

LARS KJAERHOLM

VIḷAKKIDU KALYĀṆAM

A marriage-like pre-puberty ritual of the Kārkāṭṭa Vēḷāḷar of Tamil Nadu

*Introduction*

The Kārkāṭṭa Vēḷāḷar (in the following: K.V.) is a subcaste of the Vēḷḷāḷa group of castes in Tamil Nadu. Members of this caste are found in small numbers in all districts of Tamil Nadu, and in some places they are concentrated and are the locally "dominant" caste. They resemble very much the much more numerous Koṇḍaikāṭṭi Vēḷāḷar<sup>1</sup>, and are like them predominantly Śaivite and very strict vegetarians. The position of K.V. and Koṇḍaikāṭṭi Vēḷāḷar in the caste hierarchy is also very similar. They are both placed next to Brahmans due to their strong commitment to Śaivism and vegetarianism.

The dominant position of these two castes is also due, in some measure, to their involvement in the Hindu revivalism of the Middle Ages, which produced over the centuries the many *bhakti* poets of Tamil Nadu. Both these castes have contrived to combine everything which can possibly heighten the status of a caste, and they have a position which is quite unique in India, when one considers that they are to be classed as Śūdras according to the *varṇa* system of four classes. The position of the Vēḷḷāḷa castes in Tamil Nadu is in fact strikingly different from that of agricultural castes in the rest of India.

The Vēḷḷāḷar have made attempts to classify themselves as Vaiśyas or even Kṣatriyas, but there is no doubt that they should be classed as Śūdras, since they are a purely agricultural caste. Nevertheless they command the respect of such castes as the Maravar, who are no less dominant and royal than the Vēḷḷāḷar. Throughout history the



Figure 1. *Viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam*. Photographed by Lars Kjaerholm.

high-ranking Veḷḷāḷa castes of Tamil Nadu have allied themselves with both royal power and Brahmans, and this double alliance has given them their unrivalled position in the local hierarchy.

### *Śaiva Siddhānta and Veḷḷāḷar*

Due to the special situation in South-India — the scarcity of Brahmans, the general lack of a real foundation of the varna system as a model for the caste system — the Veḷḷāḷa castes have been able to take over a large part of the role, which should have been played by Brahmans. During the Hindu revival in the Middle Ages many Veḷḷāḷar participated as poets and founders of Śaiva religious institutions, *maṭhs*, which propagated Śaiva culture.

Now it can be argued how important or dominant the Veḷḷāḷar really were in this cultural renaissance. Kamil Zvelebil says that Indian and Soviet scholars have taken a wrong view of the class orientation of the bhakti movement. The impression has been created that this was a movement initiated by the lower castes and the Veḷḷāḷar, and that very few of the higher castes played a role. But Zvelebil takes a more sober view of this and points out that 35 per cent of the bhakti poets were Brahmans, 35 per cent were Kṣatriyas, and only 20 per cent were of Veḷḷāḷa origin, and the remaining 10 per cent of either low or unknown origin.<sup>2</sup>

But even when we take these reservations into consideration, the important fact remains,

"that like Brahmans and religious sects dominated by Brahmans, non-Brahmans, especially Vellalars, can lay claim to a philosophy of their own as erudite and 'Hindu' as any. Many well-known philosophers and poets were Vellalars, and the importance of the Mats, the religious institutions, should not be ignored, as they must have helped to build up Vellalar esteem. In some of them, the leader may be taken from any of the non-Brahman vegetarian castes such as the Vellalar, the Chettiyar and Mudaliyar; in fact only people from such non-Brahman castes may be eligible in some Mats...It is also worth mentioning that the important Śaiva philosopher Meikandar was a Vellalar. The Śaiva philosophy has since come to be known as the Meikanda system".<sup>3</sup>

One example of such an important link between Veḷḷāḷar and the bhakti movement is the Dharmapuram Adhīnam near Māyūrā in Tanjore district. It was founded by Guru Nānasambandar, who lived in the 16th century. The purpose of this richly endowed institution is to spread

Śaivism in all its aspects in Tamil Nadu, educate the followers of Śaivism in its philosophy and keep up the tradition of singing the Tamil Śaivite hymns - the Tēvāram. I have visited the place and recorded Tēvāram songs, as they are still being taught there.

Since the *maṭh* was founded by a K.V. and the present head of the institution is also of this caste, the place is very important for the K.V. All Śaiva, i.e. pure vegetarian non-brahman castes, may attend the place or eventually become leaders of it. These castes are the K.V., the Koṇḍaikaṭṭi Vellāḷar, the Śaiva Ceṭṭiyar and the Cōḷiya Vēḷāḷar. They are the leading non-Brahman castes which were active in the Hindu revival on the Śaiva side.

Apart from Dharmapuram, the K.V. have also been connected with other maṭhs, namely Tiruvāvaḍuturai and Sūryanārkōyil, as founders and/or spiritual heads in some periods. The time of the greatest spiritual importance is no doubt past for these three maṭhs, since the days of revivalism are so far gone. But still they function and spread their influence. In everyday religious matters, however, the K.V. are served by Brahman priests. In the Chola area the Kañjanūr Ayyar are the gurus of all the K.V. in the district. They (the Brahmans) are concentrated in two villages on the northern bank of the Kāveri. They collect an annual *mānya* (gift) from them, and are called to the homes of all K.V. on all auspicious occasions.

The close association of the K.V. with the bhakti movement notwithstanding, they were influenced to a high degree by Brahmanical ideals.

"Both men and women after a certain stage had their Śivadīkṣā and they observed their anuṣṭhāna (corresponding to the Brahmin sandhyāvandana) every morning and evening. In the evening members of both the sexes attended the evening temple services.. (in the Śiva temple).. A good percentage of both performed their Ātmārtha Śiva pūjā"<sup>4</sup>

The K.V. usually live near Śiva temples to which they are closely connected. This is the case in Tirunelvēli town, where they live in some streets to the west of the local Śiva temple, and in the nearby village, Rājavallipuram, where there is a large Naṭarāja temple outside the village, and a large Akhilāṇḍeśvari temple in-

side it. Both these temples have K.V. as patrons. In Rājavallipuram they were the local dominant caste who owned all the land and are still today the ones who pay for the temple festivals. The obligation to do that is taken up by each family in turn, but those who cannot afford to do it will pass it on to someone who can. As the dominant donators of land to these temples, the K.V. have the greatest influence on the administration of them. In this way, the K.V. in Rājavallipuram, with whom I carried out field work from Sept. 1978 to March 1979, stand out among the worshippers of the higher Hindu gods in the village. There are also some members of other higher castes, like Kōṇār, Ōduvār, Koṇḍaikarṭti, Śaiva Veḷḷālar, very few Brahmans, Kambar and Kōttu Pillaimār, but the K.V. have monopolized the role of patrons of the temples for the higher gods. At the same time they have also donated land for religious institutions in the village which propagate the bhakti school of thought, and where the children of these high caste people learn the Tēvāram songs. So one could say that the K.V. have a double strategy. They have attached themselves very firmly to the worship of the high gods, but at the same time they have associated themselves closely with the popular form of Hinduism, the bhakti movement, and hence, because the songs of this movement are in Tamil, with modern Tamil nationalism.

There is one feature about the religion of the K.V. which sets them apart from Brahmans, however, and that is their family deities. These lesser gods and goddesses are worshipped by a lineage or a family, when something important happens like a wedding, the naming of a child, or a burial or some other rite of passage. I encountered the following family deities in Rājavallipuram:

Cāttan, Vīraṇār, Kiḷakkulamādan. Śāstā (under the name of Tavacittambirān), Taṇappasvāmi, Vīranāyaṇārpāppātti, and also two forms of Viṣṇu, one Gopālasvāmi, the other Maṇaikkāttapiravipperumāl.<sup>a</sup>

In the village there are shrines for some of these family gods. Tavacittambirān and Vīranāyaṇārpāppātti have small stone shrines with stone images of the gods. Taṇappasvāmi was thought to reside in a tree in the village, and one informant showed me three stones in his backyard and told me that this was Maṇaikkāttapiravipperumāl. Some had their family gods in far-away places, some could not remember

who their family gods were, but were certain that they had one. A few said, that they had no family god, or rather their family god was Akhilāṇḍeśvari and they worshipped her in the local temple.

One should perform pūjā for one's family god whenever there is an important function in the family, and at certain important festivals like Poṅgal, but very few did that now, and it seemed that the family deities were on the way to being forgotten a generation or two from now. About family deities Arunachalam says: "The Kārkāttār lived around Śiva temples. If there were no temple for Śiva, they built at least a temple for Vināyaka. Worship of Māriamman, Ayyanār etc. there was no doubt of; but this was frowned upon by them, although their family tutelary deity (Kula Deivam) was usually some form of Śakti, such as Periyānāyaki, Ankālamman, Māriyamman, etc."<sup>5</sup> But in Rājavallipuram I found no such goddesses as family deities, but then there may be regional differences in this, since Arunachalam himself is from Tanjore, and my data were obtained in the Tirunelvēli district.

One exception to the general neglect in the worship of family deities was a group of wealthy land-owning K.V. families in Rājavallipuram who had Gopālasvāmi as their kula-deivam. The svāmi was thought to reside in a small copper vessel. This was an ordinary household vessel, but according to legend there was once a snake in it which followed it around wherever the vessel was placed. When the women tried to use it for household purposes it would topple or a snake would appear. It was then realized that Gopālasvāmi had taken possession of the vessel, and in a group of families this vessel is now kept by each family in turn. When a death occurs in a family where the vessel is kept, it will be removed from that house and kept in another house, and so on. If there is a function which requires the worship of Gopālasvāmi, the other families will come to the house where he is currently residing, and will ask the Brahman priest to come there and perform pūjā to him.

It seems that in the matter of choosing family deities, the K.V. rather follow local habits. In the area where I studied them, in Tirunelvēli, the preference is for male family gods, also among the lower castes. There seemed to be no territorial attachment to the

family god. If people moved, they were likely to change their family god, and a marriage to a rich woman could result in the man taking over the family god of his father-in-law, rather than his own father's, as is usually the case. The K.V. lineages are grouped in exogamous clans, and when a woman marries, she always leaves her own clan and joins that of the husband. Likewise she usually takes over his kula-deyvam, but there are examples of the opposite.

There is no special attachment of a K.V. kula-deyvam to a particular clan or lineage, except what may have been created by accident in particular family histories. Two families of different clans may have the same family deity, and two families of the same clan may have different family deities in different localities. Obviously there are no clearly discernible patterns in the area of family deities, and the whole question is no doubt incompletely understood and studied. As Marie-Louise Reiniche says in her pioneering study<sup>6</sup> the actual relation between a family and its deity is not yet completely understood, and it also differs enormously even inside the limited area of Tamil Nadu.

*The Origin of the Name Kārkāttār*

The origin myth of the Kārkāṭṭa Vellāḷar is found in many different sources, among them the Tinnevely Gazetteer, but I quote it here from "The Great Temple of Madurai"<sup>7</sup>:

"During the reign of Ukkirapandian, Indiran once bade the seas destroy Madurai. The Lord appeared in the king's dream and said: 'Use the spear given by your father, and the sea will recede.' Madurai was thus saved from going the way of the first two Tamil Sangams.

Indiran caused a famine in the land by preventing rain. The enraged Pandyan imprisoned four of Indira's clouds. Indiran engaged the Pandyan in battle, but the Lord was on the side of the Pandyan. He finally pleaded for the release of the clouds, promising to send rain. Pandyan was sceptical about the sincerity of this offer. At that time an old man of the Vellala community came forward to stand surety for Indiran. Pandyan released the clouds and there was rain in the land. Vellalas are therefore sometimes referred to as Karkathars ('Saviours of clouds')."

The Tinnevely Gazetteer also suggests that the K.V. may have come from a place called Kāraikāḍu, hence the name Kārkāṭṭār. Arunachalam quotes these explanations and adds this to the cloud story:

"From that day the Velalars came to be called the Kār-Kāttār, 'the saviours of the clouds'. Indira was also much pleased and he showered many presents on them, chief among them being his own white elephant Irāvata, and his own horse Uchaisravam. In memory of this incident, these two can still be seen during the Kārkāttār wedding ceremonies installed in the centre close to the home fire place, round which the newly wedded bride and bridegroom walk three times."<sup>8</sup>

Now the Kārkāttār have by no means monopoly of horse and elephant symbols, but what is interesting in this case is how the legend stresses the ability of the K.V. to get good crops through their good relations with the rain god. The clay elephant and horse have an opening on top, in which are placed seven pots, each smaller than the other. These pots are painted blue and symbolize the clouds of the legend told above. This is in a way evidence of the divine calling of the K.V. to be master agriculturists. The animals which symbolize Indra, the rain god, together with the blue pots, represent the water element very strongly at the K.V. wedding but of course all four elements are represented, as is usual at Hindu marriages.

Arunachalam also mentions a number of other possible etymological explanations of the name Kārkāttār, but since the cloud legend is the one which is known to most K.V. according to my observations, I will limit myself to it here.

Another source, R.S. Subramania Pillai says that seven villages were given in pledge by the K.V. for the four clouds of Indra, hence the seven pots on the horse and elephant.<sup>9</sup> The same book also mentions that Indra gave the K.V. a thousand lamps, and this is worth noting, since the worship of the lamp is a distinguishing feature of the K.V. women, something which I will return to in the following paragraph.

*Viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam and navatāli*

This ritual has a place of prominence in the culture of the people who perform it, the Kārkātta Veḷḷālar. The ritual seems to be observed by almost all in Tirunelvēli district, whereas it has fallen into disuse in others. One informant in Tanjore told me that it has been almost abandoned, and is now performed by only "one in a thousand". During my fieldwork in the Rājavallipuram, although I questioned almost all the locally residing K.V. closely on this question, I found almost no cases where the ritual had been



neglected. In fact only in a single case, can I say, was the ritual not carried out. That was a girl who was born crippled and therefore would never be married, and then it was superfluous to perform the ritual.

In one other instance the ritual was not performed, because the girl had been away for education, but immediately before her wedding her family intended to carry it out, since it is a very necessary ingredient in a K.V. marriage, as we shall see in a moment.

The ritual is performed for girls, but it is not a puberty ritual, since it must be performed before puberty at the age of either five, seven or nine. There is of course also a puberty ceremony, when the girl has her first menstruation. When the girl reaches the appropriate age, the ritual is performed on Poṅgal day, or on the following day in some places. It may, however, be performed on any convenient day if the parties involved should decide so.

The ritual consists simply of the girl's mother's father tying a necklace round the neck of the girl. This necklace is a set of nine gold pearls and ten coral pearls on a gold chain or a string of yellow cotton. In the middle there is a flat piece of gold, with an image of Śakti stamped on it (in Tanjore district), or (in Tirunelvēli) a round gold ball studded with red stones.

The necklace is called *kuḍaicamaṇi*<sup>b</sup> or *navatāli*, and some of those I have seen in Tirunelvēli were of the type with the round gold ball with red stones. The necklace seems to be part of a ceremony which represents a pseudo-marriage of the girl to the person who ties it round her neck, the mother's father. He is also the one who pays the *navatāli*, and he must also give the girl two small ghee lamps made of either bronze or silver, which represent Śiva and Śakti. The cost of these things alone can run pretty high. They are made by a goldsmith, who works exclusively for the K.V.

The ritual takes place in the girl's home, and her father has to pay for the feast after the ritual, where sometimes hundreds of people are invited. The grandfather also gives the girl clothes and jewels, if he can afford it. If the mother's father is dead, his brother will

not take over the responsibility. Then the mother's brother must do it. The rule is that it must be the oldest male member of the mother's nearest kin who performs the ritual. When a suitable relative is not available, the father may pay for the navatāli and lamps himself, and ask some distant relative to perform the ceremony.

According to some informants viḷakkidu kalyāṇam means a symbolic marriage to the nine planets. Others said that this was not the case, it was a marriage to the sun god, and some were of the opinion that it was an initiation to the worship of Śiva, "He Who is in the Form of Light". However that may be, the girl is certainly initiated into the worship of the lamp. The ritual also means that she is initiated to the domestic duties of the household, including cooking. The girl's brothers are obliged to supply her with wicks and ghee for the lamps every Poṅgal day throughout their lives, and also a little money until she becomes a widow or dies.

One lamp is called *kaiviḷakku*, the other *akaviḷakku*. On Poṅgal day, which is the first day in the Tamil month of Tai (January 14th), the Poṅgal ceremony is performed early in the morning as the sun rises. After that, at an auspicious time decided by an astrologer, the viḷakkidu kalyāṇam is performed. Poṅgal is offered to the sun god, the navatāli is tied around the girl's neck, she lights the lamps, and then circles them five times if she is five years old etc.

Poṅgal is raw rice cooked with sugar, and is the South Indian way of celebrating the new year. The poṅgal should boil up and flow over the rim of the vessel in the first rays of the sun. On Poṅgal day the girl is seated outside the house on the porch on a special dais with her mother's father. If she is five years old, five pots containing poṅgal will be brought out into the rays of the sun, etc. One of these pots must be given by the mother's father, the others by the girl's father.

While the girl is sitting on the porch, there may be preparations made in the house to remember the dead. Some remarkable man or woman will be remembered by keeping the person's clothing, dhoti or sari, in a special basket. These clothes will then be soaked with water and shaped in the form of human figures. Offerings of poṅgal

and *payacam* (a sort of liquid sweet) will then be made to the soul of the dead on palm leaves.

Meanwhile the girl will light the two lamps outside on the porch, and her grandfather will tie the *navatāli*. She is then taken into the house and prostrates in front of the images of the dead. Then she is brought back outside and sits on the dais, and relatives and friends come to bless her. The following day the girl lights the lamps again in the morning and in the evening. If there are any left-overs of the wick and ghee, they will be thrown in a rice-field and supposedly make it more fertile.

The girl is now initiated into the worship of the lamp, which she will from then on do regularly. The special lamp ceremony will be repeated every *Poṅgal*, and the girl will receive clothes, money, ghee, wicks, and other things from the maternal grandfather. After her marriage, these responsibilities are taken over by her father, and after his death by her brother.

After the *navatāli* ceremony the girl supposedly wears the *navatāli* till she is married, but nowadays she takes it off after the ceremony. At the girl's marriage, the middle gold pearl and two coral pearls are taken from the *navatāli* and attached to the real *tāli*, but usually this is substituted for with a small gold replica of these three pearls. The rest of the *navatāli* is then placed on the clay pot in the shape of an elephant, which is found at all K.V. weddings (referred to earlier).

Should the woman die a *sumāṅgali* (a married woman), her *tāli* is removed by her husband, but the small piece from the *navatāli* will follow the dead woman to the burial ground and will be burned with her body.

#### *Explanatory legends and lore about viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam*

There are several explanations among the K.V. of how the *viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam* was initiated, and what the meaning of the *navatāli* is. It is generally assumed that coral has a certain medical value, since it helps to keep the body "heat" down. The fact that there are ten coral pearls has a certain magical importance, like the number nine of gold pearls. The exact meaning of these numbers was, however, not known to my informants. The K.V. in *Tirunelvēli* presented me with

three different explanations of how the ritual originated, and they are listed below.

(1) The *viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam* is a pseudo-marriage. It was begun in order to protect the K.V. girls from being molested by the muslim invaders led by Malik Kafur in the Middle Ages. Since the muslims did not touch married women, the ritual was begun in order to make the K.V. girls look like married women. One informant found that the coral pearls strengthened this hypothesis, since the muslims use coral pearls in their *tāli*. This explanation was the one I was commonly offered.

(2) Once upon a time the *Saptaṛṣis* (the seven notes) were so impressed with the beauty of the K.V. girls that they snatched some of them away. From then on, the *navatāli* - which symbolizes the nine planets - was introduced to invoke the protection of the nine planets against the *Saptaṛṣis*.<sup>c</sup>

(3) When Kundavi, the mother of *Karṇaṇ*, was playing one day at the age of five, a saint happened to pass by. He saw her, looked at her palm and found that when she grew up, she would be barren. He was saddened by this and said: "Remember these six mantras which I will give you. If you say one of them and look at a male person, you will have one baby, if you say all six, you will have six babies". One day when she was still five years old, Kundavi said one mantra while she was looking at the sun, and immediately she had a baby. Kundavi took the baby and put it in a pail and let it float on the river. She was married later to *Pāṇḍu Mahārāja* and had five sons by him. When she was six years old, the saint came back and said: "this cannot go on happening from generation to generation, so it is better that I tell you how to remove the power from the mantras. Take ten coral pearls and nine gold pearls (signifying *navaśakti*, the nine powers); if you take this chain and let your girls wear it between the age of five and until marriage, the mantras will lose their power."

According to this legend, the K.V. are descended from *Dēvēndraṇ*, the sun god. Both Kundavi and *Pāṇḍu* were K.V., and Kundavi's first son, *Karṇaṇ*, later became a king, known from the *Mahābhārata*.

Legend three has a distinct upper-class character, and it was told me by a man from a patrician family in Tirunelvēli town, descended from a very wealthy taḥsīldār (tax collector). This legend was not known to my other informants.

I witnessed one viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam on Poṅgal day 1979 in a house belonging to a K.V. family in Rājavallipuram, whose family deity was Gopalasvāmi, and the Brahman priest who usually performed the rituals for this god also helped at the lamp worship ceremony. But I was told that the Brahman priest is not necessary at this ritual, and either an Ōduvār or a gurukkaḷ may assist. (A gurukkaḷ is a non-brahman priest, either a K.V. an Ōduvār, or a man of any other high caste, who has been initiated at an early age into Śaivite rituals. Theoretically any K.V. can become gurukkaḷ, and they may be initiated at Dharmapuram Maṭh.) The Brahman priest also performed pūjā for Gopalasvāmi. There were almost no guests at this function, but Kambar musicians were playing *nāgasvaram* and *tavul* (drum).

### *Conclusion*

Apart from the fanciful explanations offered by the K.V. for the viḷakkiḍu kalyāṇam, the message of this ritual is clear enough. The young K.V. girl is initiated into the worship of the lamp and into the household duties—including cooking.<sup>d</sup> The navatāli announces that she is unmarried but marriageable and a true K.V. girl, who is properly brought up and able to cook pure vegetarian food, as is required by a K.V. to keep up his extreme degree of purity.

What is signalled is the purity of the caste, which is somehow greater even than that of other vegetarian Veḷḷāḷa castes, like the Śaiva Veḷḷāḷār. The unique position of the K.V. in the caste hierarchy is recognized by all the other castes in Rājavallipuram. Although there may be differences of opinion among some of them about their relative position, there was universal agreement that the K.V. is the highest ranking caste next to Brahmins.

The legends quoted above are also very concerned with the purity of the K.V. women, and the importance to preserve it. The fact that the ritual must be performed before puberty also adds to the purity element in it, and puts the ritual in its right context, - a series

of rituals, a life style — designed to keep up the very high ritual status by stressing the ritual purity of K.V. women.

The vilakkiḍu kalyāṇam can also be viewed from an alliance point of view as yet another occasion to bring two lineages together, but to explain this further would go outside the limits of this paper.

#### Notes

- 1) The Koṇḍaikāṭṭi Vēlāḷars have been described by Barnett 1970.
- 2) Zvelebil 1973, p. 192.
- 3) Arunachalam 1974, pp. 204-205.
- 4) Arunachalam 1975, p. 24.
- 5) Arunachalam 1975, p. 24.
- 6) Reiniche 1979.
- 7) Palaniappan 1970, pp. 85-86.
- 8) Arunachalam 1975, p. 11.
- 9) Subramania Pillai 1930, p. 19.

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*Additional notes*

- a. Cāttan̄ is possibly identical to Śāstā, whose name is often spelt Cāttan̄ in Tamil.

Kilakkulamāḍan̄: 'Māḍan of the eastern tank'. Names of gods ending in -māḍan̄ designate a group of lesser Dravidian deities.

Tavacittambirān̄: derived from the Sanskrit word *tapasvin* 'one who does *tapas*'. It means now one who does service in a Śaiva maṭh, especially a cook. In Tirunelvēli it is common among the Vēḷāḷar to call a cook *tavaci*. Tambirān̄ is a title used by non-brahman gurus in Śaiva sects in Tanjore. It was the title of the Kārkāṭṭa heads of Tiruvāḍaturai maṭh, which has a branch in Tirunelvēli district near Vīravanallūr.

Vīranāyanārpāppātti means 'the (dear) wife of Vīranāyanār', a local deity. Like Vīranār, Vīranāyanār is possibly a hero, who came to be worshipped as a god after his death.

Manakkāttapiravipperumāl 'Piravipperumāl who protects the house'. *Manai* means 'house'; *kāṭṭa* is from *kā* 'to protect'. *Piravi* means 'birth', and *Perumāl* is a name for Viṣṇu. *Piravipperumāl* is a common name among the Vēḷāḷar.

- b. Kuḍaicamaṇi: 'kuḍai' is from *kuḍai* 'to perforate, bore a hole in something'; *maṇi* means 'gold bead, jewel'.
- c. There is to my knowledge no written confirmation that the saptarṣis are identical to the seven notes. This notion was, however, widespread among my informants.
- d. The actual initiation into household duties is done in a special ceremony on *ciruvittu pōṅgal*. This ceremony is not necessarily connected with *viḷakkīḍu kalyāṇam*. It is repeated every year until the girl is married. The ceremony is not exclusive to the Kārkāṭṭar.

I am grateful to Dr. P. R. Subramanian, Köln University, for help with the etymological explanations.