

# *Kāraikkālammai*

*Part 1: An iconographical and textual study*  
*Part 2: Poems for Śiva*



உரையினு லிம்மாலை யந்தாதி வெண்பாக்  
கரைவிடற் காரைக்காற் பேய்சொற் – பரவுவார்  
ஆராத வன்பிடு டண்ணலைச்சென் றேத்துவார்  
பேராத காதல் பிறந்து.

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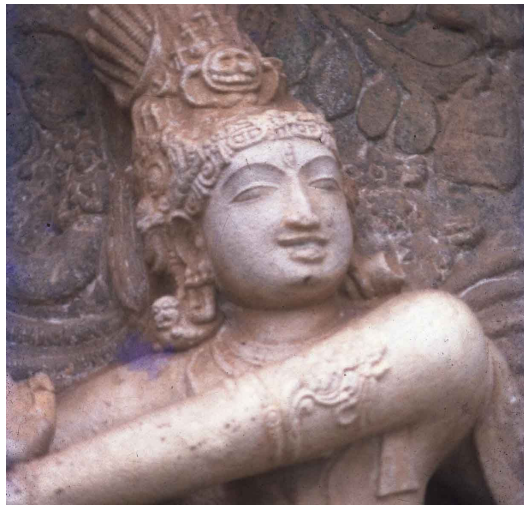
Peter J.J. de Bruijn

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# *Kāraikkālammaiṅār*

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*Part 2: Poems for Śiva*



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***Part 2: Poems for Śiva***

ISBN 978-90-811564-1-7

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Photograph cover:

Banteay Srei temple, Cambodia, eastern pediment of the first eastern gopura  
(photograph courtesy by the author)

Photograph back:

Dancing Kālī, detail Śiva Naṭarāja temple, Cidambaram, India  
(photograph courtesy by the author)

Text cover:

*To those who tenderly say the words of the Kāraikkālpēy,  
the garland of words [in] the antāti-form,  
and to those who will praise Aṅṅal with abundant love,  
[for these] worshippers undetachable love is produced.*

Verse 101 of the *Arputat tiruvantāti*, Kāraikkālammaiār

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Spelling  
Abbreviations

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# Kāraikkālammaiṃār

## Part 1: An iconographical and textual study

### INTRODUCTION

In 1954 A.L. Basham published in his *The Wonder that was India* a photograph depicting an ascetic or demonic female figure that he called “Kālī as Demoness playing Cymbals”<sup>1</sup> and in 1955 also Heinrich Zimmer called this female character “Kālī”.<sup>2</sup> One year later this similar type of figure was not called Kālī anymore, but the Tamil nāyaṇār Kāraikkālammaiṃār<sup>3</sup> by Jean Filliozat in Kārāvêlane’s *Kāreikkālammeiṃār: œvres éditées et traduites*.<sup>4</sup> In 1956 Kārāvêlane and Jean Filliozat presented a publication that included the first complete translation (in French) of the verses ascribed to the South Indian (Tamil) poet/nāyaṇār Kāraikkālammaiṃār probably to be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The publication pointed out that the figure described in the verses, Kāraikkāl, (perhaps) was depicted in South Indian art from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In the publication several plates depicting the female nāyaṇār, in bronze, stone or as being a part of a templestructure, are published. Most interesting is perhaps the plate showing the dancing Śiva in a *koṣṭha* on the vimāna’s southwall of the Bṛhadeśvara temple at Gangaikondacolapuram (c. AD 1025). On Śiva Naṭarāja’s left side, below, an emaciated female figure is depicted playing the *tāla* and displaying ascetic or demonic features: she has wild flaring out hair, has pointed shrivelled breasts and a fierce facial expression. Filliozat identified this figure as being Kāraikkālammaiṃār. This similar depiction of the squatting female figure was published by Hermann Kulke in 1970<sup>6</sup> in his excellent analysis of the religious and historical background of Cidambaram in Tamilnadu based on the *Cidambaramāhātmya*. In this he also calls the figure Kāraikkālammaiṃār and states that this emaciated figure strongly resembles the seventh mothergoddess Cāmuṇḍā (Kulke 1970:123). Referring to Cāmuṇḍā seems very plausible, especially when comparing her to Danturā, a form of Cāmuṇḍā. If we for instance compare the figure at the Bṛhadeśvara temple to a bronze sculpture depicting Danturā, discovered at Aṭṭahāsa in the Burdwan district and now at the museum of the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat, many similarities can be traced.<sup>7</sup> Both figures are female, are squatting on their haunches, are having pointed shrivelled breasts, are showing demonic and ascetic features and are clearly emaciated. In 1976 Mireille Bénisti published an article in which she states that the figure of Kāraikkāl is depicted not only in South Indian art, but also in Khmer art (Bénisti 1976). On a lintel from Vat Baset she found a figure that she, on the basis of a comparison of Kāraikkālammaiṃār’s verses and South Indian and Khmer arthistorical sources, interpreted as being the emaciated Tamil-nāyaṇār Kāraikkālammaiṃār. From this time onwards some other publications on this subject came out, based on Khmer-material found before Pol Pot’s genocidal Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979, and the presence of Kāraikkālammaiṃār in

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<sup>1</sup> Basham 1954:plate LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Zimmer 1955:pl.422.

<sup>3</sup> *Kāraikkāl* (a small town forty-seven miles from Tanjore) + *-ammai*: mother + *-(y) ār*: honorific (plural) suffix. Kāraikkālammaiṃār: “the respected mother from Kāraikkāl”.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. pl. 13 in Kārāvêlane 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Filliozat in Kārāvêlane 1956:xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Kulke 1970:pl.18.

<sup>7</sup> See plate LXXII a in Bhattasali 1929.

Khmer-art was accepted.<sup>8</sup> After the horrible Khmer Rouge regime no more intensive research on this subject has been done. As stated above, the presence of Kāraikkālammaiṃyār in Khmer-art was accepted and therefore perhaps of little interest anymore.

As a Tamilian and an admirer of Early South Indian art I was interested in this possible occurrence of one of the Tamil-nāyaṃmār especially in Southeast Asian art, since a depiction of a nāyaṃnār in Southeast Asian art may indicate that the Tamilliterature related to these nāyaṃmār was also known in Southeast Asia.

During my research in South- and Southeast Asia, I found (mainly) arthistorical material that has not been published or discussed before and that gives the idea of Kāraikkāl being depicted in South- or Southeast Asian art a twist.

I would like to discuss my findings on this subject and I would like to conclude whether the South Indian (Tamil) poet/nāyaṃnār Kāraikkālammaiṃyār indeed is depicted in South- and Southeast Asian art. Since the verses ascribed to Kāraikkālammaiṃyār are the most important literary sources regarding the ascetic or demonic figure depicted in art, this book is divided in two parts.

In the first part I will discuss my research, the second part consists of the first complete translation of all texts ascribed to Kāraikkālammaiṃyār in English.



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<sup>8</sup> At the end of this introduction I have included a list of all (important) publications on Kāraikkālammaiṃyār depicted in art. The titles marked with an asterisk (\*) were not at my disposal.

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## CHAPTER III

### ARTHISTORICAL SOURCES

#### 1. Introductory remarks

This chapter is essentially a description of the relief's or images that display the theme of the dancing Śiva on which an emaciated female is depicted. I will describe the depictions of this female and will analyse its context in a chronological and geographical order whenever possible. These include depictions of the emaciated female that are earlier published and identified as being Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār, or depictions that are not identified or published at all. Whether this (emaciated) female character is actually Kāraikkālpēy or Karaikkālammaiṅṅār, I will discuss later.

In this chapter I cannot discuss all the depictions of the emaciated female in relation to the dancing Śiva that I found in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia, but only those that are the most relevant.

#### 2. India

##### 2.1 *Kailāsanāthasvāmin temple, Sembiyan Mahadevi village, Tamilnadu*

Probably the earliest depiction of a dancing figure flanked by an emaciated or demonic figure can be found in the central niche on the south *ardhamanḍapa* wall of the Kailāsanāthasvāmin temple, built by Sembiyan Mahādevī, in the Sembiyan Mahadevi village. This temple can be dated to AD 981 on the basis of an inscription.<sup>9</sup> The two- or four-armed figure is dancing, has a frontal eye, *gajahasta*, *abhayamudrā* and wears a *jaṭāmukuta* with peacock-feathers and a skull on it. On the basis of these features, the figure can be identified as the dancing Śiva.<sup>10</sup> According to Rao this dance is known as the Bhujaṅga Lalita<sup>11</sup> but in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* it is called the Bhujaṅgatṛāsa, in which one leg is “bent in a triangular fashion and lifted up while the body about the hip and the knee is lightly turned on one side” (Ghose 1938:95).<sup>12</sup> In several Āgama-texts, both names appear to denote the dance of Śiva.<sup>13</sup> Śiva was probably depicted dancing on the demon-like character that mostly has been identified as *Mucalakaṅṅa* or the *apasmārapuruṣa*. Around the arm held in the *gajahasta*, a snake is coiled.

The relief is badly damaged, but below the dancing Śiva, three music-making gaṇas can be seen. On the right side of Śiva, outside the niche, an emaciated demonic figure can be distinguished. This (female?) figure is squatting, while both knees are pulled up, more or less resembling an *utkūṭakāsana*. The figure has a large demonic mouth, large bulbous eyes, flaring out hair and is (perhaps) playing the *tāla*.

At the other side of Śiva, outside the niche, an unidentifiable probably female person is depicted.

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<sup>9</sup> 36 of 1930.

<sup>10</sup> For the identification of Śiva, see e.g. Banerjea 1956:446-488.

<sup>11</sup> Rao 1914:227.

<sup>12</sup> Another name is *bhujaṅga-naṭana*, see Gaston 1982:24.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Bhujaṅgatṛāsa: *Ajitāgama* (Kriyā, 36, 233, Bhatt (ed.), Vol. II, 1967); *Rauravāgama* (Kriyā, 35, 221-230, Bhatt (ed.), Vol. II, 1972). Bhujaṅga Lalita: *Uttarakāmikāgama* 50, 52 Aḷakappamutaliyar (ed.), *Cennai*, 1909, p. 173). Source: Dagens 1981:72. Interesting is that Śiva is called *Puyāṅkaṅṅa* (Bhujaṅga) in the *Tiruvālaṅkāṭṭu Mūttatiruppatikam* verse 8. See also table 1 of Gaston 1982:24.

## 2.2 Rājarājeśvara temple, Tanjavur, Tamilnadu

Roughly similar in design to the dancing Śiva relief of the Kailāsanāthasvāmin temple, is a relief that can be found on the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjavur. On the basis of an inscription this temple can be dated to 1009-10 AD.<sup>14</sup>

The four-armed Śiva is depicted dancing the *ānandatāṇḍava* on Mucalakaṅ/apasmārapuruṣa while a snake is fastened around his lower left arm that is held in the *gajahasta*. Below the *apasmārapuruṣa*, three gaṇa-like musicians are depicted on a small panel. Outside the niche in which Śiva is depicted, on his *left* side, a female emaciated figure sitting in the *ardhaparyāṅka*-posture is depicted.<sup>15</sup> She wears large earrings, her hair is flaring out and she is playing the *tāla*. This figure has been identified as Kāraikkāmmaiyār by e.g. Filliozat (in: Kārāvêlane 1956:pl. 5) On the opposite of this figure, on the other side outside the niche, a four-armed male figure is seated, while playing the drum.

## 2.3 Bṛhadeśvara temple, Gangaikondacolapuram, Tamilnadu

Another depiction similar to the ones mentioned above can be found in a niche on the vimāna's southwall of the Bṛhadeśvara temple (c. AD 1025)<sup>16</sup> in

Gangaikondacolapuram. Śiva is dancing the *ānandatāṇḍava*, has the *gajahasta*, *abhayamudrā*, *damaru*, fire and wears a *jaṭāmukuta*. In his *jaṭā* the goddess Gaṅgā is depicted holding the hands in *añjali*. He is standing on Mucalakaṅ/apasmārapuruṣa and is wearing a girdle of skulls on his waist (Ghose 1938:95). At the right side of Śiva, in the same niche, the three-legged Bṛṅgin is dancing and at the other side the multi-armed fierce Kālī is depicted. At the upper left outside the niche, right of Śiva, we find an apsaras and below that, Skanda and Gaṇeśa are depicted on their *vāhanas*. Below these two sons of Śiva we find a four armed person playing a drum with the *pūrvahastas*. At the other side of the niche we find again an apsaras and below that, a female person who likely can be identified as Umā/Śivakāmī: while her left hand is resting on the bull's back, she is standing in the *tribhaṅga*-pose and is wearing a *karaṇḍamukuta*. In her right hand, in the *kaṭakamudrā*, she holds a lotus. Below these depictions, a three-partite frieze is applied with music making bhūtas on it and one female.

At the lower right side of the *caturbhujā* dancing Śiva we find an emaciated female figure, sitting in the *utkūṭakāsana*. Her breasts are shrivelled and she is holding both hands in front of the face, while playing the *tāla*. She has lean legs, wild flaring out hair and her face shows



<sup>14</sup> Balasubrahmanyam 1975:19.

<sup>15</sup> This posture often occurs in depictions of Cāmuṇḍā. See e.g. Blurton 1992:pl.110.

<sup>16</sup> Harle 1994:315.

demonic features such as bulbous eyes and protruding teeth. This figure has been identified as Kāraikkāl by Karavelane (Kârâvêlane 1956:pl.6).

### 3. Sri Lanka

Stone relief's depicting the theme of the dancing Śiva in which an emaciated or demonic female is included, are to my knowledge not to be found in Sri Lanka. Probably only three Sri Lankan depictions of the emaciated or demonic female in relation to the dancing Śiva exist. These are all made out of bronze.

#### 3.1 Bronze statue from the Śiva Dēvālē No. 5, Polonnaruva



The first image that I would like to describe is in my opinion one of the most peculiar bronzes of the Cōla period found in Sri Lanka. This bronze has been excavated in 1960 at the little Śiva temple in Polonnaruva and depicts a seated female without a pedestal and has been identified as Kāraikkālammaiār (Godakumbura 1961:244). This considerable large image has a wizened demonic facial expression (*viz.* bulbous eyes, large open mouth) and large *pattra-kunḍala*. On the head she has dishevelled hair in which she wears a chaplet. Around her thin neck she wears a long necklace. She has long shrivelled breasts and in front of her face, she is playing the *tāla* that are connected by means of a cord. She wears bracelets and around her thin upper right arm she wears an armlet. She does not wear any clothes, except for a small cloth around her thighs. She is sitting in the *ardhaparyāṅka*-posture.

(photograph courtesy by the author)

#### 3.2 Provenance unknown

Very similar to this bronze is a sculpture that can be found at the Colombo Museum.<sup>17</sup> This sculpture of an emaciated female, sitting in the *ardhaparyāṅka*-posture while lifting the right leg, is exactly similar in composition, except for the fact that this image does not have the dishevelled hair and the chaplet and that the pedestal is not missing. The facial expression of this image seems less demonic. Around the upper-arms she wears *vājibandha*. On the pedestal a ring has been applied, in order to secure it to another *pīṭha*.

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<sup>17</sup> See Dehejia 1988:pl.66.

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## *Kāraikkālammaiār*

*Part 2: Poems for Śiva*



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திருவாலங்காட்டு முத்ததிருப்பதிகம்  
(The old ten verses of Tiruvālaṅkāṭu)



## திருவாலங்காட்டு முத்ததிருப்பதிகம் காரைக்காலமமையார்

1.  
கொங்கை திரங்கி நரம்முெழுந்து  
குண்டுகண் வெண்பற் குழிவயிற்றுப்  
பங்கி சிவந்திரு பற்கள் நீண்டு  
பரடுயர் நீள்கணைக் காலோர்பெண்பேய்  
தங்கி யலறி யுலறுகாட்டில்  
தாழ்சடை யெட்டுத் திசையும்வீசி  
அங்கங் குளிர்ந்தன லாடுமெங்கள்  
அப்ப னிடந்திரு ஆலங்காடே

2.  
கள்ளிக் கவல்டலைக் காலைநீட்டிக்  
கடைக்கொள்ளி வாங்கி மசித்துமையை  
விள்ள எழுதி வெடுவெடென்ன  
நக்கு வெருண்டு விலங்குபார்த்துத்  
துள்ளிச் சுடலைச் சுடபிணத்தீச்  
சுட்டிட முற்றுஞ் சுளிந்துபூழ்தி  
அள்ளி யவிக்கநின் றுடுமெங்கள்  
அப்ப னிடந்திரு ஆலங்காடே

3.  
வாகை விரிந்துவெண் ணெற்றெலிப்ப  
மயங்கிருள் கூர்நடு நாணையாங்கே  
கூகயொ டாண்டலை பாடஆந்தை  
கோடதன் மேற்குதித் தோடவீசி  
ஈகை படர்தொடர் கள்ளிநீழல்  
ஈம மிடுகடு காட்டகத்தே  
ஆகங் குளிர்ந்தன லாடுமெங்கள்  
அப்ப னிடந்திரு ஆலங்காடே

4.  
குண்டிலோ மக்குழிச் சோற்றைவாங்கிக்  
குறநரி தின்ன வதனைமுன்னே  
கண்டிலோ மென்று கனன்றுபேய்கள்  
கையடி த்தோடிடு காடரங்கா  
மண்டல நின்றங்கு ளாளமிட்டு  
வாதித்து வீசி யெடுத்தபாதம்  
அண்ட முறநிமிர்ந் தாடுமெங்கள்  
அப்ப னிடந்திரு ஆலங்காடே

*The old ten verses of Tiruvālaṅkāṭu*  
Kāraikkālammaiṅār

1.

[With] shrivelled<sup>1</sup> breasts, protruding veins,  
bulbous eyes, white teeth, a hollow stomach,  
red hair<sup>2</sup>, long teeth,  
uplifted fingernails and long round<sup>3</sup> legs, a female Pēy  
stays in the spreadout dry forest.  
The *jaṭās* are hanging down [and] are spread in eight directions.<sup>4</sup>  
The body is cool, dancing on the fire,  
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.

2.

Between the forked branches of the *Kalli*<sup>5</sup> tree, the legs are spread.<sup>6</sup>  
An almost burnt down branch which is reduced to pulp by the fire, is pulled out the fire  
[and with this] lines are drawn.<sup>7</sup> After this, he convulsed with laughter, [that is] frightening  
himself and then looks aside at the animal.<sup>8</sup>  
While he jumps at the cremationfield, the fire from the corpses burns [him]  
[and therefore he] shows displeasure.  
He takes a handful of ash and dances on the fire to extinguish [this].  
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.

3.

The *vākai*<sup>9</sup> tree is spreading, with in it the white, dry fruits that are making a sound.  
[There is] dense darkness that bring disorder [in the] middle of the night.  
The *kūkai*<sup>10</sup> and *āṇṭalai*<sup>11</sup> are singing. While the owl  
jumps on the branches, they move apart.  
[There is] shadow from the spreadout branches of the *ikai*<sup>12</sup> trees and *kaḷli*<sup>13</sup> that follow one  
behind another on the burning ground where corpses are placed.  
The body is cool, dancing on the fire,  
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.

4.

The small fox<sup>14</sup> takes cooked rice from the *ōmam* pit,<sup>15</sup>  
and eats it. “We have not  
seen this before”<sup>16</sup>, thus saying the Pēys that are getting angry [by this].  
While clapping their hands they run into the forest which is a stage (for a drama).<sup>17</sup>  
They formed a circle and inside it our Lord comes  
in dispute, throws [his] leg very quickly in the air  
so that it reaches the universe,<sup>18</sup> (see plate 19)  
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.

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<sup>1</sup> Or drooping.

<sup>2</sup> The word used here for hair is *pañki*, what suggests the hair of a man or animal. By using this word, it emphases that a Pēy is not a human character.

<sup>3</sup> Long and round as an arrow (*ampu*), sugarcane (*karuppu*) or long pepper (*tippili*).

<sup>4</sup> This verseline refers to the nature of Śiva. When he dances the *jaṭās* are spreaded out and point at the eight cosmic directions. Śiva is *Aṣṭamūrti*, (Tamil: *Aṭṭamūrti*): the sun, moon, fire (Paśupati), space (Bhīma), earth (Śarva), water (Bhava), wind (Īśvara) and Ātman/Yalamāna.

<sup>5</sup> Milk hedge or Indian tree spurge, *Euphorbia tirucalli*.

<sup>6</sup> This pose probably refers to Śiva, who is about to dance and is standing with spreaded legs, the first dance position.

<sup>7</sup> The ash from the cremation fire is used for drawing three horizontal lines (*tripuṇḍra*) on the body, mainly on the forehead, of Śiva or his devotees.

<sup>8</sup> The animal here is a *vilāṅku*. This word is often used to indicate beasts or birds in general or a deer. Perhaps the word *vilāṅku* here has to be translated as a deer or antelope, since this animal is not uncommon in the iconography of Śiva (Sanskrit: *mṛga*). See for instance the form of Śiva as Candraśekhara or Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇamūrti where this animal often is depicted on Śiva's hand or Bhikṣāṭana who is accompanied by a deer (e.g. RAO 1985:113 ff.). Interesting is that in some representations of the dancing Śiva a small antelope is prancing on his left side near the foot [see H. Krishna Sastri, 1995, p. 82].

<sup>9</sup> A flowering tree and a tree whose leaves are medicinal. *Mimosa flexuosa*.

<sup>10</sup> A large owl, *Tyto Alba (Scopoli)*.

<sup>11</sup> South Indian brown hawk?

<sup>12</sup> *Acacia caesia*.

<sup>13</sup> Milk hedge or Indian tree spurge, *Euphorbia tirucalli*.

<sup>14</sup> Indian fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*). This fox is slimmer and smaller built than the common Red Fox. Interesting is that this fox keeps to the open country and rarely enters forests. (See *The book of Indian Animals*, S.H. Prater, Oxford University Press, Bombay 1993 4<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 129, pl. 25).

<sup>15</sup> A pit used for a fire-sacrifice.

<sup>16</sup> The Pēys are talking here. The Indian fox noticed the cooked rice earlier than the Pēys.

<sup>17</sup> On this stage the action takes place, that is described in the following verselines.

<sup>18</sup> Probably the dance competition between Śiva and Kālī is meant here, when Śiva defeated Kālī by performing the *ūrdhvatāṇḍava*. This dance is, according to the *Tiruvālaṅkāṭṭuppurāṇam*, a local Tamil-text, performed in Tiruvālaṅkāṭu (Shulman 1980:213). While dancing the *ūrdhvatāṇḍava*, Śiva lifted one leg high into the air so that it reached the universe and Kālī was defeated. It is not known which leg was according to the story thrown into the air, but looking at most *ūrdhvatāṇḍava* depictions in art, the left leg is lifted. According to the Mārukāl-tradition in the Pāṇḍya area, the right leg is lifted. The *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal-purāṇam*, a sthala-māhātmya of the Mīnākṣi-Sundareśvara temple in Madurai, tells about a myth where the Pāṇḍya kings ask the dancing Śiva to dance on his other leg (right) in order to relax the leg that is constantly held into the air (Kalidos 1996). (see plate 19 and 22)