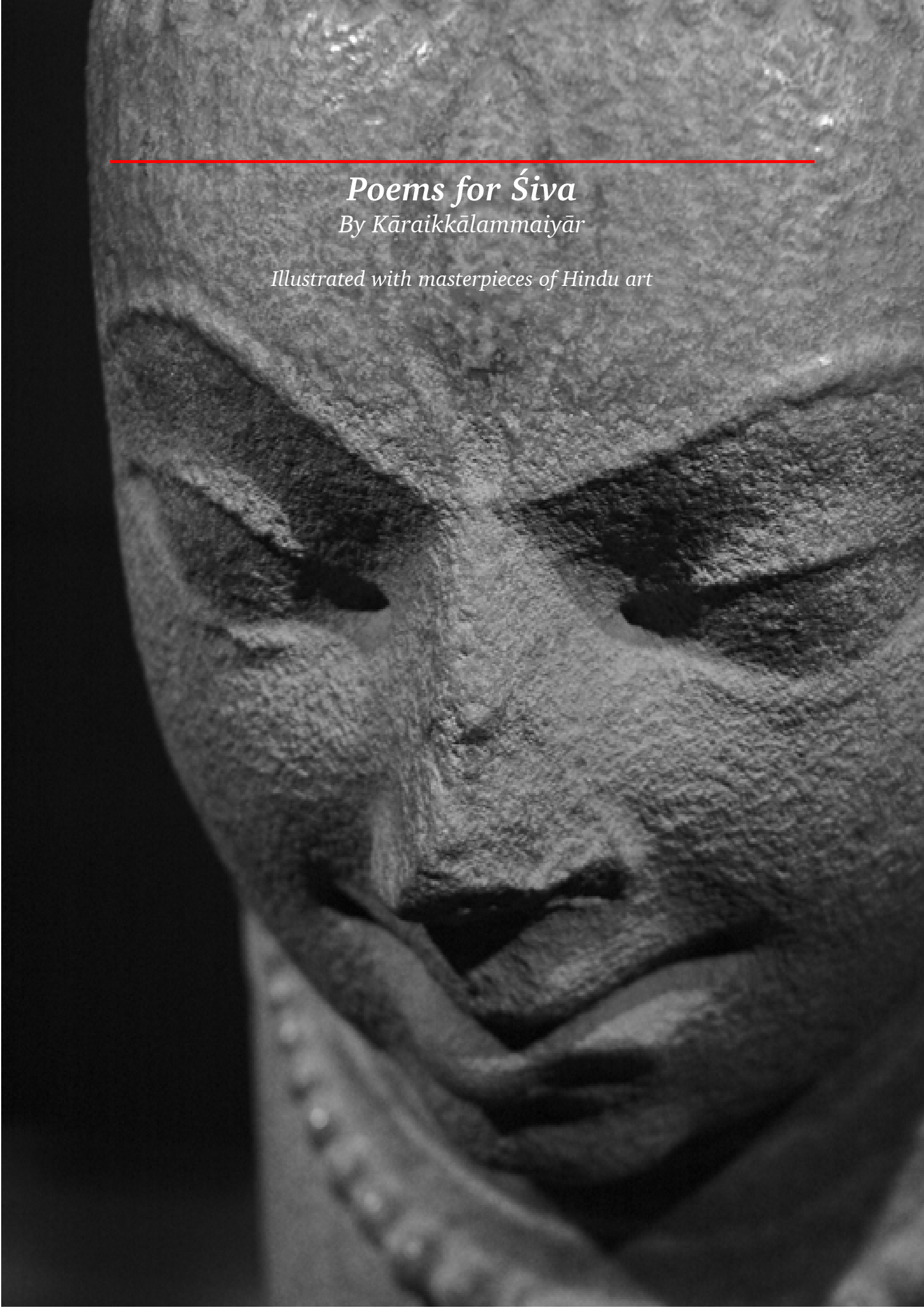

Poems for Śiva
By Kāraikkālammaiār

Illustrated with masterpieces of Hindu art



Peter J.J. de Bruijn

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Photograph cover:

Śiva on a mukhaliṅga

(Photograph: Peter de Bruijn)

Photograph back:

Śiva Naṭarāja

(Photograph: Scott Blasiman)

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The South Indian poet Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār is probably to be dated to the 7th century.¹ She is one of the 63 nāyaṅmār. The chronology of these 63 nāyaṅmār² is not completely certain, but the names of these Śaivite Tamilsaints are listed in the *Tiruttoṅṅar Tokai*, a hymn by Sundarar who lived in the 8th century.³ This hymn is codified by Cēkkiḷār⁴ in his 12th century hagiographical *Periyapurāṅṅam* without altering the order.⁵

Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār is according to Sundarar's list number 23 of the 63 nāyaṅmār. Nowadays 64 nāyaṅmār exist and the most often depicted and revered nāyaṅmār are the *nālvār*.⁶ viz., Tirunāvukkaracu nāyaṅār (Appar), Tiruñāṅacampantar mūrtti nāyaṅār (Sambandar), Cuntaramūrtti nāyaṅār (Sundarar) and Māṅikkavācakar, a figure added to the list. Other important nāyaṅmār are besides Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār, Kaṅṅappa nāyaṅār, Caṅṅēcura nāyaṅār (Caṅṅēśa), Tirumūla nāyaṅār, Ciruttoṅṅa nāyaṅār, Cēramāṅ perumāl nāyaṅār, Aiyaṅṅikal kāṅṅavarkōṅ nāyaṅār and Pūcalār nāyaṅār.

The other nāyaṅmār are well known but they did not have leave writings, nor even any oral tradition.⁷ Their iconography is less elaborate in comparison to the *nālvār* or the other lesser Śaiva nāyaṅmār, which make them often difficult to identify when depicted in art. Especially prior to the 15th century, when the practise of adding inscribed names seems to have started,⁸ it is extremely difficult to identify the complete group of nāyaṅmār.

Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār is probably the earliest Śaiva poet-saint, whose poems might have marked the beginning of the so-called *pirapantam*-literature in Tamil.⁹

Her work includes four poems. The first poem is the *Arputat tiruvantāti* which consists of 101 stanzas written in the *veṅṅpā*-form in the *antāti* arrangement. The second poem is the *Tiruviraṅṅaimaṅṅimālai*, 20 stanzas in the *veṅṅpā* and *kaṅṅṅalai-kkalituruṅṅai* metre.¹⁰ Finally she wrote two *patikaṅṅal*, the *Tiruvālaṅkāṅṅu mūttatiruppatikam* and the *Tiruvālaṅkāṅṅu tiruppatikam*. The complete work is included in the *Tirumuruṅṅai* 11.

Another well-known literary source in relation to the character Kāraikkāl, is the 12th century hagiographic *Periyapurāṅṅam* written by Cēkkiḷār¹¹, a minister of the ardent Śaivite Cōḷa-emperor Kulōttuṅṅaṅ (1135-1145 AD).

¹ Filliozat in Kārāvêlane 1956:xiv.

² Nāyaṅār or nāyaṅmār (nāyaṅ: chief/god + the (plural or) honorific suffix -ār, or the ancient plural or honorific suffix -mār).

³ Dehejia 1988:153.

⁴ A minister of the Śaivite Cōḷa-emperor Kulōttuṅṅaṅ (1135-1145 AD).

⁵ Another source is the work of Nampī Antar Nampī, who elaborated the list of Sundarar in the 10th century. This work was not at my disposal.

⁶ Nāl: four + ār: honorific suffix. The four revered ones. This group of four does not exist in the *Tiruttoṅṅar Tokai*, and therefore neither in the work of Nampī Antar Nampī or the *Periyapurāṅṅam*. The figure of Māṅikkavācakar is a later addition. Instead of the Nālvār there were the Mūvar, the group of three.

⁷ Dehejia 1988:86.

⁸ Ibid. 146.

⁹ *Pirapantam* is a poetic composition of 96 varieties e.g. the *iraṅṅṅai-maṅṅi-mālai* (poem consisting of 20 stanzas) and *patikam* (poem in praise of a deity consisting generally of ten stanzas), poetical forms used by Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār. According to Zvelebil (1995:334) some of these 96 forms are probably used for the first time by Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār.

¹⁰ She was probably responsible for inventing the *kaṅṅṅalai-kkalituruṅṅai* metre (Zvelebil 1995:334).

¹¹ *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature* p. 323.

Although this source is not included in this book, I will shortly give the contents of the purāṇa as given by G.U. Pope in his *The Tiruvāṇṇam*.

According to the hagiography Kāraikkāl originally was the wife of a rich merchant of Kāraikkāl¹², whose name was Paramatattan. Her own name was Punītavati. She was very devout, and especially careful to entertain all Śaiva devotees that came to her door. One day her husband received from some persons who had come to him on business a present of two mangoes, of a very superior kind, which he sent home to his wife. Soon afterwards, a holy devotee arrived at the house as a mendicant guest; but she had nothing ready to offer him except boiled rice. This she set before him, and having no other condiment to present, gave him one of the aforesaid mangoes.



At noon her husband returned, and after his meal ate the remaining mango, which pleased him so much that he said to his wife, 'There were two; bring me the other.' She went away in dismay; but remembering that the God to whose servant - because he was His servant - she had given the fruit, never desert those who serve Him, she offered a mental prayer, and straightway found a mango in her hand, which she carried to her husband. Being a divine gift, it was of incomparable sweetness, and he said her, 'Where did you obtain this?' She hesitated at first to reveal the wonder that had been wrought on her behalf, but reflected that she ought to have no concealments from her husband, and so told him everything. He gave no credence to her words, but roughly applied, 'If that is so, get me another like it.' She went away, and said in her heart to the God, 'If thou givest me not one more fruit, my word will be disbelieved!' Forthwith she found another fruit still more lovely in her hand. When she carried this to her husband he took it in astonishment; but behold! it forthwith vanished. Utterly confounded by these wonderful things, he came to the conclusion that his wife was a supernatural being, and resolved to separate at once from her. He revealed the matter.

¹² Kāraikkāl (Kāraikkāl) is a small town held by the French. It is forty-seven miles from Tanjore. Near it is the famous Ālaṅkāṭu (Vatāraṇyam), a forest of banyan trees, where the shrine of the 'Mother' still stands.

திருவாலங்காட்டு முத்ததிருப்பதிகம்
(The old ten verses of Tiruvālaṅkāṭu)



திருவாலங்காட்டு முத்ததிருப்பதிகம்
காரைக்காலம்மையார்

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 காலநீட்டிக்
கடைக்கொள்ளி வாங்கி மசித்துமையை
விள்ள எழுதி வெடுவெடென்ன
நக்கு வெருண்டு விலங்குபார்த்துத்
துள்ளிச் சுடலைச் சுடபிணத்தீச்
சுட்டிட முற்றுஞ் சுளிந்துபூழ்தி
அள்ளி யவிக்கநின் ருடுமெங்கள்
அப்ப னிடந்திரு ஆலங்காடே

3.
வாகை விரிந்துவெண் ணெற்றெலிப்ப
மயங்கிருள் கூர்நடு நாணையாங்கே
கூகயொ டாண்டலை பாடஆந்தை
கோடதன் மேற்குதித் தோடவீசி
ஈகை படர்தொடர் கள்ளிநீழல்
ஈம மிடுசுடு 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
Kāraikkālammaiār

1.

[With] shrivelled¹ breasts, protruding veins,
bulbous eyes, white teeth, a hollow stomach,
red hair², long teeth,
uplifted fingernails and long round³ legs, a female Pēy
stays in the spreadout dry forest.
The *jaṭās* are hanging down [and] are spread in eight directions.⁴
The body is cool, dancing on the fire,
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.

2.

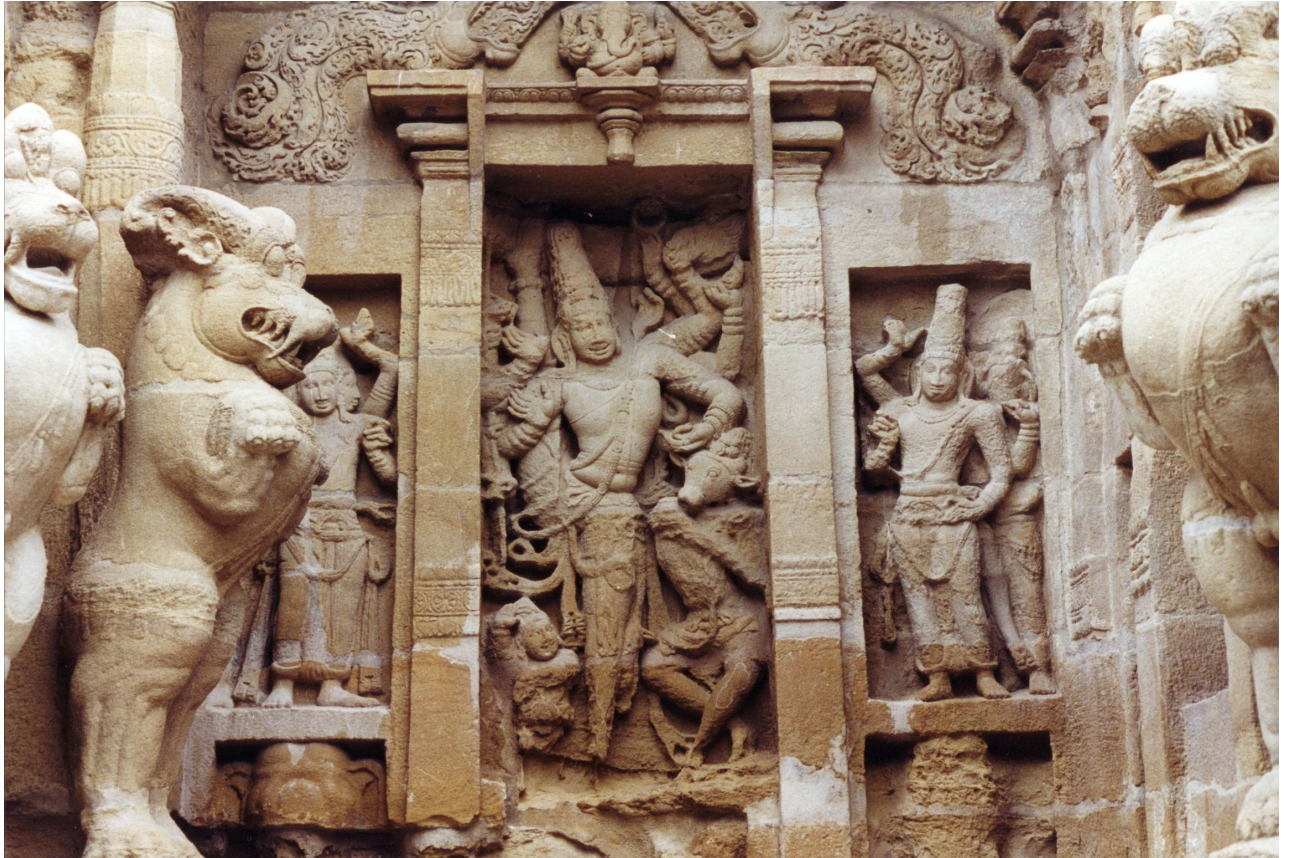
Between the forked branches of the *Kaḷḷi*⁵ tree, the legs are spread.⁶
An almost burnt down branch which is reduced to pulp by the fire, is pulled out the fire
[and with this] lines are drawn.⁷ After this, he convulsed with laughter, [that is] frightening
himself and then looks aside at the animal.⁸
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*⁹ 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*¹⁰ and *āṇṭalai*¹¹ are singing. While the owl
jumps on the branches, they move apart.
[There is] shadow from the spreadout branches of the *īkai*¹² trees and *kaḷḷi*¹³ 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 fox¹⁴ takes cooked rice from the *ōmam* pit,¹⁵
and eats it. “ We have not
seen this before”¹⁶, 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).¹⁷
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,¹⁸ (see plate 19)
it is Tiruvālaṅkāṭu [where] our Lord is staying.



19. Detail of a relief from the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñcipuram, Tamilnadu, India. 8th century

A depiction of the dance competition between Śiva and Kālī is shown here, when Śiva defeated Kālī by performing the *ūrdhvatāṇḍava* dance. This dance is, according to the *Tiruvālaṅkāṭṭuppurāṇam*, a local Tamil-text, performed in Tiruvālaṅkāṭu. 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 *Tiruvīḷaiyāṭal-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.

(Photograph: Peter de Bruijn)

¹ Or drooping.

² 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.

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

⁴ 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*, (Tamiḷ: *Aṭṭamūrti*): the sun, moon, fire (Paśupati), space (Bhīma), earth (Śarva), water (Bhava), wind (Īśvara) and Ātman/Yalamāna.

⁵ Milk hedge or Indian tree spurge, *Euphorbia tirucalli*.

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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].

⁹ A flowering tree and a tree whose leaves are medicinal. *Mimosa flexuosa*.

¹⁰ A large owl, *Tyto Alba (Scopoli)*.

¹¹ South Indian brown hawk?

¹² *Acacia caesia*.

¹³ Milk hedge or Indian tree spurge, *Euphorbia tirucalli*.

¹⁴ 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 4th ed., p. 129, pl. 25).

¹⁵ A pit used for a fire-sacrifice.

¹⁶ The Pēys are talking here. The Indian fox noticed the cooked rice earlier than the Pēys.

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

¹⁸ 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 Mārūkāl-tradition in the Pāṇḍya area, the right leg is lifted. The *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal-purāṇam*, a sthalamāhātmya 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)