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The genre of Jayadeva’s \textit{Gītāgovinda}

1. Introduction

Jayadeva’s \textit{Gītāgovinda} is probably one of the best known literary Sanskrit texts. Despite this, the question as to what genre it belongs to is still completely open. The most striking feature of the \textit{Gītāgovinda} is the combination of songs in moric metres which rhyme, which is reminiscent of popular songs, known from Apabhraṃśa, with descriptive stanzas in \textit{vṛtta} metres, typical of classical Kāvyā poetry. It has been suggested by Pischel (1893: 22) that we are actually dealing with a translation of an Apabhraṃśa text into Sanskrit. However, others, such as Sandahl-Forgue (1977: 155-156), have argued that the text with its songs embedded in classical stanzas is an innovation within the Kāvyā tradition itself. In 8.8 the \textit{Gītāgovinda} says that it is “to be danced” (\textit{nāṭanīyā}), which has led scholars to place it somewhere between song and drama; terms which have been used are “lyric drama”, “opera” and “melodrama”. Quite recently the connection of the \textit{Gītāgovinda} with the Bengal \textit{yātá} performance tradition has been explored in detail (Śliwięczyńska 1994). However, as far as I can see no one has so far been able to trace the origin of the \textit{Gītāgovinda} within the classical literary tradition. Or, as it was recently put by Bożena Śliwięczyńska: “the \textit{Gītāgovinda} [is] a work that has no prototype in earlier Sanskrit literature. It seems to appear quite suddenly and it is a phenomenon in itself”\footnote{Bożena Śliwięczyńska (1994: 8). See also pp. 13-27 for an overview of earlier attempts to classify the \textit{Gītāgovinda}. To these may be added the one by Gerow (1989).}.

In what follows I will try to show that the \textit{Gītāgovinda} is not the only text of its kind. It appears to have a counterpart in the Tamil text \textit{Kalittokai}. On closer consideration this text contains the very same type of poetry as the \textit{Gītāgovinda}. It is possible to identify the poetry of the \textit{Kalittokai} with a specific genre of minor dramatic scenes defined in the \textit{Nāṭyaśāstra}, which identi-
fication is directly supported by a peculiarity met with in the compilation of this anthology. The Sanskrit Gitagovinda, in its turn, appears to be a special development of the very same genre to which the Kalittokai belongs.

Before having a closer look at a typical Kalittokai poem I should add a few words about Old Tamil poetry if only because my interpretation of this literary corpus differs considerably from the current one. This poetry, which describes an early Tamil society which was largely unaffected by the North Indian Sanskrit culture, is generally dated in the first centuries of our era. As I have tried to show elsewhere (Tieken 2001), Old Tamil poetry is not to be dated in but after the period it describes. It is a poetry evoking a traditional Tamil society such as at the time of its composition was believed to have existed in the past or as was supposedly still found only in small villages in the countryside. Furthermore, we are not dealing with an indigenous, pure Tamil literature, as is generally maintained, but adaptations in Tamil of North Indian Kavya literature. Typically, of those Tamil texts which have counterparts in the Kavya tradition, the counterparts in question all happen to belong to Pракrit and Apabhraṃśa literature. Thus, in Old Tamil poetry Tamil, as a regional language, appears to have been assigned the role of a Pракrit. As such the language of Cankam poetry agrees with the linguistic policy of the Pἀñṭiya of the Velvikkudi inscription, in which the epic-mythological part of the praśasti is in Sanskrit and the part narrating historical events in Tamil. This has led me to ascribe Old Tamil poetry more specifically to the Pἀñṭiya of the eighth or ninth century. Apart from the question of dating Cankam poetry, for the purpose of identifying the genre of the Kalittokai poems it is important to hold on to the finding that the counterparts of the anthologies in the Kavya tradition all belong to Pракrit or Apabhraṃśa poetry.

2 Chapter 8 of this book has been dedicated to the identification of the genre of the Kalittokai, in which investigation the Gitagovinda features prominently. Here the roles are reversed, the starting point being the identification of the genre of the Gitagovinda.

3 The only Tamil anthologies which have no direct counterparts in North Indian Kavya literature are those dealing with Puran, or heroic, themes, that is, Puranṉāṉṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟ and Painṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟ. However, these Tamil texts typically deal with local history. The restriction we see here of the vernacular Tamil to local history can be accounted for with reference to Kavya.

2. Kalittokai

Kalittokai is an anthology, or tokai, of altogether 150 so-called kāli poems. I am not exaggerating when observing that it is probably one of the least known and least studied of Cankam texts. All attention so far has gone to the few so-called kuravai poems in the Kalittokai. However, these poems, which depict a cowherd festival and a bull-fight, are atypical of the Kalittokai. As we will see, they belong to a genre different from the rest of the poems. Furthermore, the Kalittokai poem quoted most often, number 94, is exceptional for other reasons. It contains a dialogue between a dwarf and a humpbacked woman. The dialogue is hilarious. It is a discussion of the gymnastics involved in the love-making of these two persons who are physically completely incompatible. Below some parts of A. K. Ramanujan’s translation of this poem will be quoted. However, the format of the poem is exceptional, three quarters of the poem of the Kalittokai poems having a completely different structure.

By way of illustration of the standard type I will quote poem 44:

katirvirī kaṭācārak kaviraṇa koṭṭata koṭṭata
ērtērīr ṣōkaṇa māhārāya atūkka
atatirīya atri ya ṣīvaiya mācavīla
mātramā koṭta maṭuviya ṣirvēnka
varunam eḻī vēram pū rēmēr ācavirappu
purinekkid tāmarai malaranakan viyēyit
triv naṇantirintāya tōnkamal viḻvērēvā

tappēvar kōṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟrray

nīyya mācavillār ēṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟMYSQL ERROR - \null
In this poem a girl is addressing a boy on behalf of her friend. The boy is delaying his decision to go to the girl's parents and ask them for their daughter's hand. The girl suffers greatly on account of this delay, but hides her frustration in front of her friend (the woman speaking, eṉgal[v]{i}[n]), the village (ōṟiyum), as well as her other companions (ṯyumum), as she is afraid that they will start interfering, which would make the situation only more complicated. The go-between, however, decides to invite the boy to join her and hurry towards the girl to cure her from her illness.

In the first seven lines the go-between calls the boy's attention and states the situation. She does so indirectly, through a description of nature. After this introduction the metre changes. In three short stanzas the go-between describes how her friend copes with her frustration about the way the love-affair is developing (in paraphrase):

Even if her grief is great, my friend hides your lack of grace from me, for she is afraid that if I hear about it I will upbraid you in front of others.

Even if this great illness is overpowering her, my friend hides your lack of grace from the village, for she is afraid that if they hear about it the villagers will chase you away.

Even if she suffers from a killing illness, my friend hides your lack of grace from her companions, for she is afraid that they will tell others about your lack in virtues.

Next, the metrical pattern changes once more. In what follows the go-between directly addresses the man again:

Thinking of the terrible things such as these which could happen to you, the girl protects you with such rare virtue. But let us go to her quickly to cure her suffering.

The most striking feature of the poem is its format. The shorter Caṅkam poems invariably consist of a single stanza. By contrast Kalittokai is made up of several independent stanzas with different metres\(^4\). Among these, the three stanzas in the middle occupy a special position. This is indicated by the short phrase eṉgal[a]ku “like this”, which serves to underline the status of the preceding stanzas as independent poems or as quoted text. A striking feature of

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\(^4\) For details concerning the kali metres/compositions, see Zvelebil (1989: 60-71).

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3. Gitagovinda

Upon reading Kalittokai 44 those familiar with the Gitagovinda will no doubt experience a déjà vu. The similarities are indeed striking. In fact, as I will argue below, we have to do with one and the same literary genre. By way of example I will discuss the ninth song of the Gitagovinda, which starts with a sārdhalavikrīḍita verse in which the go-between describes to Kṛṣṇa how Rādhā suffers during his absence:\(^5\)

Her house becomes a wild jungle,  
Her hand of loving friends a snare.  
Sighs fan her burning pain  
To flames that rage like forest fire.  
Suffering your desertion,  
She takes form as a whining doe  
And turns Love into Death  
Disguised as a tiger hunting prey.

This song is followed by eight songs in which the go-between describes Rādhā's unhappiness. The songs are in a so-called moric metre and each one of them is followed by the same refrain. The first one runs as follows:

An exquisite garland lying on her breasts  
Is a burden to the frail wasted girl,

to which is added the refrain:

Krishna, Rādhikā suffers in your desertion.

The eight songs are introduced by a reference to the rāga and tāla. The final song is a so-called bhānita, which assigns them to the poet Jayadeva, thus underlining the independent status of the songs within the poem. The bhānita runs as follows:

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\(^5\) All translations of the Gitagovinda given below are by Miller (1977).
May singing Jayadeva’s song
Give pleasure to the worshipper at Krishna’s feet!
Krishna, Radhikā suffers in your desertion.

The whole is concluded by four stanzas in syallabic metres again. In these the go-between is, so to speak, using her own words again. To quote the first of these four stanzas:

She bristles with pain, suck in breath,
Cries, shudders, gasps,
Broods deep, reels, stammers,
Falls, raises herself, then faints.
When fevers of passion rage so high,
A frail girl may live by your charm.
If you feel sympathy, Krishna,
Play godly healer! Or Death may take her.

The similarities between the Kalittokai and Gitagovinda are striking. For their origin there are various possibilities: the Gitagovinda may have borrowed from the Kalittokai or, vice versa, the Kalittokai may have borrowed from the Gitagovinda. A third possibility is that the Kalittokai, on the one hand, and the Gitagovinda, on the other, are independent elaborations of a common source. Before trying to argue which is the most likely possibility, I will try to identify the genre of the poems. In this connection it is important to draw attention to the format of the poems once more, and in particular to the variation encountered in the Kalittokai on this point. Also, we should have a brief look at what the texts themselves have to say about their genre.

4. The format of the Kalittokai poems

The format of the poems of the Gitagovinda is strikingly uniform: the introduction consists invariably of one stanza in a syllabic metre. This is followed by eight songs in moric metres, of which the last one is the bhanita. The songs are followed by one or more stanzas in, again, syllabic metres. The number of these final stanzas may vary. By contrast, the situation in the Kalittokai is varied. The structure of poem 44 discussed above agrees with that of approximately three quarters of the Kalittokai poems. However, even within this type there is some variation. For instance, while 44 starts with a stanza introducing the scene, poem 55 starts right in the middle of things. It begins

with a stanza in which the girl reports what the lover had said to her, praising her hair, her teeth and her brow. Or, in Ramanujan’s translation (1985: 197-198):

“O your hair,” he said,
“it’s like rainclouds
moving between
branches of lightning.
It parts five ways
between gold ornaments,
braided with a length of flowers
and the fragrant screwpine.”

“O your smiles, your glistening teeth,
words sheer honey,
mouth red as coral.
O fair brow,
I want to tell you
something,
listen, stop and listen.”

This report is interrupted by a stanza in which the girl sketches the situation:

[“... listen, stop and listen,”]
he said, and stopped me.
Came close,
to look closer
at my brow, my hands, my eyes,
my walk, my speech,
and said, searching
for metaphors.

After this the report of the lover’s flattery is continued:

[and said, searching for metaphors:]
“Amazed, it [the forehead] grows small, but it isn’t the crescent.
Unspotted, it [the face] isn’t the moon.
Like bamboo, yet it [the shoulders] isn’t on a hill.
Lotuses [the eyes], yet there’s no pool.
Walk mincing, yet no peacock.
The words languish, yet you’re not a parrot”.


This passage is concluded with the phrase egavānku “and so on”. Next, in a new stanza, the girl admits that she had been taken in by all this flattery and had allowed the lover to embrace her.

The format of the remaining 20-25% of the poems is still object of further investigation. This group of poems includes, for instance, dialogues. The example quoted most often, poem 94, provides the dialogue between the dwarf and the humpbacked woman already mentioned above. Below I quote a fragment from Ramanujan’s translation (1985: 209-211):

[Woman to dwarf]
You dwarf, standing piece of timber,
you’ve yet to learn the right approach
to girls. At high noon
you come to hold
our hand and ask us to your place.
Have you had any woman?

[Man to humpbacked woman]
Good woman,
your waist is higher
than your head, your face a stork,
plucked and skinned,
with a dagger for a beak,
listen to me.
If I take you in the front, your hump
juts into my chest; if from the back
it’ll tickle me in odd places.
So, I’ll not
even try it. But come close anyway and let’s touch
side to side.

This poem consists of pure and straightforward dialogue. A striking difference with the type of poems discussed above is the absence of songs with refrains.

5. The genre according to the literary traditions

According to Gitagovinda 8, 8 the text is pathuṇiyam and nataṇiyam, that is, is to be sung (or recited) and to be danced:

sṛopyadevabrhamitum idam adhitam yadi manasa naṭaṇiyam
harivirahākulaśāresvavatītākhovacanam paṭhaṇiyam.

As for the Kalittokai the relevant information is found in the Tolkāppiyam, a work on the poetics and the language of Caṅkam poetry. In Book III, Porulakārakam, śūtra 56 the Kalittokai is defined together with the Paripāṭal as a composition belonging to the dramatic tradition, which is full of songs:

nāṭaka vaḷaḷkaṅkum utakṣital vaḷaḷkaṅkum
pāṭal cāraṇa pulavērīvaḷaḷkaṅkam
kaliya paṇiṭha śāyur pāṇiṇiṃ
urvitaṇkum epuṇaṇa pulav

In a poetic composition which consists of songs, whether it follows the rules of drama or those of the ordinary world, one uses two types of stanzas, viz. kali and paṇiṭha. Thus say the wise poets.

Both the Kalittokai and Gitagovinda are compositions which somehow belong to the dramatic tradition, or else compositions largely determined by the laws and conventions of drama.

In this connection I would like to draw attention to the so-called lāṣyas mentioned in the Nāṭyakāstra, which are minor operatic scenes exclusively dealing with matters of love. In what follows I will try to show that the poems of the Kalittokai, and with that those of the Gitagovinda, are examples of these lāṣyas.

6. The lāṣya of Sanskrit drama

Nāṭyakāstra treats of the lāṣyas twice, namely in chapter XIX (117-137) and, again, in XXXI (330-367). The treatment of the lāṣyas in chapter XIX is mainly focused on the situations underlying the scenes, that in chapter XXXI deals with formal features such as the types of metres and in particular the tempi (ūḍā) of the songs and dances.

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5 The expressions nāṭaka vaḷaḷkaṅkum and utakṣital vaḷaḷkaṅkum are clearly loan translations of Sanskrit nāṭyadharman “the order of things in drama” and lokadharman “the order of things in the ordinary world” respectively. The pair of terms is found in the Nāṭyakāstra. For a discussion of the relevant passages, see Bansat-Boudon (1992: 155 ff.). Note, however, that her interpretation is highly influenced by Abhinavagupta (see my review, Tieken 1998). The former term, nāṭyadharman, covers typical theatrical strategies such as asides and the ākṣaḥstaṭa-device typical of the bhārata, in which the dialogue is enacted by only one actor (see Nāṭyakāstra XIII 76: anuktam sṛṇyate yac ca nāṭyadharman tu sā smṛtya, and XXV 87).
Nāṭyaśāstra distinguishes altogether twelve types of lāṣyas. In what follows, however, I will concentrate not on the individual lāṣyas but on their general characteristics. To begin with, it may be observed that the situations underlying the various lāṣyas cover a range of erotic situations. They feature a woman deserted by her lover (viyuktā), her body burning hot from the fire of love (modanānālataiptaṅgī, sīhitāpiḥya lāṣya XIX 123). They depict women who remain devoted to their lovers despite the fact that they are offended by them (priyena saṣijante hyapi vipriyakārisu, prachchedaka lāṣya XIX 129). Another typical situation concerns the frustration of the lovers after they have failed to meet (vihhrasāsataketa, saṃdhiḥavaka lāṣya, XIX 131).

Secondly, the lāṣya is said to be performed by one actor. In the Nāṭyaśāstra the lāṣya is explicitly compared to a bhāna: ... bhāna ivaiṣa-pravojāṇi (XIX 117), bhānaśekrīval lāṣyan vijnevaṃ ṛṇakopārocārāyain vā (XIX 118), and bhānaavac caicahārīrom syād (XXXI 332). The actor is a woman (see in this connection the relevant passage from Bhoja’s Śringāra-prakāśa, quoted below in note 20), who besides her own part in the love affair enacts that of the man as well. Note the puspaganḍikā lāṣya: striyaḥ puṃsvaca ceṣṭantie (XIX 128) and sṛṇa narasena laṭalam saṃsiktaṃ pathit (XIX 127). The trimūḍhaka lāṣya focuses apparently exclusively on the male sentiment (purasvābhāvādiḥyaḥ XIX 130). The man is obviously trying to appease the woman, for the trimūḍhaka consists of verses full of exhortations (antahprasālaṣnapadaṁ XIX 130). We are to believe that this trimūḍhaka was in its entirety performed by one actor. The same would be the case with the so-called uktaprātyukta lāṣya, which includes a real dialogue (saṃlāpā) between an angry woman and a man trying to appease her. The uktaprātyukta consists of angry recriminations by the woman alternating with soothing words uttered by the man (kopprasādagajitānaḥ sādhikṣepapadādyayaiḥ XIX 135 and kopprasādagabhalukaiḥ samāśparacaitīrṇyaṁ XXXI 365).

The third characteristic of the lāṣya concerns its format, a striking feature being the use of different metres. A lāṣya consists of a string of independent stanzas in different metres. To give an example: the puspaganḍikā lāṣya consists of one sloka followed by a khaṇḍaka and a narkuttaka, and is concluded by a śiṣṭaka (XXXI 345-348). The śiṣṭaka, narkuttaka and khaṇḍaka are particular moric metres specifically associated with songs.

7. The Kalittokai and Gitagovinda as examples of lāṣyas

Like the lāṣyas, the Kalittokai and Gitagovinda present erotic scenes. Both compositions may, again like the lāṣyas, be characterized as bhānas, in the sense that there is only one actor or narrator. In connection with the dialogue between the dwarf and the hunch-backed woman in Kalittokai 94, parts of which have been quoted above, I should like to refer to the uktaprātyukta lāṣya. All three, that is, the Kalittokai, Gitagovinda and the lāṣyas, contain songs.

In both the Kalittokai and Gitagovinda the songs are introduced by separate stanzas. In the Gitagovinda this distinction of function coincides with one of metre: the songs are in moric metres, the introductions (as well as the

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7 In chapter XXXI as many as ten types are distinguished. In chapter XIX the same ten types plus two more are mentioned. According to Bansat-Boudon these latter two lāṣyas would be special developments of the uktaprātyukta lāṣya (Bansat-Boudon 1992: 419-422).

8 See Nāṭyaśāstra XXXI 331ab:

lāṣyaṃ lāṣaye iñyekeṇāṃ strīpumbhāvāsanāvaiyaṃ,


9 While according to Nāṭyaśāstra XIX 117-118 and XXXI 332 lāṣyas feature only one actor, the definitions of, for instance, geypada, puspaganḍikā and prachchedaka speak of women in the plural. Admittedly, the definitions concerned waver between the singular and the plural. Thus, that of geypada in XIX 121 introduces persons (women? in any case plural) sitting and singing: āśāaśāāśā ... gāyanaṁ gāya). By contrast, 122, which has not been commented upon by Abhinavagupta, introduces a woman on her own: yā nṛtayāsātanā nārī geyanī. A similar situation is found in the definitions of the puspaganḍikā: plural in XIX 126 and 128, and singular in 127. A possible explanation of this “confusion” between singular and plural may be offered by assuming that where the plural describes the scene, i.e. an imaginary group of women, the singular describes the lāṣya, which zooms in on one of the women of the group.

10 For these metres, see Nāṭyaśāstra XXXII 254-301.

11 In this respect the ninth song of the Gitagovinda quoted above may not be a good example. Note, however, the fifth song, in which the speaker quotes what Rādhā said to a friend about Kṛṣṇa. For an English translation of this poem, see Miller (1977: 78-79).
conclusions) in syllabic metres. This aspect cannot—at least not in this form—be retrieved in the Nāṭyaśāstra. However, in this connection I would like to draw attention to something equivalent. In the context of the so-called saīndhayavaka lāṣya a way of singing is mentioned in which the text is made completely subordinate to the rāga. This way of singing is contrasted to a recitative form of singing.

The topic of the saīndhayavaka is the frustration experienced by lovers who have failed to meet at the appointed time and place. It is said to be “full of utterances in Prākrit” (prākṛtī parvamanair yuktam XIX 131). This Prākrit text is set to the Śāradhā jāti (sāndhāvām āśrītām bhāṣām XXXI 358). The essence of the saīndhayavaka is “bodily acting” and music (rūpa paramādātyā-dīṣantyuktam XIX 132). Finally, the saīndhayavaka lāṣya is “devoid of pāthya” (pāthyaena ca vivarjitaṃ XIX 132 and na pāthyaṃ svalpam apyatra prakurvita vicakṣanoh XXXI 360). Evidently, we have to do with the so-called pāthyagunas of Nāṭyaśāstra XVII 102 ff. here, which concern such things as appropriate notes (svāra), articulations, accents, and intonation, that is, means which help to bring out more clearly the meaning of the text. The idea of the phrase pāthyaṃ vivarjitaṃ is that the meaning of the text is made completely subordinate to the demands of the rāga and that all vocal elements to bring out the meaning more clearly are dispensed with. The rāga should do the trick, supported, however, by dance movements (saṃvatrakaranajñitam XIX 131, “accompanied by expressive karanas, or dance positions”). The Nāṭyaśāstra seems to introduce a distinction here between two ways of singing, the one dominated by the rāga and the other by pāthya, which is comparable to that between aria and recitative in western opera respectively. It is more than tempting to explain the alternation of narrative stanzas (in syllabic metres) and songs (in moric metres) in the Kalittokai (and the Gitagovinda) as representing these different ways of singing mentioned in the Nāṭyaśāstra in connection with the saīndhayavaka lāṣya.

8. The compilation of the Kalittokai anthology

There is a very concrete piece of evidence which supports the interpretation of the Kalittokai as belonging to the lāṣya genre. It is found in the crite-

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12 For the pāthyagunas, or pathitis, in Bhoja’s Śṛṅgāraprakāśa, see Raghavan (1963: 365 ff.).

13 See, e.g., Zvelebil (1973: 119-130), who treats the two texts under the heading “late classical poetry”. On the untenability of the distinction between early bardic and late classical poetry, see Tieken (2001: esp. 146 ff.).

14 On this feature of Bhakti poetry, see Ramanujan (1981: 119).
Besides these songs the poems contain conversational sketches between the participants of the festivities. In the Pariṣṭal, as in the case of the Kalittokai, we are dealing with dramatic scenes.

However, as far as the setting of the scenes is concerned the Kalittokai and Pariṣṭal are clearly distinguished. The Pariṣṭal has specialized in festival scenes. As indicated, it repeats the songs people were singing at festivals and presents dialogues and conversations taking place among these people. As such the poems of the Pariṣṭal may be compared to a late Apabhraṇaśā genre of festival songs of Indo-Aryan literature, included among the so-called upārūpakas. The genre includes, among other types, the hallīsaka, carcarī and ṛāsaka, or certain dance songs typical of the cowherd community, and the phāgū, or songs sung at the spring festival.¹⁵

Instead, the poems of the Kalittokai are restricted to more intimate scenes. They are not set in a crowd but in a small circle of intimates, formed by a woman, her companion, and her lover. An exception to this is formed by the so-called kuravai poems (101-108).¹⁶ These poems are set at a cowherd festival. The scene is a bullfight in which a cowherd boy has to prove his strength. The festival is concluded by a kuravai dance, in which girls dance in a circle around the successful bullfighter. As I have shown elsewhere in more detail (Tieken 2001: 182-184), we have to do with a dramatization of the so-called hallīsaka festival here, descriptions of which are found in, among other texts, the Harivaniśa.¹⁷ Dance dramas set at the hallīsaka festival have been mentioned by Abhinavagupta ad Nātyaśāstra IV 268 (p. 179) and by Bhoja in Śrīgūrāprakāśa p. 468.¹⁸

Why were these kuravai poems included in the Kalittokai, and not in the Pariṣṭal? For a possible explanation we have to turn to Bhoja's Śrīgūrāprakāśa, in which as in the Kalittokai the counterpart of the Tamil kuravai scene has been classified together with the lāsyaśas. Among the twelve so-called minor dramatic scenes Bhoja makes a distinction between nartanasakas, or “little dances” (numbers 1-9) and prekṣanakas, or “spectacles” (numbers 10-12). The nartanasakas are performed in a dance-hall (sadasī) by one female actress only and include, for instance, the lāsyaśas. The prekṣanakas, or spectacles, are set on the street and present many different actresses. This category includes in particular the rāsaka, nāṭyarāsaka and carcarī dances. Curiously, Bhoja includes the hallīsaka, which is the counterpart of the Tamil kuravai scene and which involves a group of women dancing in a circle, not in the category of spectacles but together with the lāsyaśas in that of the little dances, or nartanasakas. This decision to classify the hallīsaka together with the lāsyaśas may be traced back to a misunderstanding, or at least a mistaken interpretation, of the definition of the hallīsaka as found in Abhinavagupta commentary on Nātyaśāstra IV 268 (p. 179), in which it is followed immediately by that of the rāsaka:

Krṣṇa’s cārita (his fight with the bulls?), imitating his ilā and his way of walking, all the while having their eyes fixed on him (24-26).

In Bhoja’s Śrīgūrāprakāśa, p. 468, the bullfight and the following dance have been divided over two distinct upārūpakas, namely the gošṭhī and hallīsaka respectively.

Bhoja does not speak about upārūpakas, but uses the term padaṁtrābhimanyā, of which he distinguishes twelve types: 1. śrīgadita, 2. durnāti, 3. prastāha, 4. kārya, 5. citrakārya, 6. bhāna, 7. bhānīka, 8. gośṭhī, 9. hallīsaka, 10. rāsaka, 11. nāṭyarāsaka, 12 carcarī. Raghavan (1963: 546) provides a slightly different list, which includes the prekṣanaka and nartana as subtypes of the padaṁtrābhimanyas. However, it is clear that the latter terms do not refer to types but are labels for two different categories among the twelve types.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the situation of the upārūpakas is complicated by the lack of “original”, or rather, secular examples. The possibly earliest reference to the carcarī is found in Harṣa’s Raṇaṇavali (p. 6 ff.). In the first act of this play Yaugandharāyana hears the noise (dancing, music and singing) of a carcarī being performed on the streets as part of the spring festival. In stanzas 13-15 an example of a festival song is provided. Next, the carcarī has been exploited by the Jains for religious and didactic purposes. The carcarī is mentioned in Hemacandra’s Chandaśuṣāsana 7, 47 (p. 244), which is basically a description of a religious festival celebrating Mahāvīra’s birthday. For a list of other Jaina carcaris I would like to refer to Bhayani (1972).

¹⁶ The kuravai poems have been discussed in detail by Edholm and Suneson (1972).

¹⁷ See Harivaniśa 63. During autumn night Krṣṇa and the young cowherds fight with bulls (63, 15-17). After the contest the cowherd girls look for Krṣṇa and, “forming a line” (paktikeṭh), delight him. Joined two by two they sing songs about
mandalena tu yan nṛttaiṁ hallisakam iti smrtam
ekas tāra tu nṛtā syād gopastrīṁ niḥāḥ hariḥ
anekanartākītyojayā ciratālalālayaṁvitaṁ
dvātāsyaśtyagyād ācaram masābuddhatāṁ.

On the basis of ekas ... nṛtā in the definition of the hallisaka and anekanartākī in that of the rāsaka mentioned next, Bhoja might have reconstructed a distinction between the two types similar to that between lāsya and festival scenes. It should be clear, however, that the reference to the “one leader” has nothing to do with the total number of dancers involved in the dance or in the dramatic scene. This “one leader” is Kṛṣṇa dancing with one gopi after the other, or with all at the same time.

As already indicated, from the inclusion of the kuravai poems in the Kalittokai it may be concluded that the compilers of the latter text considered the kuravai poems actually as a kind of lāsya. At the same time it will be clear that the classification of the hallisaka in the category of the lāsya is ultimately arbitrary. It is highly unlikely that the agreement on this point between the North and South Indian literary traditions is the result of two independent developments. Rather, it testifies to the indebtedness of the Tamil tradition to the Sanskrit one or, more concretely, to Bhoja22.

9. Gītāgovinda

If the Kalittokai poems are indeed lāsya, the poems of the Gītāgovinda must be lāsya as well. However, if this is the case, we must assume that the Gītāgovinda represents a special development of the genre. A typical feature of the Gītāgovinda is the number of songs, which is fixed at eight. In the Kalittokai the number of songs varies. Furthermore, while in the Kalittokai the songs are set apart by the phrase eyavāhku “and so forth” or are summed up by, for instance, the word iyaiya “like these” in the narrative verse which follows, in the Gītāgovinda the division has been made in a much more concrete

way. The songs are preceded by an indication of the rāga and tāla, and are concluded by the so-called bhānita verse, in which the songs are attributed to Jayadeva and are enumerated the fruits of listening to the songs (phalāśrit). The go-between does not sing songs of her own or of Rādhā, but songs composed by a certain Jayadeva, in which this Jayadeva was impersonating Rādhā. It is as if the Gītāgovinda has been pieced together from two different types of texts, that is, from songs composed by a supposedly famous and well-known poet and from stanzas composed for the occasion in order to supply a convincing dramatic context to the songs.

There is evidence of independent compositions corresponding exactly to the song sections of the Gītāgovinda. A case in point is found in Tamil Bhakti poetry. Tamil Bhakti poetry is made up of groups of nine or ten songs followed by an envoy mentioning the “author”, or rather, the “singer” of the songs. The decades are accompanied by an indication of the rāga. By way of example I should like to quote Shulman’s translation of the first and the last song of the 28th decade by Cuntarar (1990: 171 ff.):

Rāga: nattarākām
Ash covers you body
with the sacred thread on one side,
the sharp trident,
swelling Gahā,
the sweet Lady,
and fragrant kogai.

O lord
in the hero’s shrine of Kāṭavūr,
ambrosia to me—
what companion have I
except you?

Ārūraṇ, king of beautiful Nāvalūr,
the devotee,
servant at his feet,
uttered this Tamil song
to the lord rich in beauty,
his companion
in the hero’s shrine of Kāṭavūr
circled by groves dark with cloud.

22 It should be noted that while the classification of the uparāpikas into nartacakas and prekṣanakaras is found with Bhoja (eleventh century) for the first time, Bhoja may well be merely transmitting an earlier interpretation here. In any case, the conditions for this classification have already been attested in Abhinavagupta’s commentary of the Nyāyaśāstra. In this connection it is to be noted that Abhinavagupta, who is generally believed to be a contemporary of Bhoja, explicitly admits his indebtedness to predecessors here.
Those of this world
who can utter these praises
will reign in the other world.

As I have argued elsewhere (Tieken 2001: 213 ff.), Tamil Bhakti poetry is dated not before the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century. Its origin is contemporary to the rise of the cult of the saint, for which there is indeed no evidence from before the ninth century (see Swamy 1972). There is, however, earlier evidence of similar song texts, namely in Kalidasa’s Madhavikāgnimitra. In the second act of this drama the heroine Madhavikā performs a small dramatic scene. The script of the scene seems to have contained at least four songs in Prakrit, of which in the end only one is actually performed. As in the case of the GītGovinda the song composition is provided with a signature. It is introduced with the words sarīṃśthāyāḥ kṛitr, “composition of Sarīṃśthā”. It should be noted that this signature has a double function here. Sarīṃśthā is not only the author of the scene but also the heroine. She is a figure known from epic mythology, who, like Madhavikā, the heroine of the main drama, had lived for some time unrecognized at the court of a king (see Banerji-Boudon 1992: 405, n. 85). As such the function of the signature may be compared to that of the introductory stanzas in the Kalidātaka and GītGovinda.

In the Madhavikāgnimitra (p. 37) itself the composition is identified as a catuspadā, more in particular a catuspadā in madhyā laya:

sarīṃśthāyāḥ kṛitr layamadhyā catuspadā tasyāḥ caturthavastunāḥ prayogam ekāmaṇāḥ śrotum arhati devaḥ.

See also p. 41:

Madhavikā – upavahānāni kṛtvā catuspadāni vastu gāyati
dullahā pia tassān bhava hi sa nīrāsah
anha apaṅgāno me paphrādā kimpī vāno
eso so ciraṅītho kahan uvanāidārvo
nāma main parāhīnāni tu ganaa sainhān

The catuspadā has been defined as a separate genre in Nātyaśāstra XXXI 327-329, that is, immediately before the lāṣya:

catuspadā tathākāmāṇā tryaṅgā vā pariśrītā
angair vyastātā samastair vā yugmañjī vā pramōnatah
ekāya vā bahūnām vā dvayor vāthā prayojītam (∗tā)

Unfortunately, on the basis of these extremely meagre definitions it is difficult to get an idea of the form and contents of the catuspadā. However, taking into account the position of the treatment of the catuspadā, namely immediately before the lāṣyas, it is not unlikely that the catuspadā forms a general category of erotic (śringārabhūṣīṭhā) scenes containing songs (lāṣya), which beside other types also includes the lāṣya. This is how we may understand the line ekāya vā bahūnām vā dvayor vāthā prayojītam (∗tā), “it is performed by one actress, by many or by two”, the first part of which would specifically refer to the lāṣya type.

Though not mentioned in the definitions in the Nātyaśāstra, the scene in the Madhavikāgnimitra and Tamil Bhakti poetry would show that the signature is indeed characteristic of the catuspadā, the signature is absent in the Kalidātaka. In this text we find instead narrative stanzas introducing the songs and providing a dramatic context to them. It seems to have been either the one or the other: that is, the dramatic context is supplied either in narrative stanzas or by a signature.

Against this background the GītGovinda, which consists of songs which are signed as well as being embedded in stanzas providing the context, may be regarded as a combination of the catuspadā and lāṣya. In this connection it should be noted that strictly speaking the envoy stanzas in the GītGovinda spoil the dramatic effect of the poems, which seems to support the conclusion that we are indeed actually dealing with a hybrid genre.

10. Conclusion: the experimental nature of the GītGovinda

Its composite nature marks the GītGovinda as a literary experiment. In fact, this is evident in yet another respect, namely the use of Sanskrit. For, both genres combined in the GītGovinda, namely the lāṣya and catuspadā, were in Prakrit. The GītGovinda is a “translation” into Sanskrit of an original Prakrit type of composition. Interestingly, as such the GītGovinda does not stand on its own. A similar development is seen in the Aryāsaṅśāṭāṭī, a Sanskrit translation of the Prakrit Sattasāṭī. It cannot be a coincidence that the author of the Aryāsaṅśāṭāṭī, a certain Govardhana, was patronized by the same Bengali king Laksmana, who was believed to have been the patron of Jayadeva (see Pischel 1893).
The Gitagovinda seems to assume the existence of a similar poetry in Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa. However, as far as Indo-Aryan literature is concerned it appears to be the first text of its kind. It is the first text in Indo-Aryan literature of independent lāsya/catuspadās. At the same time, by its religious contents the Gitagovinda stands at the beginning of the tradition continued by Vidyāpati and Chandīdās.

It is hard to believe that the author of the Gitagovinda had borrowed directly from the Tamil tradition. Apart from that, the anteriority of the Kalīttokai to the Gitagovinda is doubtful. All we know is that the Kalīttokai is later than the eighth or ninth century. The actual date of its composition is anybody's guess. It is equally unlikely that the author, or authors, of the Kalīttokai borrowed from the Gitagovinda. In this connection I need only refer to the variety in the format of the poems of the Kalīttokai against the uniform format in the Gitagovinda, which is clearly the result of a specialized development representing the end of a tradition rather than its beginning.

How then can the similarities between the Gitagovinda on the Indo-Aryan side and the Kalīttokai and Bhakti poetry on the Tamil side be explained? It has become clear that in the case of the compilation of the Kalīttokai, and with that, probably of its composition as well, poetical treatises such as Bhoja's Śrīgāparakāśa played a role. On the other hand, the influence of handbooks seems to be insufficient on its own to account for the similarities. It is anyhow unlikely that two authors trying to compose a lāsya solely on the basis of the definitions of the genre in, for instance, the Nāṭyaśāstra would ever have arrived at even approximately the same text. Instead, everything would point to the conclusion that both the Kalīttokai and Gitagovinda represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg: they are probably the only texts among many similar ones to have survived. One of the questions which then arises is in which context these supposedly lost examples have been looked for. No doubt, beside the strictly literary tradition there was also a folk tradition of songs and dances. However, any direct influence from that direction can in this case be ruled out if only because it is highly unlikely that the folk traditions were everywhere in India the same and have resulted in similar compositions in the North and the South. Instead, a more promising source may have

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23 This is not necessarily in conflict with the idea that the Kalīttokai is the first text of its kind in Tamil. It is assumed that the Kalīttokai was modelled on examples in Sanskrit, or rather, in Prakrit.

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