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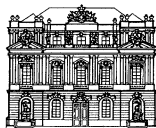
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The *pūrvaraṅga*, the *prastāvanā*, and the *sthāpaka**

I. INTRODUCTION

A classical Sanskrit play invariably opens with the so-called *prastāvanā*, a scene in which the *sūtradhāra*, or the director of the troupe of actors, announces the play. The *prastāvanā* or prologue, which is also called *āmukha*, has been described in Nāṭyaśāstra XX 30-39. The performance as a whole is believed to have been preceded by the *pūrvaraṅga*, described in chapter V of the Nāṭyaśāstra, which is a ritual carried out by that same *sūtradhāra*. The transition from the *pūrvaraṅga* to the prologue would have been punctuated by the exit and entrance of the *sūtradhāra*. Occasionally the role of the *sūtradhāra* in the prologue has been taken over by the *sthāpaka*.

The role and the function of this latter figure have been explained in the fifth chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra. In the dramatic literature itself we come across the *sthāpaka* only rarely. His name is found in some manuscripts of the prologue of the Karpūramañjarī as a variant reading for *sūtradhāra*.¹ Furthermore, the name *sthāpaka* is echoed by the term *sthāpanā*, which in South Indian drama texts is used as a synonym for *prastāvanā* "prologue" in the North-Indian texts. As it is, for details concerning the role and function of the *sthāpaka* we have to fall back entirely on the Nāṭyaśāstra. The relevant passage (V 161cd-169) has been dealt with exhaustively by Feistel (1969) and Kuiper (1978 and 1979). According to these scholars the *sthāpaka* came on stage after the completion of the *pūrvaraṅga*, at that point taking over the part of the *sūtradhāra* in order to introduce the topic of the play. The *sūtradhāra* is part of the *pūrvaraṅga* and the *sthāpaka* of the following prologue. However, according to Kuiper the roles of *sūtradhāra* and *sthāpaka* could be played by one and the same actor. The switch would merely

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¹ Only in the manuscripts P and U; the other manuscripts have *sūtradhāra*. See also Harihara's Śāṅkharābhavavyāyoga, in which the *sūtradhāra* is first called *sthāpaka*, but after that regularly *sūtradhāra* again.

be one in terminology, *sthāpaka* denoting the profane function of the *sūtradhāra*, who in the *pūrvarāṅga* proper carried out a religious function.

In subsequent studies Feistel's and Kuiper's interpretations of the *sthāpaka* have been generally accepted, for instance, most recently by Steiner (1997: 107ff.), whose comments only concern details and do not affect the main thesis. For instance, according to Steiner we should reckon with the possibility that the roles of the *sūtradhāra* and *sthāpaka* were actually played by two different actors. In this connection he draws attention to some plays in which one of the first roles in the play proper is played by the same actor who plays the *sūtradhāra*. The entrance of the *sthāpaka* in the prologue would give that actor time to retire and prepare for his appearance in the play proper (Steiner 1997: 109).²

As already indicated, for information on the *sthāpaka* we have to rely on the Nāṭyaśāstra. From a closer look at the relevant passage from that treatise it will, however, become immediately clear that the current interpretation of the role of the *sthāpaka* cannot be maintained, because this character made his entrance somewhere in the middle of the *pūrvarāṅga* itself. In this way the *sthāpaka* almost on his own overhauls the watershed which is believed to exist between the *pūrvarāṅga* and the prologue. On closer inspection it appears that the *sthāpaka* passage of the Nāṭyaśāstra describes a prologue almost exactly like the one found in South Indian drama texts. This brings us to another problem, namely the relationship between the prologues in the North and the South Indian textual traditions respectively. Despite some differences, the two types of prologues must have been genetically related. However, it will prove to be impossible to explain the North Indian prologue as a transformation of the South Indian one or *vice versa*. In the end in order to be able to explain the relationship between the prologues in the North and South Indian texts a more radical approach seems to be required. This approach involves making a distinction between a performance tradition, in which the play was preceded by a ritual like the one underlying the *pūrvarāṅga*, on the one hand, and a literary tradition, in which the text of the play proper was prefixed by a prologue, on the other. As I will argue, the situation has become confused since the attempt to combine the two traditions.

² This explanation is actually a variation on one given earlier by Thieme (1966: 42-43).

In this way the study of the role of the *sthāpaka* would come to serve as a veritable test case of the interpretations of the *pūrvaraṅga* and the *prastāvanā* respectively. However, before dealing with the *sthāpaka* passage I would like to have a closer look at two premises which have played an important role in Kuiper's interpretation of the *sthāpaka*. Thus, according to Kuiper the *pūrvaraṅga* was a ritual, and consequently something "secular" as the announcement of the play by the *sthāpaka*, or for that matter, by the *sūtradhāra*, simply could not have taken place in the *pūrvaraṅga*.

2. IS THE PŪRVARAṅGA A RITUAL?

Kuiper characterizes the *pūrvaraṅga* as a ritual, or, to use his own words, "as a religious *drōmenon*" (Kuiper 1975: 241). A breaking point would be formed by the *raṅgadvāra*, which marked the stage in the *pūrvaraṅga* where acting or *abhinaya* began (NS V 26):

yasmād abhinayas tv atra prathamam hy avatāryate |
raṅgadvāram ato jñeyam vāgaṅgābhīnayātmakam ||

The verse is part of a list (16cd-56) enumerating the "limbs" of the *pūrvaraṅga* together with brief characterizations. This list is itself preceded by another list (8-16ab) which enumerates the same items, however, without the characterizations. In these two lists, which serve as tables of contents for the fifth chapter, the *raṅgadvāra* is mentioned immediately before the *cārī* (14; cp. 26 quoted above). In the body of Chapter V itself the term *raṅgadvāra* is found for the first time in v. 114, that is, indeed immediately before the description of the *cārī*. Accordingly, Kuiper situates the switch from ritual to drama at this point, only to ignore it subsequently, for he could not believe that "this was the end of the ritual part" (Kuiper 1979: 189), which he evidently had expected only at the end of the *pūrvaraṅga*.

However, a brief look at the passage concerned shows that it does not refer to the beginning of the *raṅgadvāra* but to the end (114cd-115):³

gaditvā jarjaraślokaṃ raṅgadvāre ca yat smṛtam ||

....

jarjaram namayitvā tu tataś cārīm prayojayet ||

³ The passage will be discussed again below (p. 109-110) from a different point of view.

Having recited the *jarjaraśloka* and what is taught [as to be recited] in the *raṅgadvāra* ... and having inclined the *jarjara* he should perform the *cārī*.

In fact, if *abhinaya* is indeed the key word, then the *raṅgadvāra* would begin with the entrance of the *sūtradhāra* in the second *parivarta* of the *utthāpana*, which in 74cd-75ab is defined as follows:

sūtradhārapraveśādya vandanābhinayāntakaḥ ||
dvitīyaḥ parivartas tu kāryo madhyalayāśritaḥ |

It would thus appear that almost immediately after the musical introduction, from the moment of the entrance of the *sūtradhāra* onwards, we are looking at a dramatic performance, not at the performance of a ritual.

In his decision to situate the beginning of the *raṅgadvāra* before the *cārī* (or, what comes to the same, before the disposal of the *jarjara*) Kuiper felt justified by NŚ XXVII 41⁴ (Kuiper 1979: 171 and 189), according to which at this point the experts (*prāśnikas*) started to evaluate the performance. However, if as argued play-acting had indeed already begun with the entrance of the *sūtradhāra*, the meaning of the switch taking place during the recitation of the *cārī* will have to be assessed all over again, a point to which I will return later (p. 113).

3. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PLAY IN THE PŪRVARAṄGA

In the two lists at the beginning of Chapter V of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which serve as tables of contents enumerating the items of the *pūrvaraṅga*, the last item mentioned is the *prarocanā*. The announcement of the play is not mentioned. According to Kuiper the announcement of the following play could not occur in the *pūrvaraṅga*, which was a purely ritual act. On the other hand, the *trigata* as well as the *prarocanā* would include hints at the following play or the plot, but these hints should be kept separate from the formal announcement in the prologue. Likewise, Feistel divides the “introduction” to the play into two parts. The first part would be performed by the *sūtradhāra* in the *pūrvaraṅga* and includes “hints” to the following play in the *trigata* and *prarocanā*; the second part would be the classical *prastāvanā* or prologue, which would take place after the *pūrvaraṅga* (Feistel 1972: 11). The breaking point would

⁴ *jarjaramokṣasyānte śiddher mokṣas tu nālikāyās tu | kartavyas tv iha satatam nāṭyajñaiḥ prāśnikair vidhinā ||*.

be marked by the *sūtradhāra*'s exit after the *prarocanā* and, next, the same *sūtradhāra*'s entrance again at the beginning of the prologue. However, a closer look at the last part of the description of the *pūrvaraṅga* would show that it does include the announcement of the topic of the play as an individual, separate item.

The definitions of the last items of the *pūrvaraṅga*, the *trigata* and *prarocanā*, read as follows (133cd-134):

tathā ca bhāratībhede trigataṃ samprayojayet ||
vidūśakas tv ekapadāṃ sūtradhārasmitāvahāṃ |
asambaddhakathāprāyāṃ kuryāt kathanikāṃ tataḥ ||

This is followed by a passage elaborating the *trigata*. The passage, which is missing in most manuscripts and has not been commented upon by Abhinavagupta, has not been included in the verse numbering:

viṭaṇḍāṃ gaṇḍasamyuktāṃ tālikāṃ ca prayojayet |
kas tiṣṭhati jitaṃ kenetyādikāvyaṃ prarūpiṇīm ||
pāri-pārśvika-saṅjalpo vidūśakavirūpitaḥ |
sthāpitaḥ sūtradhāreṇa trigataṃ samprayujyate ||

Next the *prarocanā* is defined (135):

prarocanā ca kartavyā siddhenopanimantraṇam |
raṅgasiddhau punaḥ kāryaṃ kāvyavastunirūpaṇam ||

After this all three actors make their exits (136):

sarvam eva vidhiṃ kṛtvā sūcīvedhakṛtair atha |
pādair anāviddhagatair niṣkrāmeyuḥ samam trayāḥ ||

The compounds *kāvyaṃ prarūpiṇīm* and *kāvyaṃ vastunirūpaṇam* have been taken as referring to hints to the following play given in the course of the *trigata* and *prarocanā* respectively. As I will try to show, this interpretation of the function of the respective compounds will have to be revised.

To begin with the *trigata*, as already argued by Kuiper, it is the counterpart of the ritual fight taking place in the course of the *raṅgapūjana* described in NŚ III (Kuiper 1979: 192). The specification *bhāratībhede* defines the contrast between the *trigata* and the fight, which latter item involved real, physical violence. In the *trigata* we are dealing with a purely verbal contest between the two assistants, one of whom plays the role of the "Verstehrder" (*vidūśaka*). The matter is decided (*sthāpita*) by the *sūtradhāra*. The *trigata* is a small "play" with a script of its own (*kathā* and *kathanikā* in 134). The words *kas tiṣṭhati jitaṃ kena* in *kas tiṣṭhati jitaṃ kenetyādikāvyaṃ prarūpiṇīm* most likely belong to the verbal

contest, and not, as is assumed by Kuiper and others, to the following play. That is to say, *kāvya* seems to refer to the text (or script) of the *viṭaṇḍā* role here, which consists of such “silly” questions as *kas tiṣṭhati* and *jītaṃ kena*.

The meaning of the phrase *kāvyaṣṭunirūpaṇa* in 135 presents a problem of a different nature. The available translations, by Feistel and Kuiper, are not really helpful here.⁵ As I see it, the main problem lies in the meaning of *siddhena* in *siddhenopānimantraṇam*, a phrase which clearly purports to supply a definition of the *prarocanā*. As to the meaning of *siddha*, the compound *raṅgasiddhau* in the very next line (135cd) “when the stage has reached the state of being *siddha*”, suggests that to *siddha* we supply the word *raṅga*, “the *raṅga* is *siddha*”. This “state of being *siddha*”, or *siddhi*, is the outcome of the preceding *trigata*, as becomes clear from III 93, which describes the ritual fight underlying the *trigata*:

tatra chinnaṃ ca bhinnaṃ ca dāritaṃ ca saṣoṇitaṃ |
kṣataṃ pradṛptaṃ āyastaṃ nimittaṃ siddhilakṣaṇam ||

The *prarocanā* is thus an invitation by (instr.) [announcing that] the stage is “perfected”, “cleared [of demons]” (*siddha*). Verse 135 may now be translated as follows:

And the *prarocanā* is to be made, which is an invitation by [announcing that the stage is] “ready”.

When the stage is “ready” (*raṅgasiddhau*), the topic of the play is to be indicated (*kāvyaṣṭunirūpaṇa*).

At first sight the passage would enumerate two separate, consecutive items, namely the invitation (of the actors or the audience) and the indication of the topic of the play. However, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* itself the two items have been combined and the *kāvyaṣṭunirūpaṇa* has been taken as a part of the *prarocanā*. Thus, in V 29 (= XX 29) the definition of the *prarocanā* reads as follows:

upakṣepeṇa kāvyasya hetuyuktisamāśrayā |
siddhenāmantraṇā yā tu vijñeyā sā prarocanā ||

⁵ Feistel’s translation runs as follows: “Und die Laudatio (*prarocanā*) ist auszuführen als eine Anrede [an die Zuschauer] durch den Erfahrenen (*siddhena* [H. T.]), [d.h.] es ist aber in Hinsicht auf den Erfolg [des Stückes] bei den Zuschauern auszuführen eine Beschreibung des Inhalts des (Schauspiel-)Gedichts” (Feistel 1969: 84); Kuiper’s translation reads: “The *prarocanā* is performed. (Then [sic]), however [sic], an ‘invitation’ with *siddham* is performed – for success of the performance [the locative *raṅgasiddhau*] – which mentions the subject of the play” (Kuiper 1979: 187).

for which Kuiper (1979: 187), who reads *kāryasya* for *kāvyaasya*, supplies the following translation:

An invitation with *siddham*, based on reasoning and arguments (?) by alluding to the (following) action [*kāryasya*], is known as *prarocanā*.⁶

However, V 29, which is part of the lists enumerating the items of the *pūrvaraṅga* at the beginning of Chapter V, does not provide evidence independent of the rest of Chapter V. In this connection I would like to refer again to the position of the *raṅgadvāra* in these lists (see above, p. 93). The fact that the lists mention the *raṅgadvāra* immediately before the *cārī* implies that they do not provide information on the position of an item in the *pūrvaraṅga* but merely indicate the place at which the term is mentioned for the first time in the following treatment of the *pūrvaraṅga*. This would show that the two lists are later additions to the chapter and that as such they cannot be relied upon to transmit the original meaning of the text.

On the other hand, the scenario presented in V 29 corresponds to the situation met with in the prologues in the available Sanskrit plays. In these, the *trigata* and *prarocanā* have been skipped, the action being taken up after the *prarocanā*. One of the first things mentioned by the director (*sūtradhāra*) is the invitation he had received to come and perform such and such a play. Thus, in Kālidāsa's *Śakuntala* the *sūtradhāra* addresses his wife with the following words: *ārye abhirūpa-bhūyiṣṭhā pariṣat tasyām ca śrīkālīdāsagrathitavastunā navenābhijñāna-śakuntalanāmnā nāṭakenopasthātavyam asmābhiḥ* (p. 1, 11-13). It is as if the invitation to the *sūtradhāra* did include a specification of the play to be performed. In this way, these plays do not help us in deciding if *kāvyaavastunirūpaṇa* in 135 refers to a proper announcement as an item by itself, or to a mere hint to the topic of the play as a part of the invitation.

However, before discussing the nature of the *prarocanā* and *kāvyaavastunirūpaṇa* any further I would like to return to the role of the *sthāpaka*, in which, as we will see, elements of the *pūrvaraṅga* have been combined with the prologue (*prastāvanā* or *āmukha*).

⁶ Feistel's translation of V 29 runs as follows: "Als Laudatio (*prarocanā*) muss man die Ankündigung (*āmantraṇa*) erkennen, die sich mittels einer auspiziösen Anspielung (*upakṣepa*) auf die Logik (*hetu*) des Gedichts stützt" (Feistel 1969: 34). *siddhena* has been construed with *upakṣepaṇa* here. Lienhard suggests to translate the combination as follows: "mittels einer wirksamen (d.h. die Wirkung nicht verfehlenden) Anspielung" (Lienhard 1973: 59).

4. THE *STHĀPAKA* PASSAGE IN *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA*, CHAPTER V

The passage in question reads as follows:

prayujya vidhinaiṣaṃ tu pūrvaraṅgaṃ prayogataḥ //161//
sthāpakāḥ praviśet tatra sūtradhāragunākṛtīḥ |
sthānaṃ tu vaiṣṇavaṃ kṛtvā sauṣṭhavaṅgapuraskṛtam //162//
praviśya raṅgaṃ tair eva sūtradhārapadañi vrajet |
sthāpakasya praveśe tu kartavyārthānugā dhruvā //163//
tryaśrā vā caturaśrā vā tajjñāñi madhyalayāñvitā |
kuryād anantaraṃ cārīṃ devabrāhmaṇaśaṃsinīm //164//
suwākyamadhurāñi ślokāñi nāñbhāvarasāñvitāñi |
prasādyā raṅgaṃ vidhivat kaver nāma ca kīrtayet //165//
prastāvanāñi tataḥ kuryāt kāvyapakṣepaṇāśrayāñi |
udghātyakāñi kartavyāñi kāvyopakṣepaṇāśrayāñi //166//
divye divyāśrayo bhūtvā māñuṣe māñuṣāśrayāñi |
divyamāñuṣasaṃyoge divyo vā māñuṣo 'pi vā //167//
mukhabījāñusadrśāñi nāñmārgasamāśrayāñi |
nāñāñvidhāñi upakṣepāñi kāvyopakṣepaṇāñi bhavet //168//
prastāvyañiṣaṃ tu niṣkrāmet kāvyaprastāvakaṣ tataḥ |
evam eṣa prayoktavyāñi pūrvaraṅgo yathāñvidhī //169//

The first line (161cd) marks the transition from the preceding passage to the present one. It comes after an interpolated passage found only in some manuscripts, which itself has been preceded by 161ab, *prayujya raṅgāñi niṣkrāmet sūtradhāraḥ saḥāñnugaḥ*. According to Kuiper (1978: 174), it is clear from 161ab and 161cd that the *sthāpaka* enters after the *pūrvaraṅga*, in which case 169cd (= 137ab) must have been misplaced. However, in drawing these conclusions Kuiper seems to have ignored the context in which the passage is found. With 136, quoted above (p. 95), describing the exits of the *sūtradhāra* and his two assistants, the exposition of the *pūrvaraṅga* of the longest, *caturaśra* or “square” variety has indeed come to an end. After this, however, a number of alternative, abbreviated ways of performing the same *pūrvaraṅga* are mentioned. Thus, in 138-147 an exposition is given of the so-called “triangular” (*tryaśra*) variety, in which all the metrical passages are reduced from *catur-* to *tryaśra*. Both the *caturaśra* and the *tryaśra* varieties are called “pure” (*śuddha*), in that the emphasis is on the text (*bhāratyupāśraya*, 148). As such they differ from the “multi-coloured” (*citra*) variety, which includes much dancing and singing.

All this is followed by a warning to avoid in the *pūrvaraṅga*, whether it is of the *śuddha* or the *citra* type, excesses in music, singing and dancing

(158-160), for this may wear out the actors as well as the audience, and as a result the clarity of the *rasas* and *bhāvas* will get dimmed. And what is even more important, the remainder of the performance, namely that of the play proper, will fail to produce any pleasure.

Next a passage is found, not commented upon by Abhinavagupta, which provides what seems to be another type of abbreviation of the *pūrvaraṅga*. In this version the whole *pūrvaraṅga*, up to and including the *nāndī*, is performed backstage by the *sūtradhāra*, who stands behind the curtain (*antaryavanikāsamsthah*). Only after the *nāndī* does he appear on stage in order to perform the *prastāvanā*, or the announcement of the play, skipping all the items between the *nāndī* and the announcement.

After this the *sthāpaka* passage is found. Given the context in which it is found, we are entitled to expect yet another abbreviated form of the *pūrvaraṅga*. As I will try to show next, this is indeed the case.

As already indicated, Kuiper claims that the second hemistich of 169 has been misplaced because “it makes no sense in the context, since it would imply that it was the *sthāpaka* who performed the various *aṅgas* of the *pūrvaraṅga*” (Kuiper 1978: 174). It is not clear to me how Kuiper could be so certain that this was not the case, for the very first thing the *sthāpaka* does after his entrance is to perform the *cārī*, which for all we know is one of the “limbs” of the *pūrvaraṅga*. Kuiper, whose attention appears to have been completely absorbed by the *ślokas* framing the passage, does not even mention the *cārī*. Feistel, for his part, does not commit himself on the question as to whether we have to do with “the” *cārī*, that is, the *cārī* of the *pūrvaraṅga* here or with “a” *cārī*, and leaves open both possibilities (Feistel 1969: 96). However, from a closer look at the passage it would appear that we are dealing with the *cārī* of the *pūrvaraṅga* here. One of the functions of the *pūrvaraṅga* is the worship of the gods (of the stage) in order to propitiate them. In fact, the *cārī* would be the very last item involved in this function (see V 53ab: *āśrāvaṇādicāryantam etad daivatapūjanam* |; cp. III 33-34: *anenaiva vidhānena yathāsthānaṃ yathāvidhi | suprasādāni sarvāni daivatāni niveśayet* ||33|| *sthāne sthāne yathānyāyaṃ viniveśya tu devatāḥ | tāsāṃ prakurvīta tataḥ pūjanam tu yathārhatāḥ* ||34||). The *cārī* in the *sthāpaka* version has the very same function (164cd-165):

Immediately he should perform the *cārī* praising (*śamsinī*) the gods and brāhmaṇas with *ślokas* sweet with well(-formed) sentences and full of the various *bhāvas* and *rasas*; and having [thus] properly propitiated

(*prasādyā*) [the gods of] the stage he should make known the name of the playwright.

It would seem that the *sthāpaka* did not make his entrance after the *pūrvaraṅga* but, so to speak, right in the middle of it. We would be dealing with a duplication of the *pūrvaraṅga*, in which, however, some items have been skipped. The idea that we are dealing with a duplication of the *pūrvaraṅga* is confirmed when we next turn to the description of the entrance of the *sthāpaka*. It appears to be an almost exact copy of that of the entrance of the *sūtradhāra* in the second *parivarta* of the *utthāpana*. The main difference is that where the *sūtradhāra* enters in the company of his two assistants the *sthāpaka* apparently enters entirely on his own:

<i>sthāpaka</i>	<i>sūtradhāra</i>
162a <i>sthāpakakḥ praviśet tatra</i>	65d <i>sūtradhārapraveśanam </i>
162b <i>sūtradhāraguṇākṛtiḥ </i>	66 <i>puṣpāñjalim samādāya rakṣāmaṅgalasaṃskṛtāḥ śuddhavastrāḥ sumanasas tathā cādbhutadr̥ṣṭayah </i>
162cd <i>sthānaṃ tu vaiṣṇavaṃ kṛtvā sauṣṭhavāṅgapuraskṛtam </i>	67 <i>sthānaṃ tu vaiṣṇavaṃ kṛtvā sauṣṭhavāṅgapuraskṛtam dīkṣitāḥ śucayaś caiva praviśeyuḥ samaṃ trayah </i>
	68ab <i>bhṛṅgārajarjaradharau bhavetāṃ pāripārśvikau </i>
163ab <i>praviśya raṅgaṃ tair eva sūtradhārapadair vrajet </i>	68cd <i>madhye tu sūtrabhṛt tābhyāṃ vṛtṭaḥ pañcapadīm vrajet </i>
	69 <i>padāni pañca gaccheyur brahmaṇo yajaneccchayā padānāṃ cāpi vikṣepaṃ vyākhyāsyāmy anupūrvaśaḥ </i> ...

<i>sthāpaka</i>	<i>sūtradhāra</i>
163cd <i>sthāpakasya praveśe tu kartavyārthānugā dhruvā //</i>	[65d <i>sūtradhārapraveśanam //</i>]
164a <i>tryaśrā vā caturaśrā vā</i>	
164b <i>tajjñair madhyalayānvitā /</i>	[65c <i>kāryaṃ madhyalaye tajjñaiḥ</i>]

The juxtaposition of the two passages reveals a link between the expression *sūtradhāraguṇākṛtiḥ* in 162b and the description of the appearance of the *sūtradhāra* and his two assistants in 66-67, and one between the expression *sūtradhārapadaḥ* in 163b and the steps mentioned and described in 68d-72. The two expressions may accordingly be paraphrased as “(he should enter) looking exactly like the *sūtradhāra* does at that occasion” and “(he should make) exactly the same steps which the *sūtradhāra* makes at that occasion”. The passages seem to imply that the *sthāpaka* is the same “role” as that of the *sūtradhāra*. Whatever distinction there is between the two roles seems to lie in the respective names, a point to which I will return (p. 108).

In the *caturaśra* version of the *pūrvaraṅga* the entrance of the *sūtradhāra* is followed by the worship of the *jarjara*. In the *sthāpaka* version of the *pūrvaraṅga* the *sthāpaka* enters and immediately (*anantaram*) performs the *cārī*, which otherwise follows upon the disposal of the *jarjara*. After the *cārī*, which consists of the propitiation of the gods residing in the stage by, among other things, the recitation of *śloka*s, the *sthāpaka* begins the announcement of the play. The fact that the *sthāpaka* enters just before the *cārī* suggests that the half-verse 161cd, *prayujya vidhinaivaṃ tu pūrvaraṅgaṃ prayogataḥ*, should not be construed with the following *sthāpakah praviśet* Instead, it would somehow (note the absence of a finite verb) function as a conclusion to the preceding passage (for which, see above, p. 98). As such it may be compared with 169cd, *evam eṣa prayuktavyaḥ pūrvaraṅgo yathāvidhi* (= 137ab), which forms the conclusion of the *sthāpaka* passage. The latter half-verse also implies that the *prastāvanā* is included in the *pūrvaraṅga*. In this connection it should be noted that in the *sthāpaka* version of the *pūrvaraṅga* the transition from the *cārī* to the *prastāvanā* is carried out smoothly, without any interruption caused by the exit of the *sthāpaka* and, next, this same person’s entrance.

Another thing to be noted is that in the *sthāpaka* version the *trigata* and *prarocanā* have been skipped. In this respect it shows an interesting point of agreement with the prologues of classical Sanskrit drama, which from an introductory verse proceed immediately to the announcement. However, before going into that an attempt will be made to reconstruct the role of the *sthāpaka* in greater detail. One of the aims of this is to discern the exact meaning of the term *sthāpaka*. The other is to investigate the relationship of the *sthāpaka* version of the *pūrvvaraṅga* with the *pūrvvaraṅga* of the *caturaśra* type. After that I will turn to the relationship of the *sthāpaka* role with the prologues of the Sanskrit plays themselves.

5. THE CĀRĪ AND MAHĀCĀRĪ

The first item performed by the *sthāpaka* is the *cārī*, after which he proceeds immediately with the announcement. It would seem that apart from the *trigata* and *prarocanā*, he also skipped the *mahācārī*, the description of which in the Nāṭyaśāstra follows upon that of the *cārī*. However, on closer consideration the relationship between the *cārī* and *mahācārī* is of a different nature. In order to explain this relationship, I will analyse the relevant passages in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

The *cārī* is described in NS V 115cd-123. This passage is immediately followed by a description of the so-called *mahācārī* in 124-132. The (*mahā*)*cārī* is performed after the *jarjara* has in one way or another been disposed of. See in this connection 124, for the *mahācārī*:

pāriparśvīkahaste tu nyasya jarjaram uttamam |
mahācārīṃ tataś caiva prayuñjīta yathāvidhi ||

and 115cd for the *cārī*:

jarjaram namayitvā tu tataś cārīṃ prayojayet ||

The disposal of the *jarjara* is generally considered to have occurred in two steps. In the *cārī* the *jarjara* was “only” inclined. The *cārī* included dance steps during which the *jarjara* was held horizontally at the level of the actor’s navel (Kuiper 1975: 262ff.). See in this connection passage 119c-120, to be quoted below (p. 107). Apparently only at the beginning of the following *mahācārī* the *jarjara* was actually removed. So far the *cārī* and the *mahācārī* have been taken as two separate items to be performed one after the other. However, on closer consideration the *cārī* and *mahācārī* are each in their own ways duplications of the *parivartana*

described in 87-99ab, which would suggest that we have to do with alternative versions of the same item. It would not be a matter of performing the one after the other but of performing the one instead of the other. Below the descriptions of the *parivartana* (88-98), *mahācārī* (124-132) and *cārī* (115cd-123) are juxtaposed:

<i>parivartana</i>	<i>mahācārī</i>	<i>cārī</i>
	124 <i>pāriparśvikahaste tu nyasya jarjaram uttamam / mahācārīṃ tataś caiva prayuñjita yathāvidhi //</i>	115cd <i>jarjaram namayitvā tu tataś cārīṃ prayojayet //</i>
		116ab <i>pāriparśvikayoś ca syāt pāścimenāpasarpaṇam /</i>
88 <i>caturaśraṃ laye madhye sannipātair athāṣṭabhiḥ / yasyā laghūni sarvāṇi kevalaṃ naidhanaṃ guru //</i>	125 <i>caturaśrā dhruvā tatra tathā drutalayānvitā / caturbhiḥ sannipātais ca kalā hy aṣṭau pramāṇataḥ //</i>	116cd-117ab <i>aḍḍitā cātra kartavyā dhruvā madhyalayānvitā // caturbhiḥ sannipātais ca caturaśrā pramāṇataḥ /</i>
89 <i>bhaved atijagatyām tu sā dhruvā parivartanī / vārttikena tu mārgeṇa vādyenānugatena ca //</i>	126 <i>ādyaṃ caturtham antyaṃ ca saptamaṃ daśamaṃ guru / laghu śeṣaṃ dhruvāpāde caturviṃśatike bhavet //</i>	117cd-188ab <i>ādyaṃ antyaṃ caturtham ca pañcamaṃ ca tathā guru // yasyām hrasvāni śeṣāṇi sā jñeyā tv aḍḍitā budhaiḥ /</i>
	127 <i>pādatalāhati- pātitaśailaṃ kṣobhitabhūta- samagrasamudram / tāṇḍavanṛttam idaṃ pralayānte pātu jagat sukhadāyi harasya //</i>	

<i>parivartana</i>	<i>mahācārī</i>	<i>cārī</i>
	128 <i>bhāṇḍonmukhena</i> <i>kartavyam</i> <i>pādavikṣepanam tataḥ /</i> <i>sūcām kṛtvā punaḥ</i> <i>kuryād</i> <i>vikṣepaparivartanam //</i>	
		118cd-119ab <i>asyāḥ prayogaṃ</i> <i>vakṣyāmi</i> <i>yathā pūrvam</i> <i>maheśvaraḥ //</i> <i>sahomayā krīditavān</i> <i>nānābhāvaviceṣṭitaiḥ</i>
		119cd-120 <i>kṛtvāvahittham</i> <i>sthānam tu</i> <i>vāmaṃ cādhomukhaṃ</i> <i>bhujam //</i> <i>caturaśram uraḥ</i> <i>kāryam</i> <i>añcitas cāpi mastakaḥ /</i> <i>nābhipradeśe vinyasya</i> <i>jarjaram ca</i> <i>tulādhr̥tam //</i>
90 <i>lalitaiḥ pādavinīyāsair</i> <i>vandyā devā</i> <i>yathādiśam /</i> <i>dvikalam pādapatanaṃ</i> <i>pādacaryām gataṃ</i> <i>bhavet //</i>	129 <i>atīkrāntaiḥ salalitaiḥ</i> <i>pādair druta-</i> <i>layānvitaiḥ /</i> <i>tritālāntaram utkṣepair</i> <i>gacchet pañcapadīm</i> <i>tataḥ //</i>	121 <i>vāmapallavahastena</i> <i>pādais tālāntarot-</i> <i>thitaiḥ /</i> <i>gacchet pañcapadīm</i> <i>caiva</i> <i>savilāsāṅgaceṣṭitaiḥ //</i>
91 <i>vāmapadena vedhas tu</i> <i>kartavyo nṛttayokṛbhīḥ /</i> <i>dvitālāntaraviṣkambho</i> <i>vikṣepo dakṣiṇasya ca //</i>	130ab <i>tatrāpi vāmavedhas tu</i> <i>vikṣepo dakṣiṇasya ca /</i>	122ab <i>vāmavedhas tu kartavyo</i> <i>vikṣepo dakṣiṇasya ca /</i>

<i>parivartana</i>	<i>mahācārī</i>	<i>cārī</i>
92 <i>tataḥ pañcapadīm</i> <i>gacched</i> <i>atīkrāntaiḥ padair atha /</i> <i>tato 'bhivādanam kuryād</i> <i>devatānām yathādīśam //</i>	cf. 129 <i>atīkrāntaiḥ salalitaiḥ</i> <i>pādair druta-</i> <i>layānvitaiḥ /</i> <i>tritālāntaram utkṣepair</i> <i>gacchet pañcapadīm</i> <i>tataḥ //</i>	
93-94 enumeration of the four regions and their gods		
95 <i>diśām tu vandanaṃ</i> <i>kṛtvā</i> <i>vāmavedhaṃ</i> <i>prayojayet /</i> <i>dakṣiṇena ca kartavyaṃ</i> <i>vikṣepaparivartanam //</i>	cf. 130ab <i>tatrāpi vāmavedhas tu</i> <i>vikṣepo dakṣiṇasya ca /</i>	
		122cd <i>śṛṅgārarasasamyuktām</i> <i>paṭhed āryām</i> <i>vicakṣaṇaḥ //</i>
		123ab <i>cārīślokaṃ gaditvā tu</i> <i>kṛtvā ca parivartanam /</i>
96 <i>prāṇmukhas tu tataḥ</i> <i>kuryāt</i> <i>puruṣastrī-</i> <i>napuṃsakaiḥ /</i> <i>tripadyā sūtrabhṛd</i> <i>rudra-</i> <i>brahmopendrābhi-</i> <i>vādanam //</i>	130cd-131ab <i>tair eva ca padaiḥ</i> <i>kāryam</i> <i>prāṇmukhenāpa-</i> <i>sarpaṇam //</i> <i>punaḥ padāni trīṇy eva</i> <i>gacchet prāṇmukha</i> <i>eva tu /</i>	cf. 123cd ⁷ <i>tair eva ca padaiḥ</i> <i>kāryam</i> <i>[prāṇmukhen]āpa-</i> <i>sarpaṇam //</i>

⁷ The text actually reads *paścimenāpasarpaṇam*. As I will argue (p. 114), 123cd would describe the steps made by the *sūtradhāra* in the direction of the curtain (*paścimenāpasarpaṇa*) behind which the *natī* is waiting to be invited to make her entrance. The half verse has been quoted here opposite 130cd-131ab and 96 in order to show the origin of the variant reading *prāṇmukhenāpasarpaṇam*.

<i>parivartana</i>	<i>mahācārī</i>	<i>cārī</i>
97 <i>dakṣiṇaṃ tu padaṃ</i> <i>pumso</i> <i>vāmaṃ strīṇāṃ</i> <i>prakīrtitam</i> <i>punar dakṣiṇaṃ eva</i> <i>syān</i> <i>nātyutkṣiptaṃ</i> <i>napuṃsakam </i>		
98 <i>vandeta pauruṣeṇeśaṃ</i> <i>strīpadena janārdanaṃ /</i> <i>napuṃsakapadenāpi</i> <i>tathaiṅvāmbuja-</i> <i>sambhavam </i>		
cf. 95 <i>diśaṃ tu vandanaṃ</i> <i>kṛtvā</i> <i>vāmavedhaṃ</i> <i>prayojayet /</i> <i>dakṣiṇena ca kartavyaṃ</i> <i>vikṣepaparivartanam </i>	131cd <i>tataś ca vāmavedhaḥ</i> <i>syād</i> <i>vikṣepo dakṣiṇasya ca </i>	
	132ab <i>tato raudrarasam ślokaṃ</i> <i>pādasamharanaṃ</i> <i>paṭhet /</i>	
cf. 96/97/98 (see above)	132cd <i>tasyānte tu tripadyātha</i> <i>vyāharet</i> <i>pāripārśvikau </i>	cf. 123cd <i>tair eva ca padaiḥ</i> <i>kāryaṃ</i> <i>paścimenāpa-</i> <i>sarpaṇam </i>

As appears from the above, the scenarios of the *parivartana*, *mahācārī* and *cārī* run almost completely parallel. The function of the *parivartana* is to praise the gods residing in the various parts of the stage. The instructions for the *parivartana* are mainly restricted to the choreography. While in the *cārī* and *mahācārī* the choreography is basically the same as in the *parivartana*, additional information is supplied concerning the texts to be recited during the dance steps. The *cārī* consists of a *pañcapadī* performed with gracious movements of the body (*savilāsān-*

gaceṣṭitaiḥ, 121cd), followed by a *vāmavedha* and a *vikṣepa* of the *dakṣiṇa*(*pāda*) (122ab), an *āryā* verse in the *śṛṅgārarasa* (122cd) and, next, a *tripadī* (*tair eva ca padaiḥ* of 123cd corresponding to *tripadī* of 96). The *mahācārī* consists of two such movements, in the second of which, however, the *pañcapadī* is performed with violent dance steps (see 129ab: *atīkrāntaiḥ salalitaiḥ pādaiḥ*; cf. 90a: *lalitaiḥ pādavinīyāsaiḥ*, and 92b: *atīkrāntaiḥ padaiḥ*, for the *parivartana*) and the verse is conformingly in the *raudrarasa* (132a). In the description of the *mahācārī* the first movement, with the *salalita pāda* and the *śloka* in *śṛṅgārarasa*, has not been elaborated upon, obviously because it had already been dealt with in connection with the *cārī*. The definition of the *mahācārī* is restricted to information additional to that which had already been supplied for the *cārī*.

Of the two consecutive movements in the *mahācārī* (and the *parivartana*), in the *cārī* only one is performed. In the description of the *cārī* given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* it is the movement with the gracious dance steps (probably of the *lāsya* type). It is not hard to understand why the *sthāpaka*, who performed an abbreviated version of the *pūrvarāṅga*, performed “only” the *cārī*.

The performance of the *cārī* by the *sthāpaka* might also explain the difference in the handling of the *jarjara* in the *mahācārī* and the *cārī*. We have seen that the *sūtradhāra* enters together with two “assistants”. At the beginning of the *mahācārī*, which seems to belong to the “complete” *caturaśra* version of the *pūrvarāṅga*, the *sūtradhāra* puts the *jarjara* in the hands of one of these assistants. The *sthāpaka*, on the other hand, seems to have entered entirely on his own. There was no one else on the stage who could take over the *jarjara* from him. Accordingly the *sthāpaka* performs the *cārī* holding the *jarjara* in his hands. The “removal” of the *jarjara* is represented symbolically by keeping it horizontally (*tulādhṛta*) as described in the passage 119cd-121:

kṛtvāvahitthaṃ sthānaṃ tu vāmaṃ cādhomukhaṃ bhujam //119//
caturaśraṃ uraḥ kāryam añcitaś cāpi mastakaḥ |
nābhīpradeśe vinyasya jarjaraṃ ca tulādhṛtam //120//
vāmapallavahastena pādaiś tālāntarothhitaiḥ |
gacchet pañcapadīm caiva savilāsāṅgaceṣṭitaiḥ //121//

But there is more. A comparison of this passage with that in V 66ff. and 162-164 (*vaiṣṇava sthāna*, *pañcapadī*; see p. 100f.)⁸ appears to show that

⁸ See also IV 274cd-275ab describing the entrance of a dancer: *vaiśākhasthānakeneha sarvarecakacārīṇī* // *puṣpāñjalidharā bhūtvā praviśed raṅgamaṇḍapam* |. Note that like the *sūtradhāra* in V 66 the dancer enters holding flowers in her hand.

we are dealing with a typical entrance scene here. As an entrance scene – and I leave aside the differences in the choreography between this passage and 162-164 – it would only make sense in the case of the *sthāpaka*, who enters immediately before the *cārī*.

In the *caturaśra* version of the *pūrvaraṅga* the “grasping” or “taking hold” of the *jarjara* is a separate act which takes place in the fourth *parivarta* of the *utthāpana* (*grhītvā jarjaram ...* [82c]; *jarjaragrahaṇādyo ... caturthaḥ parivartaḥ* [84c-85a]). In the *sthāpaka* version no such item is mentioned, which can only mean that the *sthāpaka* has entered with the *jarjara* already in his hand. This brings us to the meaning of the term *sthāpaka*. Kuiper (1978: 177) mentions two possible “derivations”, arguing that it could describe the *sūtradhāra*’s task of deciding who has won the verbal contest in the *trigata* (note *sthāpita* following 134). The other possibility is to regard it as an elliptical expression for *utthāpaka* as found in *utthāpana*, the “raising of the *jarjara*”. The first possibility may be rejected on the ground that the *trigata* is skipped by the *sthāpaka*. Furthermore, the term seems to denote the actor at the moment of his entrance. Note that later, when he is announcing the play, the same actor is called *prastāvaka*. This being so, the second possibility would make perfect sense.

The sequence may now be reconstructed as follows: the actor enters with the *jarjara* kept upright in his hand (*sthāpaka*). He takes in a certain starting position (*sthāna*). Next he brings the *jarjara* down, holding it horizontally, makes the “five steps”, and recites the *cārīśloka*. It should be noted once more that after the *cārī* the same *sthāpaka* without any interruption (*anantaram*, 164c) makes the announcement of the play and that we are dealing with a scene in which the *pūrvaraṅga* and *prastāvanā* have been combined. As already indicated the *sthāpaka* role is in many respects similar to what we actually find in the prologues of Sanskrit plays, and, as I will try to show, in particular to what we find in the South Indian textual tradition. However, before going into that, two points in the text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* will have to be dealt with.

6. JARJARASYA VINĀŚANAM

The first point concerns line 116ab: *pāripārśvikayoś ca syāt paścimenā-pasarpaṇam*. Above (p. 107) it has been argued that before performing the *cārī* the *sthāpaka* had entered entirely on his own. On the basis of line 116ab one would have to conclude that instead he had entered in the company of two assistants, who, however, immediately retired to

the back of the stage. However, as I see it, this line has been added only secondarily after the *cārī* and *mahācārī* had come to be interpreted as separate movements to be performed consecutively: the assistants had to be introduced and assigned a role in the *cārī* in order to account for their appearance in the subsequent *mahācārī*.

The second point concerns the interpretation of the passage 114cd-115:

gaditvā jarjaraślokaṃ raṅgadvāre ca yat smṛtam ||114||
pathed anyam punah ślokaṃ jarjarasya vināśanam |
jarjaraṃ namayitvā tu tataś cārīṃ prayojayet ||115||

Kuiper (1975: 260), who with manuscript “ta” reads *vināmanam* instead of *vināśanam*, provides the following translation:

After having pronounced the *śloka* [in praise] of the *jarjara* and what is taught [as to be pronounced] in the *raṅgadvāra*, [the *sūtradhāra*] recites another *śloka*, which accompanies the inclining of the *jarjara*. Having inclined the *jarjara* he thereupon performs a *Cārī*.

While according to Kuiper “the correctness of this reading [*vināmanam*] cannot reasonably be doubted” (1975: 261), in the present context it is difficult to imagine the substitution of *vināmanam* by *vināśanam*. In any case, *jarjaraṃ namayitvā* of the following line makes no sense if the *jarjara* had been destroyed first. This also means that *vināśanam* cannot refer to the destruction of the *jarjara*. As I see it, it indeed would not refer to the destruction of the *jarjara* but to its own destructive power, that is, its power to destroy obstacles:

He should recite another *śloka* [praising] the destructive power of the *jarjara*.

This interpretation would, however, result in a cumulation of *jarjaraślokas*, that is, after the one mentioned in 114cd, yet another *jarjaraśloka* would be recited in 115ab. In my opinion, however, we might have to reckon with a transposition of lines, 115ab originally having preceded 114cd. In order to understand what is the matter here we would have to go back to 110. In this verse the *nāndī* described in 104-110ab is said to be followed by a *śuṣkāvakraṣṭā dhruvā*, which is further described as *jarjaraślokadarśikā*. While the exact meaning of the latter compound is not clear, we seem to have to do with a *dhruvā* praising the *jarjara*. The metrical characteristics of the *dhruvā* are specified in 111-112ab. This *śuṣkāvakraṣṭā dhruvā* is said to be followed by one *śloka* in a deep tone (*gambhīrasvara*, 113ab). In actual fact we seem to be dealing with yet another *nāndī* here. Compare in this connection the definition of its contents given in 113cd-114ab:

*devastotraṃ puraskṛtya yasya pūjā pravartate ||
rājño vā yatra bhaktiḥ syād atha vā brahmaṇaḥ stavam |*

(He should recite a *śloka*) namely, a *stotra* of the god who is worshipped, or one praising the king to whom one is devoted, or one praising brahmans.⁹

with that of the *nāndī* in 24:

*āśīrvacanasamyuktā nityam yasmāt prayujyate |
devadvijanṛpādīnām tasmān nāndīti samjñitā ||*

Like the one mentioned in 104ff. this “*nāndī*” of 113-114ab is followed by a *jarjaraśloka* (*gaditvā jarjaraślokaṃ*, 114cd). The Nāṭyaśāstra thus mentions two *nāndīs*, each of which is followed by a *jarjaraśloka*. However, in the present text the “*śloka* [praising] the destructive power of the *jarjara*” (115ab) is not only a second one, coming after another *jarjaraśloka*, but is recited after the *raṅgadvāra* seems to have been completed (*raṅgadvāre ca yat smṛtam*, 114d). As already indicated, we should seriously reckon with the possibility that 115ab originally stood before 114cd, but has been transposed after *vināśanam* had come to be misunderstood as somehow referring to the removal of the *jarjara*. The text as reconstructed by me reads:

*tataḥ ślokaṃ paṭhed ekaṃ gambhīrasvarasamyutam |
devastotraṃ puraskṛtya yasya pūjā pravartate ||113||
rājño vā yatra bhaktiḥ syād atha vā brahmaṇaḥ stavam |114ab/
paṭhed anyam punaḥ ślokaṃ jarjarasya vināśanam ||115ab||
gaditvā jarjaraślokaṃ raṅgadvāre ca yat smṛtam |114cd/
jarjaraṃ namayitvā tu tataś cārīm prayojayet ||115cd||*

Next, he should recite a single *śloka* in a deep tone, namely, a *stotra* of the god who is worshipped, or one praising the king to whom one is devoted, or one praising brahmans. Next, he should recite another *śloka*, [namely, one praising] the destructive power of the *jarjara*. Having recited the *jarjaraśloka* and what is taught [as to be pronounced] in the *raṅgadvāra*, [and] having inclined the *jarjara*, he should next perform the *cārī*.

It is an entirely different matter if the Nāṭyaśāstra in V 104ff. and 112cdff. describes a sequence of two *nāndīs*, or if we are dealing with items to be performed one after the other. As I see it, as in the case of

⁹ Note that Kuiper (1975: 259-260), who did not connect 113cd-114ab with the definition of the *nāndī* in 24, solves the syntax in a completely different way: “It [the *dhruvā*] is followed by the praise (*stotra*, *stava*) of a god who is just then specially worshipped or of whom the king is a special devotee, or else of the class of brahmans” (italics mine).

the *cārī* and *mahācārī*, we should reckon with the possibility that in 112cd-114ab we are not dealing with a second *nāndī* but with a variant, one in *gambhīrasvara*, which as such may be performed instead of the one mentioned in 104, which is in *madhyama svara*.

7. THE PROLOGUES OF CLASSICAL SANSKRIT PLAYS

The prologues of classical Sanskrit plays agree closely with the *sthāpaka* version of the *pūrvaraṅga*. From an introductory verse the *sūtradhāra*, unaccompanied by any assistants, proceeds immediately to making the announcement of the play. In the North Indian tradition the introductory verse has been identified as a *nāndī*, which indeed belongs to the *pūrvaraṅga*. The *sūtradhāra* would perform the *pūrvaraṅga* and *prastāvanā* in one go. In this respect the South Indian tradition is different. In the South Indian texts the first verse, which is called “*nāndī*” in the North Indian texts, has not been named. It has been preceded by a stage direction mentioning the entrance of the *sūtradhāra*. The prologue seems to have been set after the *pūrvaraṅga*, which had been marked by the *sūtradhāra*’s exit. However, on closer inspection it is precisely this introductory scene in the South Indian texts which appears to correspond almost literally to what is described in the *sthāpaka* passage in the Nāṭyaśāstra. Before going into this, the differences between the two types of prologues, from the north and south respectively, may be presented in the following way.

North India (e.g. Śakuntala)	South India (e.g. Pratijñāyauṅgharāyaṇa)
verse identified as <i>nāndī</i> characteristic: <i>avatu vaḥ</i> (cf. <i>vo ... pāntu</i> in <i>Mālatīmādhava</i> and <i>vyapanayatu nas tāmasīm vṛttim</i> in <i>Mālavikāgnimitra</i>) <i>nāndyante</i> <i>sūtradhārah:</i> <i>alam ativistareṇa</i> <i>nepathyābhimukham avalokya</i>	<i>nāndyante tataḥ praviśati sūtradhārah</i> verse recited by the <i>sūtradhāra</i> <i>pātu (vaḥ)</i> (cf. <i>pāyād vaḥ</i> in <i>Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi</i>)
invites <i>naṭī</i> on the stage	<i>parikramya nepathyābhimukham avalokya</i> invites <i>naṭī</i> on the stage

As already indicated, the stage direction “after the *nāndī*, next the *sūtradhāra* enters” in the South Indian textual tradition gives the impression of a break between the *pūrvaraṅga* and the prologue, formally marked by the exit and entrance of the *sūtradhāra*. However, if we compare the South Indian prologue with the *sthāpaka* version an entirely different picture emerges. Above (p. 101) we have seen that immediately after having entered the *sthāpaka* proceeds to the *cārī*. This *cārī* otherwise follows right upon the *nāndī* (for the *jarjaraśloka* after the *nāndī*, see above, p. 110). The playwright’s saying that the *sūtradhāra* enters “after the *nāndī*” may have merely been a way of indicating where we are in the *pūrvaraṅga*. We therefore need not be dealing with the *sūtradhāra*’s second entrance, but with the *sthāpaka*’s very first entrance instead.

Such a conclusion would hinge on the identification of the introductory verse. As already indicated, in the North Indian text tradition the verse has been called “*nāndī*”; in South India this same verse has been left unnamed. However, its identification as a *nāndī* has been ruled out by the preceding stage direction “after the *nāndī* enters the *sūtradhāra*”. The verses in question indeed do not show any resemblance to the examples of the *nāndī* given in NS V 105ff. (see below, p. 114). In fact, on the basis of the South Indian text tradition we would have to conclude that the verse is an example of a *cārīśloka*, which is the first “verse” after the *nāndī*. It should be noted that the *jarjaraśloka* after the *nāndī* is a *dhruvā* song,¹⁰ the text of which type of song has been generally ignored in the textual tradition. The *dhruvā* is not a composition of the playwright; it is a song belonging to the actors’ standard repertory. The decision to perform a *dhruvā*, and which one at that, lies entirely with the actors. Moreover, *dhruvās* are in a kind of Prakrit, while the verse under consideration is always in Sanskrit.

The identification of the first verse in the South Indian prologue as a *cārīśloka* is supported from two sides. The verses concerned in classical drama all show a similar pattern: a god is invoked to protect “you” (*pātu vaḥ*, *pāyād vaḥ*, *pāntu vaḥ*, etc.) or in a general way to further the interests of “you”. As such, these verses agree with the verse quoted in NS V 127 (see above, p. 103), which purportedly provides an example of a *mahācārī dhruvā*. However, it should be noted that the text of 127 is

¹⁰ See above, p. 109. The characterization (*śuśkāvakṛṣṭā*) *dhruvā* applied to the verse mentioned in 110 implicitly applies to the verse mentioned in 114cd-115ab as well.

completely different from that of the *dhruvās* quoted in NŚ XXXIII. Thus, most likely we are dealing with an example of a *cārīśloka* (in this case, one exemplifying the *raudrarasa*) instead, which has somehow been misplaced.

Furthermore, if the first verse in the South Indian prologue is indeed a *cārīśloka* other things fall into place. We have seen (p. 94) that with the *jarjaramokṣa* the *raṅgadvāra* has come to an end and that with the *cārī* the *pūrvaraṅga* enters into a new phase. Beginning with the *cārī* the performance is subjected to the judgement of *prāśnikas* or experts (XXVII 41). If the first verse in our drama text is indeed a *cārīśloka*, the task of the experts would begin exactly at the point where the contribution of the playwright begins. Or to put it differently, with the *cārī* the performance becomes unique; before that, whatever there was by way of text, was not the work of the playwright but of the actors (*dhruvās*), who naturally relied on routine and on stock material.

8. THE PROLOGUE IN THE NORTH INDIAN TEXT TRADITION

The evidence would suggest that the South Indian prologue indeed represents the *sthāpaka* version as described in the Nāṭyaśāstra. Where does this leave us with the prologue of the North Indian tradition? As already indicated the two types of prologue agree on a number of essential points. In both, the *pūrvaraṅga* and the *prastāvanā* seem to have been combined, which involved the loss of the *trigata* and *prarocanā* (and the *cārī*). Here another point of agreement may be mentioned, which can likewise be traced back to the *sthāpaka* version. It concerns that part of the prologue where the *sūtradhāra* moves towards the curtain at the back of the stage to invite the *naṭī* ([*parikramya*] *nepathyā-bhimukham avalokya*). These movements agree exactly with those described in the *cārī* passage (123cd), which, as we know, is the domain of the *sthāpaka*: after he had recited the *cārīśloka* the *sthāpaka*, “making those very same steps” (a *tripadī*?) moves backwards (*paścimenāpasarpaṇam*; see p. 105, n. 7).

The question arises if the North Indian prologue is related to the one found in South India or whether it represents an entirely independent development. In fact, it would seem highly unlikely that the North Indian prologue is the result of a development independent of the South Indian version. On the other hand, however, it appears to be almost impossible to reconstruct the transformation of the one from the other

as an inevitable process. For instance, starting from the South Indian prologue it is difficult to identify exactly the factors which may have led to the identification of the *cārīśloka* as a *nāndī* and the deletion of the stage direction *nāndyante tataḥ praviśati sūtradhāraḥ* respectively in the North Indian text tradition.

The starting point in the change must have been the removal of the stage direction, because otherwise it is highly unlikely that the identification of the introductory verse as a *nāndī* could have occurred. In any case, the verses in question do not look like *nāndīs* at all. Going by the example quoted in NŚ V 105ff. the *nāndī* consists of a sequence of *padas*, the recitation of which is interrupted by the exclamation “*evam ārya*” (109), of the assistants: “*namo ’stu sarvadevebhya*”, “*evam ārya!*”, “*dviḥjātibhyaḥ śubham*”, “*evam ārya!*” ... “*praśāstv imāṃ mahārājaḥ pṛthivīm ca sasāgarām*”, “*evam ārya!*”, etc.

If the choice had indeed been one between *cārī* and *nāndī*, we may assume that this formal distinction would have overruled whatever agreement there may have been between the *cārī* and *nāndī* on the functional level. Compare in this connection the definition of the *cārī* in 164cd: *kuryād anantaram cārīm devabrāhmaṇasamsinīm* ||, with that of the *nāndī* in 24: *āśīrvacanasamyuktā nityam yasmāt prayujyate | devadvijanrpadīnām tasmān nāndīti samjñitā* || (see also 113cd-114ab, quoted above, p. 110). It should be added that the above definition of the *cārī* is not clear at all, for the primary function of the *cārī* was the propitiation of the gods of the stage (*prasādya raṅgam*, 165c;¹¹ cf. *vand-yā devā yathādiśam* in 90 in the description of the *parivartana*). Thus, the *brāhmaṇas* are not praised but, together with the actors, the patronizing and the audience, are included among the ultimate beneficiaries, the “you”, of the *cārīśloka*.

If the identification of the verse as a *nāndī* can indeed only have taken place after, or simultaneously with, the removal of the stage direction *nāndyante tataḥ praviśati sūtradhāraḥ*, it is difficult to point to one reason in particular why the stage direction would have been removed. A possibility is that it was removed as the result of a misunderstanding according to which the stage direction was taken to indicate a second entrance of the *sūtradhāra* before the announcement, which second entrance had not been sanctioned by the Nāṭyaśāstra. Another possibility

¹¹ The definitions of the *cārī* and *mahācārī* in NŚ V 27 represent merely an attempt to account for the origin of the respective terms: *śṛṅgārasya pracaraṇāc cārī samparikīrtitā | raudrapracaraṇāc cāpi mahācārīti kīrtitā* ||.

is that the stage direction had been removed so that the work came to be preceded by an auspicious verse.

In the identification of this “external”, introductory verse as a *nāndī* a role may have been played by the description of the mythical first dramatic performance in NS I 56cd-57, which is said to have taken place immediately after the *nāndī*:

*pūrvam kṛtā mayā nāndī hy āśīrvacanasamyutā ||56||
aṣṭāṅgapadasamyuktā vicitrā vedanirmitā |
tadante 'nukṛtir baddhā yathā daityāḥ surair jitāḥ ||57||*

It should be noted that otherwise this passage from the Nāṭyaśāstra seems to underline the fact that the *nāndī* is the work of the actors, not the playwright. In these circumstances the identification of the verse as a *nāndī* can indeed only have taken place after the preceding stage direction had been removed.

In this connection I would like to refer to some differences between the opening verses in the North and the South Indian traditions respectively. For one thing, while the South Indian *cārīśloka*s show a direct relationship with the following play, often through puns on the names of the protagonists (e.g. in the Pratiññāyugandharāyaṇa), in the case of this same type of verse (*pātu vah*) in the North Indian texts such a relationship with the following play is less obvious, if present at all. Furthermore, the South Indian texts usually have only one introductory verse, while in the North Indian texts it is not uncommon to find two or even more verses here.

A question which arises is which of the two traditions might be the more authentic one here. Beginning with the South Indian prologue, it should be noted that the single verse is in agreement with the role of the *sthāpaka*, who is specifically associated with a shortened version of the *pūrvaraṅga*. Apart from that, the hints to the following play which this verse was apparently supposed to contain may be assumed to have prevented duplication. On the other hand, if we are indeed dealing with a *cārīśloka* here, it is not clear if the hints are authentic. In any case, the definitions of the *cārīśloka* in the Nāṭyaśāstra are silent on this point. The only distinction they make is based on the mythological scenes depicted in the verses, or whether Śiva is dancing his gruesome *tāṇḍava* dance or playfully (*lāsya*) dallying with Umā. It should be noted, however, that the authors of the South Indian plays need not, or need no longer, have been aware of the fact that the introductory verse was a *cārīśloka* and as a result did not feel themselves constrained by the

description of this type of verse in the Nāṭyaśāstra. For all we know, the verses in the South Indian tradition may be the result of the adaptation to the general drift of the prologue, which served, among other things, to smoothen the transition to the following play through, for instance, “hints” (*upakṣepeṇa kāvyasya*, V 29a; *kāvyaopakṣepaṇa*, 166d).

As already indicated, in the North Indian plays, in which there is no necessary connection between the introductory verses and the play, it is not uncommon to find two or even more verses. By itself this situation is not inconsistent with the definitions of either the *cārīśloka* or the *nāndī*. Thus, the description of the *cārīśloka* in V 165 (for a translation, see above, p. 99-100) mentions (*cārī*)ślokas in the plural:

svākya madhuraiḥ ślokaiv nānābhāvarasānvitaiḥ |
prasādyā raṅgaṃ vidhivat kaver nāma ca kīrtayet ||

Probably, however, the plural refers to the *cārīślokas* as a collective here. Apart from that, as we have seen, the *mahācārī* seems to allow for a sequence of several verses, dedicated to different gods. As to the *nāndī*, as seen above (p. 109-110), the Nāṭyaśāstra can be read as if it stipulated the performance of at least two consecutive *nāndīs*.

On the other hand, the situation in the North Indian texts, at least as far as the number of verses is concerned, may well be the result of a purely literary development. In any case, the verses in question, which often make use of highly complex images, have evidently come to serve as a means for the playwright to show his poetical skills. Because they need not have a direct bearing on the following play their number could easily be increased.

The North Indian drama texts show a striking agreement with some inscriptions which begin with a number of verses of exactly the same type as that found in drama. See, for instance the Mandasor Stone Pillar Inscription of Yaśovarman (Fleet 1888: 142-148, no. 33), which opens with a stanza which closely resembles the introductory verses in drama (*kṣapayatu bhavatām śatrutejāmsi ketuḥ*). Even more interesting is the case of the Mandasor Stone Inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvvarman (Fleet 1888: 79-88, no. 18), which opens with three such stanzas. Of these verses the numbers one and three agree with the *cārī* genre (v. 1: *pāyāt sa vo bhāskaraha*, v. 3: *pāyāt sa vaḥ ... vivasvān*). The second verse is of a slightly different type, in that the beneficial actions (e.g. *puṣṇāti*, *dadāti*) of the god in question are found in relative clauses to *tasmai* in *tasmai savitre namaḥ*.

These inscriptions testify to the existence of the present form of the North Indian prologue, in which the text opens with one or more independent auspicious verses, in the early Gupta period. This is well before the introduction of Sanskrit drama into South India, for which there is no concrete evidence earlier than the first half of the seventh century (Tieken 1993 and 1997). This casts doubts on the authenticity of the stage direction *nāndyante tatah praviśati sūtradhārah* found in the South Indian texts. It is in any case difficult to imagine the continuing insertion of introductory verses after this stage direction, which virtually marks the following text as that of the author. In this connection it should be noted that as far as the drama texts are concerned the multiplication of the verses, even if already present at the time of the composition of the play, seems to have gone on during the subsequent transmission of the text. This would account for the discrepancies in the manuscripts of one and the same play concerning the opening verses, their order and their number. Unfortunately, detailed documentation of this type of textual variation is available so far only for the *Mālatīmādhava* (Coulson 1989) and *Nāgānanda* (Steiner 1997: 23ff.). It is also interesting to note that in the case of the *Nāgānanda* we seem to be dealing with an independent tract of *stotras* (see Steiner 1997: 47ff.). All this might suggest that the inscriptions and plays represent independent developments and that the evidence of the inscriptions cannot be used either to question or to confirm the authenticity of the prologue in the South Indian tradition.

When all is said and done the attempt to trace the North Indian prologue back to the South Indian one, or *vice versa*, does not seem to lead to any definite conclusion. In what follows I would therefore like to approach the problem from a completely different angle.

9. CLASSICAL SANSKRIT PLAYS AS LITERARY TEXTS

We tend to see the texts of the classical Sanskrit plays as scripts meant for actual performances. We should not forget, however, that they have come down to us basically as literary texts. This allows for a specific reading of the prologue, the function of which may have been to transport the readers as it were to the theatre, and to prepare them for the fact that they are not going to read a poem but are going to “see”, if only in their minds, a play. It is not unlikely to assume that the pro-

logues which we now have are indeed the products of the composition of plays as literary texts. The text of the play as a whole, that is, including the prologue, may have been preceded by one or more verses asking a god to protect the reader.

An actual dramatic performance would have been preceded by certain ritual acts. As we have seen, the *pūrvaraṅga* described in the Nāṭyaśāstra presents a dramatized version of such a ritual. However, because we are dealing with a standard procedure the ritual has never been part of the script, which was restricted to what was unique. The script would have started with the play proper.

For the moment we will assume that it was either a *pūrvaraṅga* or a prologue. Indeed, the cumulation of “preliminaries”, namely first a *pūrvaraṅga* and next a prologue, results in a strange situation, though it is stranger still that this has not been commented upon so far. In the *pūrvaraṅga* the *sūtradhāra*, who plays the role of the ritual specialist, would invite (*prarocanā*) himself to appear in the prologue to announce the play in his capacity of director of the troupe. This kind of shift is difficult to perform in a convincing way. The problem has been mentioned in the Nāṭyaśāstra in XX 38-39ab in connection with the transition from the prologue to the play proper:

eṣām anyatamaṃ śliṣṭaṃ yojayitvārthayuktibhiḥ |
[tasmād aṅgadvayasyāpi sambhavo na nivāryate] ||38||
pātragrathair asambādhaṃ prakuryād āmukhaṃ tataḥ |

Having performed with *arthayuktis* (?) one of these [types of *āmukha*] which is overlapping (*śliṣṭam*) [with the main play] [Next/Therefore a/the division into two parts is not prevented / is obligatory.], one should perform the *āmukha* in such a way that no congestion arises in the arrangement of the roles.

Also, where this kind of shift is found, namely in Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava*, it is carefully anticipated (see Coulson 1989: 237, *ad* I 7.2).

The distinction between two traditions, one with a *pūrvaraṅga* and the other with a prologue, makes it possible to consider the final part of the *pūrvaraṅga* on its own merits, that is, without reference to the “following” prologue, in which we are made to believe that the invitation (*prarocanā*) in the *pūrvaraṅga* was addressed to the *sūtradhāra* and that it included an indication of the topic of the play to be performed. Taking the text of the Nāṭyaśāstra by itself, we have to do with an invitation followed by an indication, or what amounts to the same, an announcement of the topic of the play. In the absence of any stage direc-

tion introducing another character we have to assume that both the invitation and the announcement were made by the *sūtradhāra* himself. This implies almost automatically that the invitation was not one addressed specifically to the actors but was an invitation addressed to the audience in general to come and see the play. This invitation was then “followed” by a *kāvyaavastunirūpaṇa*, that is, the indication of the topic of the play.

As I see it, the problem began at the moment when an attempt was made to interpret the literary tradition in terms of the *pūrvaraṅga* “practice”. Given the first words of the director in the prologue, he seems to take up the matter as it were after the *prarocanā* and the *kāvyaavastunirūpaṇa*. The *prarocanā* came to be interpreted as an invitation of the director. Fictionally, the introductory scene was set after the *pūrvaraṅga*. The problem really started with the preceding verse. In the attempt to try to identify this verse one automatically landed somewhere in the *pūrvaraṅga*. Going backwards from the *prarocanā*, the first verse is the *cārī*, the next one is the *nāndī*. As I see it, the North Indian tradition, which opted for the *nāndī*, does not seem to have taken its cue directly from the description of the *pūrvaraṅga* in Nāṭyaśāstra V, but rather from the mythological account of the origin of drama in the very first chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra, in which the *nāndī* on its own has come to stand for the *pūrvaraṅga*. In this connection I may refer again to I 56cd-57, in which the performance of the play proper is said to begin after the *nāndī* (see above, p. 115). By identifying the introductory verse as a *nāndī* justice is done in particular to the external nature of the verse, which would indeed not have belonged to the play proper but, so to speak, to the manuscript.¹² We have to assume that the fact was disregarded that in all this the verse did not look like a *nāndī*. The *nāndī* version was not felt to have any consequences for the *pūrvaraṅga*, for the prologue started as it were after the *pūrvaraṅga*. As in the case of

¹² In this connection I would like to mention again (see also p. 99) the abbreviated version of the *pūrvaraṅga* found in the interpolated passage between V 160 and 161, immediately before the *sthāpaka* version. This version agrees with the North Indian one by the role assigned in it to the *nāndī*. All items of the *pūrvaraṅga* up to and including the *nāndī* are said to be performed backstage behind the curtain. The *sūtradhāra* enters the stage after the *nāndī* in order to perform the *prastāvanā* (... *nāndīm kṛtvā sa sūtradhṛt | punaḥ praviśya raṅgam tu kuryāt prastāvanām tataḥ ||*). The interpolated version differs from the North Indian prologue in introducing an entrance scene between the *nāndī* and the announcement.

the mythological account of the origin of drama, the *pūrvaraṅga* was represented by the *nāndī*.

The *cārīśloka*, or *sthāpaka*, version would be the result of a literal comparison of the prologue with the description of the *pūrvaraṅga* in Nāṭyaśāstra V. The two seem to have been literally set side by side and compared systematically. The identification of the verse as a *cārīśloka* indeed betrays a systematic mind, for in going backwards from the *prarocanā* and *kāvyaṅgastunirūpaṇa* the *cārīśloka* is indeed the first verse encountered. Next, the comparison would have led to an adaptation of the Nāṭyaśāstra consisting of the incorporation of the particular opening in V 161cd-169 side by side with the *caturaśra pūrvaraṅga*, on the one hand, and the addition of the stage direction *nāndyante tataḥ pravīṣati sūtradhāraḥ* in the texts of the plays, on the other.

What is to be noted is that in drawing up the *sthāpaka* version no distinction has been made between the *pūrvaraṅga* and the prologue; the two items have been fitted into one uninterrupted sequence. This implies that the persons responsible for the *sthāpaka* passage recognized only one “preliminary” before the play proper, instead of two as has been assumed by many modern scholars, namely first a *pūrvaraṅga* and next a prologue.

The situation may be reconstructed as follows. Originally, or rather, in the performance tradition, there was indeed only one “preliminary”, namely something corresponding to the *pūrvaraṅga*. The *pūrvaraṅga* was concluded by a brief announcement of the play which was going to be performed (*kāvyaṅgastunirūpaṇa*). After that the performance of the play proper was started. However, the texts of the plays which have come down to us represent scripts turned into literary texts. In the literary tradition the text of the play has come to be introduced by the prologue, which, as I have already explained, was meant to mentally transport the reader to the theatre. The prologue situates the following incidents explicitly in a performance context. Fictionally, the scene of the prologue was situated after the *pūrvaraṅga*. As the texts concerned were purely literary texts which were meant to be read, this was no problem. Next, however, the play texts have come to be re-interpreted in the light of the performance tradition as it was laid down in the Nāṭyaśāstra. The *nāndī* interpretation was superficial; in any case the technical details have not been elaborated. The *cārīśloka* interpretation, on the other hand, rests on the systematic comparison of the introductory scene with the *pūrvaraṅga* and has resulted in the recognition of the particular scene as a shortened version of the *pūrvaraṅga*.

10. THE NATURE OF THE *CATURAŚRA PŪRVARAṅGA*

The scenario presented here, tentative though it may be, is as far as I can see the only one which provides an explanation for the existence side by side of the *pūrvaraṅga* and the *prastāvanā*, and their amalgamation. The *prastāvanā* would have its origin in a purely literary development, while the *pūrvaraṅga* seems to have belonged to a performance tradition. At the same time we would have to conclude that all the presently known drama texts have their origin in a purely literary tradition, including those plays which may have been composed for a performance such as, for instance, the *Ūrubhaṅga* (Tieken 1997: 37). The performance of the *Ūrubhaṅga* was most likely part of a revival based on the literary tradition. However, just how *Aśvaghōṣa*'s plays fit into this picture remains uncertain, because the text fragments which have been rescued do not contain the prologues.

The scenario would also have consequences for our view of the composition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. For instance, XXVII 41 (see above, p. 94 and 113), which says that the experts started their examination of the play after the disposal of the *jarjara* and which evidently has its origin in the *sthāpaka* version of the *pūrvaraṅga*, would consequently be exposed as a later insertion. However, we should reckon with the possibility that in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* both strands, the performance practice and the literary tradition, were present from the very beginning. At the same time, we should be careful not to exaggerate the distinction between items belonging to the literary tradition and those belonging to the performance practice. For instance, to what extent is the *pūrvaraṅga* as described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* determined by the actual performance practice? Was it ever performed or, rather, was it ever meant to be performed?

In this connection it should be noted that the incorporation of the *sthāpaka* version in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as an abbreviation of the *caturaśra pūrvaraṅga* already implies that the performance of the latter version in its entirety was considered a cumbersome affair. The performance of the *caturaśra pūrvaraṅga* must indeed have been a costly affair in terms of the number of actors required, as it regularly involves three actors and at a certain point even a fourth (the *caturthakāra* in V 99).

At the same time, what strikes the eye when one looks at the *caturaśra* version of the *pūrvaraṅga* is the faithfulness with which it agrees with the ritual of the worship of the stage described in *Nāṭyaśāstra* III. For virtually every part of the ritual there is a corresponding dramatic scene. The ritual seems to have served as a grid which was filled in with

dramatic scenes. The scenes may have been inspired directly by the ritual actions themselves. This was indeed probably the case in the scene performed by the so-called *caturthakāra* described in V 99cd-102ab, which dramatizes the *homa* sacrifice taking place in the *raṅgapūjana*, described in III 82-88ab. However, in other cases we may be dealing with set-pieces from the dramatic repertory. A case in point may be the *trigata*, meant to fill in the slot of the ritual fighting of the *raṅgapūjana*. Such dialogues as met with in the *trigata* will have been part, as they still are, of the dramatic repertory in general. In this connection I would like refer to Tarabout (1998: 283), who reports comic scenes in a present-day theatre tradition from Kerala, which correspond almost literally to the script of the *trigata* given in the Nāṭyaśāstra (*kas tiṣṭhati jītaṃ kena*; see above, p. 95).¹³

The question arises if the *pūrvarāṅga* as described in the Nāṭyaśāstra is not just a learned construct, testifying to a strong interest in ritual, which is also otherwise characteristic in particular of the first five chapters of the Nāṭyaśāstra. Instances of this interest abound. I need only mention the concave shape of the stage floor mentioned in II 72, which is compared to the back of a tortoise or a fish (*kūrma-* or *matsyapṛṣṭha*). The prescriptions echo those for the surface of the Vedic sacrificial altar. Such instances would indicate that the author, or authors, of these first five chapters of the Nāṭyaśāstra attempted to equate drama with the ritual sacrifice, describing drama in terms of ritual and organizing the dramatic elements by placing them on a template derived from ritual. If so, this would reduce the ritual aspect of drama to a veneer, at least as far as the Nāṭyaśāstra is concerned. Or, to put it differently, in investigations on the ritual origin of drama the evidence of the Nāṭyaśāstra will have to be used much more carefully and with much greater discrimination than has hitherto been done.

¹³ If my interpretation of the origin of the *trigata* is correct, the origin of the figure of the *vidūṣaka* will have to be sought in the first place in the theatrical tradition (note in this connection Thieme 1987: 297), not, as was done by Kuiper (1979), in that of ritual or religion.

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