

## The genre of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*

### 1. Introduction

Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* 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 *Gītagovinda* is the combination of songs in moric metres which rhyme, which is reminiscent of popular songs, known from Apabhraṃśa, with descriptive stanzas in *vṛtta* metres, typical of classical Kāvya 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 Kāvya tradition itself. In 8.8 the *Gītagovinda* says that it is "to be danced" (*nataniya*), which has led scholars to place it somewhere between song and drama; terms which have been used are "lyrical drama", "opera" and "melodrama". Quite recently the connection of the *Gītagovinda* with the Bengali *yātrā* performance tradition has been explored in detail (Śliweczyńska 1994). However, as far as I can see no one has so far been able to trace the origin of the *Gītagovinda* within the classical literary tradition. Or, as it was recently put by Božena Śliweczyńska: "the *Gītagovinda* [is] a work that has no prototype in earlier Sanskrit literature. It seems to appear quite suddenly and it is a phenomenon in itself"<sup>1</sup>.

In what follows I will try to show that the *Gītagovinda* is not the only text of its kind. It appears to have a counterpart in the Tamil text *Kalittokai*. On closer consideration this text contains the very same type of poetry as the *Gītagovinda*. It is possible to identify the poetry of the *Kalittokai* with a specific genre of minor dramatic scenes defined in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which identi-

<sup>1</sup> Božena Śliweczyńska (1994: 8). See also pp. 13-27 for an overview of earlier attempts to classify the *Gītagovinda*. To these may be added the one by Gerow (1989).

fication is directly supported by a peculiarity met with in the compilation of this anthology. The Sanskrit *Gītagovinda*, 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)<sup>2</sup>, 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 Kāvya literature. Typically, of those Tamil texts which have counterparts in the Kāvya tradition, the counterparts in question all happen to belong to the Prakṛit and Apabhraṁśa literature. Thus, in Old Tamil poetry Tamil, as a regional language, appears to have been assigned the role of a Prakṛit. As such the language of Cankam poetry agrees with the linguistic policy of the Pāṇīyas of the Velvikudi inscription, in which the epic-mythological part of the *prāśasti* is in Sanskrit and the part narrating local history in Tamil. This has led me to ascribe Old Tamil poetry more specifically to the Pāṇīyas 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 Kāvya tradition all belong to Prakṛit or Apabhraṁśa poetry<sup>3</sup>.

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

<sup>3</sup> The only Tamil anthologies which have no direct counterparts in North Indian Kāvya literature are those dealing with Puṛam, or heroic, themes, that is, *Puṛānāṇūru* and *Pattiruppattu*. 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 Kāvya.

## 2. *Kalittokai*

*Kalittokai* is an anthology, or *tokai*, of altogether 150 so-called *kali* 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 *Kalittokai* poems having a completely different structure.

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

*katirviri kapaicūṭark kavaiṭ koṭṭa naṇaiñcāral*  
*etiretir ḍṅkiya mālvāraiy atukkai-*  
*tairicaiy aruvi taṇ aṅciṅgai micaiṅṭa*  
*mutirinar ūlkoṅṭa muḷavuttāl erivēṅkai*  
*varimtal eḷi vēlam pū nūmēr coritarap*  
*purinekil tāmarai malaranṅkaṅ vīreyit*  
*tiru nayantruntanṇa tēṅkamaḷ viṅalveṇpa*

*taṇṇevvai kūṇṇum nī ceyta aruḷṇimai*  
*eṇṇaiy maṇṇittāl eṇ rōḷi atu kēṇṇu*  
*niṅṇai yāṅ piṅar muṇṇarp paḷi kūṇal tāṅ nāṇi*  
*kūṇṇōy ciṅappavum nī ceyta aruḷṇimai*  
*cēṇṇum maṇṇittāl eṇ rōḷi atu kēṇṇu*  
*kōru nī nilaiyalaiy eṇak kūṇal tāṅ nāṇi*  
*nōyata varuṇṇiyum nī ceyta aruḷṇimai*  
*āyamum maṇṇittāl eṇ rōḷi atu kēṇṇu*  
*nīyā niṅ paṇṇṇimai piṅar kūṇal tāṅ nāṇi*  
*eṇṇāṅka*

*iṅaiyāṅa tīmai niṅaiyāṅal kāitān-*  
*kaṇaiy arum paṇṇṇitāṅ niṅ tīmai kāitavaḷ*  
*aruṇṇiyar āraṅar tīrkkum*  
*maruṇṇākie celkam peruma nām virāṇiē.*

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, *enṇaiyinu(m)*), the village (*cēriyūm*), as well as her other companions (*āyamum*), 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<sup>4</sup>. Among these, the three stanzas in the middle occupy a special position. This is indicated by the short phrase *enṇavāiku* "like this", which serves to underline the status of the preceding stanzas as independent poems or as quoted text. A striking feature of

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

the three stanzas is the combination of rhyme and refrain, which gives them a markedly song-like character:

*taṅṅevvai kūṛinum nī ceyta arulinmai*  
*enṇaiyu maṇaitāḷ en vōḷi atu keṭtu*  
*niṇṇai yāṇ piṇar muṇṇarp peḷi kāṛal tāṅ nāṇi*

### 3. *Gītāgovinda*

Upon reading *Kalittokai* 44 those familiar with the *Gītāgovinda* 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 *Gītāgovinda*, which starts with a *sārthāvikrīḍita* verse in which the go-between describes to Kṛṣṇa how Rādhā suffers during his absence:<sup>5</sup>

Her house becomes a wild jungle,  
 Her band 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 *bhāṇita*, which assigns them to the poet Jayadeva, thus underlining the independent status of the songs within the poem. The *bhāṇita* runs as follows:

<sup>5</sup> All translations of the *Gītāgovinda* given below are by Miller (1977).

May singing Jayadeva's song

Give pleasure to the worshipper at Krishna's feet!  
Krishna, Rādhikā suffers in your desertion.

The whole is concluded by four stanzas in syllabic 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 *Gītāgovinda* are striking. For their origin there are various possibilities: the *Gītāgovinda* may have borrowed from the *Kalittokai* or, vice versa, the *Kalittokai* may have borrowed from the *Gītāgovinda*. A third possibility is that the *Kalittokai*, on the one hand, and the *Gītāgovinda*, 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 *Gītāgovinda* 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 *bhāṣita*. 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 *eṅgavāñiku* "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 *Gītāgovinda* 8, 8 the text is *pañhanīyam* and *naṭanīyam*, that is, is to be sung (or recited) and to be danced:

*śrījāyadevabhāṇitam idam adhikāni yadi manasā naṭanīyam  
 harivrahakūtaballavayuvatisakṭhāvacanam pañhanīyam.*

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, *Poruḷatikāram*, *sūtra* 56 the *Kalittokai* is defined together with the *Paripāṭal* as a composition belonging to the dramatic tradition, which is full of songs:

*nāṭaka vaḷakkūṇum ulakīyal vaḷakkūṇum  
 pāṭal cāṅṅa pulaṅṅerivaḷakkam  
 kalīyē paripāṭṭu āviru pāviṇum  
 uriyatākum eṇmañār pulavar*

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 *paripāṭṭu*. Thus say the wise poets.<sup>6</sup>

Both the *Kalittokai* and *Gītāgovinda* 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 *lāsyas* mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 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 *Gītāgovinda*, are examples of these *lāsyas*.

### 6. The *lāsyā* of Sanskrit drama

*Nāṭyaśāstra* treats of the *lāsyas* twice, namely in chapter XIX (117-137) and, again, in XXXI (330-367). The treatment of the *lāsyas* 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 (*lāla*) of the songs and dances.

<sup>6</sup> The expressions *nāṭaka vaḷakku* and *ulakīyal vaḷakku* are clearly loan translations of Sanskrit *nāṭyadharmī* "the order of things in drama" and *lokadharmī* "the order of things in the ordinary world" respectively. The pair of terms is found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. 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, *nāṭyadharmī*, covers typical theatrical strategies such as asides and the *ākāśabhāṣita*-device typical of the *bhāṇa*, in which the dialogue is enacted by only one actor (see *Nāṭyaśāstra* XIII 76: *anuktam śrīyate vac ca nāṭyadharmī tu sā smṛtā*, and XXV 87).

*Nātyasāstra* distinguishes altogether twelve types of *lāsya*s.<sup>7</sup> In what follows, however, I will concentrate not on the individual *lāsya*s but on their general characteristics. To begin with, it may be observed that the situations underlying the various *lāsya*s cover a range of erotic situations.<sup>8</sup> They feature a woman deserted by her lover (*viyuktā*), her body burning hot from the fire of love (*mādanāmalataptāngī*, *sthitapāṭhya lāsya* XIX 123). They depict women who remain devoted to their lovers despite the fact that they are offended by them (*priyeṣu sajjante hyapi vipriyākāriṣu*, *pracchedaka lāsya* XIX 129). Another typical situation concerns the frustration of the lovers after they have failed to meet (*vibhrāṣṭasanketa*, *saindhavaka lāsya*, XIX 131).

Secondly, the *lāsya* is said to be performed by one actor. In the *Nātyasāstra* the *lāsya* is explicitly compared to a *bhāna*: ... *bhāna ivaika-prayojyāni* (XIX 117), *bhānākrīval lāsyaṃ vijñeyam tvekapātrahāryam vā* (XIX 118), and *bhānavac catkāhāryam syād* (XXXI 332). The actor is a woman (see in this connection the relevant passage from Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa*, quoted below in note 20), who besides her own part in the love affair enacts that of the man as well. Note the *puṣpagaṇḍikā lāsya*: *strīyaḥ puṃvac ca ceṣṭante* (XIX 128) and *strī naraveṣṇa lalitām saṃskṛtām paṭhet* (XIX 127). The *trimūḍhaka lāsya* focuses apparently exclusively on the male sentiment (*puruṣabhāvādīyam* XIX 130). The man is obviously trying to appease the woman, for the *trimūḍhaka* consists of verses full of endearments (*caṇiṣṭhuraslakṣnapadaṃ* XIX 130). We are to believe that this *trimūḍhaka* was in its entirety performed by one actress. The same would be the case with the so-called *uktapratyukta lāsya*, which includes a real dialogue (*samilāpa*) between an angry woman and a man trying to appease her. The *uktapratyukta* consists of angry recriminations by the woman alternating with soothing

<sup>7</sup> 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 *lāsya*s would be special developments of the *uktapratyukta lāsya* (Bansat-Boudon 1992: 419-422).

<sup>8</sup> See *Nātyasāstra* XXXI 331ab:

*lāsanāḷ lāsyaṃ ityuktam strīpūṃbhāvavasānīrayam*,

On l'appelle "lāsya" à cause du jeu [amoureux] (*lāsana*) [qu'il représente], lié qu'il est au sentiment [amoureux] que l'homme et la femme [éprouvent l'un pour l'autre] (translation Bansat-Boudon 1992: 289).

words uttered by the man (*kopaprasādajamitām sādhiḥkṣepapadāśrayam* XIX 135 and *kopaprasādābhulām ... samilāparacitair-nīyam* XXXI 365).<sup>9</sup>

The third characteristic of the *lāsya* concerns its format, a striking feature being the use of different metres. A *lāsya* consists of a string of independent stanzas in different metres. To give an example: the *puṣpagaṇḍikā lāsya* consists of one *śloka* followed by a *khañjaka* and a *narkūtaka*, and is concluded by a *śīrṣaka* (XXXI 345-348). The *śīrṣaka*, *narkūtaka* and *khañjaka* are particular moric metres specifically associated with songs.<sup>10</sup>

### 7. The *Kalittokai* and *Gītāgovinda* as examples of *lāsya*s

Like the *lāsya*s, the *Kalittokai* and *Gītāgovinda* present erotic scenes. Both compositions may, again like the *lāsya*s, be characterized as *bhānas*, in the sense that there is only one actor or narrator.<sup>11</sup> In connection with the dialogue between the dwarf and the hunchbacked woman in *Kalittokai* 94, parts of which have been quoted above, I should like to refer to the *uktapratyukta lāsya*. All three, that is, the *Kalittokai*, *Gītāgovinda* and the *lāsya*s, contain songs.

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

<sup>9</sup> While according to *Nātyasāstra* XIX 117-118 and XXXI 332 *lāsya*s feature only one actor, the definitions of, for instance, *geyapada*, *puṣpagaṇḍikā* and *pracchedaka* speak of women in the plural. Admittedly, the definitions concerned waver between the singular and the plural. Thus, that of *geyapada* in XIX 121 introduces persons (women?) in any case plural sitting and singing: *āsaneṣṭūpaviṣṭair ... gāyanair* (introduces a woman on her own: *yā nrīyaṣīnā nārī geyani*). A similar situation is found in the definitions of the *puṣpagaṇḍikā*: 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 *lāsya*, which zooms in on one of the women of the group.

<sup>10</sup> For these metres, see *Nātyasāstra* XXXII 254-301.

<sup>11</sup> In this respect the ninth song of the *Gītāgovinda* 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 *Nātyasāstra*. However, in this connection I would like to draw attention to something equivalent. In the context of the so-called *saindhavaka lāsya* 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 *saindhavaka* 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 Prakṛit” (*prākṛitair vacanair yuktam* XIX 131). This Prakṛit text is set to the *saindhavā [jāti]* (*saindhavīm āśritām bhāṣām* XXXI 358). The essence of the *saindhavaka* is “bodily acting” and music (*rūpavādhyā-dīśanīyuktam* XIX 132). Finally, the *saindhavaka lāsya* is “devoid of *pāṭhya*” (*pāṭhyena ca vivarjitam* XIX 132 and *na pāṭhyam svalpam apyatra prakurvīta vicakṣaṇaḥ* XXXI 360). Evidently, we have to do with the so-called *pāṭhyaguṇas* of *Nātyasāstra* XVII 102 ff. here, which concern such things as appropriate notes (*svara*), articulations, accents, and intonation, that is, means which help to bring out more clearly the meaning of the text<sup>12</sup>. The idea of the phrase *pāṭhyena vivarjita* 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 (*svyaktakarāṇāṅvītam* XIX 131, “accompanied by expressive *karāṇas*, or dance positions”). The *Nātyasāstra* seems to introduce a distinction here between two ways of singing, the one dominated by the *rāga* and the other by *pāṭhya*, which is comparable to that between aria and recitativo 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 *Gītagovinda*) as representing these different ways of singing mentioned in the *Nātyasāstra* in connection with the *saindhavaka lāsya*.

## 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 *lāsya* genre. It is found in the crite-

<sup>12</sup> For the *pāṭhyaguṇas*, or *paṭhitis*, in Bhoja's *Śringāraprakāśa*, see Raghavan (1963: 365 ff.).

ria used in the compilation of the *Kalittokai*, which show that the compilers did indeed take the poems as examples of *lāsya*s.

In order to clarify this point it is necessary to make a brief excursion into the type of poetry of another Caṅkama text, namely the *Paripāṭal*. As already indicated above, *Tolkāppiyam* treats the *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* as it were in one breath. In the available studies and handbooks of Old Tamil literature, the *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* are together set apart as not belonging to the earliest strata of bardic literature<sup>13</sup>. Of the two texts the *Paripāṭal* is believed to be an early Bhakti text dedicated to Viṣṇu and Murukan (see, e.g. Gros 1984: XLIX). However, even a cursory glance at the *Paripāṭal* makes it clear that it is not a Bhakti text. The *Paripāṭal* does not describe an individual devotee speaking about his personal relationship with Viṣṇu or Murukan<sup>14</sup>, but instead it deals with crowds celebrating festivals dedicated to these gods. In fact, in the *Paripāṭal* itself the term *paripāṭal* is used for songs sung at festivals. See *Paripāṭal* XI 134-140, which sums up the fruits of the water festival in the river Vaiyai:

*iṅga paṅṅiṅ iṅṅaiṅ nīrāṭal*  
*miṅṅiṅṅai narunutaṅ makammēm paṭṭa*  
*kaṅṅimai kaṅṅiṅkaṅ kaikkilāik kāma*  
*iṅṅiyai māṅṅerecciy icai paripāṭaṅ*  
*muṅṅuraṅ ceytanavatiṅ immuṅaiy iyaintēm*  
*maṅṅumūṅaiy amāiyattum iyāika*  
*naṅṅunīr vāiyai ngyattaku nīrāiyē.*

Plaisants jeux d'eau de *Tai* de cette nature:

– Amours non partagé [*kaikkilāik kāma*], pas encore mûr,  
 dans l'éminente virginité

Des filles au front parfumé et aux parures étincelantes,

*Paripāṭal* à musique raffinée et qui excelle en douce poésie –

Par l'ascèse pratiquée dans nos âges antérieurs, en cet âge-ci nous  
 les avons atteints;

Puissions-nous les atteindre aussi lors des âges à venir!

Ô Vaiyai aux douces eaux, dans tes crues enviables!

(Translation Gros 1968: 78)

<sup>13</sup> 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.).

<sup>14</sup> On this feature of Bhakti poetry, see Ramanujan (1981: 119).

Besides these songs the poems contain conversational sketches between the participants of the festivals. In the *Paripāṭal*, 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 *Paripāṭal* are clearly distinguished. The *Paripāṭal* 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 *Paripāṭal* may be compared to a late Apabhramśa genre of festival songs of Indo-Aryan literature, included among the so-called *uparīpakas*. The genre includes, among other types, the *hallīsaka*, *carcarī* and *rāsaka*, or certain dance songs typical of the cowherd community, and the *phāgu*, or songs sung at the spring festival.<sup>15</sup>

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).<sup>16</sup> 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 *Harivamśa*.<sup>17</sup> Dance dramas set at the *hallīsaka* festival have been

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the situation of the *uparīpakas* is complicated by the lack of "original", or rather, secular examples. The possibly earliest reference to the *carcarī* is found in Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* (p. 6 ff.). In the first act of this play Yaughandharāyana 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 *Chandonsūśāna* 7, 47 (p. 244), which is basically a description of a religious festival celebrating Mahāvīra's birthday. For a list of other Jaina *carcarīs* I would like to refer to Bhayani (1972).

<sup>16</sup> The *kuravai* poems have been discussed in detail by Edholm and Suneson (1972).

<sup>17</sup> See *Harivamśa* 63. During autumn night Kṛṣṇa and the young cowherds fight with bulls (63, 15-17). After the contest the cowherd girls look for Kṛṣṇa and, "forming a line" (*pañikṛtāḥ*), delight him. Joined two by two they sing songs about

mentioned by Abhinavagupta ad *Nāṭyaśāstra* IV 268 (p. 179) and by Bhoja in *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, p. 468.<sup>18</sup>

Why were these *kuravai* poems included in the *Kalittokai*, and not in the *Paripāṭal*? For a possible explanation we have to turn to Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, in which as in the *Kalittokai* the counterpart of the Tamil *kuravai* scene has been classified together with the *lāsya*s. Among the twelve so-called minor dramatic scenes<sup>19</sup> Bhoja makes a distinction between *nartanakas*, or "little dances" (numbers 1-9) and *prekṣanakas*, or "spectacles" (numbers 10-12). The *nartanakas* are performed in a dance-hall (*sadasī*) by one female actress only and include, for instance, the *lāsya*s<sup>20</sup>. The *prekṣanakas*, or spectacles, are set on the street and present many different actresses<sup>21</sup>. 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 *lāsya*s in that of the little dances, or *nartanakas*. This decision to classify the *hallīsaka* together with the *lāsya*s 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 *Nāṭyaśāstra* IV 268 (p. 179), in which it is followed immediately by that of the *rāsaka*:

Kṛṣṇa's *carita* (his fight with the bulls?), imitating his *līlā* and his way of walking, all the while having their eyes fixed on him (24-26).

<sup>18</sup> In Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, p. 468, the bullfight and the following dance have been divided over two distinct *uparīpakas*, namely the *goṣṭhī* and *hallīsaka* respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Bhoja does not speak about *uparīpakas*, but uses the term *padārthābhīnaya*, of which he distinguishes twelve types: 1. *śṛṅgadita*, 2. *durmitā*, 3. *prasthāna*, 4. *kāya*, 5. *citrakāya*, 6. *bhāṇa*, 7. *bhāṇikā*, 8. *goṣṭhī*, 9. *hallīsaka*, 10. *rāsaka*, 11. *nāṭyarāsaka*, 12. *carcarī*. Raghavan (1963: 546) provides a slightly different list, which includes the *prekṣanaka* and *nartanaka* as subtypes of the *padārthābhīnayas*. However, it is clear that the latter terms do not refer to types but are labels for two different categories among the twelve types.

<sup>20</sup> *yasya padārthābhīnayanī lalitayami sadasi nartakī kurute tan nartanakaṁ samyālāsyaucchalikadvipadyādī.*

<sup>21</sup> *rathīyāsamājjacatvarasukhāyādaṁ pravartiyate bahubhiḥ pātravīṣeṣair yat tat prekṣanakam kāmadahanādī.*



*maṇḍalena tu yan nṛttam hallīśakam iti smṛitam  
ekas tatra tu netā syād gopastu-ṛṇām yathā hariḥ  
anekamartakīyojyam citratālalalayāmvitam  
ācatuṣṣaṣṭiyugālād rāsakam masṛṇoddhatain.*

On the basis of *ekas ... netā* in the definition of the *hallīśaka* and *anekamartakī* in that of the *rāsaka* mentioned next, Bhoja might have reconstructed a distinction between the two types similar to that between *lāsya*s 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 *gopī* 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*s. At the same time it will be clear that the classification of the *hallīśaka* in the category of the *lāsya*s 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 Bhoja<sup>22</sup>.

### 9. *Gītagovinda*

If the *Kalittokai* poems are indeed *lāsya*s, the poems of the *Gītagovinda* must be *lāsya*s as well. However, if this is the case, we must assume that the *Gītagovinda* represents a special development of the genre. A typical feature of the *Gītagovinda* 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 *eṇavāṅku* “and so forth” or are summed up by, for instance, the word *ināya* “like these” in the narrative verse which follows, in the *Gītagovinda* the division has been made in a much more concrete

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that while the classification of the *uparūpakas* into *nar-tanakas* and *preṣaṇakas* 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 *Nāṭyaśāstra*. 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.

way. The songs are preceded by an indication of the *rāga* and *tāla*, and are concluded by the so-called *bhaṇita* verse, in which the songs are attributed to Jayadeva and are enumerated the fruits of listening to the songs (*phalaśruti*). 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 *Gītagovinda* 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 *Gītagovinda*. 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 Cuntatar (1990: 171 ff.):

*Rāga: natṭarākam*

Ash covers you body  
with the sacred thread on one side,  
the sharp trident,  
swelling Gaṅgā,  
the sweet Lady,  
and fragrant *konṇai*.

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

Ārūraṅ, 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 Kaṭavūr  
circled by groves dark with cloud.



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 Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*. In the second act of this drama the heroine Mālavikā performs a small dramatic scene. The script of the scene seems to have contained at least four songs in Prakṛit, of which in the end only one is actually performed. As in the case of the *Gītagovinda* the song composition is provided with a signature. It is introduced with the words *śarmiṣṭhāvāḥ kṛtir*, "composition of Śarmiṣṭhā". It should be noted that this signature has a double function here. Śarmiṣṭhā is not only the author of the scene but also the heroine. She is a figure known from epic mythology, who, like Mālavikā, the heroine of the main drama, had lived for some time unrecognized at the court of a king (see Bansat-Boudon 1992: 405, n. 85). As such the function of the signature may be compared to that of the introductory stanzas in the *Kalittokai* and *Gītagovinda*.

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

*śarmiṣṭhāvāḥ kṛtir layamādhyā catuspadā tasyās caturthavastunahḥ prayogam  
ekamanāḥ śrotum arhati devah.*

See also p. 41:

*Mālavikā – upavahanam kṛtvā catuspadam vastu gāyati*

*dullaho pio tassim bhava hita nirāsam  
amho apāngao me papphuraḥ kinpi vāmo  
eso so etradītho kaham unānādanvo  
nāha mani parāhūnam tui gaṇṇa satīṅhanī*

The *catuspadā* has been defined as a separate genre in *Nāṭyaśāstra* XXXI 327–329, that is, immediately before the *lāśya*:

*catuspadā tathakāṅgā tryaṅgā vā parikūṛṭitā  
aṅgair vyastaiḥ samastair vā yugmanijā vā pramāṇataiḥ  
ekasyā vā bahūnām vā dhvayor vātha prayojitam (-tā)*

*tathā śrīṅārābhūyīṣṭhā trividhā syāc catuspadā  
pravṛtītkhyā drutalayā shtītkhyā tu vilambitā  
shtitapravṛttasaniññā ca jñeyā madhyalayā tathā*

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 *lāśyas*, it is not unlikely that the *catuspadā* forms a general category of erotic (*śrīṅārābhūyīṣṭhā*) scenes containing songs (*laya*), which beside other types also includes the *lāśya*. This is how we may understand the line *ekasyā vā bahūnām vā dhvayor vātha prayojitam (-tā)*, "it is performed by one actress, by many or by two", the first part of which would specifically refer to the *lāśya* type.

Though not mentioned in the definitions in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the scene in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* and Tamil Bhakti poetry would show that the signature is indeed characteristic of the *catuspadā*. The signature is absent in the *Kalittokai*. 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 *Gītagovinda*, 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 *lāśya*. In this connection it should be noted that strictly speaking the envoy stanzas in the *Gītagovinda* 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 *Gītagovinda*

Its composite nature marks the *Gītagovinda* as a literary experiment. In fact, this is evident in yet another respect, namely the use of Sanskrit. For, both genres combined in the *Gītagovinda*, namely the *lāśya* and *catuspadā*, were in Prakṛit. The *Gītagovinda* is a "translation" into Sanskrit of an original Prakṛit type of composition. Interestingly, as such the *Gītagovinda* does not stand on its own. A similar development is seen in the *Āryāśaptasatī*, a Sanskrit translation of the Prakṛit *Sattasatī*. It cannot be a coincidence that the author of the *Āryāśaptasatī*, a certain Govardhana, was patronized by the same Bengali king Lakṣmanasena who was believed to have been the patron of Jayadeva (see Pischel 1893).

The *Gītagovinda* seems to assume the existence of a similar poetry in Prakṛit or Apabhramśa. 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 *lāsyaśatupadās*. At the same time, by its religious content the *Gītagovinda* stands at the beginning of the tradition continued by Vidyapati and Chandidās.

It is hard to believe that the author of the *Gītagovinda* had borrowed directly from the Tamil tradition. Apart from that, the anteriority of the *Kalittokai* to the *Gītagovinda* is doubtful. All we know is that the *Kalittokai* 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 *Kalittokai* borrowed from the *Gītagovinda*. In this connection I need only refer to the variety in the format of the poems of the *Kalittokai* against the uniform format in the *Gītagovinda*, 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 *Gītagovinda* on the Indo-Aryan side and the *Kalittokai* and Bhakti poetry on the Tamil side be explained? It has become clear that in the case of the compilation of the *Kalittokai*, and with that, probably of its composition as well, poetical treatises such as Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 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 *Kalittokai* and *Gītagovinda* represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg: they are probably the only texts among many similar ones to have survived<sup>23</sup>. One of the questions which then arises is in which context these supposedly lost examples have to be 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

<sup>23</sup> This is not necessarily in conflict with the idea that the *Kalittokai* is the first text of its kind in Tamil. It is assumed that the *Kalittokai* was modelled on examples in Sanskrit, or rather, in Prakṛit.

been the scholarly musical tradition, in which *lāsya*s and *catuṣpadās* may have been composed to serve as examples. Note in this connection that, as shown by the *Gītagovinda* as well as Tamil Bhakti poetry, music, and in particular the *tāla*, forms an important aspect of these type of compositions. Note also that at least some of the main terms of the Tamil poetical tradition, such as *kuriñci* and *mullai*, are in the poems themselves used to denote specific musical modes.

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