Birds, Bards, Buffoons and Brahmans: (Re-)Tracing the Indic Roots of some Ancient and Modern Performing Characters from Java and Bali

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Introduction

On the basis of evidence gathered from Old Javanese textual sources—most notably the 9th-century Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa kakavin (RK) and the early 13th-century Sumanasāntaka—and Central Javanese temple reliefs, I have elsewhere proposed to identify some figures of itinerant ascetics-cum-performers (e.g. the vidu, Old Jav./Skt. vidu) as localised counterparts of Indic prototypes, namely low-status, 1.

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2. (1) The spelling of Old Javanese words follows the system used in Acri 2011b, discussed in Acri and Griffiths 2014 (e.g.  for  and  for  ). References to entries in the Old Javanese-English Dictionary (OJED, cf. Zoetmulder 1982) and Kawi-Balineesch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek (KBNW, cf. van der Tuuk 1896–1912) retain the spelling as in the original; Modern Javanese and Balinese words are spelled in accordance with the standard modern convention. (2) I wish to thank Elisa Ganser and Roy Jordaan, as well as the reviewers Arlo Griffiths, Peter Worsley, and an anonymous scholar, for their useful comments on a draft of this article. Elisa Ganser, Roy Jordaan and Sugi Lanús are to be credited for providing me with the photographs that have been included here as figs. 1, 10 and 16 respectively. I am also grateful to Margaret Coldiron for having kindly shared with me the unpublished draft of a paper on Sidha Karya that she presented at the 5th EuroSEAS Conference in Naples in 2007.
4. Vidu = “intelligent, wise” (Monier-Williams 1899 [henceforth MW]: 963); compare vidvat “learned” and vidvas, “one who knows, […] learned, intelligent, wise, […] skilled in, […] a wise man, sage, seer” (MW 964).
antinomian practitioners belonging to the AtimƗrga stream of Šaivism (e.g. Pāṣupatas or Kārukas).\textsuperscript{5} Here I take up additional passages of the two Old Javanese kakavins, and point at some tantalising similarities between the performances described there and those enacted by 19\textsuperscript{th}-century Javanese and contemporary Balinese performers. In so doing, I aim to “historicize” these figures and the performances linked to them, and pinpoint their connections with, if not trace their origins to, analogous figures and milieux—at once performative, ritual, and/or ascetic—known from the South Asian Sanskritic tradition.\textsuperscript{6}

Various attempts to trace genres and players in the rich and diverse tradition of Javano-Balinese performing arts—including dance, masked performance, recital, and puppetry—to an Indic past have been made so far. Stutterheim (1956a [1935]), followed by Becker (2004 [1993]),\textsuperscript{7} linked some modern Javanese performers to premodern counterparts, whose pedigree they traced to religious figures known from the South Asian Šaiva tradition; although their approach is rigorous and their hypotheses are convincing, their conclusions need to be fine-tuned in the light of newly available textual and visual evidence, and especially of our better historical grasp of Šaivism in both South Asia and Nusantara. Studies by Sedyawati (1982) and Lopez y Royo-Iyer (1991, 1998, 2003) on dance performances portrayed on Central Javanese temple reliefs did not go beyond the identification of the formal features displayed by the dancing characters and their links to karana-poses as codified in the Sanskrit NāṭyaĞāstra.\textsuperscript{8} Soedarsono (1984) convincingly traced the origin of Modern Javanese shadow play (wayang), dance drama (wayang wong), masked-dance (matapukan, raket), as well as analogous Balinese forms, to the ancient Central and East Javanese kingdoms (9\textsuperscript{th}–15\textsuperscript{th} century AD) on the basis of


\textsuperscript{6} I do not intend to rule out the possibility that the origin of these complex and multifarious characters may have been pre-Indic, insofar as Indic styles of performance and religious fashions were adopted by preexisting local practitioners, whom scholars have tended to call “shamans”, without taking much trouble to explain that category. But the fact remains that we simply have no evidence apart from the Šaiva one; moreover, it is often the case that the “shamans” of the (modern) Malay-Indonesian world, whether in “tribal”, rural, or urban contexts, display Indic features.

\textsuperscript{7} Cf. also Holt (1967:113–115).

\textsuperscript{8} Sedyawati (1982) divides the dances depicted on the Borobudur and Prambanan reliefs into the two categories of “Indic” (i.e. Sanskritic, mainly NāṭyaĞāstra-based) and “local/indigenous/popular”, on the basis of (1) their stylistic adherence or deviance to “common standards” and criteria of beauty codified in Indian classical texts, (2) their seemingly comical character, (3) their connection with “folk” or rural settings. This distinction, as well as the criteria on the basis of which it is conceptualized, is problematic. As we will see, there is a high degree of permeability and entanglement between “Indic” and “local” traditions, which are often bridged in the case of performance.
the occurrence of this terminology in epigraphic and manuscript documents, yet he did not provide concrete text-historical evidence linking with specific groups and traditions. The same critique could be directed to the otherwise excellent studies by Emigh (1984, 1996) and Coldiron (2005a, 2005b, 2007), who limited themselves to posit a common, and rather generic, “Tantric root” for South Asian (i.e. Orissan) and Javano-Balinese masks and masked performers.

As concluded by Coldiron (2005b) in her discussion of the Balinese Sidha Karya and the Japanese Okina (among others), although information concerning the sources of these masks is “lost in the murky world of myth and legend” and hampered by “the paucity of documentary records concerning ritual and theatrical performance” (p. 243), there is “a growing body of iconographic and archaeological evidence that points to an Indic origin […] but there are still some significant gaps” (p. 228). The aim of this article is to fill some of the remaining gaps by linking dispersed fragments of evidence from literary texts and temple reliefs from the 9th–15th century Central and East Javanese kingdoms, ethnographic accounts from the late 19th century Muslim courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, and modern Balinese temple-centred performances. My concern here is primarily to provide scholars of Indonesian (and Indian) performance traditions with additional textual data that may open up new directions for comparative research taking into account the historical, religious, and ritual aspects of these phenomena from a supralocal perspective. Even though I will not uphold any specific theoretical framework, I will nonetheless briefly characterise the philosophical and ritual rationales underpinning many of the performances discussed here, and individuate the socio-cultural trajectories behind the localised developments of the performers, who adapted to changing circumstances and external influences (e.g. Islamization and/or Western “modernization”) by adopting new modes of engagement with audiences, patrons, and prevalent religious and/or ritual fashions. Further, engaging with the view that such fringe Śaiva ascetic groups as the Kāpālikas were no institutionalized orders but mainly the product of the “prescriptive imagination” of South Asian landscapes (White 2005:9), my contribution will offer a preliminary answer to the vexed question as to whether, and to what extent, textual accounts and visual documents from the premodern Indic world did ever reflect actual social realities.

**Peacocks and Pigeons, Bards and Dancers**

Starting from the hypothesis that playful allegory was extensively used in ancient Javanese textual and visual documents as a means to criticize rival religious and

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10. As such, my discussion is to be considered still provisional; a larger and wider-ranging project that I hope to be able to pursue in the future will have to take into account the vast amount of data from Tantric Buddhist traditions of South, Central, and East Asia (cf. below, fn. 98 and 117), as well as from the (early) modern Javanese antinomian traditions of performances that have been regarded as Sufi in nature and origin, but which perhaps may also be traceable to pre-Islamic (that is, Indic) “prototypes”.

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political factions, I have analysed RK 24.111–115 and 25.19–22 as a satire of the 
kuvoṅ, an enigmatic bird that is linked with the no-less enigmatic figure of the 
vidu (Acri 2011a). Given their religious function, vagrant and unattached lifestyle, 
and leaning toward performance, singing and buffoonery, I argued that the vidus 
represent a localized development of Indic ascetic figures, possibly belonging to the 
Pāṣupata or Kārūkan division of the Śaiva Atimārga.

I begin my analysis by taking up once again Sargas 24 and 25 of the RK, and focus on two avian characters portrayed there as dancers and performers respectively, namely the peacock (mrak) and the wild pigeon (darapati). The latter is explicitly linked to the pirus (Old Jav.), a performer who will be discussed throughout this article. Stanzas 105–106 of Sarga 24 describe a scene involving some sort of dance enacted by a darapati and a peacock: 11

11. As Old Javanese third person pronouns do not have the category of number, it is difficult to determine whether the characters described in these stanzas form a couple or a larger group; here I have opted for the former scenario.

12. This is a hapax of uncertain meaning; cf. OJED (859) s.v. kedak: “(from idak?) shaken?”

13. Cf. OJED 2321, s.v. pamugari: “Does the kayw āra (see hara; here rendered with kalpataru by Bal. com.) ‘bombard’ with flowers?”

14. Sugama, which occurs only in 24.106 and Rāmaparāśīvijaya 8.8 (a late kakavin from Bali), is glossed in OJED (1833) thus: “Is it arealis to sugem? Is sugema perhaps the female (male?) of the male (female?) hadawa or darapati?”; as Zoetmulder suggests, on the unique basis of the late Sri Tāṇjuni (1.10), sugom would be the “name of a big wild pigeon (green with brown breast).” If irrealis to sugom, the expression could convey the sense that the peacocks are trying to imitate the call of the wild pigeons, implying that the peacocks are inviting them to join the dance. For an alternative explanation, cf. below, footnote 23.
The similes evoked in the stanzas revolve around the trope of “peacocks dancing for rain,” which is well attested in both Old Javanese and Sanskrit literature. Here the “rain” is metaphorically characterized as a shower of flowers and fragrant unguents, which “embellish” the excited dancing peacock as if they were the typical “offerings” bestowed upon dancers by patrons, namely golden ornaments, and a cosmetic unguent (Jav. boreh). The association of peacock with dance (and dancers) is well established in both the Indic and Javano-Balinese traditions. The Nāṭyasāstra (prob. 200 BC–200 AD) codifies the “posture of the peacock” as one of the karaṇas (mayūralalita); a link between the peacock and certain Javanese dance styles may be detected (cf. below: 26–28).

The peacock is associated with a Śaiva milieu, as it is both the vehicle (vāhana) and banner of Śiva’s son, the warrior-god Kumāra (also known as Skanda or Kārttikeya). The link between the peacock and a category of devotees of that god is made explicit in the “sister stanza” to RK 24.105–106, namely RK 25.24cd:

\[
aji saṅ kumāra aji niṅ mrak arūm \\
maįje makuņcir agә lәm maṅigә lәm
\]

The teaching of the illustrious Kumāra is the teaching of the graceful peacocks;
They act thoughtlessly, wear a tuft on the top of the head, and are never tired of dancing.

These lines may allude to the sect known in Sanskrit sources from South Asia as the Kaumāras, who worshiped Śiva’s son as their paramount deity. This group, especially popular in the southern regions of the Indian Subcontinent, was one of the six theistic Brahmanical cults (śaṃmata) approved by the non-dualist Vedāntin Śāṅkara around the 8th century. The reference to the strenuous practice of dance apparently alludes to the dances of ritual or devotional character performed in honour of Kumāra—possibly by Kaumāra practitioners. The Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai, 

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15. According to various Old Javanese texts studied by Zoetmulder (1974:200–201), “when it hears the rumbling of thunder in the distance, announcing the coming rains and the blossoming forth of flowers, the peacock starts dancing and ‘shouting’ for exuberant joy.” A verse in Kālidāsa’s Rāghuvaṃśa (16.14) presents the image of sporting peacocks (krīḍāmayaṇa—compare līlābhāva in KR 24.105c) fond of dancing at the sound of drums (mṛdāṅga).

16. Cf. OJED (739) s.v. jēnu: “a cosmetic unguent, boreh. The ingredients include flowers, and it is fragrant. It is also used by men (before battle, dance; it can fall out of the air like rain).”

17. Cf. also Holt 1967:97: “Of dance movements which discernibly derive from the imitation of animals, the most widespread perhaps are postures and motions based on those of birds and other winged creatures.”


19. These included (mainstream) Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Śāktas, Gāṇapatyas, Kaumāras, and Sauras.
a prob. 6–7th century Caṅkam Tamil poem devoted to the worship of Skanda/Murukaṇ, describes the kuravai dance as follows:

“... hillmen dance the kuravai to the tonṭaka drum, inebriated by the liquor made from honey, which matured in the long bamboos” (194–197, see Hardy 1983:618).

As Hardy points out, the kuravai is in the poem implicitly linked to Murukaṇ; the Kalittokai makes an explicit reference to the religious significance of the dance, which is done “to please the god who lives on the mountains.” On the basis of his analysis of the early and later strata of the Caṅkam poetic corpus, Hardy (1983:620) expressed the opinion that “the poetry is dealing with a real dance form of the ancient Tamils, or better, that behind the poetic coding a real dance may be assumed.” He deduced that at least three varieties of kuravai were danced by priests and laity of both sexes, and that the sources

agree on the whole on the orgiastic, wild and ecstatic character of the dance. We hear constantly of liquor, and sometimes of “wild, fiery, frenzied.” Moreover, the first two types are both connected with Murukaṇ.

Hart (1987:470–471) documents the curious fact that in ancient South India many different categories of performers as well as the priests of Murukaṇ were regarded as belonging to lower groups, who lived at the margins of society, and were associated with wilderness, possession, and fierce rituals. According to Venkataraman (1956:312),

[KumƗra] was believed to induce violent passions of love in the minds of girls, and was propitiated by magic rites. His priests and priestesses, wearing clusters of veṅgai flowers (Pterocarpum marsupium) dripping with honey, sang and danced the veriyāṭṭam or the kuravai [...]. The great town of Kaveripattinam, near the mouth of the KƗverī, witnessed numerous festivals in His honour, when women danced to the accompaniment of the flute, harp, and drum.

Many elements of the Tamil dances described above resonate with the image portrayed in stanza 25.24 of the RK. The word arūm in line c, beside “beautiful, elegant,” can also mean “sweet, fragrant” (OJED 1569), which in this context may allude to both the beauty of the peacock and the clusters of flowers “dripping with honey” worn by KaumƗra devotees (compare also the “liquor made from honey” inebriating the dancers described in the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai). Kuṅcir, a rare Old Javanese word that is only attested in RK 5.65 and 25.24, means “crest” (compare Bahasa Indonesia kuncir, “cowlick”), being perhaps related to kuṅcit, “a crest or tuft on the back of the head”? (OJED 927); it might thus allude to the crest on the head of the peacock and, at the same time, to the “crest-hair” or tuft worn by KaumƗra

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20. In modern Tamil, kuravai means “chorus of shrill sounds made by women by wagging the tongue, uttered on festive occasions” — compare Malayalam kurava, “shouting (especially of women)”; among the Todas, it means “shouting dance” (Hardy 1983:621).
practitioners. The form majule “inattentive, thoughtless, frivolous, empty-headed” (OJED 752) may refer to the cliché behaviour of “drunken” or “intoxicated” peacocks, and to the fact that the Kaumāras danced thoughtlessly—as if in a trance, probably under the effect of the “violent passions of love” induced through possession by the God (or some excitant substance?).

Let me now turn to the other avian figure portrayed in Sarga 24.106 of the RK, i.e. the darapati or “wild pigeon,” which seemingly joins the peacock’s dance. Darapati was translated as “turtle-dove” by Hooykaas (1958:275) and “wood-pigeon” by Santoso (1980:801). Curiously, the word is not listed in OJED; Zoetmulder apparently connected it to the (itself obscure) form sugëma, occurring in 24.106c, about which he noted: “Is it arealis to sugém? Is sugëma perhaps the female (male?) of the male (female?) hadawa or darapati?” (OJED 1833).  

22. Haðava (= harava, kadava), attested only in RK 25.11 and Rāmaparasāvijaya 8.8, is glossed by OJED (570, 592) as “wood pigeon” and (762) “a kind of wood-pigeon (Juynboll: Columbia Aenea).” Whatever the identity of this bird may be, the line under discussion depicts it with evident comical traits, i.e. while trying to bend low in a particular dancing position (mamañ kava), thereby looking like a “dwarf” (vělu), and being “bearded” (OJED 1251), s.v. (ma)mandañ: “(a position of the body in dancing) to bend low, stoop?,” from pândak, “short, low, dwarfish.”

23. The kuravai dance is in Tamil Cāṅkam poems often connected to “hillmen” (kurinći) and to a mountainous setting. That (ma)kuñciri might constitute a playful anagram evocating the Old Tamil word kuriñci is not without the realm of possibility; in fact, the whole Sarga 25 abounds in double-entendres and other sophisticated figures of speech.

24. Harava is a hapax, attested only in RK 24.108; kadava occurs in a passage quoted in KBNW, s.v. bhāradvājja, along with varu-varu (dove), which the Balinese commentary glosses as sugöm. The Navaruci (31.24) describes the kadava as a bird living in trees (pakṣi riñ kayon) and having a loud cry (Gadba aguṅ). Interpreted in this light, the connection between the sugöm of stanza 106c and the peacocks may be that the latter have become yellow (due to the rain of jānu-unguent, made of turmeric) like sugöm birds.

25. Cf. OJED (1251), s.v. (ma)mandañ: “(a position of the body in dancing) to bend low, stoop?,” from pândak, “short, low, dwarfish.”

or “hairy” (vok). The verbal form apipiruṣa occurring in stanza 106 of the RK attracted the attention of van Naerssen (1937:460), who traced it to the root pirus and suggested translating it as “trying/wishing to act like a pirus.” According to OJED (1368), pirus denotes “a certain type of performer or musician (but which?).” Van Naerssen argued that the pirus was a reciter and puppet-master. In support of this argument he referred to the gloss of the Sanskrit kuśīlava (“a bard, herald, actor, mime,” MW 297) as pirus in the Sanskrit-Old Javanese lexicon Amaramālā, part of the larger grammatical and poetological work entitled Caṇḍakirāṇa. Indeed the Sanskrit lexicon Amarakośa (2.8.1421) associates the kuśīlavas with actors, dancers, and mimes (bharatā ity api naṭāś cāraṇās tu kuśīlavāḥ). It appears that the line of the RK under discussion conveys a parody of a practitioner who is playfully equated to a pigeon (darapati), and associated with a comic performer known as pirus, arguably on account of the comic gait and/or postures that he assumes when joining the dance of a peacock. The elements and context of this parody will become clearer below.

A community of low-caste bards called kuśīlavas, also known as vālmīkis, existed in various regions of the Indian Subcontinent until recent years. The word kuśīlava is used in the Rāmāyaṇa to denote the two brothers Kuśa and Lava, sons of Rāma, both raised by the sage Vālmiki, author of the text. According to Goldman (2007:286), on the authority of MacDonell, “Originally the word probably meant a loose-living, wandering rhapsodist, and the naming and characterization of the twins Kuśa and Lava are probably the result of folk-etymology.” Kuśīlava may be either a generic or technical term to describe a class of itinerant performers, whom Sanskrit legal texts characterize as despicable individuals of low (śūdra) status.

27. Cf. wok (OJED 2309): “abundant hair-growth on the body (esp. under the chin, chin whiskers, beard? Thus ModJ).” Previous editors and translators read volu and vok as one word, voluvok—a hapax of uncertain meaning, simply glossed by OJED (2242) as “a part. kind of bird (Balinese commentary: balĕkok).”

28. Cf. folio 49a (Lokesh Chandra 1997:224). On account of its eulogy dedicated to the Śailendra king Jitendra (otherwise unknown), the Amaramālā may date back to the 8th century or earlier. Besides Balinese manuscripts, it has come down to us through a 15th-century palm-leaf manuscript from West Java.

29. Cf. Dhere (1996:121–123). In the online English summary of the book (in Marathi) Bhāratiya Rangbhūmīcyā Śodhāt “In search of Indian theatre” (http://rcdhere.com/Bharatiya_Rangbhoomichya_Shodhat/SPS-Bharatiya%20Rangbhoomichya%20Shodhat_1.html; accessed 29-07-2013), Dhere refers to the extended narrative poetry “Ukkaharan” by a poet ‘Chombha’ in the Pre-Eknath era. He was a composer from the ‘Vālmiki’ sect of composers and a folk singer in the tradition of Kushi-Lava’s. Harikathā performer Dr. Ananth Rao in an email dated 12-07-2013 mentioned a category of “itinerant tribal singers called kuśīlavas […] who used to go round villages [in Karnāṭaka]. […] We occasionally used to see them in Bangalore too years ago. I recall them with hair tied up like jaṭās [in the fashion of ascetics] and looking much like Rāma and Lakṣmana in the forest.” Categories of devotional and ritual itinerant performers of various social standing and religious affiliation continue to exist throughout the Indian Subcontinent down to the present day, such as e.g. the Bauls of Bengal and the Marathi Gondhāls. The latter are a category of performers of Śakti affiliation specializing in the dramatic rite of goddess worship called gondhaḷa. This ritual involves singing and dramatic performance (i.e. of oral narratives and ballads), and is often performed to mark an important life-cycle event such as weddings (cf. Dhere 1988).

30. On which basis Raja Radhakanta Deb (1783–1867) in the Śabdaṭalpadṛuma (vol. 2, p. 160) glossed
Manusmṛti (8.65, 8.102) these are mentioned in a dvandva compound along with the kāruka (kārulakaśīlava) as persons unfit to act in the capacity of witnesses. I have advanced elsewhere (Acri 2011a:78–79) the hypothesis that the kārus and kārukas mentioned in Sanskrit legal texts and in the Nāṭyaśāstra are not to be interpreted as “artisans” or “mechanics” (√kṛ 1) but as “singers” or “bards” (from kāru, “one who sings or praises, a poet,” √kṛ 2),31 which in turn may be linked to the obscure Kārukas of the Atimārga stream of Śaivism known from rare references found in Śaiva Saiddhāntika literature. The latter group might have constituted a category of ascetics who engaged in stage performances among the populace, and whose Javanese counterparts might have been the vidus.

Certain elements in RK 24.106d support the hypothesis that the pirus too constituted a type of Śaiva performer who was a common enough figure in the Javanese literary imaginaire as early as the 9th century. One such element is the connection of the pirus with the wild-pigeon, darapati. Santoso (1980:801), rejecting van Naerssen’s (1937:460) derivation of the verbal form pipiruṣa from pirus, traced it back to the Sanskrit root rūṣ, “to adorn, decorate,” but also: “to cover, smear” (MW 886). The sense of “smear” may fit here, being a reference to the ash-smear worn by Atimārga ascetics, and which may also hint at the smear of boreh unguent worn by dancers. Of course, it may be the case that the author was punning, consciously envisaging double-meanings as he was in most stanzas of Sarga 24 and 25. It is probably the outward appearance of these Śaiva ascetics as well as their behavior that justified the poet’s choice of the darapati as their alias: the wood pigeon or ring dove, Streptopelia risoria, is ash-grey-coloured, with a black collar around the neck. The rather comical way in which pigeons “rhythmically” shake their heads horizontally while they walk on the ground may also play a role here.32 Vok, “bearded” or “hairy,” is frequently found in sarga 24 and 25 of RK as an epithet of wandering ascetics (probably referring to their prominent hairdos and beards), a feature which, as we will see below, is attributed to wandering ascetics of the Kāpālika and Siddha type in Sanskrit sources. RK 25.108d comically describes how a wood pigeon

31. Here the suffix -ka may be either expletive or pejorative; the latter possibility is the most plausible.
32. Cf. below: 33-34, 45.
(harava = darapati) and a wild pigeon (vuru-vuru), allegorically representing an emaciated ascetic and a beggar respectively, turn into their opposites:

\[ tāñ jīrṇāṅjīrṇa meñjuh ń harava harivuvun veh-veh vuru-vuru \]

Not worn out [as a consequence of ascetic penance], the wood pigeon becomes fresh, elated; the wild pigeons care about giving alms [instead of begging for food].

_Veh-veh_ is the technical expression used in Old Javanese texts to indicate the action of giving alms to religious people.³³ Here it may represent the opposite of _alap-alap_ (“to steal, seize, carry off”),³⁴ which reflects the pigeon’s typical feeding habit. The allegorical depiction of ascetics as pigeons is found in several Sanskrit Šaiva Siddhāntatantras, which link categories of ascetics (_yati_) to birds according to their particular conducts (_vṛttivaiśeṣika_); some are described as acting “like pigeons” (kapotavat, kāpota), i.e. living on whatever they may find on the ground, such as fallen grains or leftovers.³⁵

The use of the hapax _darapati_ in RK 24.126d, literally “lord/master of the pigeons,” in place of the more common _darā_ (OJED 365) or _harava/haḍava_, arguably betrays a pun. If we break the compound into its two constituents, i.e. the Sanskrit and Old Javanese _dāra_ “wife” (which, according to OJED 365, becomes _ḍara (= rara)_ in such expressions as anak _ḍara_ “girl, maiden”) and the Sanskrit _pati_ “master, lord,” then the compound may be alternatively translated as “the lord of the maidens (_dara_).” If the _pirus_ is indeed a Šaiva Tantric performer, he could naturally be regarded as a “master” of dancing-girls. This connection will become clearer later on in the article.

The character of the _pirus_ was discussed by van Naerssen in his study of the Sangsang copperplate inscription, issued by king Balituṅ in 907 AD to ratify the granting of tax-exempt status to the monastery of Dalinan. To celebrate that event a variety of performances were offered (plate II.9–10);³⁶ some of these appear to have been of a sacred or ritual type as they were given by the religious functionaries known as _taṅkil hyaṅ_ (Old Jav.),³⁷ while others were offered to the god.³⁸ Although the syntactical structure of the passage is not transparent and, therefore, it is not entirely

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³³. Cf. Dharma Pātañjala 264.3 (Acri 2011b:264–265), and _Vyhaspatitattva_ 25.3, which glosses Skt. _dāna_ with Old Jav. _veveh_.
³⁴. The form _alapan_ occurs next to _vuru-vuru_ in RK 25.65. OJED (46) notes that the form _aṅalapi_ is in _kidungs_ “frequently said of the clearing away of food after the meal, when the servants get it.”
³⁵. Cf. Barazer-Billoret 2001. The passages in question, i.e. _Suprabheda_ 6.32cd–33ab and _Kiraṇa_ 9.15cd–16ab, have close parallels in other Siddhāntatantras, e.g. _Sārdhatriṁatikālottarāgama_ 35.
³⁶. […] hinyūnnakan tontonan mamidu sañ _taṅkil hyaṅ_ si nalu macaritta bhimma kumāra maṇigal kicaka si jaluk macarita _raṇa_ mabañol si muṅmuk si galigī _mavaṇa_ buatt _hyaṅ_ macarita bhimma ya kumāra […] (Sarkar 1972 IŚ96).
³⁷. Cf. OJED 1943: “a certain (religious?) functionary (nomen loci?).” The _taṅkil hyaṅs_ are said to recite stories (macarita) alongside _vidus_ also in _Sumanasāntaka_ 113.4 (cf. Acri 2011a:70–71).
³⁸. Cf. OJED 238 s.v. _bwat hyaṅ_: “ceremonies (performances, etc.) in worship of the god (in the temple).”
clear who performed what, it mentions various individuals staging performances that involved play-acting and buffoonery (*mamidu*, from *vidu*, *mamirus*, from *pirus*), jesting (*mabañol*), recitation (*macarita*), dance (*maṅigal*), and puppetry (*mavayaṅ*). A recitation and puppet-show of a story entitled “b(h)imma kumāra” was performed, along with a dance of the *kīcaka*, and the enactment of what might have been a comic version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Van Naerssen (1937:458–459) noted several analogies in terminology and context between the above-mentioned passage of the Sangsang inscription and a series of stanzas of 13th-century East Javanese *kakavin Sumanasāntaka* by Mpu Monaguṇa; he quoted the stanzas in extenso without translating or commenting upon them, simply stating that “there is no need to indicate point for point the many agreements with the description in the inscriptions. For this, let us just compare this quotation with our inscriptions.”

I now proceed to analyse in detail the account of the *Sumanasāntaka*, which bears striking resemblances with RK 24.106, and which may cast some light on the *pirus* and the context of his performances.

Stanzas 3–4 of canto 113, part of the larger sequence 1–9, provide intriguing textual evidence on some (apparently Śaiva) figures of ascetic-cum-performers (cf. Acri 2011a:70–71). They depict a most remarkable performance staged on the occasion of the wedding of prince Aja and Indumati. The performance, enacted by *vidu*, *taṇda* (Old Jav.), and *taṅkil hyaṅ*, is religious as much as burlesque in character. The wedding ceremony starts with a purificatory ritual (*tavur*) conducted by an experienced (female?) master (*vikuvṛddhacārī*), who intones the five

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39. The expressions *bimma kumāra* and *bhima ya kumāra* have been interpreted by Sarkar (1972 I:98) as indicating “the son (*kumāra*) of Bhīma,” with reference to the demon, and popular Wayang-character, Ghatoṭkacca (Sarkar unwarrantly read the second occurrence of the words as *bhīmayakumāra*, standing for *bhīmaja-kumāra* “Kumāra, born from Bhīma”). On the other hand, if one interprets, with Zoetmulder (1974:208–209), Kīcaka as a personal name, and Kumāra as meaning “young” (or “lover”), one may envisage a reference to the character dancing the role of Kīcaka fighting Bhīma, an episode narrated in both the Sanskrit and Old Javanese versions of the *Virāṭaparva*, the fourth book of the *Mahābhārata*. According to Zoetmulder, the repetition of the words *bhīma kumāra* would indicate that different genres or performance styles of the same narrative took place. Supomo (1995:323), while noting that “there is no evidence that a Javanese translation or adaptation of the *Mahābhārata* already existed at that time,” speculated that “the narrator of the *Bhīma-kumāra* episode recited a Sanskrit text, and then, as in a *harikathā*, explained it to his audience in Javanese.” While Zoetmulder’s hypothesis remains plausible, alternative explanations are possible (cf. below: 52, and the following footnote).

40. The word *kicaka/kicaka/kecaka* may denote a type of dance, or dancer, rather than be a personal name, as it seems to be attested in the former sense in Old Javanese inscriptions of 10th and early 11th century (e.g. copperplate of Pelem of 971 AD [I.5], and *prasasti* of Cane from East Java of 1021 AD [v. 14], cf. Brandes 1913:118, 127). OJED (862) glosses *kicaka, kecaka* as “performer of a particular dance?” It is not altogether impossible that both words could be related to the Balinese *kecak* dance—originally a temple trance ritual performance accompanied by a male chorus, transformed and re-arranged in the 1930s by Walter Spies (cf. de Zoete and Spies 1973:80–85).

41. My translation from the original Dutch.

42. The level of detail and the spontaneity of the narration leave no doubt that Mpu Monaguṇa himself witnessed one of such performances. An analogous assessment of the genuineness of the descriptions of places and events found in the *Sumanasāntaka* has been made by Supomo (2001:123–125).
Šaiva Brahmanamantras (111.6). The performance takes place during the paprasan ceremony; according to Hunter (in Worsley et al. 2013:575–576), the paprasan (and its derivative prasprasan, apraspras) corresponds to the modern Balinese laspas/pelaspasan, both being

ceremonies of purification conducted upon completion of work on a building, mask or image, or upon the founding of a performing arts troupe. […] They share with paprasan ceremonies the element of purification upon entry to a new phase of existence whose future state of safety and good fortune is dependent upon the rituals of purification carried out at the inception of the new cycle of life, such as that embarked upon with a marriage.

The wedding is closed in canto 130 by the kraban kalasan ceremony, which includes burlesque dances featuring a (drunk) “mistress of the Šaiva” (strī niṅ śaiva), a woman of high status (daṅ hadyan) who performs a “peacock-dance”, and a “mistress of the vidu” (strī niṅ vidu) who dances, sings, laughs, and proffers the paradigm of the Sanskrit personal pronoun (Sumanasāntaka 130.1–3; Acri 2011a:72–74).

I now discuss stanzas 5–8 of canto 113, where comedians—piruses and female performers—take the stage. Given the great number of philological problems posed by this passage, my translation—which at times differs considerably from that by Worsley et al. (2013:297–298)—is to be considered as no more than a preliminary attempt at best.

sahana niṅ abañol denyāṅguvākona puraci
anigal-igal agoṅgnu konṭol pada mātōn
vālu sakōbōh agaisyak ndan mohāvādi vōkasān
kaguyu-guyu kagman yan prāptaṅ vōlu sabatāṅ (5)

All the comedians made [the audience] roll around laughing.43 They were dancing furiously, engrossed in [observing? Joking about?] their [exposed] penises, [their faces becoming] tense with effort.44 A “dwarf” [as tall] as the span of a kōbōh45 [danced] animatedly, then became suddenly afraid at last, He was laughed at [by the audience when] he was taken by a sudden fright46 as a “dwarf” [as tall] as the span of a bātāṅ arrived.47

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43. Here I follow Worsley et al. (2013:453–454, 498), who interpret the obscure puraci (occurring only in the present line and in canto 28.8 of the Sumanasāntaka, cf. OJED 1451) as “rolling around.”

44. OJED (1348–1349), s.v. pĕtĕtöṅ/*mĕtĕtöṅ (hapax), suggests: “to pull a face?.” Worsley et al. (2013:498) relate it to the Modern Javanese mĕthĕnthĕng “braced with anger or effort.” OJED (887) glosses the hapax kōnṭol as “scrotum”; however, the word kontol in Bahasa Indonesia means “penis,” hence my translation.

45. The word sakōbōh is obscure. OJED (833 and 2242) glosses kābōh with a question mark; Worsley et al. (2013:498), whom I hesitantly follow, take it to be a measure of size (referred to kōnṭol; cf. below, fn. 47). Some manuscripts read sagōbōh, which could be a spelling variant of sagōbāh, from gēbāh* (gīnēbāh) “to shake about” (OJED 505).

46. Cf. OJED (513), s.v. gōm*, kagōm, kagōman; “taken by a sudden fright or astonishment (‘to fall in the grip of’).” I cannot identify the translation of this term in Worsley et al.

47. Cf. OJED (223), s.v. bataṅ I: “guess, interpretation, probability”; bataṅ II (224): “a measure of capacity (KBNW: ‘a liquid measure consisting of a long bamboo cylinder’);” bataṅ III “corpse.” The
A pirus acted the part of a menmen,48 through his dirty jokes49 he caused laughter.50 His mistress cleverly followed “in style” by enacting [the gesture of] urinating.

As his man saw her, he looked fiercely at her and sniffed, full of excitement.

He followed her and they mated, [acting] like goats; when he gazed in her eyes, he suddenly showed his teeth.

Those who were reciting [tales] raised a laugh, and all of them were eager to be jeered.

The sacred maidens52 disliked to have as masters the young male dancers.53 Those playing the human-puppets were all equally skillful, and they caused vehement laughter.

The old men were laughing with open mouths—screaming loudly, they suddenly lay sprawling on the ground.

All of those who were on the stage joined in acting like goats54—what an amazing sight!

possibility of reading vəlus abaṭaṅ (which does not make sense) tentatively suggested by Zoetmulder s.v ōlu (OJED 2242) is unlikely, for vəlu occurs twice in the stanza, as well as in RK 24.106, precisely in the same context of a pirus’ performance. Worsley et al. (2013:498) translate vəlu sabaṭaṅ as “having the circumference of one baṭaṅ” (referred to koṇṭol).

I take the “measure of one baṭaṅ” as indicating the span of the height reached by the performers during their comic dance, i.e. the low level/baricentrum of their dancing position. Compare figs. 11 and 13 (gajah ngombé).

48. Following Worsley et al. (2013:299): the expression seems to imply that a pirus mocked a menmen (“a player or performer”). OJED (1368) glosses amirus, amirusi, apipirus as “to perform as a pirus” (compare the reduplicated apipiruṣa in RK 24.106d, “wish to act/perform like a pirus”).

49. Thus OJED (320) tentatively glosses this hapax, adding the following remarks: “see cĕmĕr, unclean, foul, low (cĕmĕr when abusing, otherwise acĕmĕr?)."

50. Cf. OJED (1221): “probably with open mouth > merry, laughing, hilarious; astonished, amazed.”

51. Or: “to be urged on.”

52. Cf. OJED (1187): “used in designating or addressing a religious person or an unmarried princess or girl of noble birth.”

53. Following OJED (2246); but cf. also wĕrĕh III: “probably a group of people (young people, see wĕrĕh II?) trained for a particular performance (awĕrĕh).”

54. Cf. OJED (1230), s.v. padu II: “a particular kind of goat or sheep (connected with adu: fighting ram?).” OJED (1229) quotes the present line of text s.v. padu I “corner, edge,” which does not make much sense; Worsley et al. (2013:498) translate pinaṅguṅ ĥuṭ padu as “were given vantage points on the edge of the performance space”; but compare the previous stanza 6d, where a pirus and his woman are described as mating like goats (vəḍus). While there is still the possibility that the focus has now shifted to the audience around the stage rather than the performers themselves, it seems likely to assume that
All of them were thundering, clashing against each other; the laughter roared in unison like thunder. Unceasing was the merriment of the villagers as they laughed convulsively. The coming together of the people’s shouting was like clashing breakers.

Mpu Monaguṇa’s fascinating account depicts male and female characters, among whom are a pirus and his mistress, playing a comic performance involving dance, recital, and an obscene pantomime of mocking (bestial) sexual intercourse. Even though more than three centuries separate the above passage and the elliptic stanza 106 of RK sarga 24, it is tempting to read the latter in the light of the former on account of several striking analogies and similar puns occurring in both passages. As RK 24.106 metaphorically describes the pirus as a pigeon (darapati) joining the dance of a peacock, so the Sumanasāntaka seems to characterise the female dancers who accompany some young male performers—apparently piruses, mentioned in the previous stanza—as peacocks and pigeons respectively. First, the rare form vәlu (“dwarf”/“low, crouching”) occurs in line 106d as a qualifier of pirus, and then again twice more in Sumanasāntaka 113.5 as a qualifier of abañol, “comedians,” to which category evidently the pirus featuring in stanza 6 also belongs. The latter is joined by a female partner (rabi nika) on the stage; in 113.7b some “sacred maidens” (nini-niny, used to address either religious people or female dignitaries) are declared to display dislike of having as “masters” (masvāmi) some young male dancers (vәrә-vәrәh). This line calls to mind the form darapati of RK 24.106, which may hide a pun for the “master (pati) of the maidens (dāra/dāra),” being a rare variant of the more common name of the pigeon, vuru-vuru. The scene has comic overtones as it is probably based on the fact that, as we know from other Old and Modern Javanese accounts, the “master” accompanying the dancing girls during taṇḍak performances was called buyut, “elder” or “great-grandfather” (cf. belowŚ 32, 41). The “old men” or “elder” (kaki-kaki) referred to in 113.7d as laughing and sprawling on the ground might be buyut-like characters. If so, an analogy between the pirus and the buyut may be established.

Extending the analogy further, it is interesting to note that Sumanasāntaka 130.2a describes the dancing style of the female dignitary (“perhaps the wife of a Brahmin,” Worsley et al. 2013:504) who replaces the dance of a drunk “mistress of the Śaiva” to the music of mṛdaṅga drums with terms that are often associated to peacocks or birds in general. For instance: oisil (“moving to and fro”), which calls to mind the gait of a bird; akikat, which is glossed by OJED (866) as “of a dancer and of a peacock,

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55. According to OJED (2335), wuruh is a spelling variant of wәrәh, hence wәrә-wәrәh = wuru-wuru and, by assonance and punning, wuru-wuru; wuru II = wәrә (= wәrә) also means “drunk, intoxicated” (awuru) (OJED 2335)—compare vәrә-vәrә (“very drunk”) qualifying the “mistress of the Śaiva” in Sumanasāntaka 130.1a.

56. Cf. also the term arәṅgiṅan in Sumanasāntaka 113.9, a hapax of uncertain meaning translated by OJED (1538) as “to move to and fro?” (in a dance-performance). To describe the dance of peacocks, RK 24.105c uses the form aṇicipir, “moving swiftly back and forth, flapping, jumping about” (OJED 862).
apparently referring to a dancing posture with the arms stretched sideways”};\(^{57}\) and \(\text{aṅavat}\) (“introduce, lead, call up [a melody]”), which occurs in various Old Javanese sources in association with the dance or cry of peacocks:\(^{58}\)

\[
\text{daṅ hadyan tumurun gumanṭy aṅiṇol oṅsil aṅavat akikat rumampayak}
\]

Then a female dignitary came down to dance in her turn moving to and fro, introducing [the melody of the orchestra], and assuming the “posture of the peacock,” with the arms stretched sideways.

Worsley (et al. 2013:504), whose translation of this line only slightly differs from my own, comments that

> the image presented in the translation here is of Balinese or Javanese dancers who move to and fro (\(\text{ongsil}\)) with their arms outstretched (\(\text{rumampayak}\)) and lifting their feet off the ground alternatively (\(\text{akikat}\)).

Brakel-Papenhuizen (1995:125–126) describes a dynamic or “hopping” dance posture called \(\text{nayung}\) (from \(\text{tayung}\), related to \(\text{tayungan}\)), involving the alternate lifting of the feet and arms stretched and fully extending sideways, used by \(\text{alusan}\) (refined male) and \(\text{putri}\) (female) characters in Javanese dance. The position performed by the dancing female characters may actually be a local evolution (or interpretation) of the “peacock posture,” codified in the \(\text{Nāṭyaśāstra}\) as \(\text{karaṇa}\) 80 (\(\text{mayūralalita}\), “peacock’s sport”).\(^{59}\) A visual representation (or, again, interpretation) of this \(\text{karaṇa}\) is found in a relief of the East Gopura of the Śiva

\(^{57}\) Cf. OJED (866) \(\text{kikat}\), \(\text{aki kat}\) “(of a dancer and of a peacock). Does it refer to sound (song, et cetera)?” Bal. comm. in \(\text{LS}\) [\(\text{Lambaṅ Salukat}\)] has \(\text{manokok}\) (see s.v. \(\text{kokok}\)). Or is it a dancing posture?; OJED (885) s.v. \(\text{kokok}\), \(\text{anokok}\) “(of the sound of the peacock, but not its cry) to cluck.”

\(^{58}\) Cf. Hunter 2001:88: “Peacocks are otherwise famous in the \(\text{kakawin}\) as the providers of the ‘opening melody’ (\(\text{pangawwat}\)) for the ‘melody of the thunder’. ” OJED (169) glosses \(\text{aṅavat}\) as follows: “to come or go first, precede, go in front of, be the ‘leader’, lead in, introduce, call up, esp. of the part of a melody, which introduces the theme before the full orchestra (\(\text{agamĕl}, \text{aṅiduṅ}, \text{surak}\)) joins in.” The passages are \(\text{Haravijaya}\) 2.11 (\(\text{aṅavatiṅ mrak}\)), \(\text{Ghaṭotkacāraya}\) 2.6 (\(\text{paṅavat niṅ mrak}\)), 4.4 (\(\text{mrak […] aṅavatī gәntәr iṅ patәr}\)); cf. also \(\text{Sumanasāntaka}\) 130. Worsley et al. (2013:320–321, 504) read \(\text{aṅavak}\), “on her own,” but admit that OJED (e.g. 866) gives the variant \(\text{aṅavat}\), and therefore suggest the alternative translation “and then proceeded to […]” I take \(\text{aṅavat}\) to be a better reading. It is also worth noting that the expression \(\text{aṅalik–alik}\), used in \(\text{Sumanasāntaka}\) 130.2b to denote the call or high-pitched shrill of the dancing female dignitary, is the standard onomatopoetic expression used to denote the call of the \(\text{kokila}\) or \(\text{valik–bird}\) (female of the \(\text{kuvoṅ}\)) in Old Javanese literature. The cry \(\text{әlik–әlik}\) occurs in RK 25.19, uttered by a laughing \(\text{kokila}\) or \(\text{valik}\), which I have identified with the female of the \(\text{vidu} (=\text{kuvoṅ})\) (Acri 2011a:85–86). Zoetmulder (OJED 941) noted that an ambiguity between the cry of the \(\text{kuvoṅ}\) (\(\text{anuvvan}\)) and that of the peacock (\(\text{anavvaṅ}\)) occurs in Old Javanese texts, to the point that the two birds were confused. On the association between the \(\text{kuravaṅ}\) dance in honor of Murukaṉ/\Skanda/KumƗra and the shrill of women, see above, fn. 20, and compare fn. 15.

\(^{59}\) Cf. \(\text{Nāṭyaśāstra}\) 4.141 (trans. Ghosh 1950:57): “After assuming the \(\text{Vṛśčika}\) K. two hands to be \(\text{Recita}\), and the \(\text{Trika}\) to be turned round [in the \(\text{Bhramari Cārī]}\).” In the \(\text{vṛśčika}\), the two hands are bent and held over the shoulders, with a leg bent and turned towards the back (p. 54); \(\text{recita}\) [relating to a limb] means “moving it round separately (i.e. not in any \(\text{Karaṇa}\) or \(\text{Cārī}\) or its drawing up or its movement of any kind separately”) (p. 66); the \(\text{trika}\) is the sacrum or “the lowest point in the vertebral column where the two other bones of the legs meet” (p. 53).
Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram in South India, which shows a woman dancing in a low posture, with arms fully extended (fig. 1; compare figs. 2, 3, 7).

It may be argued that the performances staged by piruses and female dancers on the occasion of the royal wedding described in the Sumanasāntaka were not held for mere entertainment, but were also charged with religious significance. As we have seen in the Sangsang copperplate, in premodern Java magico-religious rituals and festivities usually confirmed royal decrees and otherwise special occasions. Zoetmulder (1974:208) noted that “in the ritual consecration of the grants and in the accompanying celebrations performances of various kinds, such as dances, comic acts, the recitation of texts, etc., had their place.” Sedyawati (1982:72) drew attention to a few panels on Borobudur depicting music-making and dancing taking place in the direct proximity of a caitya, thereby implying a ritual function. In spite of the social status of those figures, who were made the target of satire by the elite and mainstream religious establishment, ensembles of male and female religious performers were clearly involved in ceremonies carried out in close association with palace functionaries, or even the king himself. It is, therefore, no wonder if most of the performing characters discussed here, including buffoons, (masked) dancers, and drama reciters, are categorized in several Old Javanese inscriptions as vatәk i jro, i.e. persons attached to the kraton in the capacity as functionaries or attendants; the same figures, on the other hand, are invariably mentioned, along with the maṅilala drabya haji “royal tax collectors,” as “undesirable” people who are, under normal circumstances, forbidden to enter religious freeholds, presumably in order not to disturb the activities going on in there.60

A number of pre-11th century Old Javanese inscriptions mention piruses besides other performers or players, menmen (cf. Sumanasāntaka 113.6a); in the Guruñ Pai copperplate inscription from Bali of 1071 AD (van Stein Callenfels 1926:17, Vb1), both characters are characterized as performing jokes (abaïval, cf. Sumanasāntaka 113.5a), playing the flute (anuliṅ) and percussion instruments (amukul), and said “to give or act in a tapuk (masked?) performance” for the king.61 The inscription of Parạah II issued in 943 AD (Brandes 1913:102, lines 45–46) mentions various performers playing music during religious festivities held in the presence of a mahārāja—arguably Siṇḍok; as understood by Gomperts (2002:586), the king himself danced (maṇigal) to music played by musicians and men of religion on that

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60. As argued by Gomperts (2002:585–586), anyone who demanded money for their services were equally forbidden to carry out their activities in a freehold’s premises. Boechari (2012a:166–167, fn. 18) pointed out that the maṅilala drabya haji were not necessarily tax collectors, but any court functionaries who did not get apanage domains and had to be paid from the state treasury (cf. also id. 2012b:281–282, 2012c).

61. Cf. OJED (1948–1949), s.v. atapukan: tapuk* I, anapuk, tinapuk “to appear, come forward fully armed or equipped; to commence with, don, take up; to act in a tapuk (masked?) performance” (see Pigeaud, Javaanse Volksvertoningen, p. 125; some places, however, suggest a performance with a percussion-instrument).” The same characters and/or activities feature in other pre-10th century inscriptions (e.g. the copperplate of Kuṭi of 840 AD).
Birds, Bards, Buffoons and Brahmans

Archipel 88, Paris, 2014

occasion. The *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, an Old Javanese text that is believed to originate from Siṇḍok’s milieu, at its very beginning describes the wonders going on in the king’s court, where all sorts of performances were held in temporary pavilions. Those mask performances, buffooneries, dances, and *vidu* competitions, were intended to accompany a ritual or religious performance (*kārya*) that was attended by the king himself and *taṇḍa* functionaries. The *taṇḍas* we find throughout premodern Javanese history, e.g. in RK sarga 24 and 25, where they are mocked and connected to the performing practices of a *vidu* (alias *kuvoṅ*-bird), in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3, again dancing besides *vidus*, and in the 14th-century *Deśavarṇana*, which describes them as low-ranking court functionaries involved in mock war-dances.

An analogous “tension” between the low social status of the performers and their religious standing when they take part in certain rituals is also present in India. R.C. Dhere, elaborating on such groups of low-status performers as the *kusīlavaśas* on the basis of his empirical knowledge of Indian regional popular theatre and performance, rightly points to the contradiction intrinsic in the fact that these performers, who are as a rule regarded as vile individuals living on the margin of society, are respected at the time of particular rituals and festivities in which they perform. Similarly, specialists in the performance (mimicked, recited, chanted, or danced) of religious narratives are considered to belong to a “learned” tradition of high Sanskrit culture and often associated with temples and religious institutions, yet at the same time are despised for their lifestyles tied to performance and performers, which automatically lower their social status. Among such performers were the *kāṭhakas*, whom Lutgendorf (1991:124) characterizes as a category of storytellers who, by at least the 14th century, were considered synonymous with *granthika* or “book specialists.” Lutgendorf explains that by the eighteenth century the term *kathak* had come to refer to a type of storyteller, whose oral renditions of devotional texts were accompanied by gesture and dance and whose art eventually moved from the temple to the royal court, where it influenced the development of a dance style.

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62. Line 45 speaks about performers playing drums (*anabōh*) as *saṅ makuvuṅ* “those who lives in holes,” thereby testifying to a connection between a musician and a “reverend person” (*saṅ*) who perform the observance of lying in ashes. This figure, on account of the data presented above, is likely to have been either a *vidu* or a similar kind of ascetic-cum-performer; cf. Acri 2011a:79–80.

63. As the following Sanskrit verse (untranslated in the Old Javanese prose portion) has *dīkṣitaṃ* as its first word, the ceremony in question may have been (connected to) a religious initiation (*dīkṣā*) or royal consecration.

64. *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, Sarga 1: […] *patapōlaṇa, pabaṅolan, paṅayvan vidu, paṅīgolan, pavayaṇan, ūniveh kādatvana katskana śrī mahārāja, pakuvvan, paṅjon katskan para taṇḍa sira kabehe, kapva miło mabīpāra ri kārya śrī mahārāja, rōp makuliṇan in paṅīgolan.

65. *Deśavarṇana* 66.5, cf. Acri 2011a:71–72. War dances appear to have been popular throughout Javanese history. Van Goens, who visited the kingdom of Mataram in the mid-17th century, claims to have attended “a dance contest between two men, one carrying a pike and the other a shield and a sword, accompanied by great gongs” (Sumarsam 1995:22). A relief apparently depicting a virtually identical ensemble of four male dancers armed with swords and pikes is panel O 15 of Borobudur.

66. Cf. above, fn. 29.
A comparable mixture of Sanskritic “high culture” and “low status” in the context of religious performances carried out in both courtly and popular milieux can be envisaged in the Javanese setting. In RK 25.21a the vidu is called katāk—an Old Javanese hapax that may be derived from the Sanskrit kathaka or a related Middle Indo-Aryan form kathak (cf. Acri 2011a:69). In panel VII.11d of Caṇḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang (cf. below: 31–32, and fig. 10) we find an ascetic of Brahmanical or Rṣi type reading from a palm-leaf manuscript, who is apparently involved in the performance scene depicted there. The Sumanasāntaka account of the prasprasan ceremony portrays a “mistress of the Śaiva” lecturing on Sanskrit grammar (130.1); further, in Sumanasāntaka 113.11–15—i.e. immediately after the account of the performance given by piruses and vidus on the occasion of Aja and Indumati’s wedding—Mpu Monaguṇa describes an ascetic (viku) of great penance (kasutapan) and his large company of disciples (śiṣya), whose appearance and behaviour he characterises as uncouth (pĕñcul) and clumsy (kiṭuṅ), but whose elaborate speech about an Old Javanese linguistic dispute was masterful (baṅsit). Irrespective of whether or not the last description refers to an adherent of the Śaiva AtimƗrga indeed, the presence of such ascetic(s) amongst the large crowds gathered on the occasion of important events in the life of royal courts tells us something about their strong appeal to both the elites and the rural folk with whom they mingled, as well as their possible connection with the performers themselves.

Performing Brahmans, Kraton Buffoons, and Dancing Girls

From Old Javanese epigraphic records and literary texts from the 9th to the late 14th century, it emerges that the performers known as vidu and pirus not only had a role in the performing arts, but also carried out magico-ritual functions on the occasion of festivities held in courtly milieux. These records are, however, difficult to decipher, because in their formulation “much that was obvious to contemporaries but which remains obscure for those living in a different century is only implied” (Zoetmulder 1974:208). Besides the extended—albeit still largely obscure—description of the performance by vidus, piruses and dancing girls found in the Sumanasāntaka, we are left with few detailed textual accounts portraying these figures and the performances they staged. In order to fill the remaining gaps, one may turn to the realm of visual arts and ethnography, and pursue the hypothesis that some 19th- and early 20th-century Javanese performers may represent the heirs of the enigmatic characters who appear on reliefs of Central Javanese monuments from the 8th and 9th centuries AD.

In a fascinating essay, aptly titled “A thousand years old profession in the princely courts on Java,” Stutterheim (1956a:93–94) discussed the mysterious Brahman depicted on some reliefs of the Borobudur:

There are always a few women present, probably also dancers, who handle little handbells, and a

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67. Cf. OJED (1343), s.v. pĕñcul: “(one can only guess from the context:) not bothering with the rules of etiquette or decorum, unrefined, uncouth, rude.”
A man in Brahman dress frequently appears, apparently marking the time with his hands; occasionally he also has little bells in his hands. [Quoted from Krom and van Erp 1920:706] This refers to a company which evidently belongs to the dancing-scene, but which does not perform the actual dance. The remarkable thing in the passage quoted is the man “in Brahman dress” (fig. 11 [= fig. 7 in this article]): whether or not he belongs to the highest caste is immaterial. What are we to think of this holy man who, judging by his beard or moustaches, should be in a hermitage rather than in a dancing scene?

[p. 94] That he is a “brahman” can be deduced mainly from the fact that in most cases he has moustaches and a beard […] judging by his position, posture and other characteristics, he appears to take part actively in the course of the dance. He is not completely absorbed in his own action, as the musicians of the reliefs usually are, but his movements and actions are clearly intended for the dance, while it is being performed by the dancing-girl or -girls. Furthermore, on several reliefs he appears to sing or recite; […] finally he claps his hands or handles the little hand-bells. (Stutterheim’s italics).

Krom and van Erp detected the Brahmanic character on several reliefs of Borobudur; here I have included a selection of the most striking and/or clear depictions (cf. figs. 2–7). Similar figures also appear on reliefs of the 9th-century Buddhist Caṇḍi Sari (cf. fig. 9, featuring a solitary dancing Brahman), as well as on Śaiva monuments, such as Caṇḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang in Prambanan. With reference to panel VII.11d of that temple (cf. fig. 10), Stutterheim (1956a:93) noted that “a man with moustaches is to be found among the company of musicians, a man who evidently has something to do with the dance performed there.” He described the scene as follows (1987:152–154):

It is clear that here some sort of celebration is taking place. The dancing girls, the musicians and the priests leave no doubt about it. […] The dance of the woman is typically tantrik, as we can see in the Buddhist iconography of the Dākinī’s and other creatures of the ferocious type. It is a dance which can be seen till today as a religious dance in Tibet. Perhaps it would be good, if we consider the dance on our relief as belonging to the celebration and not just meant for the pleasure of the audience. […] The smaller drums are damaruş, as they are often to be seen even today with snake-charmers, but seldom used for ceremonies. But I must, however, point to the non-Indonesian character of the ensemble.

[c:] A woman with a sword and a shield is doing a war dance. In front of her, on the floor, is a vessel full of flowers and next to her again flowers and a fruit. On the other side there is a woman seated,

68. Another interesting dancing male figure who, although cannot be identified as strictly “Brahmanic” as he lacks beard and sacred cord (although he seemingly does have a moustache), evidently represents an ascetic—with a somewhat wild, uncanny look—is the one carved on panel O 39 of Borobudur (cf. fig. 8). That the dancing male in question is an ascetic may be evinced by the object found next to him, which was identified by Kunst as a “begging bowl with tinkling bars” (1968, fig. 5) or “begging-cup with small tinkling rods” (1973 II:416).

69. Although a discussion of the narrative context of the performances might help us better understand the circumstances that were the occasion of the performances, this is not the right place to embark on an identification of the narratives, which I will reserve for another occasion; my aim is simply to individuate a typology of characters/performers, which are in fact also found on other Central Javanese monuments, in different contexts.

70. Even a partial reproduction of relevant panels and a cursory description of them would take too much space. For a survey of the relevant panels, cf. Sedyawati 1982.
similarly decorated as the dancer, holding in her right-hand a bell and a bow in her left. Between both women there is a diadem (†).

[d:] A group of persons playing music. In the foreground there is a man with a moustache, who is reciting from a manuscript and another who is playing with the hand on two drums. Behind there are two women with hand-drums and two more where, however, it is not possible to determine what they are doing in the concert. On [panel VII.]12e there is a sitting musician, with a bell or damaru.

The subject of the scene and its position in the Rāmāyaṇa narrative are still not settled (for a summary of the previous interpretations, cf. Worsley 2006:231–232). Worsley suggests that the panel should be interpreted neither as Bharata’s nor as Rāma’s royal consecration (abhiseka), but as a depiction of the festivities held on the occasion of the return of Rāma and Sītā in Ayodhyā. Performances staged by antinomian religious performers could have played a role in both types of events—compare, for instance, those described in the Sumanasāntaka passage discussed above; however, given the prominence of the two Yoginīs71 and the concomitant presence of various characters with either demonic or “Brahmanical”/ascetic features, it is tempting to interpret this relief as portraying a gaṇacakra-like ritual, which was often associated with royal ceremonies, and especially consecrations, across the Early Medieval Indic world.72

The Brahman appearing in the dancing scenes discussed by Stutterheim calls to mind the “master” (svāmī), “leader” (nāyaka), or “stage director” (sūtradhāra) known in classical Indian theatre and dance. This figure, who was the actual “proprietor” of troupes, took part in the performances as lead singer and keeper of the rhythm for the dancers. The latter activity may have been represented in the Borobudur reliefs, where the “Brahman” appears to be either playing cymbals or clapping his hands. Nonetheless, the ascetic attire—including beard and moustache, twisted locks of hairs, and Brahmanical thread—displayed by the figure portrayed on the reliefs indicates that he may have fulfilled both functions, i.e. that of master of the troupe/dancing girls and religious practitioner.

Stutterheim attempted to explain this enigmatic character by making a thousand-year-long leap to the late 19th-early 20th century courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Suggesting that “in all probability we have before us the holders of that same function which existed at the courts of the Hindu-Javanese rulers more than a thousand years ago and which is perhaps still older,” Stutterheim (1956a:94) linked the character portrayed on the Central Javanese reliefs to the bearded performers documented in accounts by Javanese and Dutch witnesses. One such account, given by Stutterheim’s Javanese informants in 1932, describes two canthang balung (Jav.), i.e. antinomian dancers performing at the kraton of Surakarta on occasion of the Muslim festival of Garebeg:

71. The Yoginī performing a “war dance” has a striking, in fact virtually identical, parallel in a figure embossed on a gold plate found in the site of Si Thep in modern Thailand (cf. Miettinen 2008:74).
72. The Desavarnana (43.3) mentions a gaṇacakra “always going together with gifts, beloved of his subjects” in association with king Kṛtanagara of Siṁhasāri (r. 1268–1292), an adherent of esoteric Buddhist cults.
For the so-called gajah ngombé (“the drinking elephant”) the dance postures jèngkèng and kalang kinaṇṭang are used, with the right and left hand stretched out and with their bodies slightly bent forward and hopping like birds the dancers hold a small glass of gin in their right hands. In their left hands they hold between their fingers four chanjang balung, called collectively a kĕpyak and made of four long, flat leaf-shaped bones, strung on a string and kept apart by knots; they are held between the fingers and make a rhythmic, rattling noise. The dancers make twittering sounds while at every gong-beat they drink the gin, which is replenished from a jug on the floor, for the dance is performed in a crouching position. At the same time the dancers shake their heads in a ridiculous manner. […] the dancers are called badut or also kriḍastama. […] A special task is reserved for the dancers at the grĕbĕg mulud. […] During the whole procession they perform a dance, the tayungan, in which they go along hopping, alternating their right and left foot at every gong-beat. (Stutterheim 1956a:95–96; my italics).

Stutterheim (1956a:94) also notes that these characters clap their hands rhythmically during the dance of the female dancers called serimpis, and shout to them the measures at certain intervals indicated by the gamelan, while praising them. These actions—which, as I have pointed out above, seem to pertain to the figure of the “leader of the troupe”—comply with all the characteristics displayed by the Brahman-like figures in the Central Javanese reliefs, who also feature a similar attire (i.e. the long beard and the naked upper part of the body). The striking similarities between the dances performed by the canthang balungs and those described in both the RK and Sumanasāntaka give us good reason to pursue Stutterheim’s hypothesis further. For instance, the canthang balungs’ “twittering sounds” call to mind the shrill of a bird, and may be compared to the cry of the peacock in RK 24.106 (tavvaṅnya sugәma) and the high-pitched shrill by a female performer in Sumanasāntaka 130.2b. Their shaking of the head in a ridiculous manner, the indication that their right and left hands stretched out with their bodies bent forward and hopping like birds, and their going along hopping, alternating their right and left foot call to mind the characterization of the pirus as a pigeon in the RK,73 and the verb akikat in Sumanasāntaka 130.2a, which may qualify both a dancer and a peacock (apparently referring to a dancing posture). The canthang balungs’ dance performed in a crouching position, which has a comic effect (enhanced by the fact that drinking of alcohol is also taking place), is in harmony with the actions conveyed through the verbal form mamaṇḍak and the noun (or adjective) vәlu in respectively RK 24.106d and Sumanasāntaka 113.5.74 These actions may be compared to the most popular dance posture, with one leg uplifted and both legs strongly bent, characterizing the representations of either male or female dancers in Southeast Asian temple sculpture since the 8th century AD, such as the one portrayed on relief VII.11d of Caṇḍi Śiva at Loro Jonggrang. When describing the posture of the dancing Yoginīs—“possessed”

73. Intriguingly, the Proto-Austronesian *balug “pigeon” (Wolff 2010:753–754), attested in a number of Austronesian languages as, e.g., baloz, balog, balu, is remindful of the Old and Mod. Jav. balu/balung (“bone”) in the name canthang balung.
74. Another intriguing linguistic convergence may be found in the Proto-Austronesian luŋ, “curved,” and Mod. Jav. me-lung “bend, be bowed” (Wolff 2010:899); cf. above, fn. 26.
female Tantric initiates in a state of supernatural prowess—who are often, yet inaccurately, referred to as *apsaras* in Khmer art (cf. Sharrock 2013), Miettinen (2008:107) remarks:

> both the supporting and the raised leg are strongly bent often resulting in an exceptionally low position. Most of the dancing “apsaras” convey an impression of dynamic movement, since keeping the balance in this position for a longer time seems nearly impossible.

Sharrock (2013:122), referring to the work of Louis Frédéric, describes this position—*ardhaparyāṅkāsana*, which is also the iconographic posture of Hevajra, a fierce deity of Tantric Buddhism—“more like ‘fierce trampling’ than dancing.” Dunn (1983:141) describes a martial and demonic character of the sacred Balinese masked-dance *topeng pajegan* (of which Sidha Karya is also part, as we will see below) as performing a dance characterized by a walk “performed with flexed knees, varying degrees of turned out feet, and an open position of the legs in relationship to the pelvis.” This walk, called *malpal*,

> has a large stride where the center of gravity moves from side to side in large movements resembling a swagger […]; the turned put foot is raised so that the heel is almost at knee level […]. The center of gravity is low due to the flexion of the knees, and there is a pulsating quality to the phrases of the movement. The height of the stride and the lowness of the center of gravity may be adjusted to create different effects depending on which mask is worn for this role. A fiercer mask would be danced with a lower center of gravity for the walk and a more accented gait, with high knees and a heavy step. A high stride is also used in demonic roles and is associated with a wild animal-like fierceness. (Dunn 1983:142)

According to Dunn (1983:145), the design patterns of several masks in the *topeng pajegan* “are of a large asymmetrical angular presence projecting his energy from side to side in oppositional movement through space.” This style is associated to the demonic creature portrayed on frontons or lintels of Śaiva and Buddhist temples, the Kīrttimukha (“face of glory”) or Kālamukha (“Kāla’s face”), insofar as the position of the arms of the dancer resembles that displayed by the architectural motif:

> His upper arms are held at slightly above shoulder level and his arms extend forward from right angles at the elbows to flexed wrists.

In the Balinese repertoire described by Dunn (1983:198), the *tayungan*—the dance style performed by the *canthang balungs* (Stutterheim 1956a:96)—involves

> the swaying of the hands and arms accompanying the walk with the impulse originating at the rising elbow and twisting wrist as if pushing out to each side emphasing [sic] the oppositional dynamic of the walk.  

75. This mythological demonic character, and the related architectural element, is known in Bali as Bhma or Bhuta and in Java as Banaspati or BhaṭƗra KƗla (cf. Emigh 1984:23), and often referred to by art historians and archaeologists as KƗla-Makara. Cf. below—51

76. Brakel-Papenhuizen (1995:36) describes the *tayungan* performed by war dancers at the courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta as a “stylized forward stepping […] which is performed in time to the

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*Archipel* 88, Paris, 2014
Compare figs. 11 and 13, portraying two *canthang balungs* in the *gajah ngombé* posture, and fig. 1 (the *mayūralalita karāṇa*), as well as the position of the arms displayed by the “dancing girls” in the Borobudur reliefs, figs. 2 and 3. Also interesting is the detail that the naked body of the *canthang balung* was daubed over with yellow *bo·re·h* unguent, which is in harmony with the image of *jənu* (= *bo·re·h*) unguent pouring down on excited dancing peacocks in RK 24.105.

In an attempt to identify the Indo-Javanese prototypes of the *canthang balung* and their subordinate dancing girls, Stutterheim (1956a:98–99) quoted a passage from Moens (1924:531, note 33), who saw in the *canthang balung* the heirs to antinomian Tantric practitioners who flourished in the Vajrayāṇa Buddhist milieu of the East Javanese Śiṅhasāri kingdom (12–13th century):

In the Kraton of Surakarta, a remarkable survival of “Those who enjoy the five M’s”77 is still found in the so-called *chanṭang balung*, two bearded “buffoons” with the upper part of their body naked and with yellow stripes, whose duty is to become fuddled in public with gin or arak and to dance in an intoxicated state. These court-functionaries not so very long ago received their official income by keeping dancing girls and prostitutes. Their name, probably a nick-name, is probably due to the fact that originally they performed their “dance” on the *kṣetra*, “rattling with bones” (*nyaṇṭang balung*).

Stutterheim (1956a:99) linked the *canthang balung* to a Tantric milieu insofar as they made use of *mudrās* (mystical hand gestures) during their dance, and originally had seals of office consisting of a phallus inside a heart-shaped vulva.78 According to Stutterheim, other possibly Tantric elements of their attire include the *poleng* pattern of their *wrangkas*,79 as well as their weaponry (*kris*, and sometimes pikes); further, he (1956a:99) argued that the *canthang balungs*’ other (nick-)name, i.e. *kriḍa astama*,80 betrays a trace of the Sanskrit root of the word “laugh(ing)” *has [astama = (h)as + tama]* … in Yogyakarta the attention is emphatically drawn to the jeering laughter of the two *lurahs*; jeering laughter also plays a role in tantric rites.

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77. Stutterheim (quoting Moens) is referring to the practitioners of “left-hand Tantrism,” who allegedly enjoyed four impure substances (*madya* or wine, *māṃsa* or meat, *matsya* or fish, *mudrā* or parched grain) and sexual intercourse (*maithuna*) as part of their religious and ritual regimen.

78. As Stutterheim (1956a:96) informs us, these seals of office were destroyed at the death of their possessors; regrettably, these insignia were no longer used by the early 20th century, so what we know about them was reported by “those who still remember them.” Stutterheim (1926) notes that heart-shaped “chastity plates” or pubic plaques were worn by ascetics or other religious figures in East Javanese Hindu art. Many such pubic plaques are reproduced and discussed in Lunsingh-Scheurleer 2011; some of these display a phallus and are associated with ascetic figures of the ৙ṣi Brahmanical type (ibid. fig. 1), or with the character of Bhīma (ibid. fig. 3).

79. Indeed a chequered loincloth (*poleng*) is a typical feature of the iconography of Bhīma (i.e. Bhairava) in East Java and Bali (Stutterheim 1956b:108, 112–114, 118, 122). Cf. also below, fn. 88.

80. As reported by Stutterheim (1956a:96), the personal names of the two *canthang balungs* with the title of *jajar* (the lowest rank among the court administrative officials) were respectively Suka Astama (*suka* = pleasure) and Guṇa Astama (*guṇa* = magical power).
To this I may add that krīḍa in Sanskrit means “sport, play, pastime, amusement, amorous sport,” “disrespect shown by jest or joke” (krīḍa = “jest, joke”), and is a term commonly associated with dance and theatre in the Sanskrit tradition. The “dancing girls” doubling as prostitutes mentioned by Moens are the pesindhèn talèdhèk (Jav.).

When discussing the pesindhèn talèdhèk, Stutterheim (1956a:98) quotes a description related by a Javanese informant to Groneman in the 1930s:

A few pĕsiṇḍèn talèḍèk—the public dancing girls attached to the kraton, who sing at other gamelan-performances or who with their steps and solo-singing add lustre to the nayuban or dance-performances of the men—follow their official “master.”

Stutterheim (p. 100) concluded that these features must be ascribed to Tantric rites which seemed to him “to be in the first place a recrudescence of old indigenous shamanistic and other customs,” while the dancing-girls reminded him of the devadāsīs, the dancing girls-cum-sacred prostitutes known from the Indian tradition:

The older phase of the profession of the talèdhèk undoubtedly brings to mind the devadāsīs, the so-called nautch-girls of the Indian temples— the presence of a brahman on the Barabuḍur-relief permits us to draw this line of development via the chaṇṭang balung.

In the footnote closing his article, Stutterheim referred “for comparison” to a series of articles by Brandts Buys, which also dealt with the canthang balungs. Brandts Buys (1933:259), who presented materials that were indeed largely identical with Stutterheim’s, regarded these characters as “degenerate Brahmans” (gedegenereerde Brahmanen), and accepted Moens’ hypothesis linking the canthang balungs to Tantric Śaiva-Buddhist worshipers of Bhairava. He (p. 260) further added the interesting—but to him “admittedly odd” (wel vreemd)—piece of information that the canthang balungs performed at wedding ceremonies and the festivities connected with them, both within and without the kraton.

The textual and visual materials discussed by Stutterheim were again considered by Holt (1967:113–115), who advanced an alternative hypothesis:

All these Javanese functionaries—the Brahmans on the reliefs, the buyut in literature, the supervisors at the courts—may hark back to the buffoon (vidūshaka) of the classical Indian theater who was “a Brahman but ugly and ridiculous.”

Holt connected the Javanese pesindhèn talèdhèk, and especially the female dancer called juru i aṅin described in the Desavarnana (cf. below: 40), to fertility cults and indigenous female deities. In my opinion, Holt’s view represents a step backwards from Stutterheim’s more specific identifications; nevertheless, Stutterheim’s enticing hypothesis needs to be updated in the light of recent advancements in our knowledge

81. Sutton (1984:123) points out that the word talèdhèk shares one root with nglelèdhèk “to tempt, lure, attract.”
of Indic religions. An attempt in this direction, which goes beyond the catchwords “Tantric,” “indigenous,” and “shamanistic,” was made by Becker (2004:176–177):

In addition to the firm textual evidence of their presence in Java, there is less-firm, but suggestive, evidence of the involvement of Pāṣupata monks in performance traditions. The reliefs of a Śaivite priest dancing and singing or reciting in the company of dancing women on temple reliefs at Borobudur and Prambanan (Stutterheim 1956:93) may indicate Pāṣupata monks in the “marked” or first stage of spiritual practice. The women could also be Pāṣupata. In India, women as well as persons from all castes could receive Pāṣupata initiation, a practice that scandalized orthodox brahmāns [sic] in India.

When discussing the *canthang balungs*, Becker (2004:178) remarked:

Strange and inappropriate behavior by palace officials would not in itself identify these men as remnants of a Pāṣupata monkhood, but they formerly carried as well a Śaivite seal of office. Their official seal was a representation of a *lingga-yoni*, the oldest and most widespread of Śaivite symbols.

Becker (2004:177–178) rightly noted a similarity between those Javanese figures and the Pāṣupata practitioners in the domain of performance traditions, and were connected by her to Pāṣupata adepts in the second stage, who adopted a peripatetic lifestyle including the display of “madness” or improper/ridiculous actions aimed at triggering the contempt of lay people. However, on account of the markedly antinomian features displayed by these dancers, it is more likely that they represented the remnants of even more extreme Śaiva groups. In fact it has now become clear that the Pāṇḍavatas were just one among several Śaiva (sub)groups connected with performance and antinomian behaviours, such as the Lākulas, Kārukas, Kālāmukhas, and Kāpālikas. It is especially the individuals (or groups) that mainstream Sanskrit sources collectively call “Kāpālikas,“82 but who were also known under the general label of Siddhas. Those practitioners were scornfully depicted as supernaturally endowed, yet evil, sorcerers who often posed as false Brahmans or ascetics; they sang, danced and played in theatrical performances; they encouraged the practice of drinking alcohol and engaging in sex with female attendants, whom they admitted into their order (cf. Bloomfield 1924); and their attire included ornaments and musical instruments made of (allegedly human) bones, as well as human skulls or parts thereof. The etymology of the (nick-)name *canthang balungs* would perfectly make sense in a Kāpālika milieu, for the “rattling bones” may be nothing else than a local variant of the rattle-drums (*damaru*)83 made of bones that constituted one of

82. Given the paucity of textual data, mostly consisting in second-hand accounts, it is difficult to envisage a neat 1:1 correspondence between actual groups of practitioners and the labels that were attributed to them by the sources. However, by upholding a polythetic categorization, and by recognizing that the motif of the Kāpālika (or Siddha) ascetic constituted a popular, and virtually proverbial, element of the Indic imaginaire as attested in both literature and the visual arts (Bloomfield 1924 and Samuel 2006), I believe that this remains a helpful category to use for the purpose of the present study. Compare Hatley’s (2013) polythetic approach to the classification of the religious phenomenon of Yogini-cults, and the typology of Yogini practitioners, in medieval India.

83. A waisted *damaru*—“probably manufactured from a couple of human skulls” (Kunst 1973 I:219) is
the most characteristic marks of the Šaiva Kăpălikas. Also indicative of a Kăpălika origin may be the strings of flowers adorning their naked bodies, which is reminiscent of the garland of flowers offered to the gods (nirmālya) worn by Atimărga ascetics, and the emphasis on laughter, which is reminiscent of the observance of atṭahāsa or vehement laughter prescribed by the Pāśupata observance (pāśupatavrata). The detail, reported by Stutterheim (1956a:97), that on certain occasions the naked body of the canthang balungs was daubed over with horizontal stripes of yellow boreh unguent is in harmony with the image of jenau (= boreh) unguent pouring down on excited dancing peacocks (and, arguably, pigeons) in RK 24.105, and also resonates with the practice of smearing a yellow orpiment over the body or hairs and beard associated in certain Sanskrit texts with practitioners of the Bhairavamārā. As a matter of fact, the four photographic depictions of the canthang balungs “in action” included in Brandts Buys’ article, which are reproduced here as figs. 12 and 13, are impressive insofar as the characters they portray are strongly reminiscent of scruffy, emaciated, nirmālya-wearing Indic ascetics of the Pāśupata and Kăpălika type. Their unusually tall kuluk cap (fez) is reminiscent of the mitre worn by Balinese Šaiva officiants of both pedanda (fig. 14) and bhujāṅga/seṅguhu status, as well as other categories of Indic ascetics. Intriguingly, a similar cap is worn by Keralite artist Mani Damodara Chakyar playing the part of a Kăpălika in a Kutiyattam staging the Sanskrit Mattavilāsa (fig. 15); the artist also sports a prominent faux beard and wears strings of flowers. Further, as pointed out by Stutterheim (1956a:96), the canthang balungs performing on the occasion of the Muslim ceremony of Garebeg enacted a

held by the famous 13th-century dancing-Bhairava statue found near Caṇḍi Singhasari (cf. also Kunst 1968:36); see also panel VII.11 cd of Caṇḍi Siva in Prambanan (cf. above, and fig. 10), and Borobudur relief IV.7, showing a brahmanic character playing what seems to be a waisted (larger than usual) damaru (Kunst 1968:35; and figs. 31–32; 1973 II:417).

84. See, e.g., Harṣacarita 3.121 (ed. Kane 1918:50), which describes a Bhairavācārya and his disciples on the occasion of a macabre ritual performed in a charnel ground as follows: “Jewelled rings dangling from the other ear anointed them with sparkling lustre like a spell-charmed gorocana pigment” (itarakarnavālambinin ratnakundalānām acchayā rucā gorocanyaveva mantraparjaptayā samālabdhāṅgāḥ). The Buddhist Kṛṣṇamāritantra speaks of an unspecified yellow substance (pinigala) smeared over the beard and hairs of a Siddha; Davidson (2002:380) takes this to be gorocana (yellow orpiment) on account of the Harṣacarita passage. White (1997:87) discusses a connection between the four alchemical “primal Siddhas” and four alchemical substances, one of which is gorocana (“in fact an organic dye having the same intense yellow color as orpiment. Gorocana is made from the urine of the cow,” ibid.:91 n. 3). A connection between a Bhairavika milieu and boreh unguent in Java is suggested by a report by Knebel on a stone statue of Bhīma from East Java, where the author comments: “On the figure we found boreh—sapienś sat. The place is indeed pakahulan [= place where vows, kahul, are made], in case of disease of man, beast or crop” (quoted in Stutterheim 1956b:112).

85. The kuluk (also called makutha, from the Skt mukuta [= mukuta], “crest”) is a Javanese headdress worn by court officials. In fig. 11, various figures in the background (including the musicians) are wearing kuluks; however, those worn by the canthang balungs appear to be of a different, i.e. much taller, type. Compare the cap/mitre worn by ascetics in late Campă art (e.g. a 15th century sculpture from Phùt Lōi Pagoda on Nhơn Hải peninsula [Bình Định, Vietnam], depicting a Saiva ascetic [śivācārya] identified as such by inscription on the back: isaw.nyu.edu/publications/inscriptions/campa/inscriptions/C0214.html; accessed 23-01-2014). I thank Arlo Griffiths for drawing my attention to this image.
caper so as to imitate dogs in heat:

Formerly, some thirty years ago, they had to perform a remarkable dance when arrived at the foot of the stinggil [the building where the gamelan are kept], which is described as being an imitation of dogs at mating time. If they managed to make the susuhunan laugh, they were assured of a monetary reward. This custom was abolished probably for the sake of decency because many Europeans […] were present at the grĕbĕg ceremony.

This dance reminds us of the imitation of mating goats by pîruses in the Sumanasăntaka. The imitation of animals, and especially of a bull’s lowing, was a practice of the Păşupatas, and of the păşupatavrata in general (cf. Ingalls 1962:295). Since dogs are considered as the most impure animals in Brahmanical lore, they were often connected to the practices of antinomian groups: for example, the “great observance” (mahăvrata) carried out by the Kăpālikas prescribed that the adept must wear the skin of a dog; the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya by the Buddhist master Vasubandhu characterizes the Păşupata conduct as “behaving like a dog” (kukkura[…])ratam).86

Becker’s identification of the women as Păşupatas, and in particular her last remark about the women’s admissibility into the order, is not very likely. As it appears from their surviving scriptures, the Păşupata order—at least in its original form—was only accessible to male consecrated Brahmins (Sanderson 1988:664). To her credit, Becker (2004:196) in an endnote suggests the alternative hypothesis that the female figures might have been the equivalent of the Indian devadăśīs (as argued by Stutterheim, 1956a:100). Sutton (1984:125) too pointed out that the talĕdhĕk, much like the devadăśīs, doubled as prostitutes. From epigraphic documents we know that devadăśīs were maintained by the Kălamukhas, a group of the Śaiva Atimărga related to the Kăpālikas (Lorenzen 1991); post-twelfth century South Indian Saiddhăntika sources document a group of female servants maintained for temple dancing and singing, called ganikă or rudraganikă (Brunner, Oberhammer and Padoux 2004:175–176). The female talĕdhĕk, who were under the responsibility of the canthang balungs in Surakarta, and of the lurah talĕdhĕk in Yogyakarta, would also fit well into the category of female attendants (diūt) of the Kăpălini or Yojiin type, who ranked among the antinomian groups of the Kăpălikas, Kălamukhas, and Siddhas.

Sutton (1984) elaborated on the Javanese tradition of the talĕdhĕk and its connection with that of the canthang balungs in a study combining the early reports discussed by Brandts Buys, Stutterheim, and Pigeaud, with data drawn from Javanese texts and anthropological research conducted in modern Java. In her words (1984:123–124),

86. Cf. White (1991:102–103) and Acharya (2013:105, 127–128). A black dog is connected with Bhairava, the demonic manifestation of Śiva worshiped by the Kăpălikas, of whom he may be a manifestation as well as a vehicle (văhana); a dog features in this function in the dancing-Bhairava statue of Siňhasări. We also know of a Tantric master named Kukkurăcărya (kukkura = dog), who instructs king Indrabhūti in obtaining the supernatural status of vidyădhara (Davidson 2002:243).
Though rare today in Central Java, one still finds an occasional itinerant *taledhek* with a few musicians, to my knowledge always male, wandering the streets of even the larger cities. […] They are usually looked down upon by the general populace as beggars, and the *taledhek* as prostitutes. […] Whether as a beggar or as a participant in a ritual, the singer dancer is expected to perform in a manner alluring to men.

Sutton (1984:125) translates a passage from Pigeaud’s *Javaanse Volksvertoningen*, where it appears that in Solo the *taledhek* were under the jurisdiction of the *canthang balungs*:

 […] it is said that they [the *canthang balungs*] formerly held the position of leaders of the dance women. […] According to my information from Solo, they had the rights simply to consider as their own subordinates women or girls who caused public scandal through immoral conduct and who were not married or subordinate to a master or lord. Whenever a man appeared who wanted to marry one of these women or take her as a servant, he had to buy her freedom.

Sutton (1984:121–123) traced this modern Javanese tradition of dancing girls to premodern East Java by drawing attention to a passage of the 14th-century *kakavin Deśavarṇana* by Mpu Prapañca, where a number of parallels with the *taledhek* and the context of the performance occur. Canto 91 of the Old Javanese poem describes a “female entertainer” named *juru i aṅin* (“Mistress of the Wind”), whose performance consists of both dance and singing:

“The first part was essentially comical (witty, *cucud*) and perhaps erotic. The female dancer was accompanied by Buyut (Great grandfather, and oldman), probably a follower and astute servant (*panakawan*) of the kind that is indispensable in Javanese plays” [Pigeaud 1960–63, vol. IV:316]. This part was performed “in the open air, probably near the countrymen’s hall” [id., vol. IV:317]. The second part began with her entrance into the royal “Presence’, where she joined the exalted members of the court in drinking liquor and where “Mantris (mandarins) and *upapatti* (assessors at law) equally are taken for companion by her, drinking liquor, singing *kidung* (songs)” [id., vol. III:108].

Mpu Prapañca defines these songs as being “comparable with the cries of a peacock on a branch in their poetic beauty” (canto 91.3b, *mrak mañavuvvaṅ i padapa tulya nika riṅ alaiṅ*, trans. Robson 1995:191), which suggests a link between the female dancer and a peacock. Furthermore, Sutton (1984:125) noted that men made gifts of clothing to *juru i aṅin*, which finds a parallel in the Modern *tayuban/nayuban* tradition. As remarked by Pigeaud (1960–63, IV:316):

In modern Java in rural districts the custom for men to throw articles of their own apparel […] on the floor at the feet of a female dancer as a token of admiration and erotic excitement still prevails.

This custom reminds us of the simile found in RK 24.105–106, where excited peacocks danced under a “shower” of “golden ornaments” falling from trees. The *Deśavarṇana*’s account has common elements also with the description of female performers (*strī niṅ śaiva* and *strī niṅ vidu*) in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.1–3, who simultaneously dance, sing and recite in a comical manner. The name of the *Deśavarṇana*’s performer—“Mistress of the Wind”—may be linked to a Tantric

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milieu, for the god Vâyu was characterized in many Old Javanese (as well as Sanskrit) sources as the father of Bhîma, whose connection with Bhairava, the demonic aspect of Śiva, was convincingly argued by Stutterheim (1956b:124–125; cf. below). The active participation of court dignitaries in the dance and accompanying “drinking bout” appears to be a common feature in the Old Javanese accounts I have presented above. Also interesting is the presence of the buyut or “old man,” whose role of buffoon, master or partner of dancing-girls, and magician, at once recalls that of the pîrus and canthang balung.

Sutton (1984:121) discussed the practices found in passages of the 18th–19th century Javanese Serat Centhini, which persists in the Javanese tayuban tradition of dance-performance, where one or more taledhèk are involved in a kind of erotic singing and dancing with men and women, accompanied by gamelan music:

Tayuban need not involve drinking or physical contact between the taledhek and any of her male partners, yet in many cases it involves a considerable degree of both. The well-known nineteenth century poem, Serat Centhini, describes at great length a tayuban in which most of the participants wind up intoxicated and some copulate on the dance floor. While many Javanese today claim that Serat Centhini descriptions such as this are fanciful exaggerations, drinking and sexual license have been common practice at tayuban occasions. [Stutterheim 1956a:99:] “It is […] an astonishing spectacle for those who have the opportunity to attend a real, old-fashioned nayuban for the first time, to see the stately Javanese, who in ordinary life do not in the least appear to appreciate the use of alcohol, becoming fuddled to such an extent and to see them in a state of excitement in which they occasionally openly misbehave and allow themselves all kinds of liberties with the taledek.”

According to Sumarsam (1995:33), who quotes several passages of the Serat

87. The Sanskrit/Old Javanese vâyu (“wind,” or “the God Vâyu”) is synonymous with the Old Javanese aṅin.  
88. The Sanskrit word vâtula (“windy”) denotes a “mad” or “crazy” person, and is also used for someone who is possessed. According to a widespread tradition, Bhîma’s brother is Hanumañ, who shares with him the appellative bāyuputra (“son of Wind”), and who is himself considered a manifestation of Bhairava in both South Asia and the Javano-Balinese world. In the Balinese Kapiparwa indeed it is Hanumañ (anoman) who eats the Sun instead of his brother Kãla-Bhairava, as another popular version of the story has it. Vickers (2011:127) notes that “The link to Bayu explains a connection Balinese make between Anoman and Bima, which is otherwise mysterious. […] Anoman and Bima have similar iconography: both have the “prawn claw” (supit urang) coiffure of the semi-divine heroes of the epics, and both wear very little clothing except for the chequered (poleng) loin cloth. In Balinese ritual use these poleng cloths, as the union of opposites, represent power (sakti). The heroes’ conflict is ended by the intercession of their father, the god Bayu, who is iconographically identical to Bima, except that he has the aureole and what Forge refers to as a ‘god spot’.”

89. A characterization of buyut as a man of supernatural prowess is found in the Middle Javanese chronicle Pararaton (6.27, quoted in OJED 370). There a buyut is introduced by the honorific hyan, which is usually reserved for either divinities or characters of a high religious standing (including craftsmen). This buyut, who is described as the guru of Ken Anrok, possessed various supernatural powers, including the dharmakāñcanasidi (supernatural ability of making gold?). The figures of Buyut Cili and Buyut Cungking are revered as persons of (benign) magical power, in connection with slametan rituals and barong performances, in some East Javanese locales (Beatty 1999:86). As in the Pararaton, the buyut is usually referred to as eyang (hyan) (id. 1999:99). A connection between buffoonery and supernatural/magical power is found in the character embodying a comedian and black magician known as bondres in sacred Balinese temple-dance and performance.
Centhini and other nearly contemporary Javanese texts, tayuban continued to be an essential part of court celebrations into the 19th century, and survived until recent years as a tradition especially followed in wedding celebrations. Even so, as narrated in the Babad Mangkubumi, it was perceived with hostility by the devout Muslim Paku Buwana IV when he was still a crown prince in the Surakarta court in the second half of the 18th century, apparently on account of its wild, un-Islamic character (Sumarsam 1995:31–33). Stutterheim indeed labelled the nayuban a “taṇḍak-party,” and connected it to the canthang balungs via the talèdhèk. Sutton (1984:122–123) further elaborated upon this connection, linking the canthang balung to the buyut and tandhak (Jav.), whose existence was documented among the modern Tengger Hindu communities:

In the Tengger area of East Java, singer-dancers (there called tandhak) often appear at festive occasions where great quantities of liquor are consumed. In their inebriated state, the men behave in a manner which would be unacceptable in more normal public encounters with members of the opposite sex. The role of the Buyut is also paralleled in the taledehèk tradition. Pigeaud, Stutterheim, and Brandts-Buys have written of the canthang balung—men who dressed strangely and danced for the ruler (susuhunan) of Surakarta and his entourage. [Pigeaud 1938:59:] “They had a place amidst the gamelan players whenever bedhaya or srîmpi dances [female-style ensemble dances of the court] were performed in the kraton. Then they fulfilled the role of badhud (jesters) and let the senggak calls [short vocal interjections] be heard against the gamelan music.”

Erotic bedhaya-dances performed at the kraton of Surakarta in an atmosphere of drinking parties among the noblemen is reported by van Goens, a mid-17th century Dutch observer (cf. Sumarsam 1995:21). Sumarsam notes that the instrumental combination mentioned in the account—i.e. small gongs, flutes, and a bowed-string instrument—has no equivalent in today’s Javanese ensembles, yet is mentioned in Old Javanese literature, and therefore “might well be a survival of Hindu-Javanese ensembles.” The Tenggerese tandhak singer-dancers obviously derive their name from the Old Javanese taṇḍak, which means “dance (with song)” (OJED 1929). Given that taṇḍak is not traceable to any known root in Proto-Austronesian and other Austronesian languages, it is tempting to regard this word as deriving from the Sanskrit tāṇḍava, “dancing (esp. with violent gesticulation), frantic dance (of Śiva and his votaries)”.

Topeng Sidha Karya: A Balinese Tantric Temple-Dancer

Let us now turn to Bali, where some of the ceremonies and temple-ritual performances that are still practiced today may find their historical predecessors

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90 A connection with Śiva may be suggested on the basis of MW’s gloss of tāṇḍa, “a rṣi (who saw and praised Śiva),” and tāṇḍa (= tāṇḍaka), “an old sage.” The dancing posture displayed by the characters appearing in this and related reliefs of Čaṇḍi Śiva was identified by Lopez y Royo-Iyer (1998:66–72) as a form of tāṇḍava; she then came to the—to my mind unwarranted—conclusion that the performers displayed in a number of panels must represent the God himself.

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in those described in Old Javanese epigraphic and textual sources. Among such Balinese ceremonies are those involving Sidha Karya, a character that evokes many of the antinomian, and more specifically Tantric, features that we have seen in the performing figures thus far discussed. Sidha Karya is a dancer and, at the same time, a comic masked performer, who appears at the end of topeng pajegan masked dance-drama. As put by Hildred Geertz (1994:125), he has the aspect of

an old man with bright eyes, a smiling, bucktoothed mouth, and large bushy white mustache and eyebrows. He enacts an odd comic dance [...]. He is said to be a form of the demon Kala, and his act dramatizes the submission of the demon and his transformation into a being of beneficent attitudes toward the congregation.

A popular Balinese etymology of Sidha Karya is “the completion of the work,” i.e. “the one who accomplishes (siddha) the ritual work” (kārya, more correctly ‘religious performance’, cf. OJED 813 and supra: 29). This is likely to be an ex-post, “folk-etymology” of an original Sanskrit adjectival compound siddhakārya, which means “one whose object is accomplished,” hence “one whose acts are fulfilled [supernaturally]”; compare the Old Javanese siddhikāra, “one who acts through magical powers” or “one who performs wonders.” The name comprises the word siddha, “a perfect one,” in other contexts denoting a class of Śaiva and Buddhist Tantric figures.

Sidha Karya is indeed a character possessing special knowledge and magical powers (Dunn 1983:80). He embodies an odd blend of demonic and divine, and is in fact “associated with the kings of Bali in ancient times which have a pre-Majapahit rākṣasa or demonic appearance”; his frightening and semi-demonic look is referred to in Balinese as aeng, which means “tremendous,” “dreadful,” or “terrifying” (Dunn 1983:45). His pedigree and identity is portrayed in many ways according to different local traditions, e.g. as “the great laughing king,” or the son of a Śaiva priestess and a Buddhist priest, or himself a priest from India (Keling). Sidha Karya’s “appearance in the mask form is attributed to his power to change himself into different forms, a power associated with the gods who take even demonic manifestations” (Dunn 1983:76). Margaret Coldiron, in an unpublished paper titled “The Tantric root of Sidha Karya” (2007), has stressed the fundamentally “unorthodox” and contradictory nature of this Balinese mask character:

91. Cf. Hunter’s remarks: “The ‘tellers of historical tales’ (amacangah) spoken of in Sumanasântaka are also believed to have their modern descendants in the topeng dances of Bali, where masked performers enact tales from ‘dynastic histories’ (babad) rather than the mythological events related in the shadow theatre’ (Worsley et al. 2013:576); compare Cohen (2011:143), who speaks of the Javano-Balinese Sanghyang trance-dance as ‘very ancient and simultaneously tied to the local ritual economy.”

92. OJED (1759) lists siddhikāra but does not gloss it; s.v. aniddhikāra, sumiddhikāra, siniddhikāra, and paniddhikāra, it gives “to apply magical power to, effect by magic, change by magic.”

93. De Casparis (1956:226) records the expression kabikuan in siddhakārya, “the monastery (called) Siddhakārya” (or, rather, the monastery of the Siddhakārya(s)?) occurring in the Lintakan copperplate of 919 AD.
Sidha Karya is one of the most sacred and significant of Balinese mask characters, yet his appearance and behaviour are mysterious. He is holy, but a joker; refined, yet coarse; divine, yet demonic—in short, a mass of contradictions. […] Does the mask represent a “Buddhist Brahmin from Java,” an ancient Balinese demon-king or an ascetic evangelist from India? What is his significance in the ritual dance drama in which the performance of this mask often seems dramatically irrelevant, but is utterly essential?

According to various Balinese stories—with variants with respect to details—reported by oral informants or written chronicles (babad), Sidha Karya was a Brahman travelling from Java, who arrived at Pura Besakih when an important ritual to avert the disgrace that had fallen upon the kingdom was being performed. On account of his filthy attire, he was not believed to be a real Brahman; he was not allowed to cross the temple’s premises, but rather ordered to go south (kelod)—an inauspicious point of the compass, associated with the Demonic in both Indic and Javano-Balinese cosmology. Sidha Karya cursed the ritual, which resulted in even direr consequences for the kingdom and its inhabitants. Eventually, his Brahmanic status and kinship relationship with the ruling prince is recognized, and Sidha Karya “makes the ritual complete,” thereby healing the kingdom. Coldiron (2007) describes the crucial event as follows:

He appears in the king’s court unwashed, covered in ash—the ashes of the cremated dead—he has no time for court manners and he laughs at the mundane concerns of those who have not passed through the […] renunciation of the body’s needs and desires.

As a magically powerful “outsider,” and an antinomian ascetic who has mastered impurity, Sidha Karya is the most qualified person to accomplish the ritual—unlike the Śaiva SaiddhƗntika high officiant (pedanda Śiva) who, in his purity, cannot deal with the forces operating at the bhūta level.

In an earlier study, Coldiron (2005b:241) drew attention to the apparent similarities between this figure and the Tantric Siddhas known from VajrayƗna Buddhism, observing that, although the Sidha Karya’s dance contains elements of entertainment like storytelling and buffoonery, it is mainly “addressed to the gods and fulfill a purely ritual function,” including the appeasement of the bhūta kālas or malignant ghostly beings. She further pointed out that the performances of the Sidha Karya are characterized by music (“insistent, rhythmic, with a pulse that uses an interval reserved for supernatural characters and fights”); laughter and screams/cries (“indicative of a powerful, supernatural character”); erratic movements; recitation of mantras and offerings to the cardinal directions, beginning from the South (the demonic/inauspicious point of the compass) and ending with Śiva in the centre.

Sidha Karya’s mask may be white or black; a third eye—Śiva’s attribute—is represented in the middle of the forehead. Some masks have large teeth and wide grin, whereas others have fangs (see fig. 16). The figure shares with demonic

94. The south is conceived as the abode of KƗla and demons in general, as well as a synonym of wilderness and pestilence (cf. Headley 2004:321–322).
characters his bushy eyebrows, moustache, large eyes, and unruly hair; however, ‘while iconographically the character looks a lot like a demon, narratively we know that this is a high-class Brahman’ (Kodi et al. 2005:176). His Brahmanical pedigree and ascetic attire oddly mixed with demonic and frightening features, stylized lines on the face that seem to denote laughter, his ash-smear (originating from a corpse), his dance, all conjure up the prototypical devotee of Rudra/Bhairava, an anchorite of the Pāśupata, Kāpālika, or Siddha type. Coldiron (2005a:186) describes his dance as follows:

Sidha Karya laughs maniacally, as if privy of some great joke at the expense of the audience. He waves his white cloth, laughs, executes bird-like hops to the right and left, laughs again in the manner of Rangda and then rushes at the audience. (My italics)

Besides the laughter, common to all traditions discussed so far, note the striking similarity with the bird-like hops to the left and right feet performed by the canthang balungs. According to Coldiron, Sidha Karya’s sideways hops indicate his magical powers; to jump as a bird, and to dance in a frenzy way, is forbidden in the daily life in Bali. Interestingly, similar side-hops are also seen in the Sanbasō dance performed by the Japanese mask Okina. On account of the strikingly similar iconographic features, the style of their dance, and the use of mantras and mudrās by both characters, Coldiron (2005b:240–244) has suggested that Okina and Sidha Karya may derive from a common Tantric Buddhist source, probably originating from Java, and ultimately “Kaliṅga”—i.e. Andhra or Orissa, which was an important center for the trade route between India, Southeast Asia, and China. A “Kaliṅga-connection” was already pointed out by Emigh (1996) who, in his analysis to the Balinese masks of Rangda and Barong, suggested that the demonic figures of Balinese dance-drama may originate from the Tantric practices of that region in India. Coldiron, however, concludes that no certain model has as yet been found. While a Tantric Buddhist pedigree cannot be ruled out, I find a direct derivation of Sidha Karya from a prototypical Śaiva Atimārga, i.e. Pāśupata or Kāpālika, ascetic a more plausible hypothesis.

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95. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this information.
96. Cf. Coldiron 2005b:230: “While it is true that Buddhism is a feature of both Balinese and Japanese cultures, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that the source of the Tantric Buddhist influence that informs the iconography of these masks was not China but rather Southeast Asia, specifically Java. […] The Hindu-Buddhist culture of Bali is, of course, directly connected to that of pre-Muslim Java, but there is also new evidence indicating ‘Indonesian’ influences on the arts of early Japan.’ Coldiron refers to the work by Ann Kumar on ancient Javanese influences on Japan, and to David George’s suggestion that the Chinese Dragon is a representation of a creature from Java.
97. In Bali kēlin is generally meant to refer to (East) Java, but the name could actually refer to the “kingdom of Kalinga-nagaram, centred in what is now the coastal border region of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh” (Emigh 1996:77; cf. also Dunn 1987:74). The identification of Old Javanese koliṅ (i.e. the various koliṅs) is controversial: for a detailed linguistic and historical discussion, cf. Damais 1964, especially pp. 96–111.
98. A fruitful line of enquiry would be to compare the Balinese and Japanese ritual dances to Indic Tantric (Buddhist) dances from Tibet and Nepal, such as the Newari dance Bhairab Naach (“Bhairava’s
Fierce deities and demonic devotees

As we have seen above, in the Sanskritic tradition fringe groups such as the Pāṣupatas and Kāpālikas “survived mainly in the literary and religious texts of their opponents as stereotypical villains, buffoons, or heretics […] sprinkled with ashes; adorned with the six insignia; and holding a khaṭvāṅga club, a skull (kapāla), damaru and mṛdaṅga drums, and a trumpet” (Lorenzen 2000:83). These wandering (pseudo-) ascetics were ridiculed in a number of plays, where they figured as hedonistic yet “scruffy, long-haired denizens of the margins of the Indian social institutions” (Davidson 2002:114). In a similar fashion, the extant information about these fringe groups in the Javanese setting has survived to us in the form of critiques or satires by courtly literati who evidently adhered to mainstream, householder-oriented religious currents. For instance, in RK 24.112 a kuvoṅ-bird is characterized as a vidu, a homeless and unattached wayang-player, and accused of posing as a tanda functionary; he is declared to be guṇya (“having manifold supernatural abilities,” “powerful,” or: “a sorcerer”) and saguna (“possessing magical/supernatural powers”). In 24.114 the kuvoṅ invites a she-kuvoṅ to become a female ascetic (kili) and bring satisfaction to naked wandering ascetics (kalavan lagnāmutusana), thereby becoming an object of enjoyment (bhukti) for the devotees (bhakta) in the forest, who have low-ranking wives (kula-kula).

99. The South Indian farce Mattavilāsa (7th century AD) portrays a KƗpƗlika as a hedonist engaged in wild dances, parties involving the consumption of meat and alcohol, and enjoying sexual intercourse with his partner, a dancing KapƗlinī called DevasomƗś v. 20 describes him as “having as hairs a wild and tangled mess, wearing a withered garland around his neck, his body covered with dust and ash […] a garbage heap in the form of a man” (Lorenzen 2000:94).

100. See Acri 2011a:62. Intriguingly, Tantric practitioners are referred to as guniā in contemporary Orissa (cf. Keul 2013:6, who speaks of “local tantriks” connected to Yoganī-cults, cremation-ground offerings and healing practices); among the Baigals of Central India and the Santhals of (South-) Eastern India, guni means “sorcerer” (Koppers 1940-41:770). See also below, Pārthayajña 8.9, and the nicknames of the two canthang balungs mentioned in footnote 80.

101. See Acri 2011a:84. In my earlier contribution I did not mention the possibility that kula-kula may be a pun, implying a reference to the kula in the sense of “clans” or “families” (of initiated devotees, Yoganīs, and minor goddesses) around which revolved the theology and (orgiastic) ritual practice of the Tantric texts of the Kaula stream—themselves probably derived from an earlier KƗpƗlika milieu. Samuel (2006:26), when discussing KƗpƗlika-related practices, speaks about “the widespread role of low-caste ritual specialists in relation to kingship and political power, a pattern that has been identified in early Tamil literature and occurs in different forms in many parts of South Asia and the Himalayas. If fierce deity practices were originally performed by such low-caste specialists, then the kula, ‘families,’
A seemingly related category of low-status, power-seeking ascetics and performers who were active in non-courtly milieux is scornfully portrayed in stanza 6 and 9 of the eighth canto of the ca. 15th-century *kakavin Pārthayajña*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hana viku manidan} & \quad \text{manidɔri bhuvana} \\
\text{makuraviti agolu} & \quad \text{sukɔr aburarutan} \\
\text{tɔhɔr ikana puri}u & \quad \text{niu avak apo}nuñan \\
\text{si hurip ika} & \quad \text{ya vastu sukɔr aburarutan} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(6)

There are ascetics who behave in a crazy manner, wandering through the world; untidy, hindered by their matted hair, in disorder.

So is the natural state of the body [of one] exerting [himself in performing austerities].

The Life principle is in fact hindered, in disorder.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hana viku mani}g̃al macarita rinubũñ \\
\text{biṣa tivas ika siu} & \quad \text{vvañ atika vihikan} \\
\text{vvañ atika mañ̃a}lom ri guña nika lovĩh \\
\text{vvañ atika sa}ñ̃ asũñ mamĩgũñañi guña \\
\end{align*}
\]

(9)

There are ascetics who dance and recite stories, surrounded [by spectators].

Everyone should know that they are powerful [and yet] they come to nothing.

Such persons boast of their exceeding magical powers;

Such persons are the ones who render magical powers worthless.

The above description epitomizes a class of Indic wandering anchorites of the Śaiva Pāśupata and Kāpālika- or Siddha-type respectively; these were despised in Sanskrit sources by the mainstream religious establishment on account of their uniting a quest for supernatural powers (*siddhi*, *guṇa*) with a career in the performing arts, and especially because of their “crazy” behaviours and antinomian practices. The Kāpālikas practiced the observance of the Pāśupatas (pāśupatavrata), who enjoined the use of song, dance and drama in the worship of Rudra-Śiva and, concealing their Brahmanical (hence, pure) status, behaved improperly and indecently in order to cause contempt in the common people:

It was prescribed that he [the Pāśupata adept] snore, tremble, limp, play the lecher, act improperly and speak nonsensical words in full view of people. Such ridiculous actions were to be performed so as to give the impression that he was a madman (*unmatta*) and thus provoke disgust and contempt (*avamāna*). (Hara 1994:120)

\[\text{Pāśupatasūtra 3.11} \text{ prescribes that the Pāśupata practitioner}\]

\[\text{Should go about like an outcaste.} \text{[... Commentary:] He should appear as though mad, like a pauper, his body covered with filth, letting his beard, nails and hair grow long, without any bodily care. Hereby he becomes cut off from the respectable castes and conditions of men and gives rise to disgust (trans. Ingalls 1962:289).}\]

of early tantric practice may derive from the families who carried them out.”
The autocommentary Svopajñavṛtti to Yogaśāstra by the 11th–12th century Jain polymath Hemacandra (4.102.26–31) scornfully describes certain ascetics who take up and abandon the pāśupatavrata according to their own advantage, and behave in other (even more) extravagant ways typical of the Kāpālikas. The passage depicts these ascetics with their hairs twisted together in a mass (jaṭāpaṭala), their limbs covered with ashes (bhasmāṅga), dancing and singing (gītanṛtya), farting (putau vādayat-) and roaring (nādavidhāyin-) by drumming on their mouths as if it were a percussion-instrument (vadananādenātodya), attacking sages, gods and men with deceits (asatyabhāṣā), breaking their observances (vrataḥpānā) out of their desire “to become slaves of slave-girls” (dāsīdāsatvam icchat-), carrying ornaments made of human bones (narāsthibhūṣaṇabṛhat-) and a pike or khaṭvāṅga (śūlakhaṭvāṅgavāhin-), wearing bells on their ankles (ghaṇṭānupūradhārin-), indulging in the enjoyment of drink, meat and sex (madyamāṃsāṅganābhogaśakta-), continually singing (gāyat-) and dancing (nṛtyat-) with bells tied around their buttocks (putānubaddhaghaṇṭa-).

From the scant textual evidence on the beliefs and practices of Kāpālikas and their female attendants, the Kapilinis or Yoginis, which has survived to us through Śaiva sources of the Kaula or Bhairavatantra stream, we know that these practitioners aimed at achieving a direct connection with their demonic isterdevatā, the male Bhairava and/or various terrifying manifestations of the Goddess. This union was achieved via their observance of mimicking or taking upon themselves some of his/her features in order to reach a complete identification with him/her, i.e. be “penetrated” or possessed (āveṣa) in a trance-like state, often triggered through orgiastic rituals (e.g. gaṇacakrapūjā and yoginīmelāpā), drinking bouts, and frantic dances on cremation grounds. The “odd” whole-body postures, called mudrā, assumed by the followers of these groups in their ritual dances were intended to induce a state of possession; through the experience of violent emotions triggered by the transgression of social and dietary rules of purity, these adepts identified themselves with their wrathful tutelary deities, becoming his/her—“theatrical,” so to speak—human embodiments.102

Scholars generally consider that Bhairaivika Śaivism was introduced in Nusanterā, and especially in the East Javanese kingdoms of Kaḍiri and Siḥāsāri, only since the 12th century. But traces of Tantric cults are already discernible during the Central Javanese period. An incontrovertible allegorical reference to Śiva-Bhairava is found in an Old Javanese inscription from the Ratu Boko plateau dated 856 AD (de Casparis 1956:265–266, 271). There the princely figure of Kumbhayoni likens himself to a terrifying form of Śiva-Bhairava, who is described as performing an exalted tāṇḍava-dance—and, at the same time, meditating—on a corpse in a cremation ground, wearing a snake-thread, necklace, armband and leg-ornaments

102. For a fascinating account of these ritual or ritualized practices, as described in unpublished Śaiva sources, cf. the public lecture "Pleasure and the Emotions in Tantric Śaiva Soteriology" (especially mins. 40–60) delivered by Prof. Alexis Sanderson at the University of Hamburg on 07-06-2013 (http://lecture2go.uni-hamburg.de/veranstaltungen/-/v/15161; last accessed 24-01-2014).
made by the King of the Nāgas (*phaṇīndra*), adorned with blood-dripping heads of the kings defeated by him.103 The typical hairdos and attires characterizing the iconography of Bhairava, demons, and Kāpālikas ascetics, such as ornaments of human skulls, Brahmanic cords and armbands made of snakes, feature in reliefs of the Loro Jonggrang temple complex.104 A trace of Kāpālikas-Bhairavika Śaivism can also be discerned in panel VII.11d of Caṇḍī Śiva, depicting a frenzy war dance by a fanged Yogiṇī accompanied by the music of *mṛdaṅga* drums, overseen by a character looking like a Brahman, who is reciting from a palm-leaf manuscript (fig. 10). A worshiper of Kāla (*ikaṇ iṣṭi kāla*) is linked to a tiger (*harimaṅ*), Śiva’s vehicle, in RK 25.09,105 “Bhairava” and “Bhairavamārga” appear among the sects described in early Old Javanese texts, such as the *Agastya* and *Saṅ Hyaṅ Kamahāyānikan* (cf. Goris 1926:101–103); the term (*saṅ brāhmaṇa*) *kāpālikabrata* “(a Brahman) adhering to the observance of the Kāpālikas” is attested in the probably 10th-century *Udyogaparva* (45.4). It may be therefore safely assumed that these groups and their Tantric lore, rituals, and underlying theology, were known realities in the Javanese *imaginaire* already in the Central Javanese period.

Tantric imagery becomes more pronounced, and pervasive, in the Śaiva and Buddhist art of the Kaḍiri-Sīhasāri period in East Java; it recrudesces during the late Majapahit period, culminating in what Stutterheim (1956b:117–118) called a Javano-Balinese cult of Bhīma-Bhairava. According to Stutterheim, this very Bhīma—i.e. the demonic, skull-bearing ascetic aspect of Śiva known as Bhairava (of identical meaning, “the terrible/frightful”)—rather than (only) the popular Pāṇḍava hero of the *Mahābhārata* is the protagonist of the *Navaruci*, a ca. 16th-century Old/Middle Javanese soteriological text that narrates Bhīma’s mystical journey towards enlightenment or self-purification. The story of the *Navaruci*, also known through the related *Bhīmasuci* and *Bhīmasvarga*, constitutes, as shown by Hinzler (1981:29), a common plot for old as well as modern wayang narratives and performances.

103. The same antinomian and martial imagery is found in a number of Sanskrit hymns dedicated to Śiva-Rudra from Bali; cf. especially *Śivastava*, vv. 8–10 (Goudriaan and Hooykaas 1971:290–293), and also *Rudragāyatrīdhyāna* (pp. 299–300). As Jordaan and myself (2012) have argued, some of these *stuti* may be contemporary or even older than the temple complex of Loro Jonggrang, being apparently connected to the iconographic and architectural plan of Caṇḍī Śiva.

104. E.g. on Caṇḍī Śiva, in a figure that I have identified as Kāla—cf. Acri and Jordaan 2012:301–302. An actual skull-bowl has been unearthed in Central Java, in the mountains to the north of Prambanan (cf. Stutterheim 1956b:125, fn. 44; Jordaan 1996:73). The use of skulls (*kapāla*) as drinking-bowls is described in the ca. 15th century *Tantu Paṅgolaṇar* (cf. OJED 797 s.v.).

105. The Sanskrit-Old Javanese Śaiva text *Mahājñāna* (comm. ad śloka 27) defines the materialist doctrine as “the knowledge of the agitated among men, […] the knowledge of Kāla” (*kālajñāna*). The expression “agitated among men” is my tentative translation of *kagivan*, a passive from *āṅgivan* (“to shake”), glossed by OJED (532) as “in violent commotion, deeply moved, agitated” (also used, as in *Sri Taḥjuṅ*, in the sense of “moving to the tune of the gamelan”); compare *agivan*an, “moving to and fro, in violent motion.” The word is apparently connected to a frantic dance. It is worth noting that the Kāpālikas and Pāṇḍupatas were often characterized as hedonists or epicureans associated (purportedly or not) by their mainstream detractors with the materialists—the lowest among the philosophical schools codified in the Sanskritic tradition (see Lorenzen 1991:47–48, 88–89, 217).
Stutterheim’s identification is supported by the cemetery-lore that accompanies the figure of Bhīma, by his behaviour inclined to violence and rage, drunkenness and orgies, and by the features of his iconography, namely his high-worn headress, snake-bracelets and erect exposed penis, his frantic dance performed while standing on a corpse, surrounded by demons drinking from skulls. The comic—or grotesque—aspect of the Divine, represented in his demonic form of trickster, is evident in a passage of the Navaruci (p. 53.2–10) that the editor and translator Prijohotomo deemed to be corrupt, arguably on account of its enigmatic and sinister content (cf. p. 110, fn. 2). Having described the invisible and formless aspect of God as Void and non-existence (tayā), the Guru explains to Bhīma the form(s) taken as incarnation by the Lord (bhaṭāra, usually standing for Śiva):


[... The Lord.] He becomes a human being; He becomes a male, He becomes a female; He becomes a four-legged animal, moving on all fours, His belly facing down. I would say, that is an animal (sattva). There is no inferiority in His becoming a human being. He knows to dance wearing a vṛūḥ; He is skilled in singing and reciting. He knows to perform yoga and absorption. He is endowed with Gnosis and Power, there is nobody who equals Him. As for what constitutes His food, He pays little attention to what He eats; He eats his own body, He drinks his own blood. In Him, the embodied [soul] does not suffer. He is not beautiful; He really likes to laugh. His manner of haughty speaking is not pleasant. [Being only] supernaturally mighty, He is in trouble with the discernment of the sacred scriptures.

The divine figure described in the passage appears to have many of the features attributed to both Bhīma/Bhairava and Bhīma the PƗṇ̣ava, son of VƗyu. In fact, in the Navaruci Bhīma (the PƗṇ̣ava hero) discovers to be Bhīma (a manifestation of the Godhead) through esoteric instruction and a process of self-purification. The PƗṇ̣ava Bhīma is a mighty, and often wrathful and impulsive, warrior of gigantic proportions, whose strong point is almost uniquely his physical strength; in both

107. Satto here represents a common alternative spelling of sattva, which in Old Javanese can mean either “living being, creature, animal” or “good, pure, virtuous” (OJED 1713).
108. The meaning recorded in OJED s.v. vēḍiḥan and mawēḍiḥan, is “wearing garments.” One may wonder whether the word reflects a title, or a typography of performer or official. A pavēḍiḥan is attested in 11th to 13th century inscriptions among the vatsk i jro (manilala drvya ġāji)—among whose are also the vidūs—“in charge of collecting a contribution in clothes, pamēḍiḥan?” (OJED 2233). A pamoḍiḥan is mentioned along with juru buyut in the Old Javanese copperplate inscription of Penampihan (1269 AD; cf. Brandes 1913, inscr. 79, 4b.3).
109. Pati in this case may be pati IV, “to give special attention to, bestow great care on, take great pains over, make a special effort [...],” (OJED 1323).
the Sanskrit and Javanese versions of the *Mahābhārata* he is known as *vṛkodara*, “wolf-bellied,” because of his insatiable appetite. The other features of this divine figure mentioned there, such as the ability to dance (*maṅigәl*), sing (*maṅiduṅ*), and recite (*macarita*), his propensity to violently laugh (*gumuyu*), his proficiency in yoga (*mayoga*), his possession of Gnosis (*prajñā*) and Power (*śakti*), are all consonant with those attributed to Bhīma/Bhairava, and at the same time reflected in the figures of antinomian, power-seeking performers as the *vidu* and *pirus*. The references to Bhīma as paying no attention to his diet, and especially as eating his own body and drinking his own blood, call to mind the dietary habits of Atimārga practitioners and the notorious practice of cannibalism and blood-drinking attributed to the Kāpālikas, respectively. The reference to self-cannibalism finds a striking parallel in the stories about the origin of the popular architectural element of Kālamukha, the demon-head standing as a guardian above doorways of temples and monumental edifices in South and Southeast Asia, which in Java and Bali was identified with BhaṭƗra Kāla, and connected with the *malpal* style of dancing performed by “demonic” characters of Balinese *topeng pajegean*. A popular legend, Kāla, out of a permanently insatiable hunger—and at Śiva’s request, in order to save other living beings—devoured his own body, thereby leaving only his head. One of the appellatives and manifestations of Bhīma/Bhairava is Kāla, “the Dark/Black one” or “Time” (as devourer of everything). Kāla/Bhairava was the chief deity of the Kāpālikas.

A popular Balinese tradition, attested in several texts such as the Javano-Balinese *Kāla Purāṇa* and the Balinese *Kidung Saṅ Empu Leger* (Hooykaas 1973:244–266; cf. also 307–311), narrates about the vicissitudes of the brothers Kāla and Kumāra, sons of Śiva and his consort Umā. The *Kāla Purāṇa* (cf. Stephen 2002:67–71) relates how the ever-hungry Kāla wanted to devour Kumāra on account of the fact that he had been given by Śiva the right to eat all persons born on the day his younger brother’s birth. The story is still represented on Bali, in slightly different versions, in (comic) performances held during temple-festivals. Rather than being just a source

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110. “He becomes a four-legged animal, moving on all fours, His belly facing down” may be an apt characterization of a wolf.

111. *Pāṉupatasūtra* 5.32 and *Paṅcārthabhāṣya* ad 5.30 explain that the ascetic should feed with whatever he may find, i.e. food acquired by chance (*yathālābdha*); the Sanskrit *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* (II.74.50cd–55) speaks of the observance of the bull (*govrata*), also practiced by the Pāṉupatas, in terms of do not distinguishing at all “what is to be eaten and drunk, and what is not” (cf. Acharya 2013:115). As we have seen above (p. 22), ascetics characterized by this dietary habit were allegorically compared to pigeons in some Sanskrit Śaiva SaiddhƗntika texts, as well as in RK 25.108d. *Sumanasāntaka* 13.6 scornfully describes an ascetic eating his food on a rubbish heap, yet declaring that “he eats nothing that is not pure.”

112. A similar legend, featuring Kṛttimukha, is narrated in the Sanskrit *Skandapurāṇa*; in the *Śivapurāṇa* he is identified with a faithful devotee guarding the doors of Śaiva temples (Smith 1998:199). Many variants exist. According to one version, Kāla stole the elixir of life from the gods and burned in the process, keeping only his head; in Java and Bali Kāla(mukha) is often depicted as eating the sun—for in fact he represents Rāhu, the demon who causes eclipses. A Balinese version of the story, transmitted in the *Kapiparva*, narrates about the monkey-god Anoman eating the sun; this finds a parallel in South Asian literatures (cf. Vickers 2011:127). On the link between Hanumān and Kāla-Bhairava, cf. above, fn. 88.
of amusement, such parodic performances are regularly enacted for apotropaic aims.\footnote{113} Wayang performances of the legend of the birth of Kāla are conducted in Java by dalangs for exorcistic purposes (Headley 2004:321, 330).

It is tempting to connect the b(h)imma in the expression b(h)imma (ya) kumāra found in the above-discussed 10th-century Sangsang copperplate—mentioning piruses, dancers, and musicians in the context of a ritual performance—with the demonic manifestation of Śiva known under the names of Kāla, Bhairava, and Bhīma, and take the inscription as referring to a re-enactment, for “purificatory” ritual purposes, of a pre-10th century (oral?) version of the story of Kāla and Kumāra, which we only know from later Middle Javanese and Balinese texts, as well as Javanese “exorcistic” wayang performances.\footnote{114}

Conclusion

This article has attempted to bridge the “classical” past and the present through suggesting a premodern, and ultimately Indic, origin of specific Javano-Balinese performances and performers. In doing so I have followed an approach that is in harmony with Rubin and Sedana’s (2007:79) considerations on Balinese dance-drama, arguing that “new forms develop and evolve continually […], but they grow out as branches, rather than exist as completely separate species.”

Building on, and fine-tuning, the work of Stutterheim, Becker, and Coldiron, I have pinpointed the remarkable analogies that can be detected between specific Śaiva traditions of itinerant, performance-oriented antinomian practitioners known from the Indian Subcontinent and what I have argued to be their Javano-Balinese descendants. On the strength with a comparative analysis of Old Javanese and Sanskrit textual accounts, combined with insights from art history and ethnography, I have tried to make a point for the continued existence in Java over a thousand years of performances—i.e. music, dance, buffoonery, and recital—featuring a mix of laughter and comicality, sexual exhibitionism and (real or enacted) promiscuity between male and female dancers, and the consumption of alcoholic drinks. The bearded, moustached, and often scruffy attire of many of the performing characters, their connection with a Brahmanic

\footnote{113} As Stephen (2002:77–79) argues: “The significance of wayāṅ performances and other entertainments as the means of causing Durgā and Kāla Rudra to return to their positive forms of Śiva and Umā […] seems to me an idea worthy of considerably more attention than has previously been given it. […] Kāla Rudra and Durgā were publicly shamed and their actions parodied in song, dance and wayāṅ theatre. […] Why? Because parody and humour are used to point to the evil doings of the god and goddess. There is no power that can control Śiva and Umā in their terrible forms, only they can choose to transform themselves, but ridicule and laughter can cause shame and thus bring the pair to self-awareness.”

\footnote{114} As we have seen above (pp. 19-20), Kumāra is in RK 25.24cd linked to peacocks, which themselves are mentioned alongside a darapati (pigeon) alias pirus in 24.106. I wonder whether the mythical and literary association between Kumāra and Bhīma is reflected in a real-world association between dancing devotees of Kumāra and a class of comic performers, called pirus, who were devotees of Bhīma/Bhairava.
mieu, or in any event with Sanskritic high-culture, supernatural powers, and Śaiva or Tantric insignia (e.g. the canthang balungs’ “rattling bones,” liṅga-yoni emblem, strings of flowers, poleng-loincloth, pike, and “Brahmanic” cap/mitre), all conjure up a prototypical Indic milieu of wandering practitioners belonging to the Śaiva Atimārga and their numerous subgroups and developments, from the “proto-Tantric” PƗĞupatas and KƗrukas to the markedly antinomian KƗpƗlikas and KƗlamukhas. Even though, given the paucity of data, it is admittedly difficult to trace a direct line of filiation, not to speak about capturing historical processes occurred over more than a thousand years, the body of evidence presented here points to a commonality of performance styles, ritual milieux, religious ideologies and regimens, and imaginaire, which were shared by networks of performers in South Asia, Java, and Bali.

According to Holt (1967:104), although a observation that, although a general evolutionary line of Indonesian dance cannot be traced in view of the fact that “all stages are [simultaneously] present,” “it is possible to recognize in some dances the transformations they have undergone, to discover that the content and function of certain dances are reinterpretations of older conceptions, and to follow the secularization of ritual.” Applying to our discussion Holt’s observation, it may be argued that through the centuries these ascetics-cum-performers lost their religious prerogatives and adopted new fashions, gradually transforming into courtly, or

115. Considering the predominance of Śaivism in Java from the 9th until the 16th century, where it “was not merely the religion of the courts but had put down deep roots in rural society” (Sanderson 2003–04:351), the secondary role of Buddhism, and the even less significant presence of Vaiṣṇavism, it is only natural to focus—at least in the present discussion—on specific Śaiva milieux rather than what are generally referred to as “bhakti movements,” whether Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva, which developed in the Indian Subcontinent in the course of the first millennium CE. Even such (arguably post-12th century) Śaiva ascetic groups as the ViraḠaivas, NƗtha Yogins and LiṅgƗyats have left scant, if any, traces in the literature and visual arts of Nusantara, in contrast with the firmer evidence available from the 9th century onwards on the PƗĞupata, KƗpƗlika, and Bhairava traditions. On several occasions in the present discussion I have referred to studies linking performance traditions of a ritualized type widespread across Maritime Asia and the Himalayan region to KƗpƗlika/Siddha, Kaula, or (early) Tantric Buddhist milieux (Coldiron 2005a, 2005bś Wedemeyer 2013ś Samuel 2006Ś26).

116. It may be objected that to regard the Javanese and Balinese developments throughout the modern period as being orthogenetically derived from a totality of Indic-style religious practices as they existed in Nusantara by the end of supposed “waves” of Indic influence occurred before the 9th century runs the risk of incurring anachronism. While admitting the possibility of continued cultural exchange with South Asia throughout the second millennium, I should like to point out that the reception of Śaiva and Baudhha traditions in Java and Bali seems to have occurred in waves indeed, as suggested by the fact that the “localized” development of these religions retained archaic tracts, as if they received their features from a version of the tradition that reflects an early stage of doctrinal and ritual development (cf. Acri 2011b:12–16; Nihom 1994:69–115, 189, and 1997); compare Sanderson (2001:22–23) on the variety of Śaivism followed by the ancient Khmers, where the SaiddhƗntikas “remained cut off from the mainstream once their tradition had taken root”; and White (2000:21) on the export of Tantric Buddhist traditions from the Indian Subcontinent to East and Southeast Asia, where “the original revelation remained fossilized, like an insect in a block of amber, in the export tradition,” preserving as it does a “Tantric status quo of eighth-century India.” According to Nihom (1997:104, 109), this state of affairs has bearings on the chronology of religious and diplomatic contacts between the Indonesian Archipelago and the Indian Subcontinent, which may have been severed for more or less extended historical periods after the turn of the first millennium, and since the early 16th century.
“temple-centred,” categories of performers. Some, as the canthang baluns, retained only traces of their original sectarian marks, opportunistically adopting an Islamic garb and specializing in the performing arts as a means of livelihood; having engaged in a formal patron-client relation, they were integrated as low-level functionaries in the early 20th-century Central Javanese courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, where they played a role as comic entertainers during religious performances and superintendents of female singer-dancers. Others, having long since disappeared from the social and religious fabric, survived in the local imaginaire and ritual economy as grotesque ancestral characters evocative of supernatural prowess—witness the Javanese buyut and the Balinese topeng Sidha Karya.

A seeming contradiction that emerges from both South Asian and Javano-Balinese milieux is that those performers, whether in their original or “localised” subtypes, displayed an (actual or pretended) Brahmanical status and a connection with the Sanskritic tradition of the elites, yet at the same time they undoubtedly held a marginalized and low position in the social hierarchy because of their association with performance, vagrant lifestyle, promiscuity, and antinomian behaviours. Some of those characters apparently retained important functions in the performances held during particular life-cycle rituals—including weddings—or religious festivities sponsored by both the courtly elite and common folks (e.g. the Javanese piruses and canthang balungs), or became an essential part of temple-based rituals (e.g. the Balinese Sidha Karya). This contradiction is dispelled if we think about these performances as being the historical offshoots of earlier Indic Tantric ceremonies dominated by the ritual logic and “elite ideology” of esoteric fringe practitioners seeking to instantiate the identity with the divinity “in concrete, lived, social space” (Wedemeyer 2013:258, note 130). The Javanese embodiments of these ceremonies were—and, in the case of Bali, still are—dictated by an apotropaic or purificatory agenda—as such, they could only be staged by antinomian (ritual/theatrical) performers, who themselves (or the characters they typified) lived at the margins of society and were connected with impurity and the Demonic, specializing in “pacifying” or “re-orienting” the evil forces.119

117. According to Wedemeyer (2013:257–258 note 130), “There are very good reasons to believe that caryā dance [of the Newari Buddhist community of Nepal] is a contemporary, attenuated enactment of the Tantric rite of caryāvrata. […] caryāṁṛtya is performed ‘as a part of […] ritual especially on the occasion of tantric initiations, great festivals and important pujas’.” I believe that these illuminating considerations on Tantric Buddhist rituals and performances could be equally applied to the Javanese and Balinese spheres, where related Śaiva varieties of rituals and performances were predominant.

118. Cf., e.g., Sanderson’s (2003–04:376) identification of the modern Balinese Ṛṣī Bhujāṅga or Seṅguhu officiants as local descendants of a class of Pāṣupata practitioners, called Ṛṣis, who provided their ritual services (mostly of an exorcistic nature) to the rural population away from centres of worldly and religious authority. These practitioners are regarded by Brahmins as belonging to the fourth and lowest class (śūdra), and invoke or exorcize alternative sets of demons than those handled by the Pedanda Śiva.

119. Stephen (2002:61–62) describes this process—mainly involving dramatic performances—of reorientation of dangerous, destructive, and chaotic forces as one of returning to peaceful, and ordered,
Bibliography

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*Pañcārthabhāṣya*: cf. Pāśupatasūtra.


Origin or form (*marūpa somya*), and stresses that this is an important, yet often misunderstood, dynamic underlying Balinese ritual life. Compare Hart’s (1987:476–477) analogous observations on Tamil ritual dynamics and the relationship between royalty and low-status “exorcist”-performers: “The role of groups ‘of low birth’ in ancient Tamilnad was to control, or order, dangerous power. [...] If then we return to the king as a sort of dynamic engine who transmutes inauspicious, disordered power into its ordered, benevolent analog, it becomes apparent that a primary source of this power was the low-caste performers who were attached to him.”
Translations and Studies


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Iyer, A. cf. Lopez y Royo-Iyer


Fig. 1 – Panel of Chidambaram temple, East Gopura (photo Elisa Ganser 2010).

Fig. 2 – Borobudur, detail of panel III, XXXIII 65 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).
Fig. 3 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, B b 44 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).

Fig. 4 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, B a 318 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).
Fig. 5 – Borobudur, detail of panel I, a 95 (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).

Fig. 6 – Borobudur, detail of panel O I 20 (photo Andrea Acri 2013).
Fig. 7 – Borobudur, detail of panel B I, a 233a (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).

Fig. 8 – Borobudur, detail of panel O 39 (adapted from Krom and van Erp 1920).
Fig. 9 – Candi Sari, Prambanan (prob. 9th century AD) (photo Kassian Cephas, OD 044446, Leiden University Library, Kern Institute).

Fig. 10 – Candi Śiva, Prambanan, detail of panel VII.11 cd (photo Roy Jordaan).
Fig. 11 – “The luraks talèdék (chantang balung) during a grębég (Surakarta)” (adapted from Stutterheim 1956, fig. 12).

Fig. 12 – “The chantang balungs” (adapted from Brandt Buys 1933).
Fig. 13 – The Caňtang balungs performing: “flying,” “clowning,” “gajah ngombé” (“drinking elephant”) (adapted from Brandt Buys 1933).
Fig. 15 – “Guru Mani Damodara Chakyar as ‘Kapali’ in the sacred ritualistic Kutiyattam-Mattavilasa Prahasana (Mathavilasam) practised in very few Hindu temples of Malabar. A very rare photo taken from inside Killikkurussi Mahadeva Temple, Palakkad.” (Photo from Wikipedia Commons; Author: reekanthv; Source: From author’s private collection; uploaded in 2006.)

Fig. 14 – Balinese Śaiva officiant (pedanda Śiva) (adapted from Hooykaas 1966, detail of Plate 17).
Fig. 16 – Topeng Sidha Karya during a ritual held at the Bhujangga Wesnawa family temple in Banjar Celuk (Desa Dalung, Kabupaten Badung, September 2010). Photo courtesy Sugi Lanus, 2010.