

THE TRADITIONS, TRAINING, AND PERFORMANCE
OF KŪṬIYĀṬṬAM,
SANSKRIT DRAMA IN SOUTH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Traditions, Training, and Performance of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Sanskrit Drama in South India

John Sowle

Kūṭiyāṭṭam is an ancient form of dramatic art still performed in central Kerala State in south-west India. It is the only living tradition of acting Sanskrit drama; perhaps it is the oldest form of dramatic performance extant in the world. The author spent a year-long period during 1973-74 on a Fulbright Fellowship at the Kerala Kalamandalam learning basic elements of the form from the master actor and teacher of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Rāman Cākyār. The study is an outgrowth of this experience.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam uses Sanskrit dramatic texts, yet it does not leave the text to stand alone. Only a single act of a drama is performed at a time, and this act may require several weeks of nightly performances to complete. The lengthy additions to the original text include: 1) ritual, orchestral, and vocal preliminaries, 2) detailed descriptions of the given circumstances of the major characters in a highly stylized gesture language, and 3) elaborate digressions from the text signed in gesture language and spoken in the vernacular.

The present form and style of Kūṭiyāṭṭam developed about the tenth century A.D. and was influenced by the cultural patterns in Kerala at that time. Chapter I examines these influences, including relevant aspects of the Sanskrit dramatic texts, early Tamil performance traditions, and the history, literature, and arts of Kerala.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam requires actors disciplined in massage, in physical exercise, in musical form, in history, language, and culture, and in complex coordinations of the voice, the hands, and the face. Chapter II explains how the young Kūṭiyāṭṭam student masters the intricate techniques of his art and describes basic training pieces in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertoire.

Chapter III discusses the physical theatre, the actors' preparations for performance, the performance itself, and the audience's relationship to performer and performance. Parallels are suggested between Kūṭiyāṭṭam and the religious and ritual practices of the people of Kerala.

Color photographs of Kūṭiyāṭṭam performances are included.

For
My Mother
and
Dad.

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DIACRITICALS

For those unfamiliar with Sanskrit and Malayālam transliteration and familiar with phonetic transcription and the International Phonetic Alphabet, the following chart of diacriticals employed in this text may prove useful. Approximate IPA equivalents are given after the transliteral form.

Vowels

a - |ə| or |a|
 a - |ɑ:|
 i - |ɪ|
 i - |i|
 u - |ʊ|
 u - |u|
 ṛ - a vocalic r
 ṛ - a long vocalic r

Diphthongs

e - |e|
 e - |e:|
 ai - |aɪ|
 o - |o|
 o - |o:|
 au - |aʊ|

		Voiceless Unaspirated	Voiceless Aspirated	Voiced Unaspirated	Voiced Aspirated	Corresponding Nasals
Plosives	Velar	k k	kh k ^h	g g	gh g ^h	n ŋ
	Palatal	c c or tʃ	ch c ^h	j j or dʒ	jh j ^h	ñ ɲ
	Retroflex	ṭ ṭ	ṭh ṭ ^h	ḍ ḍ	ḍh ḍ ^h	ṇ ɳ
	Dental	t t	th t ^h	d d	dh d ^h	ṅ ŋ
	Labial	p p	ph p ^h	b b	bh b ^h	m m

Semivowels	Palatal	y j	Sibilants	Palatal	s ç or ʃ
	Retroflex or Aveolar	r ɻ or ɭ		Retroflex	s ʂ
	Dental	l l		Dental	s s
	Labial	v w or v̥			

Aspirant Glottal h, ḥ (visarga) |h|, sometimes voiced |ɦ|

Anusvāra ----- ṁ |̃|, indicates nasalization of the preceding vowel

Malayālam and Tamil add to these Sanskrit sounds the following:

A voiced lateral retroflex l (Malayalam **ḷ**) transliterated |l̥|;

A palatal l (Malayālam **ḷ**)--zh (or sometimes |l̥| in Tamil); and

An aveolar r (Malayālam **Ṛ**)--R.

Malayalam **ṚṚ** is transliterated |ṛṛ|.

In dealing with three languages and with the general disregard for accurate transliteration in Indian texts, it has been impossible to be completely consistent with the names of people, places, tribes, etc. Current place names usually follow the normal English spellings. In quotations I have generally left the authors' spellings alone.

GLOSSARY

abhinaya, 'histrionic representation,' means of expressing anubhāva.

There are four categories: āṅgikābhinaya 'gestures,' vācīkābhinaya 'words,' āhāryābhinaya 'costume and make-up,' and sāttvikābhinaya 'visceral reactions.'

Agni, the Vedic god of fire and messenger of the gods.

Ambalavāsi, a group of castes whose members serve the temples of Kerala. The Cākyārs and Nambyārs belong to this group.

anubhāva, consequent, or manifestation, of an emotional state.

anukrama, the section at the beginning of nirvahana where events preceding the entrance of the character are recounted backwards by a series of questions.

araññētram, first performance of the young actor-dancer.

artha, 'wealth,' one of the four aims of life in Hindu philosophy.

āsān, respectful title for a master-teacher.

aṣṭamaṅgalya, 'eight auspicious things.' They are offered at the beginning of a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance.

asuras, 'demons.' Along with the vignas they were destroyed by Indra at the first performance of the drama, according to the nāṭyotpatti.

Āṭṭaparakāras, instruction manuals for the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors. They give gesture texts and outline the Viḍūṣaka's verbal interpolations.

avasthā, the five stages of action in the Sanskrit play as defined by the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Bhadrakālī, a form of the female goddess.

bhakti, 'devotion.'

bhāna, one of the types of Sanskrit drama, a one-act monologue delivered by the Viṭa.

Bharata, the supposed author of Nāṭyaśāstra. With his hundred sons he is said to have brought the divine drama of Brahmā to earth.

Bhāsa, the supposed author of the thirteen Sanskrit plays discovered at Trivandrum in Kerala.

bhāva, 'emotional state.'

Brahmā, the Supreme Being, the creator, the first deity of the sacred Hindu trinity. The originator of the drama according to the nāṭyotpatti.

Brāhman (also Brahmin), a member of the upper class (brāhmaṇa varṇa) of the Hindu social system, traditionally priests.

Cākyār, the caste traditionally associated with the acting of Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

Campūs, mythological tales of deities written in Maṇipravāḷam and modeled on the Sanskrit Purāṇas.

cavittuka, the opening dance of Nityakriyā, also called muRayit kriyā.

Centamil, the language of the Sangam poems.

Cēras, early rulers of Kerala.

Cilappatikāram, 'The Lay of the Ankle Bracelet,' Tamil epic poem, the story of the young couple Kaṇṇaki and Kōvalan and Kōvalan's love for the danceuse Mātavi.

Cōlas, early rulers of the southeastern part of India.

collātekattuka, without recitation, in gesture only, one style of delivering a Sanskrit text in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

collikkattuka, with both word and gesture together, the manner in which a Sanskrit śloka is first presented in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

colyundi nātakhya, female gait: lift heels, step, turn in second position plié.

cutti, the white beard of the Kathakali and Kūṭiyāṭṭam make-up.

devadāsis, women employed in temples, often dancing girls; later a synonym for prostitute.

dharma, duty, prescribed conduct, good works; one of the four aims of life in Hindu philosophy.

dikpālas, the gods of the eight cardinal direction. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam they are Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛthi, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Vaiśravaṇa, and Śiva.

dhruvās, musical forms mentioned in the Nāṭyaśāstra and used at the entrance and exit of characters.

dhvani, 'suggestion,' the underlying meaning of a poem or verse in drama; subtext.

ghee, clarified butter.

gurukula system, the traditional educational system in Kerala. Students study year-round with one teacher, usually in their home.

Guruvayor, city in central Kerala, home of a large temple devoted to Kṛṣṇa.

Hanūmān, powerful monkey chief who helps Rāma rescue Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa.

hasta, 'hand,' general term for hand gesture in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, also called mudrā.

ilakiyaṭṭam, moving in space with set foot movements, one of the styles in which a Kūṭiyāṭṭam text is presented.

Ilottama, caste name of the wives of Cākyārs. They have nothing to do with the theatre.

Indra, the god of the firmament, the chief among the gods of the Vedas.

irunnātam, sitting position in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

itekka, the small, variable-pitched drum used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Kathakaḷi.

kacca, cloth wrapped around the waist and genitals for uzhiccil.

kāla, 'tempo,' 'time,' in South Indian music. First kāla, slow tempo of the basic rhythm; second kāla, double time; third kāla, quadruple time; etc.

kalappuRattu naṭann, side jumps, followed by a step and a lift of the foot, basic floor pattern in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

kāl sādham, practice of basic foot work, part of the early morning exercises in Kathakaḷi.

kaḷari, gymnasium for kaḷaripayatt̃; also practice room for Kathakaḷi.

kāma, 'pleasure,' one of the four aims of life in Hindu philosophy.

kamala parivartana, a gesture of obeisance in Kūṭiyāṭṭam: the upper body rotated from the waist, hands together in añjali hasta.

Kēralōtpatti, ancient chronicle of the Brāhman settlement of Kerala.

keśādipadam, 'from head to foot,' a section of Nityakriyā describing in gesture language Śiva and Pārvatī.

kottuvelakki, a pattern steps and gestures which signals the Kūṭiyāṭṭam orchestra to stop playing.

Kramadīpikās, instruction texts for Kūṭiyāṭṭam. They give details of make-up, costuming, etc.

Kṣatriya, the military, second, caste of the Hindus.

Kulaśēkhara, a title applied to several kings of the Cēras. One Kulaśēkhara was closely associated with the development of Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

kuRuṅkuzhal, the double-reed instrument used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

kūttambalam, the Kerala temple theatre for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

Kūttu (Prabandhum Kūttu), the solo performance of the Cākyār.

kuzhittālam, cymbals used by the Naṅṅyār in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma's brother.

Mahābhārata, the great Sanskrit epic story of the five Pāṇḍava brothers.

Malayāḷam, the language of Kerala.

mandapa, a temporary hall erected on ceremonial occasions; also the ceiling over the kūttambalam stage.

Maṅṅpravāḷa, 'pearl-coral,' mixture of Malayāḷam and Sanskrit, the earliest distinct literary language of Kerala. The prose manuals of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are written in this language.

muRayit kriyā, the first portion of Nityakriyā, performed behind the curtain as an invocation.

Māṭavi, the danceuse, the main character of Cilappatikāram who steals Kōvalaṅ from his young wife Kaṅṅaki.

mātra, 'beat' in South Indian music.

meyyaRappaṭavu, early morning warm-up exercises for Kathakaḷi students.

mizhāvu, a drum made from a large copper pot, the major musical instrument for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

mizhāvu kutti, small wooden drum used for Kūṭiyāṭṭam practice.

mundu, the cloth, usually white, wrapped around the waist which is the principal dress of the men of Kerala.

mūṭiccolluka, reciting the words of a minor character under a red cloth to avoid dressing in special make-up and costume.

Muṭiyettū, folk drama of Kerala. Its primary action is a ritual combat between Darika and Kālī.

Nambyār, the caste whose members are Kūṭiyāṭṭam drummers.

Nambūtiri, the caste name of many Kerala Brāhmans.

nāṇḍī, the invocatory verse of a Sanskrit drama.

Nañiyār, the caste from which the actresses of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are drawn; wives of Nambyārs.

nāṭaka, one of the two major types of drama according to Nāṭyaśāstra. It has a well-known king or mythological figure as its hero.

nāṭa, 'performer' (dancer, singer, mimist, or perhaps actor) mentioned in the Sanskrit epics.

Nāṭasūtra, manual for performers; early work mentioned by the grammarian Pāṇini but not extant.

nāṭya, 'drama,' 'dramatic art.'

Nāṭyaśāstra, 'Treatise on Dramatic Art,' Sanskrit encyclopedia of drama.

nāṭyotpatti, the account of the 'origin of drama' given in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

nirvahana, the solo performance of a major character in Kūṭiyāṭṭam in which he describes in gestures what has happened to him before his entrance.

Nityakriyā, 'daily practice,' the first repertoire item learned by the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor.

ōchāniccu, a gesture of obeisance--left arm horizontal, right arm vertical, both fists in muṣṭi hasta, left fist against right elbow.

paṇ, mode of music in Sangam period, related to the Sanskrit rāga.

pañcavadya, traditional temple music of Kerala.

paṭapuRapātu, 'preparation for battle,' a typical dance sequence in both Kathakaḷi and Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

patiññāṭṭam standing position in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, approximately second position plié.

pītham, the stool which is a permanent prop on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage.

poynakha, the lower garment of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam costume.

Prabandhas, Sanskrit texts used in Kūttu, compiled by the Cākyārs from classical Sanskrit works.

prahasana, one-act farce, one type of drama listed in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

prakaraṇa, one of the two major types of drama according to Nāṭyaśāstra. It has an original plot.

pratiślōka, Malayāḷam parody of a Sanskrit ślōka used by the Viḍūṣaka in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

pūjā, devotional offering to a deity.

puRappātu, 'entrance,' the first appearance of a major character in Kūṭiyāṭṭam and the solo performance which follows.

puruṣa, an individual human being; the primeval man as the soul and source of the universe.

puruṣārthas, the four aims of life of traditional Hinduism: kāma, dharma, artha, and mokṣa, satirized by the Viḍūṣaka during his nirvahaṇa.

rāga, melodic pattern in Indian music, somewhat akin to the Western scale.

Rāmāyaṇa, one of the two great epics of India, the story of Rāma's battle with Rāvaṇa to free his abducted wife Sītā.

rasa, 'sentiment.' In Sanskrit dramatic theory, rasa is the emotional state evoked in the spectator from an attentive and informed viewing of a drama. There are eight rasas each corresponding to a sthāyibhāva. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam the term rasa can also refer to the sthāyibhāva and to anubhāvas of the sthāyibhāvas.

Rāvaṇa, demon king of Srī Lankā who abducts Sītā in the epic Rāmāyaṇa.

Sāmaveda, the Veda in which verses of, primarily, the Rgveda are set to rhythmic and melodic patterns (sāmans) for use in the ritual.

samkṣepa, follows anukrama in nirvaḥaṇa. Events are recounted forward in time.

Sangam, referring to the earliest literature of the Dravidian peoples, eight anthologies of poems and ten songs written in Centamil.

śaṅkha, 'conch shell,' used in temple festivities and to mark the entrance of characters in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

sāttvikābhinaya, involuntary physical reaction to strong inner emotional states, e.g., perspiration, weeping, fainting.

Śiva, the third god of the Hindu trinity, associated with destruction. His wife or consort is Pārvatī, also called Kālī or Durgā.

śloka, Sanskrit verse.

sthāyibhāva, long-lasting psychological state. There are eight including love, sorrow, anger, and heroism.

Śūrpaṅkhā, sister of the demon Rāvaṇa in Rāmāyaṇa.

sūta, storyteller attached to the royal court in epic times.

sūtradhāra, the 'stage manager' of the Sanskrit drama.

svara, individual note in South Indian music. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam it refers to a whole melodic pattern. There are twenty svaras in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, each used for a different emotional situation.

tāla, rhythmic pattern in a measure of South Indian music.

tālavattam, a measure in South Indian music.

tārpya, a cloth covering used in the Vedic sacrifice.

Teyyam, folk drama of Kerala characterized by its fantastic costumes.

Tolan, the Brāhman scholar who is said to have assisted Kulaśēkhara in his reform of the Kerala stage.

Trichur, a city of Kerala, home of the Vaṭakkunāthan (Śiva) temple which houses the largest standing kūttambalam.

uttarīya, 'upper cloth,' part of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam costume.

uzhiccil, massage, given with the feet to students of Kathakaḷi and Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

vāyttāri, 'verbal command,' vocal equivalent to rhythmic patterns, often spoken while rehearsing dance or drumming.

Vedas, the holy books of hymns of the Āryans, in Sanskrit. There are four Vedas: Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva.

vibhāva, the cause or determinant of an emotional state, given circumstances.

Viḍūṣaka, the jester in the Sanskrit drama and a principal figure in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

Viṣṇu, the second deity of the Hindu pantheon, also called Nārāyaṇa, entrusted with the preservation of the world. He has many incarnations including Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

Viṭa, the character who delivers the one-act monologue called the Bhāṇa.

vyabhicāribhāva, complementary emotional state. Thirty-three are listed in Nāṭyaśāstra.

yajña, Vedic sacrifice.

yavanikā, the curtain for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

The field research for this study of the South Indian dance theatre of Kūṭiyāṭṭam was undertaken in 1973-74. I received a Fulbright Fellowship to study "Drama in India" in 1972, but on the eve of my departure the Indian government indefinitely rescinded all visas to foreign scholars in order to "re-evaluate" the conditions under which students and academics would be permitted to study there. My proposal for the Fulbright was to spend most of my time in India studying the Nāṭyaśāstra, the Sanskrit treatise on drama, stagecraft and acting, at the Madras school of dance known as Kalaksetra. (In 1972 the school received some notoriety by being featured in Louis Malle's film Phantom India.) Kalaksetra had an excellent reputation for scholarly studies in the arts, especially Bharatanāṭyam and Kathakaḷi. I had planned to visit other parts of India to see different dramatic styles first hand. Among these was the Kerala Kalamandalam, there Kathakaḷi is taught. I had also mentioned Kūṭiyāṭṭam in the proposal as especially interesting, but I knew almost nothing about it, for no written material was available except a few superficial articles from the early years of the century when the controversy concerning the authorship of the plays attributed to Bhāsa was raging hotly.

After almost a year of waiting, the government informed me that my visa would be granted, but that I would be assigned to Kalamandalam in Kerala, for that was a government institution, while Kalaksetra was not. I was leery of the re-assignment, for my main concern at the time was the study of the Sanskrit drama and aesthetics and the comparison of the

training implicit in that work with the training of the actor in the West. I did not know Malayāḷam, the language of Kerala, and I was not certain just what I would do at Kalamandalam. I was given the name of a teacher of Kūṭiyāṭṭam there, and I wrote him concerning my interests, but received no answer. Still I thought I could use Kalamandalam as a base of operations and travel to Kalaksetra and to other parts of India to study the various folk and classical forms in which I was interested. I arrived at Kalamandalam in late September, too late for the start of the school year which begins in June for the Kathakalī and Kūṭiyāṭṭam students. It was explained to me that Rāman Cākyār had received my letter and that he was awaiting my arrival, but it was obvious that his "waiting" was without undue anticipation. The officials at the institution decided it would be best, considering my Sanskrit background and my time of arrival, that I study Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Normally such study was restricted to members of the Cākyār caste, but since Rāman Cākyār had come to Kalamandalam he had briefly taught a couple of foreigners. He also had two Indian students from other castes, one a Nambūtiri Brāhman.

I met Rāman Cākyār and his students. They seemed bright, intelligent, knowledgeable and skilled, also cool and intimidating. Immediately after setting up a tentative study schedule with Cākyār, I left for Varanasi where Rāmīlīā was about to begin. On Monday, October 29, 1973, I began Kūṭiyāṭṭam classes. I came at first only from nine to twelve for the morning class and began learning the hand gestures, relying for communication on the Sanskrit I knew and the little Malayāḷam I was picking up as I went along. Soon I started coming to the early morning classes at four a.m. and sometimes to the afternoon classes as

well. Gradually I became hooked on this elite, peculiar form of drama, unlike anything else in the world. The incredible concentration of my fellow students combined with their innate playfulness, the simplicity of their life, the unreal discipline of their schedule which began with pre-dawn exercise classes, continued through morning repertory sessions and afternoon literary studies to evening review, all was intensely compelling to me at that time in my life. My own simple but gracious living conditions with my wife and child and servant in a large house set on an estate of coconut palms, yet without running water or gas or electricity, encouraged my undivided attention on this ancient art for almost a year.

I came to Indian drama in the early seventies after many years as a student actor, director and designer in academic theatre and after several years on a spiritual path, exploring meditation and yoga, finally becoming a teacher of Transcendental Meditation under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1970. For those of us in the theatre in the early seventies who were newly on a spiritual path, the theatre posed a dilemma. Religion has never been very kind to the theatre or to the sort of people that the religious usually associate with it. Plato started this trend in the West, but even the Buddha, at about the same time, discouraged theatre and dance among his disciples. I always felt that Hinduism, incorporating as it does almost all aspects of life into its religious doctrine--art, architecture, dance, even sexuality--would be kinder to the drama, but Maharishi, who was my interpreter for Hinduism at that time, belittled my involvement with the theatre. It was only after years of struggling with his put-down of my chosen profession that I could see it as coming from his own concern with the sciences and their ability to speak

to the present-day world with positive authority about the value of meditation. I was, after all, a renegade: I had my undergraduate degree from M.I.T. in mathematics, but I had renounced science, instead seeking the emotional and physical discovery that the drama requires, thinking it more important for my own personal growth.

In the early seventies, still under the influence of Hindu philosophy, I began to look for a theatre that was truly spiritual in its content and which required complete, serious dedication from its participants. I was strongly affected by Stanislavski's attitude toward his art. Grotowski seemed to understand better than anyone else in the West the seriousness of purpose that Stanislavski hoped to inspire in his students by allying actor training with deep, intense personal growth. I read several articles on Kathakaḷi, and this strange, demanding form, which Barba and Grotowski both seemed conversant with, even adopting its eye exercises for their use, seemed especially attractive because it combined Hindu spirituality with intense physical training. As I became more conversant with Kathakaḷi in the years to follow, and especially after my experiences in India, I became less and less enchanted with it. I saw many performances in India, and they reinforced my original impression of the tour of the Kalamandalam troupe in the states, that it seemed, in spite of all its splendor and physical demand, a hit-and-miss affair. There are a few truly outstanding actors, and occasionally their performances transcend movement and spectacle, but Kathakaḷi is so demanding physically and the attention to form so necessary for the actor on stage, that for the most part Kathakaḷi performances leave me cold. There is rarely a sense that the actor is truly involved or committed emotionally or spiritually to what is happening on stage. The so-called spirituality of the Kathakaḷi actor seems overstated. Westerners eager to see the spiritual in the

exhaustive and disciplined studies of the Kathakaḷi actor fail to realize the "devotion" is in many cases just professional necessity--acting Kathakaḷi is a good way to make a living in a country that offers precious few ways to do so.

On the other hand, each of the fully trained Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors in India (I saw them all) were transcendental in their performances. In spite of the enormous technical requirements of the form (though not as demanding physically as Kathakaḷi), all exhibited a special quality of acting that, to me at least, was intensely compelling. To be honest I had similar reactions to Kabuki and Nō. Nō has always fascinated me, while Kabuki seems relatively superficial and ultimately boring. Perhaps the antiquity of the forms of Nō and Kūṭiyāṭṭam are part of their attraction; perhaps it is that both demand unwieldy and intense concentration from the spectator in order to make anything out of them; perhaps it is simply that they generally are performed for an elite group which I fancy myself a member. But I could not help feeling that it was how the actor approached his art and his life in his art that separated Kūṭiyāṭṭam from Kathakaḷi. This dissertation is an attempt to justify my feeling. It is meant to explain the special nature of Kūṭiyāṭṭam training that literally forces its students to become compelling actors.

As I became more familiar with Kūṭiyāṭṭam I discovered that the structure of the performance guided the training directly, that within the performance itself were all the elements of training required to create this special effect in the actor's stage presence. My study of Kūṭiyāṭṭam focused on the internal dynamics of the form and how it could produce such astounding actors, rather than on the external details which would provide a complete description of the style. An encyclopedia

of names and descriptions of steps, costume pieces, etc. is important, for there is as yet no major work on Kūṭiyāṭṭam, but it remains to be done. I recorded in the field only what was necessary to recall the gestures steps, rhythms and chanting that I learned. I talked to actors only enough to try to get some understanding of their inner processes. I tried to join in the training process completely, rather than remain an observer, taking pictures and recording descriptions. It was not always possible to lose the sense of being an outsider in a situation that is so tied to Kerala tradition, but I think I was fairly successful in not disrupting the training procedure too much by my presence.

As the thesis research progressed after my return from India, it seemed important for me to examine the history of the religious and literary movements that have spawned Kūṭiyāṭṭam and to include some of this material in the text, especially for those unfamiliar with the Indian dramatic traditions. This dramatic form of Kerala is unique in that it is the only living tradition of the performance of Sanskrit drama. Yet it hardly leaves the dramatic text to stand alone. There are both masterful and ponderous additions to the original text during a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance, all influenced by the cultural patterns in Kerala at the time that Kūṭiyāṭṭam was being developed. It seemed to me that the adaptations made in Kūṭiyāṭṭam to the Sanskrit text were significant indications of the kind of cultural activity current in Kerala at the time it arose, and so it seemed important for me to describe the influence of both the Sanskrit cultural tradition and the cultural tradition reflected by the Sangam literature and ritual activities of the South. The opening chapter, "Texts and Traditions," describes these influences and then discusses the Kūṭiyāṭṭam texts themselves and how their material is used in a typical performance.

The terms Āryan and Dravidian frequently appear in the text, and an explanation of their meaning is in order here. The Āryans are said to be a tall, relatively fair, semi-nomadic race which originally inhabited central Asia but then invaded the Indian subcontinent bringing Sanskrit with them in the form of the religious texts known as the Vedas. Much later the Nāṭyaśāstra, the encyclopedic treatise which epitomizes Sanskrit dramatic tradition, came to be written in this language. The Dravidians may have been the original inhabitants of South India or they may have come at an early time from the west as a branch of the Sumerians. They were darker-skinned, primarily of Proto-Mediterranean stock. They developed a culture that was rich in dance, music and song. These two cultures intermixed at an early stage; exactly when is still in hot dispute, but certainly by the beginning of the Christian era all of India housed Āryans and their culture. Since dating is so difficult in Indian affairs, it is impossible to say what is strictly "Āryan" and what is strictly "Dravidian," but in this dissertation "Āryan" refers simply to that tradition represented by the Sanskrit drama and the Nāṭyaśāstra, and "Dravidian" that suggested in the Sangam writing, commentaries on it, and the folk forms in the South that seem to have pre-Sanskrit origins. It is clear to me that an amalgamation of these two traditions is at the heart of the form which Kūṭiyāṭṭam has taken, whether that amalgamation really took place at the same time that Kūṭiyāṭṭam was being developed in Kerala, about the tenth century, or at some earlier time. New discoveries in Kerala history and new interpretations of the influence of the South on the North by Kerala historians, though they may be prejudiced by a typically Southern point of view, are based on new information discovered by these historians, and are especially suggestive for the chron-

ology of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Their findings relative to Kūṭiyāṭṭam are discussed in Chapter I.

In Chapter II, "Training and Technique," the training of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor is described in detail along with those elements of the performance score that are inseparable from the training. Here details of physical exercise and massage and the use of voice, hands, and face are given along with descriptions of the basic training pieces. Then in Chapter III, "Transformation and Reception" the physical theatre, the actors' preparation for performance, the performance itself, and the audience's relationship to performer and performance are taken up. Along the way suggestive parallels are drawn between performance elements and certain ritual activities of the people of Kerala. The parallels are not meant to imply cause and effect, but merely to suggest certain themes that are common to ritual and drama in Kerala.

Completing this dissertation has been a long arduous project frequently interrupted by other obligations and distractions, both painful and pleasurable. I would never have made it were it not for a few hardy individuals who have borne with me through the "desires, efforts, continuations, obstructions, and fruitions" which marked its progress, and to them I extend hearty thanks. First and foremost to Rāman Cākyār, Kūṭiyāṭṭam asan, teacher and guide, who with his gentle charm and vast knowledge supplied me with a lifetime of memories and aspirations and who can now be only a memory to all of us touched by his presence. To my fellow students, Rāman Cākyār, Āśāns nephew, and Shivan Nambudiripad, the bold first non-Cākyār to become a master student, and Nārāyaṇa Cākyār, who was only 11 but still had two years on me. Also to Nārāyaṇa Nambyār, who taught me what drumming I could absorb, and his students who helped.

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