Natalia Lidova
nlidova@gmail.com
(OCHS, Oxford University)

The Ritual Boundaries of Ancient Indian Theatre

SUMMARY: The paper focuses on the question of the genesis of ancient Indian theatre and argues that it was introduced in the early post-Vedic period as an inalienable part of the *pūjā* cult. The definition of theatre as Nāṭyaveda and Pañcama Veda (the 'Fifth Veda'), presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, should not be taken merely as a kind of eulogy but as a reflection of the ancient tradition, which treated the early ceremonial theatre not so much as an art form and entertainment but as a ritual and a visual sermon intended to elevate and educate the public.

KEYWORDS: Sanskrit drama, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Nāṭyaveda, Fifth Veda, *naṭasūtra*s, *pūjā*, *yajña*, ritual.

The discussion of ritual boundaries of ancient Indian theatre requires two principal considerations to be made in the very beginning. First, Indian theatre represented a coherent system which came out of a synthesis of different arts, defined by specific laws, that themselves create the boundaries of function and role. Second, it can be argued that early Indian theatre, as reflected in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, was a system based on profound religious grounds, conceived and experienced as a kind of ritual.

There can hardly be any doubt in connection with the first statement, which is substantiated by the evidence provided by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*[1]—the oldest and the most authoritative of all available

---

[1] For a critical analysis of the history of editing, publishing, and translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text, see Rocher 1981: 107–130. For an overview

sources on the theory and practice of ancient Indian drama. This treatise, the proposed dating of which spans over more than a thousand years,[2] considers various arts and crafts involved in the theatre production, such as the rules of acting, literary and scenic texts, aesthetic theory, costumes, make-up, and so forth. Several of the opening chapters (ch. 1, 3 and 5) are devoted to a detailed description of rituals, as well as mythological narratives. It is quite evident that in order to cover the theory of drama and represent theatre as a coherent and all-embracing system, the compiler of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* engaged a wide range of concepts and categories featuring in the treatise as already codified and well-established knowledge.[3] In the absence of other ancient treatises on the topic, capable of providing additional or alternative information,

of *Nāṭyaśāstra* textual criticism, see Vatsyayan 1989: 333–338. On the validity of existing editions and the newly discovered textual materials, see Tripathi 1992: 81–89. For an annotated bibliography on the complete and partial editions of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, as well as the complete and partial translations of this treatise into European and Indian languages, see Lidova 2014.

[2]   The *Nāṭyaśāstra* text is dated by scholars from the 5th century BC up to the 7th–8th century AD. For the details, see Lidova 2014.

[3]   Contradictory opinions exist on the authorship and integrity of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text. Discussing this issue, Vatsyayan notices: "Some […] hold the view that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is not a work of a single author, not even of a group of authors or a school of thought", but "a close reading of the text makes it clear that the work reflects a unity of purpose and that it was a product of a single integrated vision, perhaps also of a single author. There are complexities, but no contradictions" (Vatsyayan 1996: 6). Tieken also believes that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a "well-planned, coherent work" (Tieken 1998: 172). For a comprehensive overview of the research literature dealing with the date of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the nature of its compilation, and the personality of its legendary or semi-historical author Bharata, see Miller 1972: 27–37. In my view, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is not the work of one single author or even a group of authors, but the outcome of a long developed tradition drawing on different sources that were brought together at the turn of our era (or a couple of centuries before it) and processed by a very savant and authoritative editor, who assembled a consistent compendium with the title "Bhāratīya-nāṭya-śāstra". See also Lidova 2014 (chapter "Structure and original core").

the encyclopaedic and all-encompassing treatise of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* remains our only and exclusive early source for the art form of theatre. As a consequence, what we are dealing with is not the actual tradition and adequate overview of the development of Sanskrit drama, but the sum of ideas, postulates and intellectual reflections on the matter that the Indian theoreticians collected and systemized many centuries ago.

The second aspect regards the possible religious basis of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition and the status of this text in Indian culture. The treatise contains a very important set of information regarding the question of the genesis of ancient Indian theatre, which has been the focus of scholarly attention for over a century now. The principal theories concentrate on two basic questions: whether Sanskrit drama had a ritual or secular[4] background, and when and in what ethnic and cultural milieu it first emerged.

The opinion of scholars, who wrote in support of the ritual genesis of theatre, was primarily influenced by two sources: the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth, or legend of "The Origin of Nāṭya"[5] (ch. 1), and the *pūrvaraṅga*,[6] a consecration ritual that took place before

---

[4]   The assumption on the secular origin of the ancient Indian theatrical tradition has still numerous adherents among researchers and has not been completely rejected in the scholarship, but the limited space of this article does not allow me to consider their views in detail. For an overview of the different approaches, see Kuiper 1979: 111, note 9.

[5]   As a basic notion of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *nāṭya* is usually translated just as 'theatre' or 'drama', without any further consideration. A rare exception is Bhatnagar's paper, in which he explores the conceptual structure underlying the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Considering the conceptual terminology of the treatise from the point of view of philosophical discourse, Bhatnagar brings forth the understanding of *nāṭya* as a complicated multi-dimensional activity, introducing it as an action-theoretic concept of its own (Bhatnagar 1987: 95–103). On the original meaning and plausible historical development of this term, see Lidova 2007: 345–356.

[6]   The *pūrvaraṅga* ritual is an important topic in *Nāṭyaśāstra* scholarship, which has brought to light numerous interpretations and suggestions

the performance of drama (ch. 5). Parikh was one of the first authors who provided a detailed overview of the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth (Parikh 1951–1952: 338–342). He treated the text as a reliable source, proving that the stage performance consisted from the very beginning of two parts: the *pūrvaraṅga*, a ceremonial worship on stage, and drama.

Byrski considered drama to be a ritual form, created in the likeness of Vedic sacrifice (Byrski 1974). He attempted to reconstruct certain intellectual ideas that could underly the general concept of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and argued for the existence of a strong and direct historical connection between Vedic sacrificial ritual (*yajña*)[7] and Sanskrit drama

---

on the subject. Some scholars view the *pūrvaraṅga* as a mere prologue preceding the performance, others consider it a self-sufficient ritual that rivals the drama in terms of its importance. Feistel, who devoted to the *pūrvaraṅga* his PhD thesis (Feistel 1969), analyzed the relationship of the *pūrvaraṅga* with the prologues of classical Sanskrit plays. He proposed a tentative chronology between the theoretical prescriptions of the *śāstra* and surviving examples of ancient dramaturgical practices (the main conclusions are summarized in Feistel 1972: 1–26, which provides a general discussion of the eighteen constituent elements of the *pūrvaraṅga*). Dave proposed the identification of the *nāndī* (the main litany of *pūrvaraṅga*) with the *prarocanā* (the laudation verses, uttered at the turn of the *pūrvaraṅga* ceremony and drama proper) (Dave 1941: 359–369). Sastri studied the *pūrvaraṅga* in connection with the prologues of classical dramas (Sastri 1963: 299–308) and Burman compared the *pūrvaraṅga* with the prologues of modern performances in India and Southeast Asian countries and showed their great structural and symbolical similarities (Burman 1994: 297–316). Thieme (Thieme 1987), who supported the hypothesis about the secular genesis of Indian theatre, expounded the connection of the *pūrvaraṅga* with puppet theater. He sustained the assumption that the *sūtradhāra* (the main priest in the *pūrvaraṅga*, later—the chief actor and manager of the theatre) originally meant 'puppet-player' and came from puppet theater. He also considered that the *pūrvaraṅga* itself was initially a scene taking place in front of the puppet-stage and later turned into the prelude of classical Sanskrit plays.

[7]   "In what follows we shall try to show that the mythological account of the *Nāṭyotpatti* was formulated in the terms of thinking dominated by

(*nāṭya*). He discussed the mythology of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* suggesting that drama was part of Vedic sacrificial sessions and a ritual form created in the likeness of a sacrifice.

Kuiper's study on this topic (Kuiper 1979) made a crucial contribution in its attempt to reconstruct the concrete Vedic context that determined the genesis of Indian drama. This study brings to light the role of god Varuṇa in the Vedic pantheon and argues that the *vidūṣaka*[8] was an equivalent of Varuṇa, and his role on stage was that of a divine scapegoat. Kuiper used this idea as the basis for his study of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, aiming to disclose the traces of Vedic sacrificial, mythological, and cosmogonic content within the treatise. In his article, published in 1975,[9] Kuiper argued against the interpretation of the *pūrvaraṅga* as a mere "preliminary", "prelude", or "Vorspiel", as had been proposed by Feistel, and considered it as a religious *drōmenon*, intended for the worship of gods and the consecration of the stage. Kuiper distinguished *pūrvaraṅga* from drama, arguing that each possessed individual ritual functions. He considered the *pūrvaraṅga* as the actual ritual and equivalent of the Vedic sacrifice (*yajña*), and drama (*nāṭya*) as a scenic representation of the Vedic cosmogonic myth.

Another author, who extensively worked on the Vedic origins of Indian theatre and of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition, was Tripathi.[10] He considered *nāṭya* as the Veda, the ultimate knowledge or Brahman, and an equivalent of the *yajña* ritual. Tripathi considered several technical and historical aspects of drama's 'externalization' from the *yajña* sacrificial system and demonstrated how this process provided

---

the idea of Yajña" (Byrski 1974: 43). In order to prove the proposed assumption, Byrski analyzes almost all important topics and concepts of the treatise, notably the plot, the structure of the performance, *rasa* theory, etc.

[8]   The *vidūṣaka* was one of the participants of the *pūrvaraṅga* and later became the main comic character of the Sanskrit literary drama.

[9]   See Kuiper 1975: 241–268. The main topic of this paper is the detailed discussion of the role of the *jarjara* (sacrificial pole, symbolizing the banner of Indra) in the *pūrvaraṅga*.

[10]   See Tripathi 1991; 1994–1995: 1–20.

grounds for the growth of theatre, at the same time determining its most important features.

An alternative opinion belongs to Gitomer. This author accepted the idea that drama could have been considered an equivalent of Vedic *yajña*: "Although there is overlap between two kinds of performance, *nāṭya* and *yajña*, it seems that, by and large, the ritual does its work precisely, but not being new, drama by being new" (Gitomer 1994: 183). At the same time, Gitomer criticized all attempts of his predecessors (first of all, Byrski and Kuiper, both of whom he cites extensively) to "religify" the drama and see cosmogonic, ritual, and transcendental meanings in it:

> While it is true that in the text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the peculiar rituals of the *pūrvaraṅga* are unexplained, seemingly pasted into the structure of what I am describing as the allegorical myth of Brahmā's creation of the drama, there is reason to believe that their original function has not been so much forgotten as appropriated into another system of meaning, a process far more complex and self-conscious than "secularization". The fact is that the narration is about the struggle of creation, but not the creation of the world; rather it is about the creation of drama. In other words, the theatric universe has reworked the archaic cosmogonic motifs, rituals, and stories and placed them at the service of its own myth. (Gitomer 1994: 178)

Gitomer acknowledged Vedic reminiscences in the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth but treated it as an allegorical story, in which Vedic cosmogonic and ritual reminiscences are deliberately used in order to raise the status of theatre. He summarised his opinion in the following statement:

> As with the *nāṭyotpatti* legend, almost every Sanskrit drama has an aesthetic or performance subtext; characters discuss poetry, dance, painting in emotional, aesthetic, and technical terms. Just as these elements refocus audience attention past the predicaments of the heroes and heroines to the world of the playwrights and performer, so, too, the exhaustive account of the building of the playhouse and the twenty page catalog of the gestures and dance postures within the very chapters containing the *nāṭyotpatti* legend can refocus our attention beyond Bharatamuni and the circle of Brahmins, beyond the legend's nostalgic nod to archaic past to the skilled, intelligent dancers, who draw us into neither cosmogony, nor transcendence, but the thick sweetness of their passion. (Gitomer 1994: 191)

In a certain sense, Gitomer expressed the position of those scholars, who put the aesthetics, poetics, and practice of Sanskrit drama above the complex topic of its ritual genesis. They were eager to accept the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth as an allegorical story and saw little sense in finding evidence indicating the time and context of the inception of theatre.

It needs to be highlighted that my vision of the topic is not concordant with any of the above-mentioned trends of research. On the one hand, I do not see the myth of the first chapter as an allegorical story, invented for the purpose to elevate the art of theatre. On the other hand, I do not support the hypothesis of direct genetic links uniting the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition with the cult of Vedic *yajña*. In several previous publications, I have already brought to light the problems with the existing viewpoints on the historical and symbolical connections of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition and of Sanskrit drama with Vedic sacrificial ritual (*yajña*) and substantiated an alternative hypothesis that the origin of drama should be sought in the context of the ritual of *pūjā*.[11]

This hypothesis required a consideration of a much broader historical and religious context and an analysis of many interconnected issues. The most important among them was the question of the correlation between *yajña* and *pūjā* rituals. Many scholars, including the researchers who associated the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition with the Vedic *yajña*, failed to make the distinction between *yajña* and *pūjā* and did not see them as two different rituals. It has been often assumed that the *yajña* and *pūjā* were merely two names of one and the same type of sacrificial worship. According to another view, however, *yajña* and *pūjā* represented from the start two independent rituals, which coexisted within Vedic culture. At a certain moment, *pūjā* started to gradually oust

---

[11]   On the topic, see Fitzgerald 1996: 182–184; Rocher 2000: 631–632. The only scholar who at first advanced a counter-argument was Tripathi. He denied the non-Vedic background of the rituals described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and prefered to treat the numerous similarities between *pūjā* rituals and the *Nāṭyaśāstra* rites as coincidental (Tripathi 1995: 79–85).

the more prominent *yajña* and finally received a dominant position.[12] And last but not least, some scholars[13] cling to the idea of the Vedic origin of *pūjā*, regarding it as a *yajña* that underwent certain transformations.[14] Challenging the latter assumption, I tried to demonstrate that *yajña* and *pūjā* have to be considered as two distinct forms of ritual. In order to prove it, I have made a comparison of the ritual principles underlying these two sacrificial practices, which, as I see it, are determined by three principal aspects. The first, "Where?", pertains to the arrangement of the ritual space; the second, "How?", to the type of the offering; the third, "What for?", describes the ritual goals of the worship. This comparison demonstrates that the ritualism of *yajña*

---

[12]   This position was characteristic for the scholars who shared the hypothesis of the non-Aryan origin of *pūjā*. One of the most committed and convinced among them was Charpentier. Charpentier believed that the *pūjā* was a very ancient ritual and at the same time had no relation to the Vedic *yajña*. In his opinion, "all the leading ideas are totally opposed to each other, and […] the two religions came to stand against each other as the religions of upper and lower classes of society". Because the lower classes were much more numerous "the Āryan Brāhmaṇism already at an early date began to be compromised, and thus created the most heterogeneous religion in the world, which, for want of a better term, we call Hinduism" (Charpentier 1927: 97).

[13]   See, for example, Sinha 1991–1993: 195–204.

[14]   However, no substantiated explanation exists on the technicalities of the transformation of *yajña* into *pūjā*. Perhaps, the only attempt to explain this transformation was made by van Buitenen, who tentatively traced *pūjā* back to the *pravargya*, a Vedic ritual which preceded the *soma* offering (Buitenen 1968: 23–28). Based on the formal similarity of the external aspects of the rituals, his concept failed to win broad recognition and became the subject of criticism (Kashikar 1972: 1–10). Houben remarked in connection with this: "Several aspects of the Pravargya, which were considered by van Buitenen as indication of the Pūjā-character of the rite, can be much better explained in connection with their similarities with the Soma sacrifice and its mantras. Moreover, van Buitenen's interpretation of the vessel as an anthropomorphic image, connected with the supposed Pūjā-character of the rite, is not very convincing" (Houben 1991: 17).

and *pūjā* do not coincide in any of the basic aspects of the religious practice. This gives us sufficient grounds to suggest that *yajña* and *pūjā* ascend to different ritualistic archetypes, with different sacrificial structures and symbolism (Lidova 2009: 205–231).

More than that, *pūjā* is not described in any text of the Vedic era, which means that this type of adoration was alien to the Vedic-Brāhmaṇic ritualism. Even the root *pūj-* is extremely rare in the Vedic sources—it appears once in a Ṛgvedic hymn (ṚV VIII.17.12),[15] twice in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (ŚB III.5.3.25; III.6.1.25), once in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (ChUp 1.2.1) and several times in later Vedic texts, in particular, the *Āśvalāyana-* (ĀśvGS 3.9.3) and the *Śāṅkhyāyana-* (ŚāṅGS 4.5.15) *gṛhyasūtra*s, and in different contexts in the *Āpastamba-, Baudhāyana-* and *Gautama-Dharmasūtra*s. In early Buddhist texts, *pūjā* as a form of veneration is repeatedly mentioned in the *Sutta Nipāta* (SN 128; 238–240; 261; 318), in the *Dīgha-, Majjhima-* and *Saṃyutta-nikāya*s, in the *Dhammapada* (Dh 5. 45), and among more reliably dated sources—in the edicts of king Aśoka, in particular the 12th Edict from Girnar. Supporting the hypothesis of the non-Aryan genesis of *pūjā*, Charpentier remarks:

> The word *pūjā* stands quite alone within the Sanskrit dictionary; the verbal root *pūj-* (*pūjayati*) is with every probability secondary in comparison with the noun. Both words are used many times already by Yāska and Pāṇini and consequently belonged to the common dictionary of the *dvija*s in the sixth century BC. (Charpentier 1927: 98)

Detailed descriptions of *pūjā* rituals appear in many sources, starting from the late/post-Vedic Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas up to the medieval Āgamas.[16]

---

[15] The same line occurs in the *Atharvaveda* XX.5.6a, *Sāmaveda* 4.1.2.05.02a and *Yajurveda*.

[16] The dating of Āgamic texts is still very approximate. However, the earliest of these texts had not emerged before the 5th–6th century AD. For details see Brooks 1992: 29–34. On the development of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, based on twenty-eight Śaiva *āgama*s, from the 6th through the 12th centuries CE, see Sanderson 2009: 41–350.

The date and chronology of these texts still remain quite problematic.[17] The same applies to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text. In its current form, the treatise is often attributed to the 2nd century BC and 2nd century AD. Chronologically this date places it in between the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas and the Āgamas. However, a number of scholars date the oldest core of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text and its tradition much earlier, to the 5th century BC,[18]

---

[17]   As far as the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas are concerned the problem of their dating has been already highlighted by Keith, who writes: "the value of the *pariśiṣṭa*s is, unhappily, seriously diminished by the total uncertainty of their date" (Keith 1912: 756). Modak considers that "the date of the compilation of the Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭas lies somewhere between second century BC… and fifth century AD" (Modak 1993: 473). At the same time, Modak does not exclude the possibility that the date of the Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭas could in some cases go back much earlier and suggests that at least some texts of the corpus could belong to the period of the 4th–3rd centuries BC (Modak 1993: 482, note 141). At the same time, Bisschop and Griffiths date the Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭas quite late and assume that they belonged "to sometime in the second half of the first millennium CE" (Bisschop, Griffiths 2003: 324). See also Sanderson 2007: 195–311 and De Simini 2016: 38, note 115. It seems, however, that the Gṛhyapariśiṣṭas were not created as a single corpus, but belong to different periods of time.

[18]   The dating of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* to the middle of the first millennium BC is favoured by scholars responsible for the publication of the text. Regnaud, a French Sanskritist, was among the firsts. He believed that an early version of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* could have existed already in the 4th century BC (Regnaud 1898: L–LI). Ghosh, another publisher and translator of the treatise, also dated it to an early period. He tried to prove that the oldest parts of the text must have ascended to the middle of the 1st millennium BC, proceeding mainly from a linguistic analysis of the treatise. As Ghosh saw it, the Sanskrit of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* corresponded to the language of the time of Pāṇini or was, at least, chronologically close to it. The antiquity of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* language was borne out, as he saw it, by numerous words occurring only in early works and out of use in later periods. Ghosh found another proof of his dating in the metric system of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The metres mentioned in the text and the specifics of their usage testify as he saw it, to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* being a direct continuation of the Vedic tradition. The early origin of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was also borne out

at the watershed between the late Vedic and early Epic eras. The uncertainty of the dates complicates significantly the establishment of a proper correlations between the existing sources.

With great probability, the chapters describing the rituals and myths go back to the most ancient parts of the treatise. Considering the possibility of the ancient origin of the text, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* potentially acts as a truly valuable source of information relevant not only to the history, theory, and practice of Indian drama but also to the religious tradition of *pūjā*. Relying on what has been said, let us once again consider the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth in order to find the details indicative of the time of appearance of the drama and of the formation of the *pūjā* cult. The text reads as follows:

> At the beginning, o sages, in the days of passing from the Fourth Age (Kṛtayuga[19]) of [Manu] Svāyambhuva and the start of the Third Age (Tretāyuga) of Manu Vaivasvata, and [due to] the spread of immorality among men and of the power of lustful desires [and] sensual pleasures, in the reckless world fed by envy [and] anger, [and oscillating between] happiness and unhappiness, Jambudvīpā guarded by the Lokapālas, was [over]crowded with gods,

---

by the mythology presented in it, which was based on the cult of Brahmā and according to Ghosh, corresponded to the mythology of the early epic (Ghosh 1967a: lxxxii; 1967b: lxv).

[19] The word '*kṛta*' can be a participle or an adjective, literally meaning 'perfect', 'ultimate', 'fine', 'elaborated', but when appearing in a combination with other words, like in '*kṛta-yuga*', '*kṛta*' has to be translated as 'four' or 'fourth'. This meaning comes from the terminology used for the dice game. In ancient India, the dice were made from the dried fruit of the *vibhītaka* tree and had four sides. These surfaces were numbered with dots from one to four. The side with just one dot was called *kali*, with two—*dvāpara*, with three—*tretā*, and four—*kṛta*. The last one guaranteed the victory of the player and, therefore, was considered to be the best. The mythologem of four *yuga*s, as well as the dice game, played an important role in the theoretical evaluation of ancient Indian theatre. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* description of the degradation of the human race during the succession of the *yuga*s is discussed in a number of post-Vedic texts, including the authoritative evidence from the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* (MDh 1.68–86).

Dānavas, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas [and] great Uragas. [Then] the gods led by great Indra said to Pitāmaha (Brahmā): "[We] want entertainment worthy of being seen and heard. As the Vedic canon cannot be followed by the caste of Śūdras, create a new, Fifth Veda [open] to all *varṇa*s."[20]

Once he agreed to help, Brahmā chose the standard Brahmāṇic way—he created a new kind of sacral knowledge. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*,

[…] having thus decided, Lord [Brahmā] recollected all Vedas and created the Nāṭyaveda, bringing together elements of four Vedas. He took recitation (*pāṭhya*) from the *Ṛgveda*, singing (*gīta*) from the *Sāma*[*veda*], means of scenic representation (*abhinaya*) from the *Yajurveda*, and emotions (*rasa*) from the *Atharva*[*veda*]. Related to the basic and supplementary Vedas, the Nāṭyaveda was thus created by the magnanimous Lord Brahmā, expert on all Vedas.[21]

As we learn from this passage, Brahmā used the most essential elements of four existing Vedas for the creation of the Fifth Veda, specifically

---

[20]   *pūrvaṃ kṛtayuge viprā vṛtte svāyaṃbhuve 'ntare | tretāyuge 'tha samprāpte manor vaivasvatasya ca || grāmyadharma-pravṛtte tu kāma-lobha-vaśaṃ gate | īrṣyā-krodhābhisaṃmūḍhe loke sukhita-duḥkhite || deva-dānava-gandharva-yakṣa-rakṣo-mahoragaiḥ | jambudvīpe samākrānte lokapāla-pratiṣṭhite || mahendra-pramukhair devair uktaḥ kila pitāmahaḥ | krīḍanīyakam icchāmo dṛṣyaṃ śravyaṃ ca yad bhavet || na veda-vyavahāro 'yaṃ saṃśrāvyaḥ śūdra-jātiṣu | tasmāt sṛjāparaṃ vedaṃ pañcamaṃ sārva-varṇikam ||* (NŚ 1.8–12). All quotations from *Nāṭyaśāstra* are from the Ghosh edition (1956–1967, here and further—NŚ) with variant readings from Ramakrishna Kavi edition (GOS) and some insights are taken from the Grosset 1898 edition. For an alternative translation of this passage of the first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* with a thorough analysis of its content, see Bansat-Boudon 2001: 35–62. See also her discussions in Bansat-Boudon 1993: 148–155; 1994: 107–119; 2012: 213–238.

[21]   *evaṃ saṅkalpya bhagavān sarva-vedān anusmaran | nāṭyavedaṃ tataś cakre caturvedāṅga-sambhavam || jagrāha pāṭhyaṃ ṛgvedāt sāmabhyo gītam eva ca | yajurvedād abhinayān rasān ātharvaṇād api || vedopavedaiḥ sambaddho nāṭyavedo mahātmanā | evaṃ bhagavatā sṛṣṭo brahmaṇā sarva-vedinā ||* (NŚ 1.16–18).

recitation, the basis of *Ṛgveda*, and singing, the core of *Sāmaveda*, etc. Apart from the four Vedic Saṃhitās, Brahmā engages many other texts of the Vedic canon. In particular, we are told that he takes supplementary Vedas (*vedopaveda*), all Śāstras without exception, knowledge of the various arts and crafts, and guidance of *dharma* and *artha*. With the help of all these resources, Brahmā creates the all-embracing doctrine of Nāṭyaveda:

> [...it] corresponds to virtue (*dharma*), prosperity (*artha*) and glory (*yaśas*),[22] comprises [good] counsels and guidelines, shows all activities of the future [world], contains the substance of all sciences and demonstrates all crafts— [that is] the Fifth Veda called Nāṭya.[23]

Once his work is over, Brahmā offers the Nāṭyaveda to the gods, but since Indra on behalf of all the deities refuses the offer, justifying his decision with the lack of skills and ability needed for the use of *nāṭya*, Brahmā passes it on Bharata, the most distinguished among the Brahmins, and suggests that he should study and enact *nāṭya* with his hundred sons (NŚ 1.19–25).

This myth is quite remarkable in its message and content, full of details and profound concern with the matter, therefore, its correct assessment is crucial for the reconstruction of the ancient stage in the perception of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition. It would be wrong to deprive this myth of any significant and historically relevant

---

[22] Similar to the majority of other concepts and notions, important for the theoretical evaluation of the Nāṭyaveda, the concept of *puruṣārtha*s ('goals of human being') is not attested in Vedic texts, but becomes a key notion of Hinduism and appears in the sources dating after the conventional borderline of the middle of the 1st millennium BC. It is mentioned several times in both epics—*Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as in *Brahmasūtra*s (Bsū III. 4. 1) of Bādarāyaṇa, in Patañjali's commentary on the *sūtra*s of Pāṇini (Mb II. 2. 34), etc.

[23] *dharmyam arthyaṃ yaśasyaṃ ca sopadeśyaṃ sa-saṅgraham | bhaviṣyataś ca lokasya sarva-karmānudarśakam || sarva-śāstrārtha-sampannaṃ sarva-śilpa-pravartakam | nāṭyākhyaṃ pañcamaṃ vedaṃ* (NŚ 1.14–15).

information and treat it just as an allegory, targeted primarily to elevate the status of theatre and engage the sphere of holy writ for what was, in fact, only an art form and a sort of entertainment. At first glance, the researchers who have established a link between the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the Vedic tradition are right. The myth is overflowed with references to different Vedic texts, including the four Vedas, and demonstrates the tendency to represent the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as an inalienable part and the continuation of the Vedic canon. More than that, in this myth the treatise itself is defined as Nāṭyaveda and the Fifth Veda.

The notion of the Fifth Veda is quite interesting. Undoubtedly, it can be treated as a glorifying epithet that does not have any special content. However, it is quite possible that the title of the Fifth Veda is not just an eulogy. It could have possessed some special meaning at the time when the tradition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was taking form and could have remained from that period.

Whether we regard the Fifth Veda as a concept or as an epithet, one thing is absolutely evident—it could have appeared only in the post-Vedic period. The first-ever textual reference to the Fifth Veda is found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.1.2; 7.1.4; 7.2.1; 7.7.1) in the dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra: "Venerable Sir, I know [three Vedas:] the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, *Ātharvaṇa* as the fourth [Veda, and] *itihāsa-purāṇa* as the fifth".[24] The same kind of evidence can be found in the *Arthaśāstra*, which mentions five Vedas, including four Vedic *saṃhitā*s and the fifth—*itihāsaveda* (AŚ 1.3.1–2).

The word '*itihāsa*' is usually translated as 'epic', while *purāṇa* as 'ancient lore'.[25] It is noteworthy that the Indian tradition knows only two ancient texts that use as their self-definition the sublime title of the Fifth Veda—the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Mahābhārata*.[26] At the same

---

[24]   *ṛgvedaṃ bhagavo 'dhyemi yajurvedaṃ sāmavedam ātharvaṇaṃ caturtham itihāsapurāṇaṃ pañcamam* (ChUp 7.1.2).

[25]   One of the earliest joint mentionings of '*itihāsa*' and '*purāṇa*' along with '*gāthā*' (song) and '*nārāśaṃsī*' (eulogy) can be found in the *Atharvaveda* (*tám itihāsaś ca purāṇám ca gā́thāś ca nārāśaṃsī́ś*…) (AV 15.6.11–12).

[26]   *vedān adhyāpayām āsa mahābhāratapañcamān* ("He (Vyāsa) taught the [four] Vedas with the *Mahābhārata* as the fifth [Veda]") (Mbh 1.57.74). See also: Mbh 12.327.18. According to Brockington, the fifth Veda is also

time, the *Mahābhārata* often defines itself as *itihāsa* (Mbh 1.56.16)[27] and *purāṇa* (Mbh 1.1.15; I.56.15).[28] It is remarkable that the claim of the Fifth Veda is substantiated in the case of the *Mahābhārata*[29] on the same grounds as in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Both present themselves as all-embracing texts in which all topics are covered. At the same time and similarly to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the sacred knowledge contained within the *Mahābhārata* is available to all *varṇa*s (Mbh 12.314.45),[30] including Śūdras and women, who, by knowing the content of the Fifth Veda, gain the right to obtain things they desire (Hiltebeitel 2011: 201).

Both *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* are not a single work, but a sort of literary production, and similarly as Veda are conceived as a certain kind of knowledge. In general, *itihāsapurāṇa* and *itihāsaveda* stand

---

implicitly mentioned in Mbh 1.1.205 ab; 1.1. 56.17cd and 18.57 (for details, see Brockington 1998: 7, note 14).

[27] On the *Mahābhārata* as *itihāsa* and Fifth Veda, see Fitzgerald 1985: 125–140. See also Brockington 1998: 5–7; Hiltebeitel 2011: 73–110; Tripathi 2014: 87–88; Malinar 2011: 201–205. About the Vedic legacy in Hinduism, see Smith 1987a: 32–55.

[28] Besides this, the *Mahābhārata* describes itself as *ākhyāna* (legend or story in general), and designates *ākhyāna* as the Fifth Veda (Mbh 3.45.8; 3.58.9). The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki also refers to itself as *itihāsa* and *ākhyāna*, but never explicitly proclaims itself as the Fifth Veda. About the distinction between the terms 'itihāsa', 'purāṇa' and 'ākhyāna', see Patton 1996: 195–230.

[29] According to Brockington, the designation of the *Mahābhārata* as the Fifth Veda "recognizes its character as collections of ancient tales, proclaims their priestly nature and claims a measure of authority for it" (Brockington 1998: 5). On the other hand "the emphasis of the epic as the Fifth Veda and comparisons with them, in reality, testifies to a break between the Vedas and the *Mahābhārata*" (Brockington 1998: 5, note 10). Gitomer believed, that "the *Mahābhārata* does not explicitly proclaim itself as a 'fifth Veda', but speaks of itself as complementary, even superior to the other four" (Gitomer 1994: 194, note 37). See also Sullivan 1999: 12.

[30] However, the *Mahābhārata* provides the alternative opinion that it was intended for just the three highest *varṇa*s and actually excluded Śūdras (Mbh 18.5.43).

for a kind of knowledge revealed in all sorts of stories, myths, and legends. It is quite possible that the *Mahābhārata* and the *Nāṭyaśāstra* represent two traditions in the transmission of this sacral knowledge. In the case of the *Mahābhārata* tradition, this knowledge was made accessible to all people, including Śūdras and women, in the form of narrative and recitation and in the case of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*—in the form of visual sermons, which, in fact, were nothing but the stage versions of the same epic myths.[31] This interpretation reveals the deep connection between the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Mahābhārata*, and actually, explains why these two texts were referred to as the Fifth Veda.

It is indicative in this respect that the Nāṭyaveda, Brahmā's creation, also defines itself on several occasions as *itihāsa*, for example in the opening chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, e.g., 1.15, when Brahmā says: "I shall create the Fifth Veda, called Nāṭya, with *itihāsa*".[32] An even clearer reference is found in another part of the test: "After he created the Nāṭyaveda, Pitāmaha [Brahmā] addressed the Mighty [Indra]: 'I created the *itihāsa*, and it is intended for the gods'."[33]

It is generally accepted that the *Mahābhārata* also appeared in the post-Vedic period.[34] Neither the Vedic Saṃhitās nor the Brāhmaṇas

---

[31] The *Nāṭyaśāstra* explicitly mentions two epic myths—*Amṛtamanthana* ("The Churning of the Ocean") and *Tripuradāha* ("The Burning of the Triple City"), which were performed as the two first dramas. Both of them were performed in a religious context and were preceded by the *pūrvaraṅga* (*pūjā*) ritual (NŚ 4. 1–10).

[32] *nāṭyākhyaṃ pañcamaṃ vedaṃ setihāsaṃ karomy aham* (NŚ 1.15b). Abhinavagupta in his commentary *Abhinavabhāratī* on NŚ 1.15 discusses meticulously the term '*itihāsa*'. He suggested that '*īti*' denotes the immediate perception (*itir evam-arthe pratyakṣa-nirdeśaṃ dyotayati*), so through the '*itihāsa*' the long-past events are perceived as taking place in the present and allowing to reach the *puruṣārtha*s (*pratyakṣa-paridṛśyamānā āgamikārthāḥ karma-phala-sambandha-svabhāvā yatrāsate tenetihāsena*) (GOS 36: 924).

[33] *utpādya nāṭyavedaṃ tu brahmovāca sureśvaram | itihāso mayā sṛṣṭaḥ sa sureṣu niyujyatām ||* (NŚ 1.19).

[34] The discussion of the *Mahābhārata* date is a long-lasting issue. For the different approaches, see Fitzgerald 2010: 72–94.

contain direct or oblique references to the *Mahābhārata,* while the sources from the latter half of the 1ˢᵗ millennium BC often mention not only the name of this epic but also the names of its heroes. The situation with the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition is more or less similar. The Vedic texts are silent on drama, but as we cross the conventional borderline of the mid-1ˢᵗ millennium BC, testimonies of theatrical performances and practice appear in numerous sources, including the epigraphical evidence, grammar treatises, and Buddhist texts.[35]

One of the important sources commonly used for the discussion of the emergence and early development of drama is Pāṇini's grammar, which scholars traditionally date to the 5ᵗʰ–4ᵗʰ century BC. Pāṇini mentions two specialized texts for *naṭas—Naṭasūtra*s by Śilālin and Kṛśāśva (Pāṇ 4.3.110–111), belonging to two different Vedic schools.[36] This indicates that at the time of Pāṇini there must have been various theoretical evaluations on the arts of *naṭa*s and at least two different schools managed to produce manuals or textbooks.[37] Pāṇini made a distinction between the two roots *nṛt-* and *naṭ-*, which are also differentiated in the developed theatre tradition. The fact that the first of them is more often used for the definitions of dance (*nṛtta*), while the second for the descriptions of more sophisticated scenic performance—drama (*nāṭya*), might be considered as an indirect indication that these two art forms were differentiated already at that time when Pāṇini created his grammar.

The notion of the Fifth Veda could have also been introduced in this particular era. The mid-1ˢᵗ millennium BC was a unique period of time. On the one hand, it was still closely linked to the Vedic culture, which means that the notion of Veda could still retain its original sacral and semiotic significance. On the other hand, this was a moment

---

[35]　For details, see Tarlekar 1991: 5–8; Wijesekera 1941: 196–206.

[36]　See also Pāṇ 4.3.129, where Pāṇini refers to the law or tradition related to *naṭa*s.

[37]　On Śilālin and Kṛśāśva within the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tradition, see Ghosh 1930: 72–80.

of major changes in the perception of the world, which provided the possibility for the extension and reconsideration of the Vedic canon at the watershed between the late Vedic and early Epic eras.[38]

It is noteworthy that the era when the Nāṭyaveda was created is also described in the *Nāṭyotpatti* myth as the time of passage from *kṛtayuga*, the perfect age, to *tretāyuga*, the age of the less virtuous. This moment of transition was perceived as the age of trials and great tribulation when religious precepts were given up and sensual pleasures prevailed. More than that, the creation of the Fifth Veda was actually necessitated by this situation of declining morality. As the *Nāṭyaśāstra* repeatedly emphasizes, the work of Brahmā is the compendium of universal knowledge, designed to support the three goals of life—*dharma*, *kāma*, and *artha*. It was able to elevate men from their depravity, restore the shattered order of things, and thus create a society whose existence was based on the noble goals of higher morality (NŚ 1.14–15).

In terms of actual historical time, the situation, presented in the myth as occurring at the end of the Perfect Age (*kṛtayuga*), could correspond to the transitional period of Indian civilization, when the pillars of the ancient Vedic religion were profoundly shaken. The essence of the esoteric Brāhmaṇic culture, with an ideal community of the twice-born as its supreme goal, incited the appearance of numerous anti-Brāhmaṇic religious movements. Supposedly, the crisis of Vedic ritualism—mainly the solemn soma-*yajña* rituals—predetermined the decline of the Brāhmaṇic tradition. Although the Brāhmaṇic theology continued to insist on the obligatory celebration of the multiple regular rituals, the status of the Vedic Śrauta rites *de facto* stopped being indisputable, even from the ethical point of view (Houben 1999: 105–83). It led to a decrease in the willingness of certain social groups to spend enormous sums of money, time, and other resources on the performance of these rituals.[39]

---

[38]   For details see Malinar 2011: 182–211.

[39]   See, for example, Heesterman 1985: 85–89; Smith 2011: 163–179; Bronkhorst 2017: 361–369.

The reformatory spirit of the time gave rise to numerous religious trends, some of which, as for example, Buddhism and Jainism, eventually played a crucial part in Indian history and culture. Others, however, survived only as distant, semi-legendary echoes of the tradition. They all shared one goal: to offer alternative roads of future development, largely predetermined by the internal crisis of the Brāhmaṇic ritual system.

As I have already discussed on several occasions (Lidova 1994; 2009: 205–231), the idea to introduce *pūjā* as an alternative form of worship can be considered as an attempt to find one more way out of that crisis. It is important that the *Nātyaśāstra* also singles out *pūjā* as pivotal in the emergence of the theatrical tradition. On the divine commandment of Brahmā, every performance had to be preceded by the *pūjā* ritual, which is comparable with Vedic *yajña*. The last is clearly expressed in the *Nātyaśāstra*:

> The stage or the spectacle should not be made without the [celebration of] the *pūjā*. If somebody makes the stage [and] the performance without *pūjā*, his knowledge shall be useless and he will come to a bad rebirth, for the *pūjā* [celebrated for] the deities of the stage is similar to a *yajña*.[40]

The *Nātyotpatti* myth also clearly refers to the event at which the drama and *pūjā* were performed together for the first time. This was realized on the occasion of the Indra festival, an annual celebration, which involved the entire community:

> An auspicious occasion for the presentation [of drama] is approaching: the [festival] of the great banner of Indra begins. There and then this Veda, known as the *Nātya*, should be used.[41]

---

[40] *apūjayitvā raṅgaṃ tu naiva prekṣāṃ pravartayet | apūjayitvā raṅgaṃ tu yaḥ prekṣāṃ kalpayiṣyati || tasya tan niṣphalaṃ jñānaṃ tiryagyoniṃ ca yāsyati | yajñena saṃmitaṃ hy etad raṅga-daivata-pūjanam ||* (NŚ 1.125–126).

[41] *mahānayaṃ prayogasya samayaḥ pratyupasthitaḥ | ayaṃ dhvajamahaḥ śrīmān mahendrasya pravartate || atredānīm ayaṃ vedo nātya-saṃjñaḥ prayujyatām ||* (NŚ 1.54–55).

This festival is not the product of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* author's imagination.[42] It existed in reality and its description can be found in a number of texts from various periods. The earliest of them is presented in the *Kauśika-gṛhyasūtra* (KGS 140.1–22) and the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 19, the two texts which belong to the *Atharvaveda* tradition. An account of the same celebration during the epic time can be found in the first book of the *Mahā-bhārata* (Mbh I.57.17–22), while its further development can be traced in the medieval text of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (VDhP II.154–157).

As I discussed elsewhere,[43] these sources describe rather different versions of the celebration. The *Kauśikasūtra* provides a description of the Indra festival of the late Vedic period according to the tradition of the *Atharvaveda*.[44] The main symbol of this festival was a big tree, which was selected in the wood, felled, brought to the village and exalted. The crux of the festival was the exaltation of the tree as Indra's banner (*dhvaja*), accompanied by various religious ceremonies. In the late Vedic period this festival was arranged by the king and conducted by the *purohita*. *The purohita* was the king's head-priest, adviser and the chaplain of the king's household, who performed not only domestic (*gṛhya*) rituals for the king, but also certain solemn rites. One of them was the Artharvavedic Indra festival, celebrated with one main purpose—to contribute to the annual renewal of the vital powers of the king, who was believed to be the guarantor of the prosperity of the society.

However, the description of the Indra celebration found in *Kauśikasūtra* does not mention drama, any stage performances, or *pūjā*, but recounts the rituals typical of the cult of *yajña*. At the same time, according to

---

[42]   This festival is also mentioned in various sources, including Sanskrit dramas and *mahakāvya*s. Among the latter, particularly interesting are the *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa (1.63; 8.73), plays ascribed to Bhāsa (for details see Pusalker 1940: 440–441), the *Raghuvaṃśa* of Kālidāsa (4.3), the *Mṛccha-kaṭika* of Śūdraka (10.7), the *Nāgānanda* of Śrīharṣadeva (Act I), and others.

[43]   See Lidova 2002–2003: 85–108. See also Sathyanarayana 1993: 3–13; 2012: 197–210.

[44]   On another version of the late/post-Vedic Indra sacrifice (Indra-*yajña*), performed according to the *Yajurveda* tradition, see *Pāraskaragṛhyasūtra* 2.15.

the conventionalized chronology of the first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Indra festival did not emerge simultaneously with drama. As the treatise has it, the festival existed before the drama and independently from it. Even the choice of the event was to an extent incidental. Brahmā viewed it merely as a convenient pretext: the Indra festival was chosen as an occasion to make all gods get together to be acquainted with the dramatic art, recently created by Brahmā. Although this point does not need to be overestimated, it provides sufficient reasons to doubt that the drama was intrinsic in the festival arrangements from the start. More probably, it was introduced at a quite advanced stage when the basic ritual of the Indra festival had acquired the final shape and became firmly established.

The latter assumption can be verified on the basis of the descriptions of this celebration as they appear in the texts belonging to the subsequent historical periods. One of them could be the late ancillary texts of the Atharvavedic tradition—*Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭa* 19. This Pariśiṣṭa closely follows the *Kauśikasūtra* and describes the festivity of Indra using almost the same words. Much more interesting is its supplement— the *Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭa* 19b, which presents the *brahmayāga*, a Brahmā worship ritual. It can be suggested that this ritual at a certain stage became part and parcel of the Indra festival. The *brahmayāga* was performed in a special edifice created for the occasion—a *maṇḍapa*. It is clearly stated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that the drama almost from the outset was also presented in a *maṇḍapa* (the construction and typology of which is described in detail in the treatise, ch. 2), and it is a great temptation to assume that it was one and the same ritual pavilion. However, the *Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭa* 19b does not mention any drama performed in the *maṇḍapa*. Nevertheless, this pavilion, constructed for the *brahmayāga* ritual, was definitely connected with the tradition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The proof of the latter is the fact that the *brahmayāga* ritual, which is centered on the *pūjā* worship, is very similar, almost identical, to the *Raṅgadaivatapūjana*, the rite of the consecration of a newly built theatre, described in detail in ch. 3 of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.[45]

---

[45] For details, see Lidova 2009: 205–231.

Subsequently, not *yajña* but *pūjā* became the main ritual ceremony of the Indra festival. This is explicitly mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, which contains the mythological narration about the King Vasu Uparicara, who instituted this celebration anew. One day, Indra offered three gifts to the king—a crown of lotus flowers, which protected him in a battle, a self-propelled divine chariot—a *vimāna*, and a bamboo pole. After some time this pole was used by the king, who stuck it into the ground and so gave rise to the Indra's festival. After the exaltation and decoration, the bamboo pole became the centre around which the *pūjā* ritual was performed in honour of Indra, followed by another one dedicated to Śiva (Mbh 1.57.21). According to the *Mahābhārata*, this bamboo pole became the main object of Indra's festival and in this form was adopted by other kings (Mbh 1.63.27).[46]

However, the *Mahābhārata* narration although clearly mentioning the ritual of *pūjā*, fails to provide any reference to stage performances during this festival. At the same time, the testimony about some kind of visual entertainment, performed in the context of *pūjā* ritual, can be found in the medieval *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (II.154–157).[47] According to this text, a spectacle was performed at the Indra festival immediately following the *pūjā*.[48] Just as in the *Mahābhārata*, in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* it is prescribed that the *pūjā* is to be performed in honour of the exalted divine banner (VDhP II.154.17) and also a performance of another *pūjā* is to take place in honour of Viṣṇu (VDhP II.155.21).[49]

---

[46]   The Indra festival is also mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* 4.13.39; 4.29.7; 4.39.2; 11.84.83; 11.122.18 and the *Harivaṃśa* 1.44.6.

[47]   On the date and the editions of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, see Rocher 1986: 250–252.

[48]   *sthāne sthāne* [...] *deyā prekṣyā* [...] *pūjayen nṛtyagītena rātrau śakraṃ narādhipaḥ* (VDhP II.155.17). The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* refers to the drama or spectacle as *prekṣā*. This term is also repeatedly used in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (see, for example, NŚ 1.122; 2.7; 3.97; 3.102).

[49]   According to Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (60.1–60), Indra received a banner pole from Viṣṇu and then gave it to Vasu Uparicara, who established The Banner Festival on the earth.

On the basis of the above analysis, it can be argued that the Indra festival could have played a significant role in the process of introduction of the *pūjā* and the genesis of drama.[50] Considering the fact that in the late Vedic period the management of the described festival must have been in the hands of Atharvavedins, it can be tentatively suggested that they were the milieu responsible for the appearance of the new form of ritual practice, the integral part of which consisted in the staging of myths. The very adaptation of *pūjā* as a new ritual in the Aryan community was rooted in the necessity to offer an alternative to the solemn Vedic sacrifices of *soma-yajña*. The world's first drama, anticipated by *pūjā*, was perceived as a new form of the solemn ritual. That is why it had to be performed during the celebration of the Indra festival, which engaged different social groups, as well as the king, who had to be present on the occasion.

It is worth pointing out that Atharvavedins belonged to a special group within the Brāhmaṇic order that did not perform the solemn *soma-yajña* rituals and so, as one might suppose, were less concerned with its survival. It is quite possible that in a situation of deep religious crisis, described by the myth of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Atharvavedins found a solution in the adaptation of a new form of ritual—*pūjā*. They could have also started the practice of the religious sermon in the form of scenic performances of the myth *de facto*, the earliest forms of drama, which subsequently became the important part of the literature of *kāvya*.[51] This enabled them to popularize and promote the new religion

---

[50]   The religious origin of the theatre is sometimes reflected in the classical tradition. One of the well-known examples is Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram* I.4, in which theatre is characterized as a form of visual sacrifice.

[51]   According to Jamison, the *purohita*s, seen by the author as court panegyrists and poets trained in Vedic compositional techniques, were directly involved in the formation of *kāvya* literature. More than that, Jamison considers them to be Vedic Brahmins, who ensured a continuous tradition of poetic composition from the Ṛgvedic period into the Classical period (Jamison 2007: 138ff). Tieken proposed an alternative view. According to him, "Vedic poetry is not a literature in the strict sense of the word"

which can be considered an early form of Hinduism. The absence of direct evidence of dramatic performances in early sources could be explained by the fact that these testimonies were primarily concerned with the ritual practice, while the practice of drama remained within the framework of another kind of knowledge—*nāṭyaśāstra*.

The proposed considerations can serve as guiding lines allowing us to formulate the following hypothesis: the early forms of theatre appeared around the middle of the 1st millennium BC in the milieu of Atharvavedins, who are the most likely candidates responsible for the adaptation of the new ritual of *pūjā* and its use within the context of the Indra festival. In order to promulgate this kind of worship and substitute the ancient forms of sacrifice, they tried to convey the religious message with the help of myths presented on stage, which only subsequently assumed the features of a developed art form (*nāṭya*). This means that at the time of its inception, the borderlines of the ancient Indian theatre were predetermined not so much by the nature of theatre as a mere entertainment but by the necessities and goals of the religious ritual, which lies at the basis of all aspects of *nāṭya*. Therefore, the place, the time, the arrangement of the stage, the elements of make-up and costumes, as well as the duration of the performance were conditioned primarily by religious concerns and together formed a complex unified system in which every element had a particular prescribed place and function. Undoubtedly, this hypothesis requires a more detailed and in-depth discussion. However, even in its working state it sets up a new vision and offers a new framework to the complex

---

(Tieken 2014: 99). On the other side, "*mahākāvya* is not a direct successor of the epics, that is to say, it did not succeed the epic in their ritual function" (*ibid.*: 100), and "was the result of a kind of makeover of the epic" (*ibid.*: 101). I completely agree with Tieken's general interpretation of the nature of Vedic poetry. As for the problem of the relationship between *kāvya* and epics, in my opinion, Tieken's interpretation can be accepted only with regard to the classical literary tradition and is less applicable when we discuss the early stages in the formation of *kāvya*, the earliest form of which has been *nāṭya*.

issue of when, under what circumstances and in what milieu the birth of ancient Indian theatre actually took place.

References

Primary sources

AŚ: *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*. R. P. Kangle (ed.). 1986. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra. Part I: A Critical Edition with a Glossary.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

ĀśvGS: *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*. T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.). 1985 [1923]. *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra with the Commentary Anāvila of Haradattācārya.* Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.

AV: *Atharvaveda.* R. Roth and W. D. Whitney (eds.). 1966 [1856]. *Atharva Veda Sanhita.* Hannover: Dummler.

BNŚ: *Bhāratīya Nāṭyaśāstram*. J. Grosset (ed.). 1898. *Bhāratīya-nāṭya-cāstram. Traité de Bharata sur le théâtre.* Texte sanskrit. Édition critique. Avec une Introduction, les Variantes tirées de quatre manuscripts, une Table analytique et des Notes. Précédée d'une préface de P. Regnaud. Tome Première: 1ère Partie: Texte et Variantes. Table analytique. 2ème Partie: Notes. Annales de l'Université de Lyon, fasc. 40. Paris–Lyon: Ernest Leroux.

BSū: *Brahmasūtras*. S. Bapat (ed.). 2011. *A Critical Edition of the Brahmasūtras. Sanskrit Text with Translation into English, Critical Analysis and Notes with Śaṅkarācārya's Commentary Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya.* 3 vols. New Delhi: New Bharatiya Book.

ChU: *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*—online edition GRETIL etext http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/1_veda/4_upa/chup___u.htm.

GOS: *Nāṭyaśāstra.* M. Ramakrishna Kavi (ed.). 1926–1964. *Nāṭyaśāstra with the Commentary of Abhinavagupta with a Preface, Appendix and Index.* 4 vols. Gaekwad's Oriental Series 36; 68; 124; 154. Baroda: Central Library; Oriental Institute.

KGS: *The Kauśika Gṛhyasūtra.* M. Bloomfield (ed.). 1889. The Kauśika Sūtra of Atharva Veda, with extracts from the Commentaries of Dārila and Keśava. In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 14. (Repr. Delhi–Varanasi–Patna: Motilal Banarsidass 1972).

Mb: *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali. 1987–1988. *Śrīmadbhagavat-patañjali-muni-viracitaṃ Pātañjalaṃ Mahābhāṣyam*. Vārāṇasī: Vāṇīvilāsa Prakāśana.

Mbh: *Mahābhārata.* V. S. Sukthankar et al. (eds.). 1933–1966. *The Mahā-bhārata.* 19 vols. Poona: BORI.

MDh: *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra.* P. Olivelle (ed.). 2005. *Manu's Code of Law. A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

NŚ: *Nāṭyaśāstra.* M. Ghosh (ed.). 1956–1967. *The Nāṭyaśāstra Ascribed to Bharata-Muni. The Original Sanskrit Text Edited with Introduction and Various Readings.* 2 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society; Manisha Granthalaya.

Pāṇ: *Aṣṭādhyāyī.* S. M. Katre (ed.). 1987. *Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini.* Roman transliteration and English translation. Austin: University of Texas Press. (Repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989).

Regnaud, P. 1898. *Bharatīya-nāṭya-śātram: Traité de Bharata sur le théâtre. Texte sanscrit.* 51 vols. Paris–Lyon: Leroux.

ŚāṅGS: *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra.* S. R. Sehgal (ed.). 1960. *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtram (Belonging to the Ṛgveda).* Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

ŚB: *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*—online edition GRETIL etext http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gret_utf.htm#SatBr.

TB: *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.* G. U. Thite (ed.). 2012. *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. Text with the Commentary of Sāyaṇācārya and English Introduction.* 2 vols. New Delhi: New Bharatiya Book.

VDhP: *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.* P. Shah (ed.). 1958–1961. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa.* 2 vols. Gaekwad's Oriental Studies 130; 137. Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Secondary sources

Bansat-Boudon, L. 2001. Drama and Dharma in Indian Speculations. In: *Indologica Taurinensia,* 1991–1992: 17–18: 35–62.

—. 1993. The Foundation Myth of Indian Theatre. In: *Altorientalische Forschungen,* 20(1) June: 148–155. https://doi.org/10.1524/aofo.1993.20.1.148.

—.1994. Le mythe d'origine du théâtre indien. In: M. Menu (ed.). *Théâtre et cité: Séminaire du CRATA 1992–1994.* Toulouse: Centre de Recherches appliquées au Théâtre Antique: 107–119.

—. 2012. Aesthetica in nuce dans le mythe d'origine du théâtre indien. In: S. D'Intino and C. Guenzi (eds.). *Aux abords de la clairière. Études indiennes et comparées en l'honneur de Charles Malamoud.* Turnhout: Brepols: 213–238.

Bisschop, P. and A. Griffiths. 2003. The Pāśupata Observance (*Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭa* 40). In: *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 46(4): 315–48.

Brockington, J. 1998. *The Sanskrit Epics*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Bronkhorst, J. 2017. Brahmanism: Its Place in Ancient Indian Society. In: *Indian Sociology*, 51(3): 361–369. https://doi.org/10.1177/0069966717717587.

Bühnemann, G. 1988. *Pūjā. A Study in Smārta Ritual*. Publications of the De Nobili Research Library 15. Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien.

Buitenen van, J. A. B. 1968. *The Pravargya, an Ancient Indian Iconic Ritual Described and Annotated*. Poona: Deccan College.

Byrski M. C. 1974. *Concept of Ancient Indian Theatre*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Charpentier, J. 1927. The Meaning and Etymology of Pūjā. In: *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, 56: 93–98, 130–135. (Earlier German version: Charpentier, J. 1926. Über den Begriff und die Etymologie von Pūjā. In: W. Kirfel (ed.). *Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte Indiens. Festgabe Hermann Jacobi zum 75. Geburtstag*. Bonn: Kommissionsverlag F. Klopp: 276–297).

Bhatnagar, R. S. 1987. The Conceptual Structure Underlying the Nāṭyaśāstra. In: Daya Krishna (ed.). *India's Intellectual Traditions: Attempts at Conceptual Reconstruction*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: 95–103.

Brooks, D. R. 1992. *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrividya Śākta Tantrism in South India*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Burman, A. D. 1994. The Pūrvaraṅga and the Prologue Scenes in the Indian and South-East Asian Theatres. In: *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 37(4): 297–316.

Dave, U. 1941. Nāndī in Theory. In: *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 17: 359–369.

De Simini, F. 2016. *Of Gods and Books*: *Ritual and Knowledge Transmission in the Manuscript Cultures of Premodern India*. Studies in Manuscript Cultures 8. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Fitzgerald, J. L.1985. India's Fifth Veda: The Mahābhārata's Presentation of Itself. In: *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 20(1): 125–140. (Repr. A. Sharma (ed.). 1991. *Essays on the* Mahābhārata. Leiden: Brill: 150–170).

—. 1996. Review: *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*. Performing Arts Series 4. General Editor Farley P. Richmond. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994. In: *Asian Folklore Studies*, 55(1): 182–184.

—. 2010. Mahābhārata. In: K. A. Jacobsen et al. (eds.). *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Vol. 2. Leiden: E. J. Brill: 72–94.

—. 2013. History and Primordium in Ancient Indian Historical Writing: Itihāsa and Purāṇa in the Mahābhārata and Beyond. In: K. Raaflaub (ed.). *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World*. Malden, Mass.– Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 41–60.

Heesterman, J. C. 1985. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*. Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press.

Houben, J. E. M. 1999. To Kill or Not to Kill: The Sacrificial Animal (yajña-paśu)? Arguments and Perspectives in Brahmanical Ethical Philosophy. In: J. E. M. Houben and K. R. Van Kooij (eds.). *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*. Leiden: Brill: 105–83.

Geslani, M. 2011. *The Ritual Culture of Appeasement: Śanti Rites in Post-Vedic Sources*. PhD dissertation, Yale University.

—. 2011a. Appeasement and Atonement in the Mahādānas, the Hindu "Great Gifts". In: *Journal Asiatique*, 299: 5–22.

—. 2012. Śānti Rites in the Development of the Purāṇic Rājyābhiṣeka. In: *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 55(4): 321–377.

Gitomer, D. L. 1994. Whither the Thick Sweetness of Their Passion? In: L. Patton (ed.). *Authority, Anxiety, and Canon. Essays in Vedic Interpretation*. New York: SUNY Press: 171–198.

Ghosh, M. 1930. Problems of the Nātyaśāstra. In: *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 6: 72–80.

—. 1967a. Introduction. In: *The Nāṭyaśāstra, ascribed to Bharata Muni. Sanskrit Text*. Vol. I. Calcutta: XVII–LXXXII.

—. 1967b. Introduction. In: *The Nāṭyaśātra, Completely Translated for the First Time from the Original Sanskrit with an Introduction, Various Notes and Index*. Vol. I. Calcutta: XVII–LXIX.

Gonda, J. 1967. The Indra Festival according to the Atharvavedins. In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87(4): 413–429. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/597586.

—. 1977. *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz.

Hiltebeitel, A. 2011. *Reading the Fifth Veda: Studies on the Mahābhārata: Essays*. A Studies in the History of Religions: Numen Book Series 131. Vol. 1. etc. Leiden: Brill.

Houben, J. E. M. 1991. *The Pravargya Brāhmaṇa of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka: An Ancient Commentary on the Pravargya Ritual.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Jamison, S. 2007. *Le Ṛgveda entre deux mondes. The Rig Veda between Two Worlds. Quatre conférences au Collège de France en mai 2004.* Publications de I'Institut de civilisation indienne 74. Paris: College de France.

Kashikar, C. C. 1972. Apropos of the Pravargya. In: *Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit Studies*, 1:1–10.

Keith, A. B. 1912. Review: *The Pariśiṣṭas of the Atharvaveda.* Vol. I, in three parts: Text and Critical Apparatus. Leipzig. 1909–10. In: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland (New Series)*, 44: 755–776.

Kuiper F. B. J. 1975. The Worship of the Jarjara on the Stage. In: *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 16(4): 241–268.

—. 1979. *Varuṇa and Vidūṣaka: On the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama.* Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde. Nieuwe Reeks 100. Amsterdam–Oxford–New York: North-Holland Publishing Company.

Lidova, N. 1994. *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism.* New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

—. 2002–2003. Indramahotsava in the Late Vedic and Early Epic Traditions. In: *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 76–78: 85–108.

—. 2007. The Definition of Performance in the Nāṭyaśāstra. In: *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 60(2). *Theatrum Mirabiliorum Indiae Orientalis*. A Volume to Celebrate the 70th Birthday of Professor Maria Krzysztof Byrski: 345–356.

—. 2009. The Changes of Indian Ritualism: yajña versus pūjā. In: H. P. Ray (ed.). *Archeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 205–231.

—. 2014. Nāṭyaśāstra. In: *Oxford Bibliographies*. http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399318/obo-9780195399318-0071.xml.

Malinar, A. 2011. Vier Veden und der 'fünfte Veda'. Über Kanonbildung im Hinduismus. In: K. Kollmar-Paulenz et al. (eds.). *Kanon und Kanonisierung*:

Ein Schlüsselbegriff der Kulturwissenschaften im interdisziplinären Dialog. Basel: Schwabe: 182–211.

Meyer, J. J. 1937. Trilogie altindischer Muchte und Feste der Vegetation. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Religions- und Kulturgeschichte. In: *Fest- und Volkskunde*, 3: 116–134.

Miller, Ch. J. 1972. Bharata and the Authorship and Age of the Nātya Śāstra (Being an Exploratory Study). In: *Samskrita Ranga Annual*, 6. Special Felicitation Volume in Honour of Dr. V. Raghavan: 27–37.

Modak, B. R., 1993. *The Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda. A Study with Special Reference to the Pariśiṣṭas.* New Delhi: Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan in association with Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Parikh, J. T. 1951–1952. The Orthodox Tradition about the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama. In: *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*, 1(1–4): 338–342.

Patton, L. 1996. *Myth as Argument: The Bṛhaddevatā as Canonical Commentary.* Berlin–New York: De Gruyter.

Pusalker, A. D. 1940. *Bhāsa—A Study.* Lahore: Mehar Chand Lachhman Das.

Rocher, L. 1981. The Textual Tradition of the Bhāratīyanāṭyaśāstra: A Philological Assessment. In: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, 25: 107–130.

—. 1986. *The Purāṇas.* A History of Indian Literature, Vol. II, Fasc. 3. Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz.

—. 2000. Review: *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism.* Performing Arts Series 4. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994. In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 120(4): 631–632.

Rotman, A. 2009. The Power of Proximity: Creating and Venerating Shrines in Indian Buddhist Narratives. In: J. Hawkes and A. Shimada (eds.). *Buddhist Stūpas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical, and Historical Perspectives.* Delhi: Oxford University Press: 51–62.

Sanderson, A. 2007. Atharvavedins in Tantric Territory: The Āngirasakalpa Texts of the Oriya Paippalādins and their Connection with the Trika and the Kālīkula, with Critical Editions of the Parājapavidhi, the Parāmantravidhi, and the *Bhadrakālī-mantravidhiprakarana. In: A. Griffiths and A. Schmiedchen (eds.). *The Atharvaveda and its Paippalāda Śākhā: Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition.* Geisteskultur Indiens: Texte und Studien, 11, Indologica Halensis. Aachen: Shaker Verlag: 195–311.

—. 2009. The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period. In: S. Einoo (ed.). *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series 23. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture. University of Tokyo: 41–350.

Sathyanarayana, R. 1993. The Banner Festival of Indra. In: *Sangeet Natak*, 110: 3–13.

—. 2012. The Legends of Indramaha. In: K. K. Chakravarty (ed.). *Visvavara: Sanskrit for Human Survival. 15ᵗʰ World Sanskrit Conference*. New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan: 197–210.

Sastri, K. K. D. 1963. Pūrvaraṅga in Sanskrit Drama. In: *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, 1(2): 299–308.

Sinha, K. P. 1991–92. Vedic Origin of the Tantric Practices. In: *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 72/73(1/4). Amṛtamahotsava (1917–1992) Volume: 195–204.

Smith, F. M. 2011. A Brief History of Indian Religious Ritual and Resource Consumption. Was There an Environmental Ethic? In: *Asian Ethnology*, 70(2): 163–179.

—. 1987b. *The Vedic Sacrifice in Transition: A Translation and Study of the Trikāṇḍamaṇḍana of Bhāskara Miśra*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Smith, B. K. 1987a. Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for Defining Hinduism and Religion. In: *History of Religions*, 27(1): 32–55.

Srinivasan, A. S. 1980. *On the Composition of the Nāṭyaśāstra*. Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, Monographie 1. Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen.

Sullivan, B. M. 1999. *Seer of the Fifth Veda: Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa in the Mahābhārata*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Tarlekar, G. H. 1991. *Studies in the Nāṭyaśāstra, with Special Reference to the Sanskrit Drama in Performance*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Thieme, P. 1987. Sūtradhāra und Pūrvaraṅga. In: *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, 13/14: 289–300.

Tieken, H. 1998. Review: *Poetique du theatre Indien: Lectures du Nāṭyaśāstra* by Lyne Bansat-Boudon. In: *Asian Folklore Studies*, 57(1): 171–175.

—. 2001. The pūrvaraṅga, the prastāvanā, and the sthāpaka. In: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, 45: 91–124.

—. 2014. On Beginnings: Introductions and Prefaces in Kāvya. In: Y. Bronner, D. Shulman and G. Tubb (eds.). *Innovations and Turning Points: Towards a History of Kāvya Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 86–108.

Tripathi, K. D. 1992. Nāṭyaśāstra: Problems of Textual Criticism and Interpretation of Text. In: *Saṃskṛti Sandhāna: Journal of the National Research Institute of Human Culture*, 5: 81–89.

Tripathi, R. 1991. *Lectures on the Nāṭyaśāstra*. Publication of the Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit. Pune: University of Pune.

—. 1994–1995. Origin and Development of Theatre in Ancient India. In: *Sambodhi. Indological Research Journal of L. D. Institute of Indology*, 19: 1–20.

—. 1995. The Cosmic View of Raṅgadaivatapūjana. The Question of its Āgamic Background. In: B. Bäumer (ed.). *Prakṛti: The Integral Vision*. Vol. 3. *The Āgamic Tradition and the Arts*. New Delhi: D. K. Printworl: 79–85.

—. 2014. Aesthetics of the Mahābhārata. Traditional Interpretations. In: A. Chakrabarti and S. Bandyopadhyay (eds.). *Mahabharata Now: Narration, Aesthetics, Ethics*. London: Routledge: 85–94.

Vatsyayan, K. 1989. The Nāṭyaśāstra—A History of Criticism. In: A. L. Dallapiccola (ed.). *Shastric Traditions in Indian Arts*. Vol. 1. *Texts*. Beiträge zur Südasienforschung 125. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag: 333–338.

—. 1996. *Bharata: The Nāṭyaśāstra*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy.

Viennot, O. 1954. *Le culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Wijesekera, O. H. A. 1941. Buddhist Evidence for the Early Existence of Drama. In: *Indian History Quarterly*, 17(2): 196–206.