīlava* is used in the *Rāmāyaṇa* to denote the two brothers Kuśa and Lava, sons of Rāma, both raised by the sage Vālmiki, author of the text. According to Goldman (2007:286), on the authority of MacDonell, “Originally the word probably meant a loose-living, wandering rhapsodist, and the naming and characterization of the twins Kuśa and Lava are probably the result of folk-etymology.” *Kuśīlava* may be either a generic or technical term to describe a class of itinerant performers, whom Sanskrit legal texts characterize as despicable individuals of low (*śūdra*) status.³⁰ In the

27. Cf. *wok* (OJED 2309): “abundant hair-growth on the body (esp. under the chin, chin whiskers, beard? Thus ModJ).” Previous editors and translators read *vəlu* and *vok* as one word, *vəluvok*—a hapax of uncertain meaning, simply glossed by OJED (2242) as “a part. kind of bird (Balinese commentary: *balēkok*).”

28. Cf. folio 49a (Lokesh Chandra 1997:224). On account of its eulogy dedicated to the Śailendra king Jitendra (otherwise unknown), the *Amaramālā* may date back to the 8th century or earlier. Besides Balinese manuscripts, it has come down to us through a 15th-century palm-leaf manuscript from West Java.

29. Cf. Dhéré (1996:121–123). In the online English summary of the book (in Marathi) *Bhāratīya Raṅgbhūmīcyā Śodhāt* “In search of Indian theatre” (http://rcdhere.com/Bharatiya_Rangbhoomichya_Shodhat/SPS-Bharatiya%20Rangbhoomichya%20Shodhat_1.html; accessed 29-07-2013), Dhéré refers to the extended narrative poetry “*Ukhaharan* by a poet ‘Chombha’ in the Pre-Eknath era. He was a composer from the ‘Vālmiki’ sect of composers and a folk singer in the tradition of Kushi-Lava’s.” *Harikathā* performer Dr. Ananth Rao in an email dated 12-07-2013 mentioned a category of “itinerant tribal singers called *kuśīlavas* [...] who used to go round villages [in Karnāṭaka]. [...] We occasionally used to see them in Bangalore too years ago. I recall them with hair tied up like *jaṭās* [in the fashion of ascetics] and looking much like Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the forest.” Categories of devotional and ritual itinerant performers of various social standing and religious affiliation continue to exist throughout the Indian Subcontinent down to the present day, such as e.g. the Bauls of Bengal and the Marathi Gondhalīs. The latter are a category of performers of Śākta affiliation specializing in the dramatic rite of goddess worship called *gondhaḷa*. This ritual involves singing and dramatic performance (i.e. of oral narratives and ballads), and is often performed to mark an important life-cycle event such as weddings (cf. Dhéré 1988).

30. On which basis Raja Radhakanta Deb (1783–1867) in the *Śabdakalpadruma* (vol. 2, p. 160) glossed

Manusmṛti (8.65, 8.102) these are mentioned in a *dvandva* compound along with the *kāruka* (*kārukakuśīlava*) as persons unfit to act in the capacity of witnesses. I have advanced elsewhere (Acri 2011a:78–79) the hypothesis that the *kārus* and *kārukās* mentioned in Sanskrit legal texts and in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* are not to be interpreted as “artisans” or “mechanics” (\sqrt{kr} 1) but as “singers” or “bards” (from *kāru*, “one who sings or praises, a poet,” \sqrt{kr} 2),³¹ which in turn may be linked to the obscure *Kārukās* of the *Atimārga* stream of *Saivism* known from rare references found in *Śaiva Saiddhāntika* literature. The latter group might have constituted a category of ascetics who engaged in stage performances among the populace, and whose Javanese counterparts might have been the *vidus*.

Certain elements in RK 24.106d support the hypothesis that the *pirus* too constituted a type of *Śaiva* performer who was a common enough figure in the Javanese literary *imaginaire* as early as the 9th century. One such element is the connection of the *pirus* with the wild-pigeon, *ḍarapati*. Santoso (1980:801), rejecting van Naerssen’s (1937:460) derivation of the verbal form *pipirūṣa* from *pirus*, traced it back to the Sanskrit root *rūṣ*, “to adorn, decorate,” but also: “to cover, smear” (MW 886). The sense of “smear” may fit here, being a reference to the ash-smear worn by *Atimārga* ascetics, and which may also hint at the smear of *boreh* unguent worn by dancers. Of course, it may be the case that the author was punning, consciously envisaging double-meanings as he was in most stanzas of *Sarga* 24 and 25. It is probably the outward appearance of these *Śaiva* ascetics as well as their behavior that justified the poet’s choice of the *ḍarapati* as their alias: the wood pigeon or ring dove, *Streptopelia risoria*, is ash-grey-coloured, with a black collar around the neck. The rather comical way in which pigeons “rhythmically” shake their heads horizontally while they walk on the ground may also play a role here.³² *Vok*, “bearded” or “hairy,” is frequently found in *sarga* 24 and 25 of RK as an epithet of wandering ascetics (probably referring to their prominent hairdos and beards), a feature which, as we will see below, is attributed to wandering ascetics of the *Kāpālika* and *Siddha* type in Sanskrit sources. RK 25.108d comically describes how a wood pigeon

kuśīlava as *kutsitaṃ śīlaṃ yaśya saḥ*, “he whose moral character is to be condemned.” The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (35.106), arguably speaking from the perspective of an “insider” in the world of performing arts, gives a fully positive etymology: “He who can apply the principles of instrumental music (*ātodya*) and is himself an expert in playing instruments, is called a *kuśīlava* because of his being clever (*kuśala*) and refined (*avadāta*) and free from agitation (*avyathita*)” (quoted and translated in Gomperts 2002:580–581).

31. Here the suffix *-ka* may be either expletive or pejorative; the latter possibility is the most plausible.

32. Cf. below: 33–34, 45.

(*harava* = *ḍarapati*) and a wild pigeon (*vuru-vuru*), allegorically representing an emaciated ascetic and a beggar respectively, turn into their opposites:

tañ jīrñānjīrṇa meñjuh ñ harava harivuvun veh-veh vuru-vuru

Not worn out [as a consequence of ascetic penance], the wood pigeon becomes fresh, elated; the wild pigeons care about giving alms [instead of begging for food].

Veh-veh is the technical expression used in Old Javanese texts to indicate the action of giving alms to religious people.³³ Here it may represent the opposite of *alap-alap* (“to steal, seize, carry off”),³⁴ which reflects the pigeon’s typical feeding habit. The allegorical depiction of ascetics as pigeons is found in several Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhāntatantras, which link categories of ascetics (*yati*) to birds according to their particular conducts (*vṛttivaiśeṣika*); some are described as acting “like pigeons” (*kapotavat*, *kāpota*), i.e. living on whatever they may find on the ground, such as fallen grains or leftovers.³⁵

The use of the hapax *ḍarapati* in RK 24.126d, literally “lord/master of the pigeons,” in place of the more common *darā* (OJED 365) or *harava/haḍava*, arguably betrays a pun. If we break the compound into its two constituents, i.e. the Sanskrit and Old Javanese *dāra* “wife” (which, according to OJED 365, becomes *ḍara* (= *rara*) in such expressions as *anak ḍara* “girl, maiden”) and the Sanskrit *pati* “master, lord,” then the compound may be alternatively translated as “the lord of the maidens (*ḍara*).” If the *pirus* is indeed a Śaiva Tantric performer, he could naturally be regarded as a “master” of dancing-girls. This connection will become clearer later on in the article.

The character of the *pirus* was discussed by van Naerssen in his study of the Sangsang copperplate inscription, issued by king Balitūñ in 907 AD to ratify the granting of tax-exempt status to the monastery of Dalinan. To celebrate that event a variety of performances were offered (plate II.9–10);³⁶ some of these appear to have been of a sacred or ritual type as they were given by the religious functionaries known as *tančil hyañs* (Old Jav.),³⁷ while others were offered to the god.³⁸ Although the syntactical structure of the passage is not transparent and, therefore, it is not entirely

33. Cf. *Dharma Pātañjala* 264.3 (Acri 2011b:264–265), and *Vṛhaspatitattva* 25.3, which glosses Skt. *dāna* with Old Jav. *veveh*.

34. The form *alapan* occurs next to *vuru-vuru* in RK 25.65. OJED (46) notes that the form *añalapi* is in *kidungs* “frequently said of the clearing away of food after the meal, when the servants get it.”

35. Cf. Barazer-Billore 2001. The passages in question, i.e. *Suprabhedha* 6.32cd–33ab and *Kiraṇa* 9.15cd–16ab, have close parallels in other Siddhāntatantras, e.g. *Sārdhatrīśatikālotarāgama* 35.

36. [...] *hinyūnnakan tontonan mamidu sañ tančil hyañ si nalu macaritta bhimma kumāra mañigal kīcaka si jaluk macarita rāmāyaṇa mamirus mabañol si muñmuk si galigī mavayañ buatt hyañ macarita bimma ya kumāra* [...] (Sarkar 1972 I:96).

37. Cf. OJED 1943: “a certain (religious?) functionary (nomen loci?).” The *tančil hyañs* are said to recite stories (*macarita*) alongside *vidus* also in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.4 (cf. Acri 2011a:70–71).

38. Cf. OJED 238 s.v. *bwat hyañ*: “ceremonies (performances, etc.) in worship of the god (in the temple).”

clear who performed what, it mentions various individuals staging performances that involved play-acting and buffoonery (*mamidu*, from *vidu*, *mamirus*, from *pirus*), jesting (*mabañol*), recitation (*macarita*), dance (*manigal*), and puppetry (*mavayan*). A recitation and puppet-show of a story entitled “*b(h)imma kumāra*” was performed,³⁹ along with a dance of the *kīcaka*,⁴⁰ and the enactment of what might have been a comic version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Van Naerssen (1937:458–459) noted several analogies in terminology and context between the above-mentioned passage of the Sangsang inscription and a series of stanzas of 13th-century East Javanese *kakavin Sumanasāntaka* by Mpu Monagūṇa; he quoted the stanzas in extenso without translating or commenting upon them, simply stating that “there is no need to indicate point for point the many agreements with the description in the inscriptions. For this, let us just compare this quotation with our inscriptions.”⁴¹ I now proceed to analyse in detail the account of the *Sumanasāntaka*, which bears striking resemblances with RK 24.106, and which may cast some light on the *pirus* and the context of his performances.

Stanzas 3–4 of canto 113, part of the larger sequence 1–9, provide intriguing textual evidence on some (apparently Śaiva) figures of ascetic-cum-performers (cf. Acri 2011a:70–71). They depict a most remarkable performance staged on the occasion of the wedding of prince Aja and Indumatī. The performance, enacted by *vidus*, *taṇḍas* (Old Jav.), and *taṅkil hyaṅs*, is religious as much as burlesque in character.⁴² The wedding ceremony starts with a purificatory ritual (*tavur*) conducted by an experienced (female?) master (*viku vṛddhacārī*), who intones the five

39. The expressions *bimma kumāra* and *bhīma ya kumāra* have been interpreted by Sarkar (1972 I:98) as indicating “the son (*kumāra*) of Bhīma,” with reference to the demon, and popular Wayang-character, Ghaṭotkaca (Sarkar unwarrantably read the second occurrence of the words as *bhīmayakumāra*, standing for *bhīmaja-kumāra* “*Kumāra*, born from Bhīma”). On the other hand, if one interprets, with Zoetmulder (1974:208–209), *Kīcaka* as a personal name, and *Kumāra* as meaning “young” (or: “lover”), one may envisage a reference to the character dancing the role of *Kīcaka* fighting Bhīma, an episode narrated in both the Sanskrit and Old Javanese versions of the *Virāṭaparva*, the fourth book of the *Mahābhārata*. According to Zoetmulder, the repetition of the words *bhīma kumāra* would indicate that different genres or performance styles of the same narrative took place. Supomo (1995:323), while noting that “there is no evidence that a Javanese translation or adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* already existed at that time,” speculated that “the narrator of the *Bhīma-kumāra* episode recited a Sanskrit text, and then, as in a *harikathā*, explained it to his audience in Javanese.” While Zoetmulder’s hypothesis remains plausible, alternative explanations are possible (cf. below: 52, and the following footnote).

40. The word *kicaka/kīcaka/kecaka* may denote a type of dance, or dancer, rather than be a personal name, as it seems to be attested in the former sense in Old Javanese inscriptions of 10th and early 11th century (e.g. copperplate of Pelem of 971 AD [I.5], and *prasasti* of Cane from East Java of 1021 AD [v. 14], cf. Brandes 1913:118, 127). OJED (862) glosses *kicaka*, *kecaka* as “performer of a particular dance?” It is not altogether impossible that both words could be related to the Balinese *kecak* dance—originally a temple trance ritual performance accompanied by a male chorus, transformed and re-arranged in the 1930s by Walter Spies (cf. de Zoete and Spies 1973:80–85).

41. My translation from the original Dutch.

42. The level of detail and the spontaneity of the narration leave no doubt that Mpu Monagūṇa himself witnessed one of such performances. An analogous assessment of the genuineness of the descriptions of places and events found in the *Sumanasāntaka* has been made by Supomo (2001:123–125).

Śaiva Brahmamantras (111.6). The performance takes place during the *paprasan* ceremony; according to Hunter (in Worsley et al. 2013:575–576), the *paprasan* (and its derivative *prasprasan*, *apraspras*) corresponds to the modern Balinese *laspas/pelaspasan*, both being

ceremonies of purification conducted upon completion of work on a building, mask or image, or upon the founding of a performing arts troupe. [...] They share with *paprasan* ceremonies the element of purification upon entry to a new phase of existence whose future state of safety and good fortune is dependent upon the rituals of purification carried out at the inception of the new cycle of life, such as that embarked upon with a marriage.

The wedding is closed in canto 130 by the *kraban kalasan* ceremony, which includes burlesque dances featuring a (drunk) “mistress of the Śaiva” (*strī niñ śaiva*), a woman of high status (*dañ hadyan*) who performs a “peacock-dance”, and a “mistress of the vidu” (*strī niñ vidu*) who dances, sings, laughs, and proffers the paradigm of the Sanskrit personal pronoun (*Sumanasāntaka* 130.1–3; Acri 2011a:72–74).

I now discuss stanzas 5–8 of canto 113, where comedians—*piruses* and female performers—take the stage. Given the great number of philological problems posed by this passage, my translation—which at times differs considerably from that by Worsley et al. (2013:297–298)—is to be considered as no more than a preliminary attempt at best.

sahana niñ abañol denyānguyvākəna puraci
añigəl-igəl agəngənan koñtol paða mətatəñ
vəlu sakəbəh agasyak ndan moghāvədi vəkasan
kaguyu-guyu kagman yan prāptañ vəlu sabaṭaṅ (5)

All the comedians made [the audience] roll around laughing.⁴³

They were dancing furiously, engrossed in [observing? Joking about?] their [exposed] penises, [their faces becoming] tense with effort.⁴⁴

A “dwarf” [as tall] as the span of a *kəbəh*⁴⁵ [danced] animatedly, then became suddenly afraid at last, He was laughed at [by the audience when] he was taken by a sudden fright⁴⁶ as a “dwarf” [as tall] as the span of a *baṭaṅ* arrived.⁴⁷

43. Here I follow Worsley et al. (2013:453–454, 498), who interpret the obscure *puraci* (occurring only in the present line and in canto 28.8 of the *Sumanasāntaka*, cf. OJED 1451) as “rolling around.”

44. OJED (1348–1349), s.v. *pētētön*/mētētön* (hapax), suggests: “to pull a face?.” Worsley et al. (2013:498) relate it to the Modern Javanese *mēthēnthēng* “braced with anger or effort.” OJED (887) glosses the hapax *koñtol* as “scrotum”; however, the word *kontol* in Bahasa Indonesia means “penis,” hence my translation.

45. The word *sakəbəh* is obscure. OJED (833 and 2242) glosses *kəbəh* with a question mark; Worsley et al. (2013:498), whom I hesitantly follow, take it to be a measure of size (referred to *koñtol*; cf. below, fn. 47). Some manuscripts read *sagəbəh*, which could be a spelling variant of *sagəbah*, from *gəbah** (*ginəbah*) “to shake about” (OJED 505).

46. Cf. OJED (513), s.v. *göm**, *kagöm*, *kagöman*: “taken by a sudden fright or astonishment (‘to fall in the grip of’).” I cannot identify the translation of this term in Worsley et al.

47. Cf. OJED (223), s.v. *batañ* I: “guess, interpretation, probability”; *baṭaṅ* II (224): “a measure of capacity (KBNW: ‘a liquid measure consisting of a long bamboo cylinder’); *batañ* III “corpse.” The

pirus amirusi menmen denyāmet pacəh acəməh
rabi nika bisa pantəs denyābhāvaka mañəyəh
laki nika mulat andrən kahyūn-hyūn añañas-uñas
kadi vədus anut añjyan yan tənḥā təkə murinīs (6)

A *pirus* acted the part of a *menmen*;⁴⁸ through his dirty jokes⁴⁹ he caused laughter.⁵⁰ His mistress cleverly followed “in style” by enacting [the gesture of] urinating. As his man saw her, he looked fiercely at her and sniffed, full of excitement. He followed her and they mated, [acting] like goats; when he gazed in her eyes, he suddenly showed his teeth.

ikañ amañcañah olih guyv aprih paḍa sinurak
tkap ika nini-niny elik masvāmi vərə-vərəh
paḍa bisañ avayañ vvañ denyānguyvakən atarik
pacəh ika kaki-kaky akrak ginyat mulih akusa (7)

Those who were reciting [tales] raised a laugh, and all of them were eager to be jeered.⁵¹ The sacred maidens⁵² disliked to have as masters the young male dancers.⁵³ Those playing the human-puppets were all equally skillful, and they caused vehement laughter. The old men were laughing with open mouths; screaming loudly, they suddenly lay sprawling on the ground.

sahana nikañ pinaṅguñ tūt pādv ābhinava katon
paḍa gumuruh avantus sakveh niñ guyu gumətər
bari-bari kapacəh niñ vvañ thānin gumuyu kəkəl
patmu ni pasurak niñ vvañ kady ampuhan apagut (8)

All of those who were on the stage joined in acting like goats⁵⁴—what an amazing sight!

possibility of reading *vəlus abaṭaṅ* (which does not make sense) tentatively suggested by Zoetmulder s.v. *wəlu* (OJED 2242) is unlikely, for *vəlu* occurs twice in the stanza, as well as in RK 24.106, precisely in the same context of a *pirus*' performance. Worsley et al. (2013:498) translate *vəlu sabatəng* as “having the circumference of one *baṭaṅ*” (referred to *koṅtol*). I take the “measure of one *baṭaṅ*” as indicating the span of the height reached by the performers during their comic dance, i.e. the low level/baricentrum of their dancing position. Compare figs. 11 and 13 (*gajah ngombé*).

48. Following Worsley et al. (2013:299); the expression seems to imply that a *pirus* mocked a *menmen* (“a player or performer”). OJED (1368) glosses *amirus*, *amirusi*, *apipirus* as “to perform as a *pirus*” (compare the reduplicated *apipirusa* in RK 24.106d, “wish to act/perform like a *pirus*”).

49. Thus OJED (320) tentatively glosses this hapax, adding the following remarks: “see *cəmər*, unclean, foul, low (*cəmər* when abusing, otherwise *acəmər*?).”

50. Cf. OJED (1221): “probably with open mouth > merry, laughing, hilarious; astonished, amazed.”

51. Or: “to be urged on.”

52. Cf. OJED (1187): “used in designating or addressing a religious person or an unmarried princess or girl of noble birth.”

53. Following OJED (2246); but cf. also *wərēh* III: “probably a group of people (young people, see *wərēh* II?) trained for a particular performance (*awərēh*).”

54. Cf. OJED (1230), s.v. *padu* II: “a particular kind of goat or sheep (connected with *adu*: fighting ram?).” OJED (1229) quotes the present line of text s.v. *padu* I “corner, edge,” which does not make much sense; Worsley et al. (2013:498) translate *pinaṅguñ tūt padu* as “were given vantage points on the edge of the performance space”; but compare the previous stanza 6d, where a *pirus* and his woman are described as mating like goats (*vədus*). While there is still the possibility that the focus has now shifted to the audience around the stage rather than the performers themselves, it seems likely to assume that

All of them were thundering, clashing against each other; the laughter roared in unison like thunder. Unceasing was the merriment of the villagers as they laughed convulsively. The coming together of the people's shouting was like clashing breakers.

Mpu Monaguna's fascinating account depicts male and female characters, among whom are a *pirus* and his mistress, playing a comic performance involving dance, recital, and an obscene pantomime of mocking (bestial) sexual intercourse. Even though more than three centuries separate the above passage and the elliptic stanza 106 of RK *sarga* 24, it is tempting to read the latter in the light of the former on account of several striking analogies and similar puns occurring in both passages. As RK 24.106 metaphorically describes the *pirus* as a pigeon (*darapati*) joining the dance of a peacock, so the *Sumanasāntaka* seems to characterise the female dancers who accompany some young male performers—apparently *piruses*, mentioned in the previous stanza—as peacocks and pigeons respectively. First, the rare form *vəlu* (“dwarf”/“low, crouching”) occurs in line 106d as a qualifier of *pirus*, and then again twice more in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.5 as a qualifier of *abañol*, “comedians,” to which category evidently the *pirus* featuring in stanza 6 also belongs. The latter is joined by a female partner (*rabi nika*) on the stage; in 113.7b some “sacred maidens” (*nini-niny*, used to address either religious people or female dignitaries) are declared to display dislike of having as “masters” (*masvāmi*) some young male dancers (*vəṛə-vəṛəh*). This line calls to mind the form *darapati* of RK 24.106, which may hide a pun for the “master (*pati*) of the maidens (*dāra/dara*),” being a rare variant of the more common name of the pigeon, *vuru-vuru*.⁵⁵ The scene has comic overtones as it is probably based on the fact that, as we know from other Old and Modern Javanese accounts, the “master” accompanying the dancing girls during *tanḍak* performances was called *buyut*, “elder” or “great-grandfather” (cf. below: 32, 41). The “old men” or “elder” (*kaki-kaki*) referred to in 113.7d as laughing and sprawling on the ground might be *buyut*-like characters. If so, an analogy between the *pirus* and the *buyut* may be established.

Extending the analogy further, it is interesting to note that *Sumanasāntaka* 130.2a describes the dancing style of the female dignitary (“perhaps the wife of a Brahmin,” Worsley et al. 2013:504) who replaces the dance of a drunk “mistress of the Śaiva” to the music of *mrdaṅga* drums with terms that are often associated to peacocks or birds in general. For instance: *oṅsil* (“moving to and fro”), which calls to mind the gait of a bird;⁵⁶ *akikat*, which is glossed by OJED (866) as “of a dancer and of a peacock,

the onlookers took part in the performance, acting like goats (*tūt padu*).

55. According to OJED (2335), *wuruh* is a spelling variant of *wəṛəh*, hence *wəṛə-wəṛəh* = *wuru-wuruh* and, by assonance and punning, *wuru-wuru*; *wuru* II = *wəṛō* (= *wəṛē*) also means “drunk, intoxicated” (*awuru*) (OJED 2335)—compare *vəṛə-vəṛə* (“very drunk”) qualifying the “mistress of the Śaiva” in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.1a.

56. Cf. also the term *arəṅgiṅan* in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.9, a hapax of uncertain meaning translated by OJED (1538) as “to move to and fro?” (in a dance-performance). To describe the dance of peacocks, RK 24.105c uses the form *anicipir*, “moving swiftly back and forth, flapping, jumping about” (OJED 862).

apparently referring to a dancing posture with the arms stretched sideways”,⁵⁷ and *aṅavat* (“introduce, lead, call up [a melody]”), which occurs in various Old Javanese sources in association with the dance or cry of peacocks:⁵⁸

dañ hadyan tumurun gumanty aṅigəl oṅsil aṅavat akikat rumāmpayak

Then a female dignitary came down to dance in her turn moving to and fro, introducing [the melody of the orchestra], and assuming the “posture of the peacock,” with the arms stretched sideways.

Worsley (et al. 2013:504), whose translation of this line only slightly differs from my own, comments that

the image presented in the translation here is of Balinese or Javanese dancers who move to and fro (*ongsil*) with their arms outstretched (*rumampayak*) and lifting their feet off the ground alternatively (*akikat*).

Brakel-Papenhuizen (1995:125–126) describes a dynamic or “hopping” dance posture called *nayung* (from *tayung*, related to *tayungan*; cf. below: 34–35), involving the alternate lifting of the feet and arms stretched and fully extending sideways, used by *alusan* (refined male) and *putri* (female) characters in Javanese dance. The position performed by the dancing female characters may actually be a local evolution (or interpretation) of the “peacock posture,” codified in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as *karāṇa* 80 (*mayūralalita*, “peacock’s sport”).⁵⁹ A visual representation (or, again, interpretation) of this *karāṇa* is found in a relief of the East Gopura of the Śiva

57. Cf. OJED (866) *kikat**, *akikat* “(of a dancer and of a peacock). Does it refer to sound (song, et cetera)?” Bal. comm. in LS [*Lambañ Salukat*] has *maṅokok* (see s.v. *kokok*). Or is it a dancing posture?; OJED (885) s.v. *kokok**, *aṅokok*: “(of the sound of the peacock, but not its cry) to cluck.”

58. Cf. Hunter 2001:88: “Peacocks are otherwise famous in the *kakawin* as the providers of the ‘opening melody’ (*pangawwat*) for the ‘melody of the thunder’.” OJED (169) glosses *aṅavat* as follows: “to come or go first, precede, go in front of, be the ‘leader’, lead in, introduce, call up, esp. of the part of a melody, which introduces the theme before the full orchestra (*agamēl*, *aṅiduñ*, *surak*) joins in.” The passages are *Haravijaya* 2.11 (*aṅavatiñ mrak*), *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* 2.6 (*paṅavat niñ mrak*), 4.4 (*mrak* [...] *aṅavati gantər iñ patər*); cf. also *Sumanasāntaka* 130. Worsley et al. (2013:320–321, 504) read *aṅavak*, “on her own,” but admit that OJED (e.g. 866) gives the variant *aṅavat*, and therefore suggest the alternative translation “and then proceeded to [...]” I take *aṅavat* to be a better reading. It is also worth noting that the expression *aṅalik-alik*, used in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.2b to denote the call or high-pitched shrill of the dancing female dignitary, is the standard onomatopoeic expression used to denote the call of the *kokila* or *valik*-bird (female of the *kuvoñ*) in Old Javanese literature. The cry *alik-alik* occurs in RK 25.19, uttered by a laughing *kokila* or *valik*, which I have identified with the female of the *vidu* (= *kuvoñ*) (Acri 2011a:85–86). Zoetmulder (OJED 941) noted that an ambiguity between the cry of the *kuvoñ* (*aṅuvvan*) and that of the peacock (*aṅavvan*) occurs in Old Javanese texts, to the point that the two birds were confused. On the association between the *kuravai* dance in honor of Murukan/Skanda/Kumāra and the shrill of women, see above, fn. 10, and compare fn. 15.

59. Cf. *Nāṭyaśāstra* 4.141 (trans. Ghosh 1950:57): “After assuming the *Vṛścika* K. two hands to be *Recita*, and the *Trika* to be turned round [in the *Bhramari Cāri*].” In the *vṛścika*, the two hands are bent and held over the shoulders, with a leg bent and turned towards the back (p. 54); *recita* [relating to a limb] means “moving it round separately (i.e. not in any *Karāṇa* or *Cāri*) or its drawing up or its movement of any kind separately” (p. 66); the *trika* is the sacrum or “the lowest point in the vertebral column where the two other bones of the legs meet” (p. 53).

Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram in South India, which shows a woman dancing in a low posture, with arms fully extended (fig. 1; compare figs. 2, 3, 7).

It may be argued that the performances staged by *piruses* and female dancers on the occasion of the royal wedding described in the *Sumanasāntaka* were not held for mere entertainment, but were also charged with religious significance. As we have seen in the Sangsang copperplate, in premodern Java magico-religious rituals and festivities usually confirmed royal decrees and otherwise special occasions. Zoetmulder (1974:208) noted that “in the ritual consecration of the grants and in the accompanying celebrations performances of various kinds, such as dances, comic acts, the recitation of texts, etc., had their place.” Sedyawati (1982:72) drew attention to a few panels on Borobudur depicting music-making and dancing taking place in the direct proximity of a *caitya*, thereby implying a ritual function. In spite of the social status of those figures, who were made the target of satire by the elite and mainstream religious establishment, ensembles of male and female religious performers were clearly involved in ceremonies carried out in close association with palace functionaries, or even the king himself. It is, therefore, no wonder if most of the performing characters discussed here, including buffoons, (masked) dancers, and drama reciters, are categorized in several Old Javanese inscriptions as *vatak i jro*, i.e. persons attached to the *kraton* in the capacity as functionaries or attendants; the same figures, on the other hand, are invariably mentioned, along with the *manilala drabya haji* “royal tax collectors,” as “undesirable” people who are, under normal circumstances, forbidden to enter religious freeholds, presumably in order not to disturb the activities going on in there.⁶⁰

A number of pre-11th century Old Javanese inscriptions mention *piruses* besides other performers or players, *menmen* (cf. *Sumanasāntaka* 113.6a); in the Guruñ Pai copperplate inscription from Bali of 1071 AD (van Stein Callenfels 1926:17, Vb1), both characters are characterized as performing jokes (*abañval*, cf. *Sumanasāntaka* 113.5a), playing the flute (*anuliñ*) and percussion instruments (*amukul*), and said “to give or act in a *tapuk* (masked?) performance” for the king.⁶¹ The inscription of Paraḍah II issued in 943 AD (Brandes 1913:102, lines 45–46) mentions various performers playing music during religious festivities held in the presence of a *mahārāja*—arguably Siṅḍok; as understood by Gomperts (2002:586), the king himself danced (*manigal*) to music played by musicians and men of religion on that

60. As argued by Gomperts (2002:585–586), anyone who demanded money for their services were equally forbidden to carry out their activities in a freehold’s premises. Boechari (2012a:166–167, fn. 18) pointed out that the *manilala drabya haji* were not necessarily tax collectors, but any court functionaries who did not get apanage domains and had to be paid from the state treasury (cf. also *id.* 2012b:281–282, 2012c).

61. Cf. OJED (1948–1949), s.v. *atapukan*: *tapuk** I, *anapuk*, *tinapuk* “to appear, come forward fully armed or equipped); to commence with, don, take up; to act in a *tapuk* (masked?) performance (see Pigeaud, *Javaanse Volksvertoningen*, p. 125; some places, however, suggest a performance with a percussion-instrument).” The same characters and/or activities feature in other pre-10th century inscriptions (e.g. the copperplate of Kuṭi of 840 AD).

occasion.⁶² The *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, an Old Javanese text that is believed to originate from Siṅdok's milieu, at its very beginning describes the wonders going on in the king's court, where all sorts of performances were held in temporary pavilions. Those mask performances, buffooneries, dances, and *vidu* competitions, were intended to accompany a ritual or religious performance (*kārya*)⁶³ that was attended by the king himself and *taṇḍa* functionaries.⁶⁴ The *taṇḍas* we find throughout premodern Javanese history, e.g. in RK *sarga* 24 and 25, where they are mocked and connected to the performing practices of a *vidu* (alias *kuvon*-bird), in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3, again dancing besides *vidus*, and in the 14th-century *Deśavarṇana*, which describes them as low-ranking court functionaries involved in mock war-dances.⁶⁵

An analogous "tension" between the low social status of the performers and their religious standing when they take part in certain rituals is also present in India. R.C. Dhere,⁶⁶ elaborating on such groups of low-status performers as the *kuśīlavas* on the basis of his empirical knowledge of Indian regional popular theatre and performance, rightly points to the contradiction intrinsic in the fact that these performers, who are as a rule regarded as vile individuals living on the margin of society, are respected at the time of particular rituals and festivities in which they perform. Similarly, specialists in the performance (mimicked, recited, chanted, or danced) of religious narratives are considered to belong to a "learned" tradition of high Sanskrit culture and often associated with temples and religious institutions, yet at the same time are despised for their lifestyles tied to performance and performers, which automatically lower their social status. Among such performers were the *kāthakas*, whom Lutgendorf (1991:124) characterizes as a category of storytellers who, by at least the tenth century, were considered synonymous with *granthika* or "book specialists." Lutgendorf explains that by the eighteenth century

the term *kathak* had come to refer to a type of storyteller, whose oral renditions of devotional texts were accompanied by gesture and dance and whose art eventually moved from the temple to the royal court, where it influenced the development of a dance style.

62. Line 45 speaks about performers playing drums (*anabəh*) as *sañ makuvuñ* "those who lives in holes," thereby testifying to a connection between a musician and a "reverend person" (*sañ*) who perform the observance of lying in ashes. This figure, on account of the data presented above, is likely to have been either a *vidu* or a similar kind of ascetic-cum-performer; cf. Acri 2011a:79–80.

63. As the following Sanskrit verse (untranslated in the Old Javanese prose portion) has *dīkṣitam* as its first word, the ceremony in question may have been (connected to) a religious initiation (*dīkṣā*) or royal consecration.

64. *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, Sarga 1: [...] *patapəlan, pabañolan, pañayvan vidu, pañigəlan, pavayañan, nūniveh kaḍatvana katəkana śrī mahārāja, pakuvvan, paiñjon katəkan para taṇḍa sira kabeh, kapva milu mabyāpāra ri kārya śrī mahārāja, rəp makuliliñan in pañigəlan.*

65. *Deśavarṇana* 66.5, cf. Acri 2011a:71–72. War dances appear to have been popular throughout Javanese history. Van Goens, who visited the kingdom of Mataram in the mid-17th century, claims to have attended "a dance contest between two men, one carrying a pike and the other a shield and a sword, accompanied by great gongs" (Sumarsam 1995:22). A relief apparently depicting a virtually identical ensemble of four male dancers armed with swords and pikes is panel O I 5 of Borobudur.

66. Cf. above, fn. 29.

A comparable mixture of Sanskritic “high culture” and “low status” in the context of religious performances carried out in both courtly and popular milieux can be envisaged in the Javanese setting. In RK 25.21a the *vidu* is called *kaṭak*—an Old Javanese hapax that may be derived from the Sanskrit *kathaka* or a related Middle Indo-Arian form *kathak* (cf. Acri 2011a:69). In panel VII.11d of Caṅḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang (cf. below: 31–32, and fig. 10) we find an ascetic of Brahmanical or Ṛṣi type reading from a palm-leaf manuscript, who is apparently involved in the performance scene depicted there. The *Sumanasāntaka* account of the *prasprasan* ceremony portrays a “mistress of the Śaiva” lecturing on Sanskrit grammar (130.1); further, in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.11–15—i.e. immediately after the account of the performance given by *piruses* and *vidus* on the occasion of Aja and Indumati’s wedding—Mpu Monaguna describes an ascetic (*viku*) of great penance (*kasutapan*) and his large company of disciples (*śiṣya*), whose appearance and behaviour he characterises as uncouth (*pəñcul*)⁶⁷ and clumsy (*kiṭuñ*), but whose elaborate speech about an Old Javanese linguistic dispute was masterful (*bañsit*). Irrespective of whether or not the last description refers to an adherent of the Śaiva Atimārga indeed, the presence of such ascetic(s) amongst the large crowds gathered on the occasion of important events in the life of royal courts tells us something about their strong appeal to both the elites and the rural folk with whom they mingled, as well as their possible connection with the performers themselves.

Performing Brahmans, Kraton Buffoons, and Dancing Girls

From Old Javanese epigraphic records and literary texts from the 9th to the late 14th century, it emerges that the performers known as *vidu* and *pirus* not only had a role in the performing arts, but also carried out magico-ritual functions on the occasion of festivities held in courtly milieux. These records are, however, difficult to decipher, because in their formulation “much that was obvious to contemporaries but which remains obscure for those living in a different century is only implied” (Zoetmulder 1974:208). Besides the extended—albeit still largely obscure—description of the performance by *vidus*, *piruses* and dancing girls found in the *Sumanasāntaka*, we are left with few detailed textual accounts portraying these figures and the performances they staged. In order to fill the remaining gaps, one may turn to the realm of visual arts and ethnography, and pursue the hypothesis that some 19th- and early 20th-century Javanese performers may represent the heirs of the enigmatic characters who appear on reliefs of Central Javanese monuments from the 8th and 9th centuries AD.

In a fascinating essay, aptly titled “A thousand years old profession in the princely courts on Java,” Stutterheim (1956a:93–94) discussed the mysterious Brahman depicted on some reliefs of the Borobudur:

There are always a few women present, probably also dancers, who handle little handbells, and a

67. Cf. OJED (1343), s.v. *pəñcul*: “(one can only guess from the context:) not bothering with the rules of etiquette or decorum, unrefined, uncouth, rude.”

man in Brahman dress frequently appears, apparently marking the time with his hands; occasionally he also has little bells in his hands. [Quoted from Krom and van Erp 1920:706] This refers to a company which evidently belongs to the dancing-scene, but which does not perform the actual dance. The remarkable thing in the passage quoted is the man “in Brahman dress” (fig. 11 [= fig. 7 in this article]); whether or not he belongs to the highest caste is immaterial. What are we to think of this holy man who, judging by his beard or moustaches, should be in a hermitage rather than in a dancing scene?

[p. 94] That he is a “brahman” can be deduced mainly from the fact that in most cases he has *moustaches and a beard* [...] judging by his position, posture and other characteristics, he appears *to take part actively in the course of the dance*. He is not completely absorbed in his own action, as the musicians of the reliefs usually are, but his movements and actions are clearly intended for the dance, while it is being performed by the dancing-girl or -girls. Furthermore, on several reliefs he appears *to sing or recite*; [...] finally he *claps his hands* or handles the little hand-bells. (Stutterheim’s italics).

Krom and van Erp detected the Brahmanic character on several reliefs of Borobudur,⁶⁸ here I have included a selection of the most striking and/or clear depictions (cf. figs. 2–7).⁶⁹ Similar figures also appear on reliefs of the 9th-century Buddhist Caṇḍi Sari (cf. fig. 9, featuring a solitary dancing Brahman), as well as on Śaiva monuments, such as Caṇḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang in Prambanan.⁷⁰ With reference to panel VII.11d of that temple (cf. fig. 10), Stutterheim (1956a:93) noted that “a man with moustaches is to be found among the company of musicians, a man who evidently has something to do with the dance performed there.” He described the scene as follows (1987:152–154):

It is clear that here some sort of celebration is taking place. The dancing girls, the musicians and the priests leave no doubt about it. [...] The dance of the woman is typically tantrik, as we can see in the Buddhist iconography of the Dākinī’s and other creatures of the ferocious type. It is a dance which can be seen till today as a religious dance in Tibet. Perhaps it would be good, if we consider the dance on our relief as belonging to the celebration and not just meant for the pleasure of the audience. [...] The smaller drums are *damarus*, as they are often to be seen even today with snake-charmers, but seldom used for ceremonies. But I must, however, point to the non-Indonesian character of the ensemble.

[c:] A woman with a sword and a shield is doing a war dance. In front of her, on the floor, is a vessel full of flowers and next to her again flowers and a fruit. On the other side there is a woman seated,

68. Another interesting dancing male figure who, although cannot be identified as strictly “Brahmanic” as he lacks beard and sacred cord (although he seemingly does have a moustache), evidently represents an ascetic—with a somewhat wild, uncanny look—is the one carved on panel O 39 of Borobudur (cf. fig. 8). That the dancing male in question is an ascetic may be evinced by the object found next to him, which was identified by Kunst as a “begging bowl with tinkling bars” (1968, fig. 5) or “begging-cup with small tinkling rods” (1973 II:416).

69. Although a discussion of the narrative context of the performances might help us better understand the circumstances that were the occasion of the performances, this is not the right place to embark on an identification of the narratives, which I will reserve for another occasion; my aim is simply to individuate a typology of characters/performers, which are in fact also found on other Central Javanese monuments, in different contexts.

70. Even a partial reproduction of relevant panels and a cursory description of them would take too much space. For a survey of the relevant panels, cf. Sedyawati 1982.

similarly decorated as the dancer, holding in her right-hand a bell and a bow in her left. Between both women there is a diadem (?).

[d:] A group of persons playing music. In the foreground there is a man with a moustache, who is reciting from a manuscript and another who is playing with the hand on two drums. Behind there are two women with hand-drums and two more where, however, it is not possible to determine what they are doing in the concert. On [panel VII.]12e there is a sitting musician, with a bell or *damaru*.

The subject of the scene and its position in the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative are still not settled (for a summary of the previous interpretations, cf. Worsley 2006:231–232). Worsley suggests that the panel should be interpreted neither as Bharata’s nor as Rāma’s royal consecration (*abhiṣeka*), but as a depiction of the festivities held on the occasion of the return of Rāma and Sītā in Ayodhyā. Performances staged by antinomian religious performers could have played a role in both types of events—compare, for instance, those described in the *Sumanasāntaka* passage discussed above; however, given the prominence of the two Yoginīs⁷¹ and the concomitant presence of various characters with either demonic or “Brahmanical”/ascetic features, it is tempting to interpret this relief as portraying a *gaṇacakra*-like ritual, which was often associated with royal ceremonies, and especially consecrations, across the Early Medieval Indic world.⁷²

The Brahman appearing in the dancing scenes discussed by Stutterheim calls to mind the “master” (*svāmī*), “leader” (*nāyaka*), or “stage director” (*sūtradhāra*) known in classical Indian theatre and dance. This figure, who was the actual “proprietor” of troupes, took part in the performances as lead singer and keeper of the rhythm for the dancers. The latter activity may have been represented in the Borobudur reliefs, where the “Brahman” appears to be either playing cymbals or clapping his hands. Nonetheless, the ascetic attire—including beard and moustache, twisted locks of hairs, and Brahmanical thread—displayed by the figure portrayed on the reliefs indicates that he may have fulfilled both functions, i.e. that of master of the troupe/dancing girls *and* religious practitioner.

Stutterheim attempted to explain this enigmatic character by making a thousand-year-long leap to the late 19th-early 20th century courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Suggesting that “in all probability we have before us the holders of that same function which existed at the courts of the Hindu-Javanese rulers more than a thousand years ago and which is perhaps still older,” Stutterheim (1956a:94) linked the character portrayed on the Central Javanese reliefs to the bearded performers documented in accounts by Javanese and Dutch witnesses. One such account, given by Stutterheim’s Javanese informants in 1932, describes two *canthang balungs* (Jav.), i.e. antinomian dancers performing at the *kraton* of Surakarta on occasion of the Muslim festival of Garebeg:

71. The Yoginī performing a “war dance” has a striking, in fact virtually identical, parallel in a figure embossed on a gold plate found in the site of Si Thep in modern Thailand (cf. Miettinen 2008:74).

72. The *Deśavarṇana* (43.3) mentions a *gaṇacakra* “always going together with gifts, beloved of his subjects” in association with king Kṛtanagara of Siṅhasāri (r. 1268–1292), an adherent of esoteric Buddhist cults.

For the so-called *gajah ngombé* (“the drinking elephant”) the dance postures *jèngkèng* and *kalang kinaṅtang* are used, *with the right and left hand stretched out and with their bodies slightly bent forward and hopping like birds* the dancers hold a small glass of gin in their right hands. In their left hands they hold between their fingers four *chaṅtang balung*, called collectively a *kěpyak* and made of four long, flat leaf-shaped bones, strung on a string and kept apart by knots; they are held between the fingers and make a rhythmical, rattling noise. The dancers *make twittering sounds* while at every gong-beat they drink the gin, which is replenished from a jug on the floor, *for the dance is performed in a crouching position. At the same time the dancers shake their heads in a ridiculous manner.* [...] the dancers are called *baḍut* or also *kriḍastama*. [...] A special task is reserved for the dancers at the *grěbėg mulud*. [...] During the whole procession they perform a dance, the *tayungan*, in which they *go along hopping, alternating their right and left foot at every gong-beat.* (Stutterheim 1956a:95–96; my italics).

Stutterheim (1956a:94) also notes that these characters clap their hands rhythmically during the dance of the female dancers called *serimpis*, and shout to them the measures at certain intervals indicated by the gamelan, while praising them. These actions—which, as I have pointed out above, seem to pertain to the figure of the “leader of the troupe”—comply with all the characteristics displayed by the Brahman-like figures in the Central Javanese reliefs, who also feature a similar attire (i.e. the long beard and the naked upper part of the body). The striking similarities between the dances performed by the *canthang balungs* and those described in both the RK and *Sumanasāntaka* give us good reason to pursue Stutterheim’s hypothesis further. For instance, the *canthang balungs*’ “twittering sounds” call to mind the shrill of a bird, and may be compared to the cry of the peacock in RK 24.106 (*tavvañnya sugəma*) and the high-pitched shrill by a female performer in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.2b. Their *shaking of the head in a ridiculous manner*, the indication that their *right and left hands stretched out with their bodies bent forward and hopping like birds*, and their going along *hopping, alternating their right and left foot* call to mind the characterization of the *pirus* as a pigeon in the RK,⁷³ and the verb *akikat* in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.2a, which may qualify both a dancer and a peacock (apparently referring to a dancing posture). The *canthang balungs*’ dance performed in a crouching position, which has a comic effect (enhanced by the fact that drinking of alcohol is also taking place), is in harmony with the actions conveyed through the verbal form *mamaṅḍak* and the noun (or adjective) *vəlu* in respectively RK 24.106d and *Sumanasāntaka* 113.5.⁷⁴ These actions may be compared to the most popular dance posture, with one leg uplifted and both legs strongly bent, characterizing the representations of either male or female dancers in Southeast Asian temple sculpture since the 8th century AD, such as the one portrayed on relief VII.11d of Caṅḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang. When describing the posture of the dancing Yoginīs—“possessed”

73. Intriguingly, the Proto-Austronesian **balug* “pigeon” (Wolff 2010:753–754), attested in a number of Austronesian languages as, e.g., *baloz*, *balog*, *balu*, is remindful of the Old and Mod. Jav. *baluh/balung* (“bone”) in the name *canthang balung*.

74. Another intriguing linguistic convergence may be found in the Proto-Austronesian *luŋ*, “curved,” and Mod. Jav. *me-lung* “bend, be bowed” (Wolff 2010:899); cf. above, fn. 26.

female Tantric initiates in a state of supernatural prowess—who are often, yet inaccurately, referred to as *apsaras* in Khmer art (cf. Sharrock 2013), Miettinen (2008:107) remarks:

both the supporting and the raised leg are strongly bent often resulting in an exceptionally low position. Most of the dancing “apsaras” convey an impression of dynamic movement, since keeping the balance in this position for a longer time seems nearly impossible.

Sharrock (2013:122), referring to the work of Louis Frédéric, describes this position—*ardhaparyānkāsana*, which is also the iconographic posture of Hevajra, a fierce deity of Tantric Buddhism—“more like ‘fierce trampling’ than dancing.” Dunn (1983:141) describes a martial and demonic character of the sacred Balinese masked-dance *topeng pajegan* (of which Sidha Karya is also part, as we will see below) as performing a dance characterized by a walk “performed with flexed knees, varying degrees of turned out feet, and an open position of the legs in relationship to the pelvis.” This walk, called *malpal*,

has a large stride where the center of gravity moves from side to side in large movements resembling a swagger [...]; the turned out foot is raised so that the heel is almost at knee level [...]. The center of gravity is low due to the flexion of the knees, and there is a pulsating quality to the phrases of the movement. The height of the stride and the lowness of the center of gravity may be adjusted to create different effects depending on which mask is worn for this role. A fiercer mask would be danced with a lower center of gravity for the walk and a more accented gait, with high knees and a heavy step. A high stride is also used in demonic roles and is associated with a wild animal-like fierceness. (Dunn 1983:142)

According to Dunn (1983:145), the design patterns of several masks in the *topeng pajegan* “are of a large asymmetrical angular presence projecting his energy from side to side in oppositional movement through space.” This style is associated to the demonic creature portrayed on frontons or lintels of Śaiva and Buddhist temples, the Kīrtimukha (“face of glory”) or Kālamukha (“Kāla’s face”),⁷⁵ insofar as the position of the arms of the dancer resembles that displayed by the architectural motif:

His upper arms are held at slightly above shoulder level and his arms extend forward from right angles at the elbows to flexed wrists.

In the Balinese repertoire described by Dunn (1983:198), the *tayungan*—the dance style performed by the *canthang balungs* (Stutterheim 1956a:96)—involves

the swaying of the hands and arms accompanying the walk with the impulse originating at the rising elbow and twisting wrist as if pushing out to each side emphasizing [sic] the oppositional dynamic of the walk.⁷⁶

75. This mythological demonic character, and the related architectural element, is known in Bali as Bhoma or Bhuta and in Java as Banaspati or Bhaṭāra Kāla (cf. Emigh 1984:23), and often referred to by art historians and archaeologists as Kāla-Makara. Cf. below: 51.

76. Brakel-Papenhuizen (1995:36) describes the *tayungan* performed by war dancers at the courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta as a “stylized forward stepping [...] which is performed in time to the

Compare figs. 11 and 13, portraying two *canthang balungs* in the *gajah ngombé* posture, and fig. 1 (the *mayūralalita karaṇa*), as well as the position of the arms displayed by the “dancing girls” in the Borobudur reliefs, figs. 2 and 3. Also interesting is the detail that the naked body of the *canthang balungs* was daubed over with yellow *boreh* unguent, which is in harmony with the image of *jānu* (= *boreh*) unguent pouring down on excited dancing peacocks in RK 24.105.

In an attempt to identify the Indo-Javanese prototypes of the *canthang balungs* and their subordinate dancing girls, Stutterheim (1956a:98–99) quoted a passage from Moens (1924:531, note 33), who saw in the *canthang balungs* the heirs to antinomian Tantric practitioners who flourished in the Vajrayāna Buddhist milieu of the East Javanese Sinhasāri kingdom (12–13th century):

In the Kraton of Surakarta, a remarkable survival of “Those who enjoy the five M’s”⁷⁷ is still found in the so-called *chaṅtang balung*, two bearded “buffoons” with the upper part of their body naked and with yellow stripes, whose duty is to become fuddled in public with gin or arak and to dance in an intoxicated state. These court-functionaries not so very long ago received their official income by keeping dancing girls and prostitutes. Their name, probably a nick-name, is probably due to the fact that originally they performed their “dance” on the *kṣetra*, “rattling with bones” (*nyanṅtang balung*).

Stutterheim (1956a:99) linked the *canthang balungs* to a Tantric milieu insofar as they made use of *mudrās* (mystical hand gestures) during their dance, and originally had seals of office consisting of a phallus inside a heart-shaped vulva.⁷⁸ According to Stutterheim, other possibly Tantric elements of their attire include the *poleng* pattern of their *wrangkas*,⁷⁹ as well as their weaponry (*kris*, and sometimes pikes); further, he (1956a:99) argued that the *canthang balungs*’ other (nick-)name, i.e. *kriḍa astama*,⁸⁰ betrays

a trace of the Sanskrit root of the word “laugh(ing)” *has* [*astama* = (*h*)*as* + *tama*] ... in Yogyakarta the attention is emphatically drawn to the jeering laughter of the two *lurahs*; jeering laughter also plays a role in tantric rites.

basic pulse of the accompanying gamelan music. While such stylized walking apparently derives from ceremonial striding in processions [...] it is also used in classical dance to move across the dancing area.”

77. Stutterheim (quoting Moens) is referring to the practitioners of “left-hand Tantrism,” who allegedly enjoyed four impure substances (*madya* or wine, *māṃsa* or meat, *matsya* or fish, *mudrā* or parched grain) and sexual intercourse (*maithuna*) as part of their religious and ritual regimen.

78. As Stutterheim (1956a:96) informs us, these seals of office were destroyed at the death of their possessors; regrettably, these insignia were no longer used by the early 20th century, so what we know about them was reported by “those who still remember them.” Stutterheim (1926) notes that heart-shaped “chastity plates” or pubic plaques were worn by ascetics or other religious figures in East Javanese Hindu art. Many such pubic plaques are reproduced and discussed in Lunsingh-Scheurleer 2011; some of these display a phallus and are associated with ascetic figures of the Rṣi Brahmanical type (*ibid.* fig. 1), or with the character of Bhīma (*ibid.* fig. 3).

79. Indeed a chequered loincloth (*poleng*) is a typical feature of the iconography of Bhīma (i.e. Bhairava) in East Java and Bali (Stutterheim 1956b:108, 112–114, 118, 122). Cf. also below, fn. 88.

80. As reported by Stutterheim (1956a:96), the personal names of the two *canthang balungs* with the title of *jajar* (the lowest rank among the court administrative officials) were respectively Suka Astama (*suka* = pleasure) and Guṇa Astama (*guṇa* = magical power).

To this I may add that *krīḍa* in Sanskrit means “sport, play, pastime, amusement, amorous sport,” “disrespect shown by jest or joke” (*krīḍ* = “jest, joke”), and is a term commonly associated with dance and theatre in the Sanskrit tradition. The “dancing girls” doubling as prostitutes mentioned by Moens are the *pesindhèn talèdhèk* (Jav.).⁸¹ When discussing the *pesindhèn talèdhèk*, Stutterheim (1956a:98) quotes a description related by a Javanese informant to Groneman in the 1930s:

A few *pēsindhèn talèdhèk*—the public dancing girls attached to the *kraton*, who sing at other gamelan-performances or who with their steps and solo-singing add lustre to the *nayuban* or dance-performances of the men—follow their official “master.”

Stutterheim (p. 100) concluded that these features must be ascribed to Tantric rites which seemed to him “to be in the first place a recrudescence of old indigenous shamanistic and other customs,” while the dancing-girls reminded him of the *devadāsīs*, the dancing girls-cum-sacred prostitutes known from the Indian tradition:

The older phase of the profession of the *talèdhèk* undoubtedly brings to mind the *devadāsīs*, the so-called nautch-girls of the Indian temples; the presence of a brahman on the Barabuḍur-relief permits us to draw this line of development via the *chanṅang balung*.

In the footnote closing his article, Stutterheim referred “for comparison” to a series of articles by Brandts Buys, which also dealt with the *canthang balungs*. Brandts Buys (1933:259), who presented materials that were indeed largely identical with Stutterheim’s, regarded these characters as “degenerate Brahmans” (*gedegenereerde Brahmanen*), and accepted Moens’ hypothesis linking the *canthang balungs* to Tantric Śaiva-Buddhist worshipers of Bhairava. He (p. 260) further added the interesting—but to him “admittedly odd” (*wel vreemd*)—piece of information that the *canthang balungs* performed at wedding ceremonies and the festivities connected with them, both within and without the *kraton*.

The textual and visual materials discussed by Stutterheim were again considered by Holt (1967:113–115), who advanced an alternative hypothesis:

All these Javanese functionaries—the Brahmans on the reliefs, the *buyut* in literature, the supervisors at the courts—may hark back to the buffoon (*vidūshaka*) of the classical Indian theater who was “a Brahman but ugly and ridiculous.”

Holt connected the Javanese *pesindhèn talèdhèk*, and especially the female dancer called *juru i anin* described in the *Deśavarṇana* (cf. below: 40), to fertility cults and indigenous female deities. In my opinion, Holt’s view represents a step backwards from Stutterheim’s more specific identifications; nevertheless, Stutterheim’s enticing hypothesis needs to be updated in the light of recent advancements in our knowledge

81. Sutton (1984:123) points out that the word *talèdhèk* shares one root with *nḡlèdhèk* “to tempt, lure, attract.”

of Indic religions. An attempt in this direction, which goes beyond the catchwords “Tantric,” “indigenous,” and “shamanistic,” was made by Becker (2004:176–177):

In addition to the firm textual evidence of their presence in Java, there is less-firm, but suggestive, evidence of the involvement of Pāśupata monks in performance traditions. The reliefs of a Śaivite priest dancing and singing or reciting in the company of dancing women on temple reliefs at Borobudur and Prambanan (Stutterheim 1956:93) may indicate Pāśupata monks in the “marked” or first stage of spiritual practice. The women could also be Pāśupata. In India, women as well as persons from all castes could receive Pāśupata initiation, a practice that scandalized orthodox brahmāns [sic] in India.

When discussing the *canthang balungs*, Becker (2004:178) remarked:

Strange and inappropriate behavior by palace officials would not in itself identify these men as remnants of a Pāśupata monkhood, but they formerly carried as well a Śaivite seal of office. Their official seal was a representation of a *lingga-yoni*, the oldest and most widespread of Śaivite symbols.

Becker (2004:177–178) rightly noted a similarity between those Javanese figures and the Pāśupata practitioners in the domain of performance traditions, and were connected by her to Pāśupata adepts in the second stage, who adopted a peripatetic lifestyle including the display of “madness” or improper/ridiculous actions aimed at triggering the contempt of lay people. However, on account of the markedly antinomian features displayed by these dancers, it is more likely that they represented the remnants of even more extreme Śaiva groups. In fact it has now become clear that the Pāśupatas were just one among several Śaiva (sub)groups connected with performance and antinomian behaviours, such as the Lākulas, Kārukās, Kālamukhas, and Kāpālikas. It is especially the individuals (or groups) that mainstream Sanskrit sources collectively call “Kāpālikas,”⁸² but who were also known under the general label of Siddhas. Those practitioners were scornfully depicted as supernaturally endowed, yet evil, sorcerers who often posed as false Brahmans or ascetics; they sang, danced and played in theatrical performances; they encouraged the practice of drinking alcohol and engaging in sex with female attendants, whom they admitted into their order (cf. Bloomfield 1924); and their attire included ornaments and musical instruments made of (allegedly human) bones, as well as human skulls or parts thereof. The etymology of the (nick-)name *canthang balungs* would perfectly make sense in a Kāpālika milieu, for the “rattling bones” may be nothing else than a local variant of the rattle-drums (*ḍamaru*)⁸³ made of bones that constituted one of

82. Given the paucity of textual data, mostly consisting in second-hand accounts, it is difficult to envisage a neat 1:1 correspondence between actual groups of practitioners and the labels that were attributed to them by the sources. However, by upholding a polythetic categorization, and by recognizing that the motif of the Kāpālika (or Siddha) ascetic constituted a popular, and virtually proverbial, element of the Indic *imaginaire* as attested in both literature and the visual arts (Bloomfield 1924 and Samuel 2006), I believe that this remains a helpful category to use for the purpose of the present study. Compare Hatley’s (2013) polythetic approach to the classification of the religious phenomenon of Yoginī-cults, and the typology of Yoginī practitioners, in medieval India.

83. A waisted *ḍamaru*—“probably manufactured from a couple of human skulls” (Kunst 1973 I:219) is

the most characteristic marks of the Śaiva Kāpālikas. Also indicative of a Kāpālika origin may be the strings of flowers adorning their naked bodies, which is reminiscent of the garland of flowers offered to the gods (*nirmālya*) worn by Atimārga ascetics, and the emphasis on laughter, which is reminiscent of the observance of *aṭṭahāsa* or vehement laughter prescribed by the Pāśupata observance (*pāśupatavratā*). The detail, reported by Stutterheim (1956a:97), that on certain occasions the naked body of the *canthang balungs* was daubed over with horizontal stripes of yellow *boreh* unguent is in harmony with the image of *jānu* (= *boreh*) unguent pouring down on excited dancing peacocks (and, arguably, pigeons) in RK 24.105, and also resonates with the practice of smearing a yellow orpiment over the body or hairs and beard associated in certain Sanskrit texts with practitioners of the Bhairavamārga.⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, the four photographic depictions of the *canthang balungs* “in action” included in Brandts Buys’ article, which are reproduced here as figs. 12 and 13, are impressive insofar as the characters they portray are strongly reminiscent of scruffy, emaciated, *nirmālya*-wearing Indic ascetics of the Pāśupata and Kāpālika type. Their unusually tall *kuluk* cap (fez) is reminiscent of the mitre worn by Balinese Śaiva officiants of both *pedanda* (fig. 14) and *bhujāṅga/seṅguhu* status, as well as other categories of Indic ascetics.⁸⁵ Intriguingly, a similar cap is worn by Keralite artist Mani Damodara Chakyar playing the part of a Kāpālika in a Kutiyattam staging the Sanskrit *Mattavilāsa* (fig. 15); the artist also sports a prominent faux beard and wears strings of flowers. Further, as pointed out by Stutterheim (1956a:96), the *canthang balungs* performing on the occasion of the Muslim ceremony of Garebeg enacted a

held by the famous 13th-century dancing-Bhāirava statue found near Caṅḍi Singhasari (cf. also Kunst 1968:36); see also panel VII.11 cd of Caṅḍi Śiva in Prambanan (cf. above, and fig. 10), and Borobudur relief IV.7, showing a brahmanic character playing what seems to be a waisted (larger than usual) *ḍamaru* (Kunst 1968:35, and figs. 31–32; 1973 II:417).

84. See, e.g., *Harṣacarita* 3.121 (ed. Kane 1918:50), which describes a Bhairavācārya and his disciples on the occasion of a macabre ritual performed in a charnel ground as follows: “Jewelled rings dangling from the other ear anointed them with sparkling lustre like a spell-charmed *gorocana* pigment” (*itarakarṇāvalambināṃ ratnakunḍalānām acchayā rucā gorocanayeva mantraparijaptayā samālabdhāṅgāḥ*). The Buddhist *Kṛṣṇayamāritantra* speaks of an unspecified yellow substance (*piṅgala*) smeared over the beard and hairs of a Siddha; Davidson (2002:380) takes this to be *gorocanā* (yellow orpiment) on account of the *Harṣacarita* passage. White (1997:87) discusses a connection between the four alchemical “primal Siddhas” and four alchemical substances, one of which is *gorocanā* (“in fact an organic dye having the same intense yellow color as orpiment. *Gorocanā* is made from the urine of the cow,” *ibid.*:91 n. 3). A connection between a Bhairavika milieu and *boreh* unguent in Java is suggested by a report by Knebel on a stone statue of Bhīma from East Java, where the author comments: “On the figure we found *boreh*—*sapientī sat*. The place is indeed *pakahulan* [= place where vows, *kahul*, are made], in case of disease of man, beast or crop” (quoted in Stutterheim 1956b:112).

85. The *kuluk* (also called *makutha*, from the Skt *makūṭa* [= *mukūṭa*], “crest”) is a Javanese headdress worn by court officials. In fig. 11, various figures in the background (including the musicians) are wearing *kuluks*; however, those worn by the *canthang balungs* appear to be of a different, i.e. much taller, type. Compare the cap/mitre worn by ascetics in late Campā art (e.g. a 15th century sculpture from Phật Lôì Pagoda on Nhon Hài peninsula [Binh Định, Vietnam], depicting a Śaiva ascetic [*śivācārya*] identified as such by inscription on the back: isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0214.html; accessed 23-01-2014). I thank Arlo Griffiths for drawing my attention to this image.

caper so as to imitate dogs in heat:

Formerly, some thirty years ago, they had to perform a remarkable dance when arrived at the foot of the *stinggil* [the building where the gamelan are kept], which is described as being an imitation of dogs at mating time. If they managed to make the *susuhunan* laugh, they were assured of a monetary reward. This custom was abolished probably for the sake of decency because many Europeans [...] were present at the *grĕbĕg* ceremony.

This dance reminds us of the imitation of mating goats by *piruses* in the *Sumanasāntaka*. The imitation of animals, and especially of a bull's lowing, was a practice of the Pāśupatas, and of the *pāśupatavrata* in general (cf. Ingalls 1962:295). Since dogs are considered as the most impure animals in Brahmanical lore, they were often connected to the practices of antinomian groups: for example, the "great observance" (*mahāvrata*) carried out by the Kāpālikas prescribed that the adept must wear the skin of a dog; the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* by the Buddhist master Vasubandhu characterizes the Pāśupata conduct as "behaving like a dog" (*kukkura[...]vrataṃ*).⁸⁶

Becker's identification of the women as Pāśupatas, and in particular her last remark about the women's admissibility into the order, is not very likely. As it appears from their surviving scriptures, the Pāśupata order—at least in its original form—was only accessible to male consecrated Brahmins (Sanderson 1988:664). To her credit, Becker (2004:196) in an endnote suggests the alternative hypothesis that the female figures might have been the equivalent of the Indian *devadāsīs* (as argued by Stutterheim, 1956a:100). Sutton (1984:125) too pointed out that the *talèdhèk*, much like the *devadāsīs*, doubled as prostitutes. From epigraphic documents we know that *devadāsīs* were maintained by the Kālamukhas, a group of the Śaiva Atimārga related to the Kāpālikas (Lorenzen 1991); post-twelfth century South Indian Saiddhāntika sources document a group of female servants maintained for temple dancing and singing, called *gaṇikā* or *rudragāṇikā* (Brunner, Oberhammer and Padoux 2004:175–176). The female *talèdhèk*, who were under the responsibility of the *canthang balungs* in Surakarta, and of the *lurah talèdhèk* in Yogyakarta, would also fit well into the category of female attendants (*dūtī*) of the Kapālinī or Yoginī type, who ranked among the antinomian groups of the Kāpālikas, Kālamukhas, and Siddhas.

Sutton (1984) elaborated on the Javanese tradition of the *talèdhèk* and its connection with that of the *canthang balungs* in a study combining the early reports discussed by Brandts Buys, Stutterheim, and Pigeaud, with data drawn from Javanese texts and anthropological research conducted in modern Java. In her words (1984:123–124),

⁸⁶. Cf. White (1991:102–103) and Acharya (2013:105, 127–128). A black dog is connected with Bhairava, the demonic manifestation of Śiva worshiped by the Kāpālikas, of whom he may be a manifestation as well as a vehicle (*vāhana*); a dog features in this function in the dancing-Bhairava statue of Siṅhasāri. We also know of a Tantric master named Kukkurācārya (*kukkura* = dog), who instructs king Indrabhūti in obtaining the supernatural status of *vidyādhara* (Davidson 2002:243).

Though rare today in Central Java, one still finds an occasional itinerant *taledhek* with a few musicians, to my knowledge always male, wandering the streets of even the larger cities. [...] They are usually looked down upon by the general populace as beggars, and the *taledhek* as prostitutes. [...] Whether as a beggar or as a participant in a ritual, the singer dancer is expected to perform in a manner alluring to men.

Sutton (1984:125) translates a passage from Pigeaud's *Javaanse Volksvertoningen*, where it appears that in Solo the *talèdhèk* were under the jurisdiction of the *canthang balungs*:

[...] it is said that they [the *canthang balungs*] formerly held the position of leaders of the dance women. [...] According to my information from Solo, they had the rights simply to consider as their own subordinates women or girls who caused public scandal through immoral conduct and who were not married or subordinate to a master or lord. Whenever a man appeared who wanted to marry one of these women or take her as a servant, he had to buy her freedom.

Sutton (1984:121–123) traced this modern Javanese tradition of dancing girls to premodern East Java by drawing attention to a passage of the 14th-century *kakavin Deśavarṇana* by Mpu Prapañca, where a number of parallels with the *talèdhèk* and the context of the performance occur. Canto 91 of the Old Javanese poem describes a “female entertainer” named *juru i anin* (“Mistress of the Wind”), whose performance consists of both dance and singing:

“The first part was essentially comical (witty, *cucud*) and perhaps erotic. The female dancer was accompanied by Buyut (Great grandfather, and oldman), probably a follower and astute servant (*panakawan*) of the kind that is indispensable in Javanese plays” [Pigeaud 1960–63, vol. IV:316]. This part was performed “in the open air, probably near the countrymen’s hall” [*id.*, vol. IV:317]. The second part began with her entrance into the royal ‘Presence’, where she joined the exalted members of the court in drinking liquor and where “Mantris (mandarins) and *upapattis* (assessors at law) equally are taken for companion by her, drinking liquor, singing *kidungs* (songs)” [*id.*, vol. III:108].

Mpu Prapañca defines these songs as being “comparable with the cries of a peacock on a branch in their poetic beauty” (canto 91.3b, *mrak mañavuvvañ i padapa tulya nika riñ alañ*, trans. Robson 1995:191), which suggests a link between the female dancer and a peacock. Furthermore, Sutton (1984:125) noted that men made gifts of clothing to *juru i anin*, which finds a parallel in the Modern *tayuban/nayuban* tradition. As remarked by Pigeaud (1960–63, IV:316):

In modern Java in rural districts the custom for men to throw articles of their own apparel [...] on the floor at the feet of a female dancer as a token of admiration and erotic excitement still prevails.

This custom reminds us of the simile found in RK 24.105–106, where excited peacocks danced under a “shower” of “golden ornaments” falling from trees. The *Deśavarṇana*’s account has common elements also with the description of female performers (*strī niñ śaiva* and *strī niñ vidu*) in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.1–3, who simultaneously dance, sing and recite in a comical manner. The name of the *Deśavarṇana*’s performer—“Mistress of the Wind”—may be linked to a Tantric

milieu, for the god Vāyu⁸⁷ was characterized in many Old Javanese (as well as Sanskrit) sources as the father of Bhīma, whose connection with Bhairava, the demonic aspect of Śiva, was convincingly argued by Stutterheim (1956b:124–125; cf. below).⁸⁸ The active participation of court dignitaries in the dance and accompanying “drinking bout” appears to be a common feature in the Old Javanese accounts I have presented above. Also interesting is the presence of the *buyut* or “old man,” whose role of buffoon, master or partner of dancing-girls, and magician,⁸⁹ at once recalls that of the *pirus* and *canthang balung*.

Sutton (1984:121) discussed the practices found in passages of the 18th–19th century Javanese *Serat Centhini*, which persists in the Javanese *tayuban* tradition of dance-performance, where one or more *talèdhèk* are involved in a kind of erotic singing and dancing with men and women, accompanied by gamelan music:

Tayuban need not involve drinking or physical contact between the *taledhek* and any of her male partners, yet in many cases it involves a considerable degree of both. The well-known nineteenth century poem, *Serat Centhini*, describes at great length a *tayuban* in which most of the participants wind up intoxicated and some copulate on the dance floor. While many Javanese today claim that *Serat Centhini* descriptions such as this are fanciful exaggerations, drinking and sexual license have been common practice at *tayuban* occasions. [Stutterheim 1956a:99:] “It is [...] an astonishing spectacle for those who have the opportunity to attend a real, old-fashioned *nayuban* for the first time, to see the stately Javanese, who in ordinary life do not in the least appear to appreciate the use of alcohol, becoming fuddled to such an extent and to see them in a state of excitement in which they occasionally openly misbehave and allow themselves all kinds of liberties with the *taledhek*.”

According to Sumarsam (1995:33), who quotes several passages of the *Serat*

87. The Sanskrit/Old Javanese *vāyu* (“wind,” or “the God Vāyu”) is synonymous with the Old Javanese *ānin*.

88. The Sanskrit word *vātula* (“windy”) denotes a “mad” or “crazy” person, and is also used for someone who is possessed. According to a widespread tradition, Bhīma’s brother is Hanumān, who shares with him the appellative *bāyuputra* (“son of Wind”), and who is himself considered a manifestation of Bhairava in both South Asia and the Javano-Balinese world. In the Balinese *Kapiparwa* indeed it is Hanumān (*anoman*) who eats the Sun instead of his brother Kāla-Bhairava, as another popular version of the story has it. Vickers (2011:127) notes that “The link to Bayu explains a connection Balinese make between Anoman and Bima, which is otherwise mysterious. [...] Anoman and Bima have similar iconography: both have the “prawn claw” (*supit urang*) coiffure of the semi-divine heroes of the epics, and both wear very little clothing except for the chequered (*poleng*) loin cloth. In Balinese ritual use these *poleng* cloths, as the union of opposites, represent power (*sakti*). The heroes’ conflict is ended by the intercession of their father, the god Bayu, who is iconographically identical to Bima, except that he has the aureole and what Forge refers to as a ‘god spot’.”

89. A characterization of *buyut* as a man of supernatural prowess is found in the Middle Javanese chronicle *Pararaton* (6.27, quoted in OJED 370). There a *buyut* is introduced by the honorific *hyañ*, which is usually reserved for either divinities or characters of a high religious standing (including craftsmen). This *buyut*, who is described as the guru of Ken Anrok, possessed various supernatural powers, including the *dharmakāñcanasidi* (supernatural ability of making gold?). The figures of Buyut Cili and Buyut Cungking are revered as persons of (benign) magical power, in connection with *slametan* rituals and *barong* performances, in some East Javanese locales (Beatty 1999:86). As in the *Pararaton*, the *buyut* is usually referred to as *eyang (hyañ)* (*id.* 1999:99). A connection between buffoonery and supernatural/magical power is found in the character embodying a comedian and black magician known as *bondres* in sacred Balinese temple-dance and performance.

Centhini and other nearly contemporary Javanese texts, *tayuban* continued to be an essential part of court celebrations into the 19th century, and survived until recent years as a tradition especially followed in wedding celebrations. Even so, as narrated in the *Babad Mangkubumi*, it was perceived with hostility by the devout Muslim Paku Buwana IV when he was still a crown prince in the Surakarta court in the second half of the 18th century, apparently on account of its wild, un-Islamic character (Sumarsam 1995:31–33). Stutterheim indeed labelled the *nayuban* a “*taṇḍak*-party,” and connected it to the *canthang balungs* via the *talèdhèk*. Sutton (1984:122–123) further elaborated upon this connection, linking the *canthang balung* to the *buyut* and *tandhak* (Jav.), whose existence was documented among the modern Tengger Hindu communities:

In the Tengger area of East Java, singer-dancers (there called *tandhak*) often appear at festive occasions where great quantities of liquor are consumed. In their inebriated state, the men behave in a manner which would be unacceptable in more normal public encounters with members of the opposite sex. The role of the Buyut is also paralleled in the *taledhek* tradition. Pigeaud, Stutterheim, and Brandts-Buys have written of the *canthang balung*—men who dressed strangely and danced for the ruler (*susuhunan*) of Surakarta and his entourage. [Pigeaud 1938:59:] “They had a place amidst the gamelan players whenever *bedhaya* or *srimpi* dances [female-style ensemble dances of the court] were performed in the *kraton*. Then they fulfilled the role of *badhud* (jesters) and let the *senggak* calls [short vocal interjections] be heard against the gamelan music.”

Erotic *bedhaya*-dances performed at the *kraton* of Surakarta in an atmosphere of drinking parties among the noblemen is reported by van Goens, a mid-17th century Dutch observer (cf. Sumarsam 1995:21). Sumarsam notes that the instrumental combination mentioned in the account—i.e. small gongs, flutes, and a bowed-string instrument—has no equivalent in today’s Javanese ensembles, yet is mentioned in Old Javanese literature, and therefore “might well be a survival of Hindu-Javanese ensembles.” The Tenggerese *tandhak* singer-dancers obviously derive their name from the Old Javanese *taṇḍak*, which means “dance (with song)” (OJED 1929). Given that *taṇḍak* is not traceable to any known root in Proto-Austronesian and other Austronesian languages, it is tempting to regard this word as deriving from the Sanskrit *taṇḍaka*, “ juggler” (MW 432), which itself stems from the root *taṇḍ*, “to beat”; from the same root is derived the word *taṇḍu*, the “name of an attendant of Śiva (Bharata’s teacher in the art of dancing), cf. *tāṇḍava*: ‘dancing (esp. with violent gesticulation), frantic dance (of Śiva and his votaries)’.”⁹⁰

Topeng Sidha Karya: A Balinese Tantric Temple-Dancer

Let us now turn to Bali, where some of the ceremonies and temple-ritual performances that are still practiced today may find their historical predecessors

90. A connection with Śiva may be suggested on the basis of MW’s gloss of *taṇḍi*, “a *ṛṣi* (who saw and praised Śiva),” and *tāṇḍa* (= *tāṇḍaka*), “an old sage.” The dancing posture displayed by the characters appearing in this and related reliefs of Caṇḍi Śiva was identified by Lopez y Royo-Iyer (1998:66–72) as a form of *tāṇḍava*; she then came to the—to my mind unwarranted—conclusion that the performers displayed in a number of panels must represent the God himself.

in those described in Old Javanese epigraphic and textual sources.⁹¹ Among such Balinese ceremonies are those involving Sidha Karya, a character that evokes many of the antinomian, and more specifically Tantric, features that we have seen in the performing figures thus far discussed. Sidha Karya is a dancer and, at the same time, a comic masked performer, who appears at the end of *topeng pajegan* masked dance-drama. As put by Hildred Geertz (1994:125), he has the aspect of

an old man with bright eyes, a smiling, bucktoothed mouth, and large bushy white mustache and eyebrows. He enacts an odd comic dance [...]. He is said to be a form of the demon Kala, and his act dramatizes the submission of the demon and his transformation into a being of beneficent attitudes toward the congregation.

A popular Balinese etymology of Sidha Karya is “the completion of the work,” i.e. “the one who accomplishes (*siddha*) the ritual work” (*kārya*, more correctly ‘religious performance’, cf. OJED 813 and supra: 29). This is likely to be an ex-post, “folk-etymology” of an original Sanskrit adjectival compound *siddhakārya*, which means “one whose object is accomplished,” hence “one whose acts are fulfilled [supernaturally]”; compare the Old Javanese *siddhikāra*, “one who acts through magical powers” or “one who performs wonders.”⁹² The name comprises the word *siddha*, “a perfect one,” in other contexts denoting a class of Śaiva and Buddhist Tantric figures.⁹³

Sidha Karya is indeed a character possessing special knowledge and magical powers (Dunn 1983:80). He embodies an odd blend of demonic and divine, and is in fact “associated with the kings of Bali in ancient times which have a pre-Majapahit *rākṣasa* or demonic appearance”; his frightening and semi-demonic look is referred to in Balinese as *aeng*, which means “tremendous,” “dreadful,” or “terrifying” (Dunn 1983:45). His pedigree and identity is portrayed in many ways according to different local traditions, e.g. as “the great laughing king,” or the son of a Śaiva priestess and a Buddhist priest, or himself a priest from India (Keling). Sidha Karya’s “appearance in the mask form is attributed to his power to change himself into different forms, a power associated with the gods who take even demonic manifestations” (Dunn 1983:76). Margaret Coldiron, in an unpublished paper titled “The Tantric root of Sidha Karya” (2007), has stressed the fundamentally “unorthodox” and contradictory nature of this Balinese mask character:

91. Cf. Hunter’s remarks: “The ‘tellers of historical tales’ (*amacangah*) spoken of in *Sumanasāntaka* are also believed to have their modern descendants in the *topeng* dances of Bali, where masked performers enact tales from ‘dynastic histories’ (*babad*) rather than the mythological events related in the shadow theatre” (Worsley et al. 2013:576); compare Cohen (2011:143), who speaks of the Javano-Balinese Sanghyang trance-dance as ‘very ancient and simultaneously tied to the local ritual economy.’”

92. OJED (1759) lists *siddhikāra* but does not gloss it; s.v. *aniddhikāra*, *sumiddhikāra*, *siniddhikāra*, and *paniddhikāra*, it gives “to apply magical power to, effect by magic, change by magic.”

93. De Casparis (1956:226) records the expression *kabikuan in siddhakārya*, “the monastery (called Siddhakārya” (or, rather, the monastery of the Siddhakārya(s)?) occurring in the Lintakan copperplate of 919 AD.

Sidha Karya is one of the most sacred and significant of Balinese mask characters, yet his appearance and behaviour are mysterious. He is holy, but a joker; refined, yet coarse; divine, yet demonic—in short, a mass of contradictions. [...] Does the mask represent a “Buddhist Brahmin from Java,” an ancient Balinese demon-king or an ascetic evangelist from India? What is his significance in the ritual dance drama in which the performance of this mask often seems dramatically irrelevant, but is utterly essential?

According to various Balinese stories—with variants with respect to details—reported by oral informants or written chronicles (*babad*), Sidha Karya was a Brahman travelling from Java, who arrived at Pura Besakih when an important ritual to avert the disgrace that had fallen upon the kingdom was being performed. On account of his filthy attire, he was not believed to be a real Brahman; he was not allowed to cross the temple’s premises, but rather ordered to go south (*kelod*)—an inauspicious point of the compass, associated with the Demonic in both Indic and Javano-Balinese cosmology.⁹⁴ Sidha Karya cursed the ritual, which resulted in even direr consequences for the kingdom and its inhabitants. Eventually, his Brahmanic status and kinship relationship with the ruling prince is recognized, and Sidha Karya “makes the ritual complete,” thereby healing the kingdom. Coldiron (2007) describes the crucial event as follows:

He appears in the king’s court unwashed, covered in ash—the ashes of the cremated dead—he has no time for court manners and he laughs at the mundane concerns of those who have not passed through the [...] renunciation of the body’s needs and desires.

As a magically powerful “outsider,” and an antinomian ascetic who has mastered impurity, Sidha Karya is the most qualified person to accomplish the ritual—unlike the Śaiva Saiddhāntika high officiant (*pedanda Śiva*) who, in his purity, cannot deal with the forces operating at the *bhūta* level.

In an earlier study, Coldiron (2005b:241) drew attention to the apparent similarities between this figure and the Tantric Siddhas known from Vajrayāna Buddhism, observing that, although the Sidha Karya’s dance contains elements of entertainment like storytelling and buffoonery, it is mainly “addressed to the gods and fulfill a purely ritual function,” including the appeasement of the *bhūta kālas* or malignant ghostly beings. She further pointed out that the performances of the Sidha Karya are characterized by music (“insistent, rhythmic, with a pulse that uses an interval reserved for supernatural characters and fights”); laughter and screams/cries (“indicative of a powerful, supernatural character”); erratic movements; recitation of mantras and offerings to the cardinal directions, beginning from the South (the demonic/inauspicious point of the compass) and ending with Śiva in the centre.

Sidha Karya’s mask may be white or black; a third eye—Śiva’s attribute—is represented in the middle of the forehead. Some masks have large teeth and wide grin, whereas others have fangs (see fig. 16). The figure shares with demonic

94. The south is conceived as the abode of Kāla and demons in general, as well as a synonym of wilderness and pestilence (cf. Headley 2004:321–322).

characters his bushy eyebrows, moustache, large eyes, and unruly hair; however, ‘while iconographically the character looks a lot like a demon, narratively we know that this is a high-class Brahmin’ (Kodi et al. 2005:176). His Brahminical pedigree and ascetic attire oddly mixed with demonic and frightening features, stylized lines on the face that seem to denote laughter, his ash-smear (originating from a corpse), his dance, all conjure up the prototypical devotee of Rudra/Bhairava, an anchorite of the Pāsupata, Kāpālika, or Siddha type. Coldiron (2005a:186) describes his dance as follows:

Sidha Karya laughs maniacally, as if privy of some great joke at the expense of the audience. He waves his white cloth, laughs, *executes bird-like hops to the right and left*, laughs again in the manner of Rangda and then rushes at the audience. (My italics)

Besides the laughter, common to all traditions discussed so far, note the striking similarity with the bird-like hops to the left and right feet performed by the *canthang balungs*. According to Coldiron, Sidha Karya’s sideways hops indicate his magical powers; to jump as a bird, and to dance in a frenzy way, is forbidden in the daily life in Bali.⁹⁵ Interestingly, similar side-hops are also seen in the Sanbasö dance performed by the Japanese mask Okina. On account of the strikingly similar iconographic features, the style of their dance, and the use of mantras and *mudrās* by both characters, Coldiron (2005b:240–244) has suggested that Okina and Sidha Karya may derive from a common Tantric Buddhist source, probably originating from Java,⁹⁶ and ultimately “Kalinga”—i.e. Andhra or Orissa, which was an important center for the trade route between India, Southeast Asia, and China.⁹⁷ A “Kalinga-connection” was already pointed out by Emigh (1996) who, in his analysis to the Balinese masks of Rangda and Barong, suggested that the demonic figures of Balinese dance-drama may originate from the Tantric practices of that region in India. Coldiron, however, concludes that no certain model has as yet been found. While a Tantric Buddhist pedigree cannot be ruled out, I find a direct derivation of Sidha Karya from a prototypical Śaiva Atimārga, i.e. Pāsupata or Kāpālika, ascetic a more plausible hypothesis.⁹⁸

95. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this information.

96. Cf. Coldiron 2005b:230: “While it is true that Buddhism is a feature of both Balinese and Japanese cultures, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that the source of the Tantric Buddhist influence that informs the iconography of these masks was not China but rather Southeast Asia, specifically Java. [...] The Hindu-Buddhist culture of Bali is, of course, directly connected to that of pre-Muslim Java, but there is also new evidence indicating ‘Indonesian’ influences on the arts of early Japan.” Coldiron refers to the work by Ann Kumar on ancient Javanese influences on Japan, and to David George’s suggestion that the Chinese Dragon is a representation of a creature from Java.

97. In Bali *kēlin* is generally meant to refer to (East) Java, but the name could actually refer to the “kingdom of Kalinga-nagaram, centred in what is now the coastal border region of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh” (Emigh 1996:77; cf. also Dunn 1987:74). The identification of Old Javanese *kēlin* (i.e. the various *kēlins*) is controversial: for a detailed linguistic and historical discussion, cf. Damais 1964, especially pp. 96–111.

98. A fruitful line of enquiry would be to compare the Balinese and Japanese ritual dances to Indic Tantric (Buddhist) dances from Tibet and Nepal, such as the Newari dance Bhairab Naach (“Bhairava’s

Fierce deities and demonic devotees

As we have seen above, in the Sanskritic tradition fringe groups such as the Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas “survived mainly in the literary and religious texts of their opponents as stereotypical villains, buffoons, or heretics [...] sprinkled with ashes; adorned with the six insignia; and holding a *khaṭvāṅga* club, a skull (*kapāla*), *ḍamaru* and *mṛdaṅga* drums, and a trumpet” (Lorenzen 2000:83). These wandering (pseudo-) ascetics were ridiculed in a number of plays, where they figured as hedonistic yet “scruffy, long-haired denizens of the margins of the Indian social institutions” (Davidson 2002:114).⁹⁹ In a similar fashion, the extant information about these fringe groups in the Javanese setting has survived to us in the form of critiques or satires by courtly literati who evidently adhered to mainstream, householder-oriented religious currents. For instance, in RK 24.112 a *kuvon*-bird is characterized as a *vidu*, a homeless and unattached wayang-player, and accused of posing as a *taṇḍa* functionary; he is declared to be *gunya* (“having manifold supernatural abilities,” “powerful,” or: “a sorcerer”) and *saguna* (“possessing magical/supernatural powers”).¹⁰⁰ In 24.114 the *kuvon* invites a she-*kuvon* to become a female ascetic (*kili*) and bring satisfaction to naked wandering ascetics (*kalavan lagnāmutusana*), thereby becoming an object of enjoyment (*bhukti*) for the devotees (*bhakta*) in the forest, who have low-ranking wives (*kula-kula*).¹⁰¹

dance”) and Caryā Nr̥tya (cf. Wedemeyer 2013:257–258, note 130). Samuel (2006:26), discussing the female deities associated in India with fierce deity rituals and the propitiation of categories of Indian malignant spirits, maintains that “masked figures possessed by these deities have played an important role in the ritual cycles of Hindu communities from the Nepal Valley to Kerala, Bengal, and Bali.” A link between ritual, possession, and dramatic art has survived up to the modern time among the performers of the Terukkūttu (“street drama”) in Tamil Nadu, among which “the boundary between performance and ritual is so thin as to be nonexistent,” and during which performances “at least one of the principal actors become possessed” (Hart 1987:477). Hart concludes that “there is no reason to suppose that performance in ancient Tamilnad was any different: indeed the poems show that the low-caste performers often became possessed and danced in a frenzied manner.”

99. The South Indian farce *Mattavilāsa* (7th century AD) portrays a Kāpālika as a hedonist engaged in wild dances, parties involving the consumption of meat and alcohol, and enjoying sexual intercourse with his partner, a dancing Kapālinī called Devasomā; v. 20 describes him as “having as hairs a wild and tangled mess, wearing a withered garland around his neck, his body covered with dust and ash [...] a garbage heap in the form of a man” (Lorenzen 2000:94).

100. See Acri 2011a:62. Intriguingly, Tantric practitioners are referred to as *guniā* in contemporary Orissa (cf. Keul 2013:6, who speaks of “local tantriks” connected to Yoginī-cults, cremation-ground offerings and healing practices); among the Baigals of Central India and the Santhals of (South-) Eastern India, *gunia* means “sorcerer” (Koppers 1940-41:770). See also below, *Pārthayajña* 8.9, and the nicknames of the two *canthang balungs* mentioned in footnote 80.

101. See Acri 2011a:84. In my earlier contribution I did not mention the possibility that *kula-kula* may be a pun, implying a reference to the *kula* in the sense of “clans” or “families” (of initiated devotees, Yoginīs, and minor goddesses) around which revolved the theology and (orgiastic) ritual practice of the Tantric texts of the Kaula stream—themselves probably derived from an earlier Kāpālika milieu. Samuel (2006:26), when discussing Kāpālika-related practices, speaks about “the widespread role of low-caste ritual specialists in relation to kingship and political power, a pattern that has been identified in early Tamil literature and occurs in different forms in many parts of South Asia and the Himalayas. If fierce deity practices were originally performed by such low-caste specialists, then the *kula*, ‘families,’

A seemingly related category of low-status, power-seeking ascetics and performers who were active in non-courtly milieux is scornfully portrayed in stanza 6 and 9 of the eighth canto of the ca. 15th-century *kakavin Pārthayajña*:

*hana viku mañidan mañidāri bhuvana
makuravit aḡaluñ sukār aburarutan
tāhār ikana purih niñ avak aḡaṇiṇan
si hurip ika ya vastu sukār aburarutan (6)*

There are ascetics who behave in a crazy manner, wandering through the world; untidy, hindered by their matted hair, in disorder. So is the natural state of the body [of one] exerting [himself in performing austerities]. The Life principle is in fact hindered, in disorder.

*hana viku mañigəl macarita rinubuñ
biṣa tivas ika siñ vvañ atika vihikan
vvañ atika mañaləm ri guṇa nika lāvih
vvañ atika sañ asuñ mamigunani guṇa (9)*

There are ascetics who dance and recite stories, surrounded [by spectators]. Everyone should know that they are powerful [and yet] they come to nothing. Such persons boast of their exceeding magical powers; Such persons are the ones who render magical powers worthless.

The above description epitomizes a class of Indic wandering anchorites of the Śaiva Pāśupata and Kāpālīka- or Siddha-type respectively; these were despised in Sanskrit sources by the mainstream religious establishment on account of their uniting a quest for supernatural powers (*siddhi*, *guṇa*) with a career in the performing arts, and especially because of their “crazy” behaviours and antinomian practices. The Kāpālīkas practiced the observance of the Pāśupatas (*pāśupatavrata*), who enjoined the use of song, dance and drama in the worship of Rudra-Śiva and, concealing their Brahmanical (hence, pure) status, behaved improperly and indecently in order to cause contempt in the common people:

It was prescribed that he [the Pāśupata adept] snore, tremble, limp, play the lecher, act improperly and speak nonsensical words in full view of people. Such ridiculous actions were to be performed so as to give the impression that he was a madman (*unmatta*) and thus provoke disgust and contempt (*avamāna*). (Hara 1994:120)

Pāśupatasūtra 3.11 prescribes that the Pāśupata practitioner

Should go about like an outcaste. [... Commentary:] He should appear as though mad, like a pauper, his body covered with filth, letting his beard, nails and hair grow long, without any bodily care. Hereby he becomes cut off from the respectable castes and conditions of men and gives rise to disgust (trans. Ingalls 1962:289).

of early tantric practice may derive from the families who carried them out.”

The autocommentary *Svopajñavṛtti* to *Yogaśāstra* by the 11th–12th century Jain polymath Hemacandra (4.102.26–31) scornfully describes certain ascetics who take up and abandon the *pāśupatavṛata* according to their own advantage, and behave in other (even more) extravagant ways typical of the Kāpālikas. The passage depicts these ascetics with their hairs twisted together in a mass (*jaṭāpāṭala*), their limbs covered with ashes (*bhasmāṅga*), dancing and singing (*gītanṛtya*), farting (*putau vādayat-*) and roaring (*nādaavidhāyin-*) by drumming on their mouths as if it were a percussion-instrument (*vadanānādenāodya*), attacking sages, gods and men with deceits (*asatyabhāṣā*), breaking their observances (*vratabhāṅga*) out of their desire “to become slaves of slave-girls” (*dāsīdāsatvam icchat-*), carrying ornaments made of human bones (*narāsthībhūṣaṇabhṛt-*) and a pike or *khaṭvāṅga* (*śūlakhaṭvāṅgavāhin-*), wearing bells on their ankles (*ghaṇṭānupūradhārin-*), indulging in the enjoyment of drink, meat and sex (*madyamāṃsāṅganābhogaprasakta-*), continually singing (*gāyat-*) and dancing (*nṛtyat-*) with bells tied around their buttocks (*putānubaddhaghaṇṭa-*).

From the scant textual evidence on the beliefs and practices of Kāpālikas and their female attendants, the Kapālīnīs or Yogīnīs, which has survived to us through Śaiva sources of the Kaula or Bhairavatantra stream, we know that these practitioners aimed at achieving a direct connection with their demonic *iṣṭadevatā*, the male Bhairava and/or various terrifying manifestations of the Goddess. This union was achieved via their observance of mimicking or taking upon themselves some of his/her features in order to reach a complete identification with him/her, i.e. be “penetrated” or possessed (*āveśa*) in a trance-like state, often triggered through orgiastic rituals (e.g. *gaṇacakrapūjā* and *yoginīmēlāpa*), drinking bouts, and frantic dances on cremation grounds. The “odd” whole-body postures, called *mudrā*, assumed by the followers of these groups in their ritual dances were intended to induce a state of possession; through the experience of violent emotions triggered by the transgression of social and dietary rules of purity, these adepts identified themselves with their wrathful tutelary deities, becoming his/her—“theatrical,” so to speak—human embodiments.¹⁰²

Scholars generally consider that Bhairavika Śaivism was introduced in Nusantara, and especially in the East Javanese kingdoms of Kaḍiri and Siṅhasāri, only since the 12th century. But traces of Tantric cults are already discernible during the Central Javanese period. An incontrovertible allegorical reference to Śiva-Bhairava is found in an Old Javanese inscription from the Ratu Boko plateau dated 856 AD (de Casparis 1956:265–266, 271). There the princely figure of Kumbhayoni likens himself to a terrifying form of Śiva-Bhairava, who is described as performing an exalted *tāṇḍava*-dance—and, at the same time, meditating—on a corpse in a cremation ground, wearing a snake-thread, necklace, armband and leg-ornaments

102. For a fascinating account of these ritual or ritualized practices, as described in unpublished Śaiva sources, cf. the public lecture “Pleasure and the Emotions in Tantric Śaiva Soteriology” (especially mins. 40–60) delivered by Prof. Alexis Sanderson at the University of Hamburg on 07-06-2013 (<http://lecture2go.uni-hamburg.de/veranstaltungen/-/v/15161>; last accessed 24-01-2014).

made by the King of the Nāgas (*phañindra*), adorned with blood-dripping heads of the kings defeated by him.¹⁰³ The typical hairdos and attires characterizing the iconography of Bhairava, demons, and Kāpālika ascetics, such as ornaments of human skulls, Brahmanic cords and armbands made of snakes, feature in reliefs of the Loro Jonggrang temple complex.¹⁰⁴ A trace of Kāpālika-Bhairavika Śaivism can also be discerned in panel VII.11d of Caṇḍi Śiva, depicting a frenzy war dance by a fanged Yoginī accompanied by the music of *mṛdaṅga* drums, overseen by a character looking like a Brahman, who is reciting from a palm-leaf manuscript (fig. 10). A worshiper of Kāla (*ikaṅ iṣṭi kāla*) is linked to a tiger (*harimōṅ*), Śiva's vehicle, in RK 25.09;¹⁰⁵ “Bhairava” and “Bhairavamārga” appear among the sects described in early Old Javanese texts, such as the *Agastyaparva* and *Śaṅ Hyaṅ Kamahāyānikan* (cf. Goris 1926:101–103); the term (*śaṅ brāhmaṇa*) *kāpālikabrata* “(a Brahman) adhering to the observance of the Kāpālikas” is attested in the probably 10th-century *Udyogaparva* (45.4). It may be therefore safely assumed that these groups and their Tantric lore, rituals, and underlying theology, were known realities in the Javanese *imaginaire* already in the Central Javanese period.

Tantric imagery becomes more pronounced, and pervasive, in the Śaiva and Buddhist art of the Kaḍiri-Siḥasāri period in East Java; it recrudesces during the late Majapahit period, culminating in what Stutterheim (1956b:117–118) called a Javano-Balinese cult of Bhīma-Bhairava. According to Stutterheim, this very Bhīma—i.e. the demonic, skull-bearing ascetic aspect of Śiva known as Bhairava (of identical meaning, “the terrible/frightful”)—rather than (only) the popular Pāṇḍava hero of the *Mahābhārata* is the protagonist of the *Navaruci*, a ca. 16th-century Old/Middle Javanese soteriological text that narrates Bhīma's mystical journey towards enlightenment or self-purification. The story of the *Navaruci*, also known through the related *Bhīmasuci* and *Bhīmasvarga*, constitutes, as shown by Hinzler (1981:29), a common plot for old as well as modern wayang narratives and performances.

103. The same antinomian and martial imagery is found in a number of Sanskrit hymns dedicated to Śiva-Rudra from Bali; cf. especially *Śivastava*, vv. 8–10 (Goudriaan and Hooykaas 1971:290–293), and also *Rudragāyatrīdhyaṇa* (pp. 299–300). As Jordaan and myself (2012) have argued, some of these *stuti* may be contemporary or even older than the temple complex of Loro Jonggrang, being apparently connected to the iconographic and architectural plan of Caṇḍi Śiva.

104. E.g. on Caṇḍi Śiva, in a figure that I have identified as Kāla—cf. Acri and Jordaan 2012:301–302. An actual skull-bowl has been unearthed in Central Java, in the mountains to the north of Prambanan (cf. Stutterheim 1956b:125, fn. 44; Jordaan 1996:73). The use of skulls (*kapāla*) as drinking-bowls is described in the ca. 15th century *Tantu Paṅḍalaran* (cf. OJED 797 s.v.).

105. The Sanskrit-Old Javanese Śaiva text *Mahājñāna* (comm. ad śloka 27) defines the materialist doctrine as “the knowledge of the agitated among men, [...] the knowledge of Kāla” (*kālaññāna*). The expression “agitated among men” is my tentative translation of *kagivan*, a passive from *aṅgivaṅ* (“to shake”), glossed by OJED (532) as “in violent commotion, deeply moved, agitated” (also used, as in *Śri Tañjun*, in the sense of “moving to the tune of the gamelan”); compare *agivaṅan*, “moving to and fro, in violent motion.” The word is apparently connected to a frantic dance. It is worth noting that the Kāpālikas and Pāśupatas were often characterized as hedonists or epicureans associated (purportedly or not) by their mainstream detractors with the materialists—the lowest among the philosophical schools codified in the Sanskrit tradition (see Lorenzen 1991:47–48, 88–89, 217).

Stutterheim's identification is supported by the cemetery-lore that accompanies the figure of Bhīma, by his behaviour inclined to violence and rage, drunkenness and orgies, and by the features of his iconography, namely his high-worn headdress, snake-bracelets and erect exposed penis, his frantic dance performed while standing on a corpse, surrounded by demons drinking from skulls.¹⁰⁶ The comic—or grotesque—aspect of the Divine, represented in his demonic form of trickster, is evident in a passage of the *Navaruci* (p. 53.2–10) that the editor and translator Prijohoetomo deemed to be corrupt, arguably on account of its enigmatic and sinister content (cf. p. 110, fn. 2). Having described the invisible and formless aspect of God as Void and non-existence (*tayā*), the Guru explains to Bhīma the form(s) taken as incarnation by the Lord (*bhaṭāra*, usually standing for Śiva):

[...] *dadi vvañ ta ya, dadi lanāñ, dadi vadon; dadi satto masuku pat, rumañkañ, lumur vətəñnya, satto liñanku iri ya. Tan ana kucivanya riñ dadi vvañ. Vəruh mañigəl mavəḍihan, bisa mañidun macarita, vəruh mayoga masamāḍhi; prajña śakti, tan anāmaḍani. Kunañ pinakāhāranira, tan pati papañanira: amanān pva avaknira ḍavak, añinum pva ya rahira ḍavak. Irika ta ya sañ maavak tan alara ta ya; tan endah, tuhu sukha gumuyu. Tan pañinak-inak avan iñ uvus laṅguk. Kaśaktin mevəh viveka riñ aji.*

[... The Lord,] He becomes a human being; He becomes a male, He becomes a female; He becomes a four-legged animal, moving on all fours, His belly facing down. I would say, that is an animal (*sattva*).¹⁰⁷ There is no inferiority in His becoming a human being. He knows to dance wearing a *vəḍihan*;¹⁰⁸ He is skilled in singing and reciting. He knows to perform yoga and absorption. He is endowed with Gnosis and Power, there is nobody who equals Him. As for what constitutes His food, He pays little attention to what He eats:¹⁰⁹ He eats his own body, He drinks his own blood. In Him, the embodied [soul] does not suffer. He is not beautiful; He really likes to laugh. His manner of haughty speaking is not pleasant. [Being only] supernaturally mighty, He is in trouble with the discernment of the sacred scriptures.

The divine figure described in the passage appears to have many of the features attributed to both Bhīma/Bhairava and Bhīma the Pāṇḍava, son of Vāyu. In fact, in the *Navaruci* Bhīma (the Pāṇḍava hero) discovers to be Bhīma (a manifestation of the Godhead) through esoteric instruction and a process of self-purification. The Pāṇḍava Bhīma is a mighty, and often wrathful and impulsive, warrior of gigantic proportions, whose strong point is almost uniquely his physical strength; in both

106. For a detailed study of this Bhīma-cult, with special reference to iconography, cf. Duijker 2010.

107. *Satto* here represents a common alternative spelling of *sattva*, which in Old Javanese can mean either “living being, creature, animal” or “good, pure, virtuous” (OJED 1713).

108. The meaning recorded in OJED s.v. *wəḍihan* and *mavəḍihan*, is “wearing garments.” One may wonder whether the word reflects a title, or a typology of performer or official. A *pavəḍihan* is attested in 11th to 13th century inscriptions among the *vatək i jro (mañilala ḍryva haji)*—among whose are also the *vidus*—“in charge of collecting a contribution in clothes, *paməḍihan*?” (OJED 2233). A *paməḍihan* is mentioned along with *juru buyut* in the Old Javanese copperplate inscription of Penampihan (1269 AD; cf. Brandes 1913, inscr. 79, 4b.3).

109. *Pati* in this case may be *pati* IV, “to give special attention to, bestow great care on, take great pains over, make a special effort [...]” (OJED 1323).

the Sanskrit and Javanese versions of the *Mahābhārata* he is known as *vrkodara*, “wolf-bellied,” because of his insatiable appetite.¹¹⁰ The other features of this divine figure mentioned there, such as the ability to dance (*manigēl*), sing (*maniduñ*) and recite (*macarita*), his propensity to violently laugh (*gumuyu*), his proficiency in yoga (*mayoga*), his possession of Gnosis (*prajñā*) and Power (*śakti*), are all consonant with those attributed to Bhīma/Bhairava, and at the same time reflected in the figures of antinomian, power-seeking performers as the *vidu* and *pirus*. The references to Bhīma as paying no attention to his diet, and especially as eating his own body and drinking his own blood, call to mind the dietary habits of Atimārga practitioners¹¹¹ and the notorious practice of cannibalism and blood-drinking attributed to the Kāpālikas, respectively. The reference to self-cannibalism finds a striking parallel in the stories about the origin of the popular architectural element of Kālamukha, the demon-head standing as a guardian above doorways of temples and monumental edifices in South and Southeast Asia, which in Java and Bali was identified with Bhaṭāra Kāla, and connected with the *malpal* style of dancing performed by “demonic” characters of Balinese *topeng pajegan*. According to a popular legend, Kāla, out of a permanently insatiable hunger—and at Śiva’s request, in order to save other living beings—devoured his own body, thereby leaving only his head.¹¹² One of the appellatives and manifestations of Bhīma/Bhairava is Kāla, “the Dark/Black one” or “Time” (as devourer of everything). Kāla/Bhairava was the chief deity of the Kāpālikas.

A popular Balinese tradition, attested in several texts such as the Javano-Balinese *Kāla Purāna* and the Balinese Kidung *Saṅ Empu Leger* (Hooykaas 1973:244–266; cf. also 307–311), narrates about the vicissitudes of the brothers Kāla and Kumāra, sons of Śiva and his consort Umā. The *Kāla Purāna* (cf. Stephen 2002:67–71) relates how the ever-hungry Kāla wanted to devour Kumāra on account of the fact that he had been given by Śiva the right to eat all persons born on the day his younger brother’s birth. The story is still represented on Bali, in slightly different versions, in (comic) performances held during temple-festivals. Rather than being just a source

110. “He becomes a four-legged animal, moving on all fours, His belly facing down” may be an apt characterization of a wolf.

111. *Pāśupatasūtra* 5.32 and *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad 5.30 explain that the ascetic should feed with whatever he may find, i.e. food acquired by chance (*yathālābha*); the Sanskrit *Brahmāṇḍapurāna* (II.74.50cd–55) speaks of the observance of the bull (*govrata*), also practiced by the Pāśupatas, in terms of do not distinguishing at all “what is to be eaten and drunk, and what is not” (cf. Acharya 2013:115). As we have seen above (p. 22), ascetics characterized by this dietary habit were allegorically compared to pigeons in some Sanskrit Śaiva Saiddhāntika texts, as well as in RK 25.108d. *Sumanasāntaka* 13.6 scornfully describes an ascetic eating his food on a rubbish heap, yet declaring that “he eats nothing that is not pure.”

112. A similar legend, featuring Kīrttimukha, is narrated in the Sanskrit *Skandapurāna*; in the *Śivapurāna* he is identified with a faithful devotee guarding the doors of Śaiva temples (Smith 1998:199). Many variants exist. According to one version, Kāla stole the elixir of life from the gods and burned in the process, keeping only his head; in Java and Bali Kāla(mukha) is often depicted as eating the sun—for in fact he represents Rāhu, the demon who causes eclipses. A Balinese version of the story, transmitted in the *Kapiparva*, narrates about the monkey-god Anoman eating the sun; this finds a parallel in South Asian literatures (cf. Vickers 2011:127). On the link between Hanumān and Kāla-Bhairava, cf. above, fn. 88.

of amusement, such parodic performances are regularly enacted for apotropaic aims.¹¹³ Wayang performances of the legend of the birth of Kāla are conducted in Java by *dalangs* for exorcistic purposes (Headley 2004:321, 330).

It is tempting to connect the *b(h)imma* in the expression *b(h)imma (ya) kumāra* found in the above-discussed 10th-century Sangsang copperplate—mentioning *piruses*, dancers, and musicians in the context of a ritual performance—with the demonic manifestation of Śiva known under the names of Kāla, Bhairava, and Bhīma, and take the inscription as referring to a re-enactment, for “purificatory” ritual purposes, of a pre-10th century (oral?) version of the story of Kāla and Kumāra, which we only know from later Middle Javanese and Balinese texts, as well as Javanese “exorcistic” wayang performances.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

This article has attempted to bridge the “classical” past and the present through suggesting a premodern, and ultimately Indic, origin of specific Javano-Balinese performances and performers. In doing so I have followed an approach that is in harmony with Rubin and Sedana’s (2007:79) considerations on Balinese dance-drama, arguing that “new forms develop and evolve continually [...], but they grow out as branches, rather than exist as completely separate species.”

Building on, and fine-tuning, the work of Stutterheim, Becker, and Coldiron, I have pinpointed the remarkable analogies that can be detected between specific Śaiva traditions of itinerant, performance-oriented antinomian practitioners known from the Indian Subcontinent and what I have argued to be their Javano-Balinese descendants. On the strength with a comparative analysis of Old Javanese and Sanskrit textual accounts, combined with insights from art history and ethnography, I have tried to make a point for the continued existence in Java over a thousand years of performances—i.e. music, dance, buffoonery, and recital—featuring a mix of laughter and comicality, sexual exhibitionism and (real or enacted) promiscuity between male and female dancers, and the consumption of alcoholic drinks. The bearded, moustached, and often scruffy attire of many of the performing characters, their connection with a Brahmanic

113. As Stephen (2002:77–79) argues: “The significance of *wayan* performances and other entertainments as the means of causing Durgā and Kāla Rudra to return to their positive forms of Śiwa and Umā [...] seems to me an idea worthy of considerably more attention than has previously been given it. [...] Kāla Rudra and Durgā were publicly shamed and their actions parodied in song, dance and *wayan* theatre. [...] Why? Because parody and humour are used to point to the evil doings of the god and goddess. There is no power that can control Śiwa and Umā in their terrible forms, only they can choose to transform themselves, but ridicule and laughter can cause shame and thus bring the pair to self-awareness.”

114. As we have seen above (pp. 19–20), Kumāra is in RK 25.24cd linked to peacocks, which themselves are mentioned alongside a *darapati* (pigeon) alias *pirus* in 24.106. I wonder whether the mythical and literary association between Kumāra and Bhīma is reflected in a real-world association between dancing devotees of Kumāra and a class of comic performers, called *pirus*, who were devotees of Bhīma/Bhairava.

milieu, or in any event with Sanskritic high-culture, supernatural powers, and Śaiva or Tantric insignia (e.g. the *canthang balungs*’ “rattling bones,” *liṅga-yoni* emblem, strings of flowers, *poleng*-loincloth, pike, and “Brahmanic” cap/mitre), all conjure up a prototypical Indic milieu of wandering practitioners belonging to the Śaiva Atimārga and their numerous subgroups and developments, from the “proto-Tantric” Pāśupatas and Kārukās to the markedly antinomian Kāpālikas and Kālamukhas.¹¹⁵ Even though, given the paucity of data, it is admittedly difficult to trace a direct line of filiation, not to speak about capturing historical processes occurred over more than a thousand years, the body of evidence presented here points to a commonality of performance styles, ritual milieux, religious ideologies and regimens, and *imaginaires*, which were shared by networks of performers in South Asia, Java, and Bali.¹¹⁶

According to Holt (1967:104), although a observation that, although a general evolutionary line of Indonesian dance cannot be traced in view of the fact that “all stages are [simultaneously] present,” “it is possible to recognize in some dances the transformations they have undergone, to discover that the content and function of certain dances are reinterpretations of older conceptions, and to follow the secularization of ritual.” Applying to our discussion Holt’s observation, it may be argued that through the centuries these ascetics-cum-performers lost their religious prerogatives and adopted new fashions, gradually transforming into courtly, or

115. Considering the predominance of Śaivism in Java from the 9th until the 16th century, where it “was not merely the religion of the courts but had put down deep roots in rural society” (Sanderson 2003–04:351), the secondary role of Buddhism, and the even less significant presence of Vaiṣṇavism, it is only natural to focus—at least in the present discussion—on specific Śaiva milieux rather than what are generally referred to as “*bhakti* movements,” whether Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva, which developed in the Indian Subcontinent in the course of the first millennium CE. Even such (arguably post-12th century) Śaiva ascetic groups as the Vraśaivas, Nātha Yogins and Liṅgāyats have left scant, if any, traces in the literature and visual arts of Nusantara, in contrast with the firmer evidence available from the 9th century onwards on the Pāśupata, Kāpālika, and Bhairava traditions. On several occasions in the present discussion I have referred to studies linking performance traditions of a ritualized type widespread across Maritime Asia and the Himalayan region to Kāpālika/Siddha, Kaula, or (early) Tantric Buddhist milieux (Coldiron 2005a, 2005b; Wedemeyer 2013; Samuel 2006:26).

116. It may be objected that to regard the Javanese and Balinese developments throughout the modern period as being orthogenetically derived from a totality of Indic-style religious practices as they existed in Nusantara by the end of supposed “waves” of Indic influence occurred before the 9th century runs the risk of incurring anachronism. While admitting the possibility of continued cultural exchange with South Asia throughout the second millennium, I should like to point out that the reception of Śaiva and Bauddha traditions in Java and Bali seems to have occurred in waves indeed, as suggested by the fact that the “localized” development of these religions retained archaic tracts, as if they received their features from a version of the tradition that reflects an early stage of doctrinal and ritual development (cf. Aciri 2011b:12–16; Nihom 1994:69–115, 189, and 1997); compare Sanderson (2001:22–23) on the variety of Śaivism followed by the ancient Khmers, where the Saiddhāntikas “remained cut off from the mainstream once their tradition had taken root”; and White (2000:21) on the export of Tantric Buddhist traditions from the Indian Subcontinent to East and Southeast Asia, where “the original revelation remained fossilized, like an insect in a block of amber, in the export tradition,” preserving as it does a “Tantric status quo of eighth-century India.” According to Nihom (1997:104, 109), this state of affairs has bearings on the chronology of religious and diplomatic contacts between the Indonesian Archipelago and the Indian Subcontinent, which may have been severed for more or less extended historical periods after the turn of the first millennium, and since the early 16th century.

“temple-centred,” categories of performers. Some, as the *canthang balungs*, retained only traces of their original sectarian marks, opportunistically adopting an Islamic garb and specializing in the performing arts as a means of livelihood; having engaged in a formal patron-client relation, they were integrated as low-level functionaries in the early 20th-century Central Javanese courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, where they played a role as comic entertainers during religious performances and superintendents of female singer-dancers. Others, having long since disappeared from the social and religious fabric, survived in the local *imaginaire* and ritual economy as grotesque ancestral characters evocative of supernatural prowess—witness the Javanese *buyut* and the Balinese *topeng Sidha Karya*.

A seeming contradiction that emerges from both South Asian and Javano-Balinese milieux is that those performers, whether in their original or “localised” subtypes, displayed an (actual or pretended) Brahmanical status and a connection with the Sanskritic tradition of the elites, yet at the same time they undoubtedly held a marginalized and low position in the social hierarchy because of their association with performance, vagrant lifestyle, promiscuity, and antinomian behaviours. Some of those characters apparently retained important functions in the performances held during particular life-cycle rituals—including weddings—or religious festivities sponsored by both the courtly elite and common folks (e.g. the Javanese *piruses* and *canthang balungs*), or became an essential part of temple-based rituals (e.g. the Balinese *Sidha Karya*). This contradiction is dispelled if we think about these performances as being the historical offshoots of earlier Indic Tantric ceremonies dominated by the ritual logic and “elite ideology” of esoteric fringe practitioners seeking to instantiate the identity with the divinity “in concrete, lived, social space” (Wedemeyer 2013:258, note 130).¹¹⁷ The Javanese embodiments of these ceremonies were—and, in the case of Bali, still are—dictated by an apotropaic or purificatory agenda; as such, they could only be staged by antinomian (ritual/theatrical) performers, who themselves (or the characters they typified) lived at the margins of society and were connected with impurity and the Demonic,¹¹⁸ specializing in “pacifying” or “re-orienting” the evil forces.¹¹⁹

117. According to Wedemeyer (2013:257–258 note 130), “There are very good reasons to believe that caryā dance [of the Newari Buddhist community of Nepal] is a contemporary, attenuated enactment of the Tantric rite of caryāvratā. [...] caryānṛtya is performed ‘as a part of [...] ritual especially on the occasion of tantric initiations, great festivals and important pujas’.” I believe that these illuminating considerations on Tantric Buddhist rituals and performances could be equally applied to the Javanese and Balinese spheres, where related Śaiva varieties of rituals and performances were predominant.

118. Cf., e.g., Sanderson’s (2003–04:376) identification of the modern Balinese Ṛṣi Bhujāṅga or Seṅguhu officiants as local descendants of a class of Pāśupata practitioners, called Ṛṣis, who provided their ritual services (mostly of an exorcistic nature) to the rural population away from centres of worldly and religious authority. These practitioners are regarded by Brahmins as belonging to the fourth and lowest class (*śūdra*), and invoke or exorcize alternative sets of demons than those handled by the Pedanda Śiva.

119. Stephen (2002:61–62) describes this process—mainly involving dramatic performances—of reorientation of dangerous, destructive, and chaotic forces as one of returning to peaceful, and ordered,

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origin or form (*marūpa somya*), and stresses that this is an important, yet often misunderstood, dynamic underlying Balinese ritual life. Compare Hart's (1987:476–477) analogous observations on Tamil ritual dynamics and the relationship between royalty and low-status "exorcist"-performers: "The role of groups 'of low birth' in ancient Tamilnad was to control, or order, dangerous power. [...] If then we return to the king as a sort of dynamic engine who transmutes inauspicious, disordered power into its ordered, benevolent analog, it becomes apparent that a primary source of this power was the low-caste performers who were attached to him."

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Fig. 1 – Panel of Chidambaram temple, East Gopura (photo Elisa Ganser 2010).



Fig. 2 – Borobudur, detail of panel III, XXXIII 65 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).



Fig. 3 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, B b 44 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).



Fig. 4 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, B a 318 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).



Fig. 5 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, a 95 (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).



Fig. 6 – Borobudur, detail of panel O I 20 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).



Fig. 7 – Borobudur, detail of panel B I, a 233a (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).

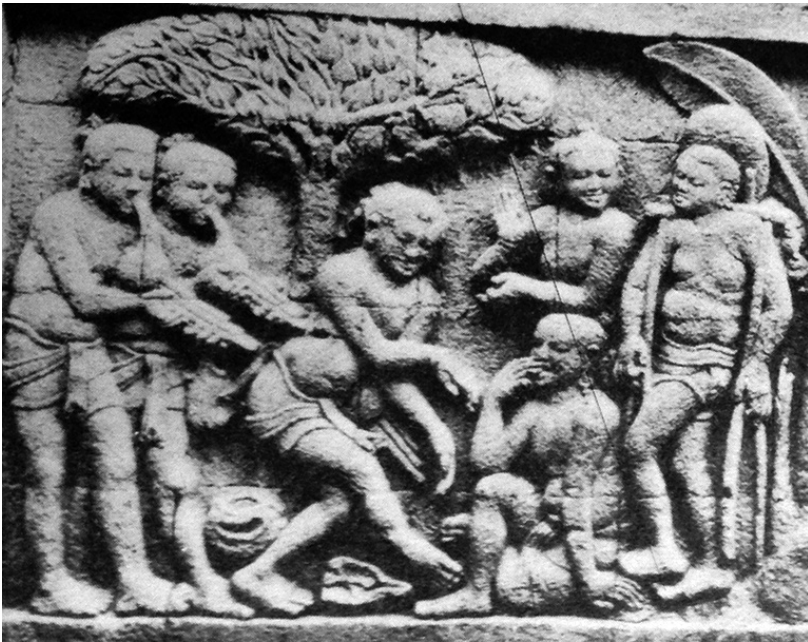


Fig. 8 – Borobudur, detail of panel O 39 (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).



Fig. 9 – Caṅḍi Sari, Prambanan (prob. 9th century AD)
 (photo Kassian Cephas, OD 044446,
 Leiden University Library, Kern Institute).

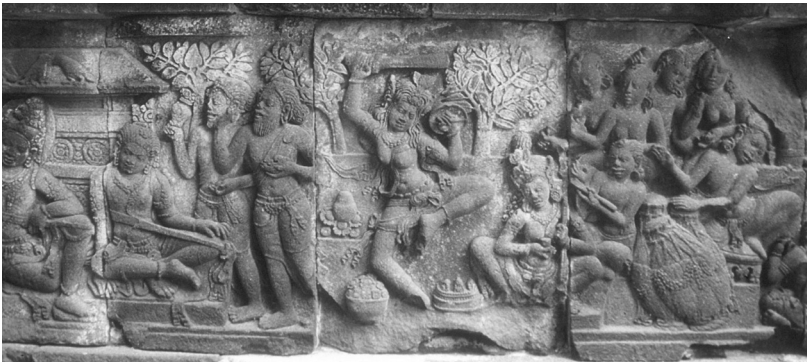
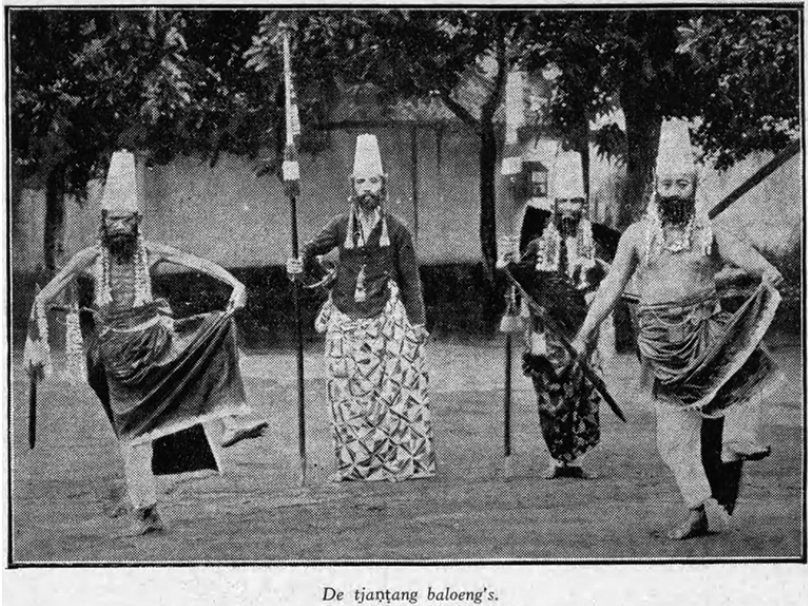


Fig. 10 – Caṅḍi Śiva, Prambanan, detail of panel VII.11 cd (photo Roy Jordaan).

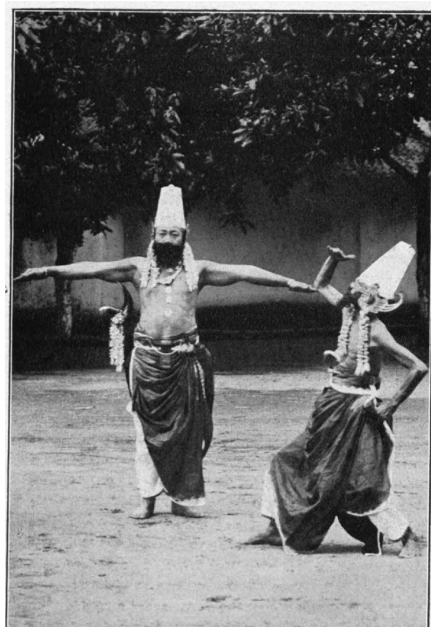


Fig. 11 – “The *lurahs talèdèk (cañtang balung)* during a *grèbèg* (Surakarta)” (adapted from Stutterheim 1956, fig. 12).



De tjančang baloeng's.

Fig. 12 – “The *cañtang balungs*” (adapted from Brandt Buys 1933).



„Vliegen”.



Grappenmakerij.



Gadjah ngombé.

Fig. 13 – The *Cañtang balungs* performing: “flying,” “clowning,” “*gajah ngombé*” (“drinking elephant”) (adapted from Brandt Buys 1933).



Fig. 14 – Balinese Śaiva officiant (pedanda Śiva) (adapted from Hooykaas 1966, detail of Plate 17).



Fig. 15 – “Guru Mani Damodara Chakyar as ‘Kapali’ in the sacred ritualistic Kutiyattam-Mattavilasa Prahāsana (Mathavilasam) practised in very few Hindu temples of Malabar. A very rare photo taken from inside Killikkurussi Mahadeva Temple, Palakkad.” (Photo from Wikipedia Commons; Author: reekanthv; Source: From author’s private collection; uploaded in 2006.)



Fig. 16 – Topeng Sidha Karya during a ritual held at the Bhujangga Wesnawa family temple in Banjar Celuk (Desa Dalung, Kabupaten Badung, September 2010). Photo courtesy Sugi Lanus, 2010.