

5 Three Goddesses

Ekāmrānātha and Kāmākṣī are *the* divine couple of Kanchipuram, and well known at a supra-regional level. Their union is announced on festival posters and invitation letters; yet, in the contemporary re-enactment of the divine marriage, Ekāmrānātha is married to Ēlavārkuḷali, from the Ekāmrānātha temple, while Kāmākṣī joins the marriage celebrations. In the afternoon of the wedding day, Ēlavārkuḷali meets Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl in Okkapiranthan Kulam. Both goddesses accompany Ēlavārkuḷali in the evening in the bridal procession to the Ekāmrānātha temple, where the marriage rituals are performed with Ekāmrānātha and Ēlavārkuḷali. A popular interpretation of the present day performance is that Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl are recognized as Ēlavārkuḷali's sisters or female friends (Tam. *tōḷi*) who serve as bridesmaids.

Why are these three goddesses—Ēlavārkuḷali, Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl—involved in the marriage rituals, and how are they related to each other and to Ekāmrānātha? The similarity of both the names and iconography of the festival statues of the accompanying goddesses—Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl—is striking, and points to a special relationship between them. Moreover, one could ask why Kāmākṣī joins the ceremonies as bridesmaid and not as the bride? One reason, among others, involves the goddess Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. Her festival image was used in the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram marriage rituals up to the end of the seventeenth century, until she was shifted to Thanjavur and possibly replaced by the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali.

This chapter investigates each goddess from a historical perspective and analyzes their contemporary roles, identities and relations to each other. The information is based on epigraphical and literary documents, and the representations of the goddesses from the perspective of their priests and temple administrations.

5.1 Kāmākṣī, Kāmakoṭi and the Kāmakoṭṭam

Kāmākṣī today is considered the supreme goddess of Kanchipuram, and her temple is an important center for goddess worship in South India. She is identified with Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the great goddess of the Tantric Śrīvidyā cult. Kāmākṣī is often named together with the goddess Viśālākṣī of Varanasi and Mīnākṣī of Madurai, forming a triad, distinguished by their eyes (Skt. *akṣi*). However, to the best of my knowledge, the first reference to the goddess in Kanchipuram with the name Kāmākṣī occurs in an inscription from the Vijayanagara king Harihara II, dated to 1392 CE.¹ Earlier literary sources and inscriptions address the goddess and consort of Ekāmrānātha by the name Kāmakoṭi

1 ARE 1890, No. 29 and ARE 1954/55, No. 316.

(‘creeper of desire’), or as Periya-Nācciyār of Kāmakōṭṭam (‘Great Lady of Kāmakōṭṭam’), which is discussed below.

Kanchipuram’s goddess in the *Tēvāram*

In the *Tēvāram*, a collection of Tamil Śaiva devotional hymns composed by the poet saints Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar between the seventh and ninth centuries, three references can be found, which possibly allude to the goddess in Kanchipuram. They refer to the names Kāmakōṭi, Kāmakōṭṭi and Kāmakōṭṭam.

The poet saint Campantar, who lived in the first half of the seventh century, mentions in a hymn (2.36.4), which is dedicated to Śiva in Irumpūlai,² Kāmakōṭi of Kanchipuram. The stanza reads: “You, who worship with desire. Please, tell us. Why are you roaming around begging for food, with the god of Irumpūlai on your head (= having bowed to him), together with Kāmakōṭi of Kacci.”³ Kacci is the ancient name of Kanchipuram, and Kāmakōṭi can be translated as ‘creeper (*koṭi*) of desire (*kāma*)’.⁴ Therefore, it seems to be a reference to the goddess Kāmakōṭi in Kanchipuram. Yet, it is surprising that the goddess of Kanchipuram is named, while the hymn is dedicated to Śiva in Irumpūlai. Nagaswamy (1982: 207) suggests that the goddess of Irumpūlai was possibly also called Kāmakōṭi, because the name was generally applied to Śiva’s consort. The image of the ‘creeper’ alludes to the union of Śiva with his consort, either in intimate embrace or in the form of Ardhanārīśvara (half male and half female form).⁵ However, the reference to Kanchipuram in the hymn is perhaps too obvious to take the term Kāmakōṭi in this case as a general appellation for Śiva’s consort. It remains unclear why Kāmakōṭi of Kanchipuram is mentioned in a hymn dedicated to Śiva in Irumpūlai, and how the two places and their deities are related.

Another reference in the *Tēvāram* is from the poet saint Appar, who also lived in the first half of the seventh century. The hymn (6.4.10) is dedicated to Śiva in Tiruvatikai Vīraṭṭam.⁶ The stanza reads: “His mountainous chest has the wounds from having fought with the two breasts of Kāmakōṭṭi, who has lips like a ripe fruit.”⁷ Kāmakōṭṭi means ‘the one who lives in Kāmakōṭṭam’. Since the stanza refers to wounds (Tam. *tarambu*) on Śiva’s chest from the breasts of the goddess, it seemed obvious to take it as an allusion to

2 What is now the village Alankuti, located between Thanjavur and Tiruvarur.

3 *Tēvāram* 2.36.4, translation based on a draft of David Shulman. The English rendering in the *Digital Tēvāram* translates “joining with Kāmakōṭi, who is prominent in Kacci.”

4 However, Devasenapati (1975: 13) is of the opinion that Kāmakōṭi refers to Kāmakōṭṭam and not Kāmakōṭi, Śiva’s ‘creeper of desire’. He argues that a differentiation between long and short vowel has always been made in spoken Tamil, but in written Tamil only since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Before that, only *o* was used in writing, as stone inscriptions show. Therefore, he reads *kōṭi* with long vowel *ō*, instead of *koṭi*. However, the name Kāmakōṭi would signify that the goddess bestows a core (*kōṭi*) of wishes (*kāma*), but not a reference to Kāmakōṭṭam. Devasenapati does not explain the doubling of *t* to read *kōṭṭi*. It remains unclear, how Campantar’s hymn should refer to Kāmakōṭṭam. Moreover, the *o* in Kāmakōṭi should be metrically short (as David Shulman pointed out to me).

5 See Venkataraman (1968: 7).

6 The village Tiruvatigai near Panruti.

7 *Tēvāram* 6.4.10, translation based on a draft of David Shulman.

Kāmākṣī's embrace in the Kanchipuram 'marriage myth'.⁸ However, Nagaswamy (1982: 205) suggests that the marks on Śiva's chest refer to the love play of Śiva and his consort, indicated by the vocabulary of "amorous force." This idea does not match with the Kanchipuram myth, in which the goddess's embrace serves to protect Śiva's body from the flood in the Kampā Nadī. Thus, he is of the opinion that Kāmakkōṭṭi in this stanza refers to 'the one who lives in the Kāmakkōṭṭam' in Tiruvatikai Vīraṭṭam.⁹ Yet, in my view, an allusion to Kāmakkōṭṭi in Kanchipuram is for two reasons possible. First, the goddess's embrace in the Kanchipuram myth, especially references to the marks of her nipples, obviously has sexual connotations¹⁰ (see Chapter Three). Second, *Tēvāram* hymns have place names and the localized form of the god as structuring principle, but particularly in Appar's hymns, the praise of Śiva's nature is more prominent than references to the sacred site (Orr 2014: 195). Thus, the stanza can refer to the known myth of Śiva in Kanchipuram.

A clear reference to the Kāmakkōṭṭam in Kanchipuram is made in a *Tēvāram* hymn by the poet saint Cuntarar, who lived in the first half of the ninth century. One stanza in Cuntarar's hymn (7.5.6) on Śiva in Ōṇakāntaṇṭaḷi near Kanchipuram begins as follows: "Here is the Kāmakkōṭṭam in the ancient town Kacci (Kanchipuram)."¹¹ (Tam. *kacci mūtūrk kāmakkōṭṭam uṇṭāka*). Venkataraman (1968: 7) renders *uṇṭāka* as "now that it has come into existence," which in his opinion implies that the Kāmakkōṭṭam did not exist before. Therefore, he argues that the Kāmakkōṭṭam in Kanchipuram was established shortly before Cuntarar's visit to Ōṇakāntaṇṭaḷi, which would place its foundation at the beginning of the ninth century. In contrast, Shulman¹² and Peterson¹³ translate the hymn in the present tense "there is/exists," which gives no indication of the time of its establishment. In any case, Cuntarar makes in this hymn an explicit reference to the Kāmakkōṭṭam in Kanchipuram. This suggests that the abode of Śiva's consort in Kanchipuram was known as Kāmakkōṭṭam by the beginning of the ninth century, whether it has been established recently, or some time ago.

8 See, for example, Devasenapati (1993: 12) or the English rendering given in the *Digital Tēvāram*: "in the chest which can be compared to a mountain there are impressions which acquired beauty when the two breasts of the goddess, Kāmakkōṭṭi (Kāmākṣi) who has lips like the flawless coral and the red fruit of the common creeper of the hedges embraced the chest as if they were waging war against it."

9 Understanding the reference in this way implies that several places or shrines called Kāmakkōṭṭam existed as early as the seventh century. This contradicts the theory of Srinivasan (1951: 56), who is of the opinion that the Kāmakkōṭṭam in Kanchipuram was the first renowned place of the goddess, so that the name was used to designate goddess's shrines after the eleventh century. However, I find Srinivasan's argument to be a rather weak one. I rather subscribe to Nagaswamy (1982: 205), who questions the theory that the Kāmakkōṭṭam originated from Kanchipuram and spread to other places.

10 Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1987: 45) points to this erotic variant of the woundend *liṅga* motif, too.

11 Translation of Cuntarar 7.5.6 by Shulman (1990: 32): "Here is the Kāmakkōṭṭam in the ancient town of Kacci, its groves dark with clouds, where you placed the Lady who never leaves your broad chest covered with honey-rich *koṇṇrai*, the Mountain Girl with flowing dark hair and eyes long as swords. You placed her here so the world would prosper. Why, then, do you travel the villages looking elsewhere for alms, you who are in Ōṇakāntaṇṭaḷi?"

12 See footnote above.

13 Translation of Peterson (1989: 234): "Lord who lives in Ōṇakāntaṇṭaḷi, why do you go begging for alms in the ancient city of Kacci with its dark woods, when your Goddess who has long, dark hair and eyes curved like swords, the mountain's daughter who wears the *koṇṇrai* garland brimming with honey on her high breasts, abides here in the Kāmakkōṭṭam shrine for the salvation of the world?"

What exactly is the Kāmakōṭṭam?

The Tamil word *kōṭṭam* (Skt. *koṣṭha*) means place or temple. Therefore, Kāmakōṭṭam can be rendered as ‘place of desire (*kāma*)’ or as a temple that houses the one who is desirable—the goddess. Srinivasan (1946, 1951) was perhaps the first to explore the topic of ‘Kāmakōṭṭam’. He defines Kāmakōṭṭam as “the name given in inscriptions to the separate shrine dedicated to Parvati or Devi installed and consecrated as the Consort of Lord Śiva” (1946: 3). Srinivasan shows that the construction of a separate shrine for the goddess within the Śiva temple complex started in South India at the beginning of the eleventh century, and flourished thereafter. In the early Chola period, from the ninth to the eleventh century, it was common to build eight sub-shrines (*aṣṭaparivāra*) around the main sanctum. The sub-shrines usually contained the deities Sūrya, Saptamātṛkās, Gaṇeśa, Jyeṣṭhā, Subrahmaṇya, Caṇḍeśa, Candra and Nandin, but none of them housed the goddess as consort of Śiva. The earliest epigraphical reference to a shrine for Śiva’s consort as a new structural element in the temple layout is from the reign of Rājendra I (ca. 1012–1043 CE). In the later half of the Chola period (from the eleventh to the thirteenth century) numerous temples constructed their separate shrine for the goddess, either as an addition to an existing temple, or from scratch in newly built temples. The goddess’s shrine can be found almost invariably on the northern side of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* or in the forecourt, facing south. With the growing importance of the shrine for the goddess, the sub-shrines of the earlier period gradually disappeared. The succeeding Vijayanagar and Nayaka kingdoms continued the practice of including a separate shrine dedicated to the goddess within the temple complex. From the twelfth century onwards these goddess’s shrines are referred to in inscriptions as Kāmakōṭṭam¹⁴ and the goddess is frequently addressed as Periya-Nācciyār of Tirukāmakōṭṭam¹⁵ (‘Great Lady of the holy Kāmakōṭṭam’).

Inscriptions¹⁶ found at the Ekāmranātha and Kāmākṣī temple also address the goddess as Periya-Nācciyār of Tirukāmakōṭṭam.¹⁷ They are six inscriptions¹⁸ in total, the earliest is probably from 1312 CE and the latest from 1438 CE. The name Kāmākṣī for the goddess in Kanchipuram seems to appear for the first time in an inscription from king Harihara II of the first (Sangama) dynasty of Vijayanagara. The inscription is dated Śaka 1315, which corresponds to 1392 CE. It is a Sanskrit verse, written in Grantha, which is found at the entrance to the inner *prākāra* of the Kāmākṣī temple. It records that the shrine (*vimāna*) of Kāmākṣī was covered with copper by the king (*kāmākṣyāś śrīvimāna[ṃ] vyatanuta*

14 See Srinivasan (1951: 52–55) for references to inscriptions of this period.

15 The term is often used with the prefix *tiru*, which serves as a marker for auspiciousness and respect, similar to the Sanskrit prefix *śrī*. For convenience, it is often translated as ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’.

16 My examination is based on the information and translations given in the ARE and SII volumes.

17 Further, she is addressed as Kāmakoṭi in one inscription. However, the inscription is from the temple in Tripurantakam in Andhra Pradesh and not from the Ekāmranātha or Kāmākṣī temple. See ARE 1906, No. 217. The inscription is dated to 1260 CE. It states that the Telugu chief Immaḍi Basava Śaṅkara Allāḍa was lord of Kanchipuram and a devotee of Kāmakoṭyambikā. Another inscription (ARE 1906, No. 272), dated 1264 CE, mentions that the chief Vijaya-Gaṇḍagōpāla was a devotee of Kāmakoṭyambikā, too.

18 See ARE 1989/90, No. 129 (Ekāmranātha temple) and ARE 1954/55, No. 301, 302, 311, 324, 346 (Kāmākṣī temple).

sukṛtāmbhonidhis tāmra-bandham).¹⁹ In the first half of the fourteenth century, the name Kāmākṣī occurs with the appellation Periya-Nācciyār of Tirukāmakōṭṭam.²⁰ Just fifty years after the first inscriptional reference to the goddess with the name Kāmākṣī did her new name prevail over the name Periya-Nācciyār of Tirukāmakōṭṭam. From the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, only the name Kāmākṣī is found in inscriptions from the Ekāmranātha and Kāmākṣī temples.

Kāmākṣī and Śrīvidyā

It is possible that the rising popularity of the name Kāmākṣī is connected with her recognition as a manifestation of goddess Lalitā Tripurasundarī, ‘the charming and beautiful goddess of the three cities’.²¹ Lalitā Tripurasundarī, also known as Rājarājeśvarī, is the great goddess of the Tantric Śrīvidyā cult.²² Śrīvidyā appears in South Indian temples by the thirteenth century. Before it was a “non-temple based tradition of Tantric goddess worship,” as Brooks (2002: 61) notes. Lalitā Tripurasundarī is worshipped in three forms: 1) as a mystical diagram (*yantra*) of nine intersecting triangles called *śrīcakra* or *śrīyantra*, 2) as a fifteen-syllabled mantra called *śrīvidyā*, and 3) as anthropomorphic deity. Her form as anthropomorphic goddess became part of the South Indian *bhakti* movement, and her image is also worshipped by non-initiates.²³ Lalitā Tripurasundarī is often depicted as seated on the recumbent body of Śiva, which in turn lies on a pedestal with legs fashioned in the image of the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and Īśāna. In her four hands she holds a noose, a goad, and the attributes of the god of desire (Kāma), namely five flower arrows and a bow.

Kāmākṣī’s iconography closely resembles the iconography of Lalitā Tripurasundarī. She, too, holds the noose, goad, five flower arrows and a sugarcane bow as attributes in her hands, and in some depictions, a parakeet sitting atop the flower arrows (or single flower) (fig. 5.1). Further, the mystical diagram called *śrīcakra*, inserted in a *yoni*-shaped receptacle with eight goddesses (*aṣṭalakṣmī*) on its inner surface, is most often part of Kāmākṣī’s iconography, and thus links her explicitly to Śrīvidyā.²⁴

19 Listed in ARE 1890, No. 29 and ARE 1954/55, No. 316. The inscription is published in SII, Vol. IV, No. 352 in its original Grantha text, but without further comments. More information about the inscription and a transcript in Devanagari can be found in a postscript to record No. 32 of EI, Vol. III, p. 229-30. The English translation renders incorrectly that the shrine was provided with a copper door.

20 Vijayanagar king Dēvarāya-Mahārāya addresses the goddess in one inscription, dated 1427 CE, as Kāmākṣī (ARE 1954/55, No. 313) and in another, dated 1438 CE, as Periya-Nācciyār of Tirukāmakōṭṭam (ARE 1954/55, No. 301).

21 Texts, such as the Lalitopākhyāna (chapters 39–41) explicitly identify Kāmākṣī in Kanchipuram with Lalitā Tripurasundarī, and tell of her heroic deeds (see Chapter Three).

22 For detailed information on Śrīvidyā see the work of Brooks (1990, 1992b, 2002).

23 However, for initiates in the Śrīvidyā cult, the worship of the goddess in her anthropomorphic form (*sthūlarūpa*) may be secondary to the higher forms of diagram (*yantrarūpa*) and mantra (*mantrarūpa*) (see Brooks 2002: 61).

24 The identification of Lalitā Tripurasundarī with local goddesses is often achieved by linking the goddesses to the *śrīcakra*. Most prominent is the example of goddess Kāmākṣī in Kanchipuram. Another goddess is Akhilāṇḍeśvarī at the Jambukeśvara temple near Trichy (Tiruchchirappalli), who wears earrings with the *śrīcakra*. Further, Brooks (1992b: 72) instances goddess Mīnākṣī of Madurai, whose image is sometimes provided with the *śrīcakra*.



Figure 5.1 Painting of Kāmākṣī with *śrīcakra*
 Courtesy: Christian Luczanits

The *śrīcakra* is also installed in front of Kāmākṣī's stone idol in the sanctum of the Kāmākṣī temple, and is the main subject of the priests' worship. An inscription (ARE 1954/55, No. 349) from the Kāmākṣī temple in characters of the sixteenth century records that Narasiṃhādhvarin installed the '*kāmakoṭī-pīṭha*', which in all probability refers to the *śrīcakra* in front of Kāmākṣī's stone image in the sanctum. The inscription reports that he constructed the receptacle and surrounded it with fine stones of different colors with Lakṣmī figures on them.²⁵ Another inscription (ARE 1954/55, No. 348) in characters of the sixteenth century, found on a pavement slab near the Gāyatrī *maṇḍapa* in the Kāmākṣī temple, records that the paved floor in the *chitra maṇḍapa* (presumably the present Gāyatrī *maṇḍapa*) near the entrance of the Tripurasundarī shrine was laid by the king's minister, Śrīpati. Srinivasan (1979: 255) specifies the king of the latter inscription as Vēṅkaṭa II (1586–1614 CE), and dates the former inscription to the reign of Śrīraṅgarāya (1572–1585 CE). Thus, it seems that by the end of the sixteenth century the *maṇḍapa* in front of the sanctum, now called Gāyatrī *maṇḍapa*, had taken its present shape, and that the identification of Kāmākṣī with Lalitā Tripurasundarī and the worship of her diagrammatic representation as *śrīcakra* was well established.

²⁵ See Venkataraman (1968: 28, 31–32), who supplies the text and a tentative translation of this inscription.

Closely associated with the Śrīvidyā tradition in South India are the Śaṅkara Maṭhas in Kanchipuram and Śrīgeri (Karnataka), traditionally said to be founded by the eighth-century Hindu philosopher, Śaṅkara.²⁶ A popular legend ascribes the ‘taming’ of wild goddesses to Śaṅkara. He is said to have transformed ferocious (*ugra*) goddesses into benevolent (*saumya*) ones by confining their powers into the *śrīcakra*, cleaning their worship of Tantric elements and establishing a Vaidic (orthodox) form of worship.²⁷ The installation of the *śrīcakra* in the Kāmākṣī temple is also attributed to him, although the above-mentioned inscription points to a much later date.

This relatively late date for the installation of the *śrīcakra*, and also Kāmākṣī’s late appearance in literary and epigraphical sources, raised for some scholars (Srinivasan 1960, Venkataraman 1968, Nagaswamy 1982) the question of whether the present Kāmākṣī temple was the Kāmākōṭṭam mentioned in early sources such as the *Tēvāram*, or another temple, namely the nearby temple of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, a deity who also joins the marriage on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram.

5.2 Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl

Adjacent to the Kumārakōṭṭam temple, and close to the Kāmākṣī temple, is the temple of the goddess Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, who joins the bridal procession on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram. Why does the goddess come with Kāmākṣī to accompany Ēlavārkuḷali as bridesmaid? Who is Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, and why does her name relate to Kāmākṣī?

A visit to the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple

A small road leads from North Rāja Vīti towards the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple. A newly constructed archway with colorful carvings signals that this is the ‘holy temple of goddess Āti Kāmāṭci’²⁸ Śrī Āti Pīṭā Paramēsvari Kālikāmpāl’ (see fig. 5.2). The Tamil word *āti* (from Skt. *ādi*) means ‘first’ or ‘beginning’, which implies that the goddess housed in this temple is the original goddess Kāmākṣī, and that this was the original seat of the goddess (Tam. *āti pīṭā*; Skt. *ādi pīṭha*) in Kanchipuram.

26 However, there is no undisputed evidence for the existence of the Śrīgeri Maṭha before the fourteenth century, the Kanchipuram Maṭha before the sixteenth century, or Śaṅkara’s role in their foundation (see Wilke 1996: 135).

27 The idea of Śaṅkara as a reformer of worship is deeply rooted in Tamil Nadu, although it is highly unlikely that he introduced a refined form of goddess worship. It seems the Śaṅkara Maṭhas adapted the Śrīvidyā cult and ascribed important texts of the tradition to Śaṅkara. In particular, the monastery in Kanchipuram played a crucial role in locating Śrīvidyā in Kanchipuram and promulgating the cult (see Wilke 1996: 135). Since 1842 the Kāmākṣī temple is administered by the Śaṅkara Maṭha in Kanchipuram (also known as Kāmākōṭi Pīṭha). ‘Taming’ narratives are also known from the Śrīgeri Maṭha. Price (1996: 155–6) describes an incident in 1894 when a local king called in the then Jagadguru to change the ritual practice of the goddess in the Ramnad palace. The head of the Śrīgeri Maṭha was the only one considered powerful enough to pacify her.

28 The spelling of the goddess’s name is inconsistent. Most often the Tamil/Sanskrit mix ‘Āti Kāmākṣī’ is used, in this case, however, the Tamil form ‘Kāmāṭci’ is used.



Figure 5.2 Archway to the temple of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl



Figure 5.3 Snāpana Vināyaka

The temple has a forecourt with a festival *maṇḍapa*, *balipīṭha*, flagpole (*dhvajastambha*) and shrine for the goddess's vehicle, the lion. The main temple complex is entered through a four-storied *gopura* on the southern side. From here, a few steps lead to the entrance porch (*ardhamaṇḍapa*), which in a niche to the right-hand side houses the sandstone idol of Snāpana Vināyaka, considered to be one of the temple's oldest idols and commonly worshipped first (see fig. 5.3). The sanctum is a small cella with an antechamber (*antarāla*), flanked by a pair of *dvārapālakīs* holding a dagger and skull cup in each hand, and *dvārapālakas* with a club and skull cup.



Figure 5.4 Painting of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpālī

Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpālī is seated on a lotus throne in the sanctum facing south. She has four hands, the upper two holding the noose (*pāśa*) and the goad (*ankuśa*), and the lower left a skull cup (*kapāla*), while the lower right hand is showing *abhaya-mudrā* ('do-not-fear-gesture'). The goddess has a calm face, but small protruding teeth on either side of the mouth. The plinth below the lotus throne shows three heads in low relief, which are said to be the heads of demons²⁹ that the goddess has killed (see fig. 5.4). Opinions vary, however,

29 However, Venkataraman (1968: 11) suggests that the heads are "probably a Kālāmukha motif," though he does not elaborate on the link to the Śaivite Kālāmukha sect. Further, he mentions that it is commonly believed that the heads are representations of the *trimūrti* (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva). However, none of the people I spoke with recognized them as the heads of the *trimūrti*. All three heads look alike and have small protruding canine teeth. I suggest that the *trimūrti* would have been depicted by the

on whether these are the three heads of the demon Trisiras,³⁰ or the heads of the three demons Śumbha, Niśumbha and Mahiṣa.³¹

In the antechamber (*antarāla*) between the sanctum and the *ardhamaṇḍapa*, a *yonī*-shaped receptacle can be seen on the floor in front of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl. It resembles the receptacle in which the *śrīcakra* is inserted in the Kāmākṣī temple (see fig. 5.1). Yet, the figures of eight goddesses (*aṣṭalakṣmī*) on the inner surface are missing and the receptacle does not contain a *śrīcakra*.³²

The sanctum is surrounded by one *prākāra*. The sacred temple tree with Nāgā stones, and statues of the deities Śāsta, the Seven Sisters, Annapūrṇā, Mahiṣasuramardinī, Vīralakṣmī, and others are found here. The statue of the latter goddess is especially interesting, since it closely resembles the statue of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl enshrined in the sanctum. She has four hands; the upper hands hold the noose (*pāśa*) and the goad (*aṅkuśa*), the lower left and a skull cup (*kapāla*)³³, and the lower right hand is showing *abhaya-mudrā*, in the same manner as Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl. She has long matted hair (*jaṭā mukuṭa*), a wide nose, full lips and three eyes. She wears a human figure as an ornament (*nara kuṇḍala*) in her right ear and a disc earring (*patra kuṇḍala*) in her left. She, too, is seated on a lotus throne, but the depiction of the three heads on the plinth below is absent (see fig. 5.5).

The resemblance between the two statues is not accidental. Both the temple's main priest and the head trustee told me that the statue of the goddess in the *prākāra*, which some call Vīralakṣmī, is the original statue of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl.³⁴ Apparently, this statue was previously installed in the sanctum. It is made of sandstone, a delicate material, and the goddess's nose and right thumb were broken. Thus, the statue is no longer suitable for worship³⁵ and has been shifted to the outer wall of the *prākāra*, replaced by the statue of

deities' respective iconography, and not with demon like canines.

30 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Kamakoti Sastrigal of the Kāmākṣī temple, 13.09.2003. A verse in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* refers to the killing of the demon Trisiras, too. KāVi 10.12–17 gives an account of six different manifestations of Durgā in Kanchipuram. One of them is Kālīkāmpāl. She is mentioned in line 16b and 17a: "Twenty-one [parts] to the south is Kālīkā called Pīṭhavartī ('abiding at the seat'). Formerly, she killed Trisiras, she, the protector of the Kāmapīṭha ('seat of desire')." (*tasyaikaviṃśe yāmye 'sti pīṭhavartīti kālīkā // purā trisirasam hatvā kāmapiṭhābhirakṣiṇī* /).

31 Interview with Senthil Kumar, head of the Viśvakarma trust, 13.03.2011.

32 It is not possible to take pictures in the sanctum. However, a picture of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl and other pictures of the temple are available at http://temple.dinamalar.com/en/new_en.php?id=1152 (accessed 13.01.2018). Note the heads on the plinth and the partly visible receptacle. A picture that shows the *yonī*-shaped receptacle more clearly can be found in Venkataraman (1968, plate IV).

33 Sharma (2007: 133) suggests that she bears an *akṣayapātra*, a begging vessel or divine vessel of inexhaustible food.

34 Interviews with Dhandapani Gurukkal, 12.03.2011 and Senthil Kumar, 13.03.2011.

35 Damaged or broken statues should not be used for worship. Instructions for the renovation of temples and damaged images can be found, among others, in the Āgamas. The Ajitamahātāntra, for example, has one chapter (*paṭala* 84) entitled *jīrṇoddhāraavidhiḥ* ('the process of renovation'). Verse 84.50 states that the worship of a decayed *liṅga* or icon might cause a drought, and should therefore be removed and replaced with all efforts (Bhatt et. al. 2005: 155). However, the Somāskanda festival statue at the Ekāmranātha temple is very decayed due to numerous ablutions. New Somāskanda festival statues have been donated, among others by the Śāṅkara Maṭha, but the priests (and devotees) prefer the decayed statue, because its potency is much higher, since it has been charged for many years with ablutions and worship.

Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl. The broken parts, however, have been repaired with *aṣṭabandha* material, and a shrine was built around the statue in the course of renovation work in 2006.³⁶



Figure 5.5 Original statue of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl

The former statue of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl is not the only idol out of place in the temple. The statues of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Annapūrṇā, too, belong to another place or even shrine, as Seshadri (2003: 155–56) suggests, since their present place on the outer wall of the *prākāra* does not suit them. He concludes that “the entire original temple has been disturbed at some stage or the other, and rebuilt during the later period, that too at various stages” (2003: 156). However, he does not suggest any dates for the different stages

³⁶ Before, the statue was just placed in a niche in the wall as plate III in Venkataraman (1968) shows.

of the temple's development. Venkataraman (1968: 12) is more specific: "This temple, datable a little after A.D. 800, has, in the subsequent centuries, undergone several modifications, both in architecture and iconography, the latest being the transformation wrought in the early Vijayanagar style (...) It still contains vestiges of the past in some parts of the structure and the mutilated idols lying about." Venkataraman must have visited the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāḷ temple more than forty years ago, though. Since then, the temple has undergone major renovation work, the latest being undertaken in 2006.³⁷ When I visited the temple for the first time in 2009 it was newly painted and I could not find mutilated idols lying around. Venkataraman had probably referred to some of the idols that are now fixed under the sacred temple tree beside the Nāgā stones, such as the statue of the deity Śāsta (see fig 5.6).



Figure 5.6 Śāsta, Nāgā stones, and other idols under the sacred temple tree

Overall, only few sources³⁸ deal with the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāḷ temple and the information about the temple's history and age is very vague. Sources note, for example, that the temple predates the present Kāmākṣī temple (Chandramouli 2001), that the temple's *gopura* is of an "early type" (Venkataraman 1968: 12), or refer to the "early

37 For example, in 1996, the niches in the sanctum's outer wall have been provided with *parivāra devatās* (Interview with Dhandapani Gurukkal, 12.03.2011).

38 The only sources I found are Venkataraman (1968: 10–12), Seshadri (2003: 155–56). Sharma (2007: 127–35) and Chandramouli (2001).

character” of the sculptures (Seshadri 2003: 155). In my view, the temple’s architecture and its sculptures need to be studied thoroughly by art historians to gain more accurate information about their history and development.³⁹

However, all sources agree on the antiquity of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple, a fact which is, among others, used to support the theory that the temple of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl was the original place of goddess worship in Kanchipuram. This theory was, to my knowledge, first proposed by Srinivasan (1960: 165), who suggests that “a temple called Ādi-pīṭhā Paramēśvarī temple, in the vicinity of the modern temple of Kāmākṣī, containing a very old seated four-armed sculpture with three human heads on the pedestal, was perhaps the original site where the *Śaktipīṭha* was installed, after the reformation of the worship by Śaṅkara.” Venkataraman (1968) elaborated this theory, using literary and epigraphic references as evidence. He argues (1968: 5) that the goddess in Kanchipuram was first worshipped as Kālī, then as Rājarājeśvarī, each at their respective places (the present Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple and present Kāmākṣī temple), which he denotes as old and new Kāmakoṭṭam. Venkataraman claims that the Kāmakoṭṭam mentioned in Cuntarar’s hymn (7.5.6) refers to the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple, because during Cuntarar’s time at the beginning of the ninth century, the present Kāmākṣī temple was possibly a Jaina and Buddhist place of worship,⁴⁰ which has gradually been converted to a Hindu place from the eleventh century onwards. The twelfth-century *Periyapurāṇam* speaks about a *yoga* and *bhoga pīṭha*, which Venkataraman (1968: 22) interprets as a reference to two goddesses’ temples, namely the old and the new Kāmakoṭṭam. Some fifteenth-century poets, such as Villiputtūrār and Aruṇagiriyaṛ, praise the dark complexion of the goddess in Kanchipuram, which Venkataraman takes as reference to Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl. Mūkakavi describes her holding a skull cup, and Aruṇagiriyaṛ also refers to the *śrīcakra*, which has been built in the present Kāmākṣī temple more recently. Therefore, Venkataraman concludes that the two temples existed side by side for some time. He (1968: 28) is of the opinion that the growth of the new Kāmakoṭṭam was completed by the installation of the *śrīcakra* in the present Kāmākṣī temple in the sixteenth century, whereas the old Kāmakoṭṭam fell gradually into disrepair. However, this theory is not undisputed. Nagaswamy (1982: 207) is of the opinion that the Kāmakoṭṭam in Cuntarar’s hymn (7.5.6) has always been the present Kāmākṣī temple, although the temple’s structure has undergone modifications. Unfortunately, he does not substantiate his assertion.

Who is Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl?

The Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple is the temple of the Viśvakarma (Viśvabrahma) community, and currently administered by the Viśvakarma trust and the HR&CE department.⁴¹ My main contact, the head trustee Senthil Kumar, has held office since 2009

39 Moreover, the temple has two unread inscriptions, which could give some details about the temple’s history.

40 See Rao (1915: 127–29), who discusses the findings of Buddha images at the Kāmākṣī temple.

41 The Viśvakarma community traditionally represents the five crafts (carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, coppermiths and sculptors), as Senthil Kumar, the head of the Viśvakarma trust, told me (Interview 13.03.2011). See also <http://viswabrahmintemples.jimdo.com/kancheepuram-district-8/> (accessed 13.01.2018). The earliest reference (*Kāñcipuram Ṭairekṭari* 1935: 34) I found to the Āti Kāmākṣī

and appears to be very dedicated. He commissioned a leaflet and a board at the temple's entrance with information about the temple's history and mythology.⁴² On the leaflet the question 'Why is goddess Āti Kāmākṣī in the Kālī form?' is raised, and answered with reference to the *Kāñcippurāṇam* and an account of the 'marriage-myth', as follows:

The Lord and the Goddess were living happily on mount Kailāsa. Once, Ammai covered for fun Appaṇ's eyes for a split second. The sun and the moon are the two eyes of Śiva. Since their rays were covered by Ammai's holy hands, the entire universe became dark. The work of creation was stopped and the precept of dharma vanished in the whole world. Sin increased under the living beings. That sin changed into black color and fell on the body of Umā Maheśvarī. Due to that her golden color changed into black. On seeing this, the gods realized that a big calamity was going to take place and started shouting. Goddess Umā realized this and removed the hands from Siva's eyes. Immediately the world got back to its old form. Umā asked the Lord for forgiveness for her mistake. She was upset to see her body turned into black. She praised Parameśvara: "Oh Lord, what is the reason that my body which was sparkling like gold got changed into black?" The Lord replied: "Devī, this is not black color. It is the sin of all living beings in the world. Because you are black, you will henceforth be called Kālī." Trembling, Umā asked the Lord: "What is the atonement to be done to get relieved from this black color?" Saṅkara explained the expiation rules. Accordingly, Umā worshipped her husband and left to Badarikāśrama. There she manifested as a child, born to the sage Kātyāyana. When she attained the right age, she collected from him an ascetic's staff (*yogadaṇḍa*), rosary (*jaṇamālā*), parasol, book, sand and water from the river Gaṅgā, a lamp stand (*dīpastambha*), book stand (*vidyādhāra*), tiger-seat (*vyāghrāsana*), two fly-whisks (*cāmara*), two pots, a fan, fried beans, and went to Kāśī. There she draw away the evil of a famine, got the name Annapūrṇī and gave *mukti* to the king of Kāśī. Then she went south and at one place the *yogadaṇḍa* and the other implements changed as the Lord has told it. On seeing this she realized this is Kāñcī town. On the banks of the Kampā River the Goddess made a beautiful *liṅga* out of sand under the mango tree and started worshipping Ekāmrānātha. To test her devotion, the Lord caused a flood in the Kampā River. Umā thought it must be harmful for the sand *liṅga*. Thus, she kneeled down and pressed the *liṅga* with both hands to her chest, which left the marks of Umā's bangles and breasts on Śiva's body. Her embrace made Maheśa so happy that he appeared in front of her. "Kālī, you and I are not different. You attained the name Kālī due to the blackness. You destroyed the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha, Caṇḍa, Muṇḍa and Mahiṣa with your *ugraśakti*. On seeing this, my heart was delighted. Ask what you want." Devī bowed before him happily several times: "Parameśvara! Before on mount Mandara you called me Kālī. Bless me, that this black color changes into golden color." "Ammai, because you became the black

Kālikāmpāl temple, too, mentions that the temple (listed as Āti Pīṭā Paramēsvari Tēvastāṇam) is under the management of the Viśvabrahma community.

42 Further, he is planning to publish a booklet containing more detailed descriptions and pictures of the temple.

colored Kālī the world is full of good deeds again, and the demons have been killed. According to your request your body will become gold. Like the snake removes its skin, you will come out of the black color and get the golden color. Henceforth you will be called as Gaurī (the Golden One).” Thus, it was told by the Lord. Immediately the Goddess removed her black color like a cloth, from which a goddess named Kauśikī appeared. We can still have *darśan* of the Kauśikeśvara *liṅga*, which was worshipped by this goddess in Kanchipuram. After getting the golden body, the Goddess with the name Gaurī married the Lord according to his wish on the auspicious Paṅkuṇi Uttiram day.⁴³

This account of the ‘marriage-myth’ is not a mere retelling of the *Kāñcippurāṇam*. It combines motifs from the version of the myth found in the *Kāñcippurāṇam* and the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (see Chapter Three). The goddess’s stopovers at Badarikāśrama, her appearance as Annapūrṇā in Kāśī, and the provision and subsequent transformation of the implements, are uniquely known from the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*, whereas the manifestation of Kauśikī from the goddess’s dark skin shed is known from the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (and the closely related *Kāñcimāhātmya* (Ś)).⁴⁴

Obviously, the ‘marriage-myth’ is used to associate Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl with the dark colored Umā, who was called Kālī since the darkness of all sins in the world fell on her body. When she came to earth ‘she came to the place of the Āti Kāmākṣī temple and did penance there, before she went for the *pūjā* to the Kampā Nadī to prepare a sand *liṅga* under a single mango tree,’ as the head trustee described vividly.⁴⁵ He also explained that the appellation ‘Kālī’ means ‘blacky’, and is not to be confused with the Kālī who kills the demons.

Yet, the link to Kālī who kills the demons is made in the version of the myth presented on the leaflet, which tells that she destroyed them with her fierce powers (*ugraśakti*). However, it is unclear whether Kālī’s *ugraśakti* is a separate entity, or whether this refers to the goddess Kauśikī, who manifested from the dark skin shed to kill the demons, as the myth’s version in the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (and KM (Ś)) tells. Moreover, in the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (and KM (Ś)) the story goes on: Before goddess Kauśikī (also called Kālī in the KM (Ś)) kills the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, she appears before Śiva and begs him to marry her. Śiva agrees and appoints her as the guardian of the city Kanchipuram. It is curious that precisely this part of the myth is not accounted for by the leaflet. Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl is indeed regarded as a protective deity, at least from the perspective of the Kāmākṣī temple priests,⁴⁶ while Śiva’s double marriage to a bright and dark goddess could be one reason, among others, why the dark goddess Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl and the bright goddess

43 Translation from Tamil by Narayanan Subramanian.

44 The myth’s account on the board at the temple’s entrance is abbreviated. Details, such as the stopovers at Badarikāśrama and Kāśī, the provision and transformation of the implements, and the appearance of goddess Kauśikī are omitted.

45 Interview with Senthil Kumar, head of the Visvakarma Trust, 13.03.2011.

46 She is regarded as one of the eight direction goddesses (*dikpālikās*) of the Kāmākṣī temple ‘called as Pīṭhavartinī, since she is safeguarding the *pīṭha*’ (interview with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 18.03.2009.)

Kāmākṣī are processing next to each other in the bridal procession of the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram marriage rituals.

The taming of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl

In interviews and conversations, however, another legend regarding Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl was often told to me. When I asked the head priest of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple why the goddess is named both Kālī and Āti Kāmākṣī, he explained:

The reason is, there are three heads under the *pīṭha* of Ampāl. She killed the three demons, and in the night when she was going out, whoever came in the way, she killed them. At that time, Ādi Śaṅkara came over here and did *pūjā* to her—you would have seen the *śricakra* in front of her—he sat there only and did the *pūjā*, and he controlled the anger of Ampāl and installed the *śricakra* and then she was invoked as Kāmākṣī over there. This here was the Ampāl before Kāmākṣī.⁴⁷

Not only people affiliated with the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple apply the ‘taming’ legend of Śaṅkara to the goddess. For example, the 2010 festival priest of the Ekāmrānātha temple told me: ‘The first thing was Āti Kāmākṣī and then Śaṅkara subdued her ferociousness and everything, and the next form is Kāmākṣī which you see in the present temple in a subdued form.’⁴⁸ One reason to apply the ‘taming’ legend to Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl is the existence of the *yoni*-shaped receptacle in front of the goddess. It does not currently contain a *śricakra*, but a *kālī yantra*, which was inserted about one hundred and twenty years ago, as the temple’s head trustee informed me. However, he is of the opinion that it originally contained a *śricakra*, which had been installed by Ādi Śaṅkara.⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that the ‘taming’ legend and the existence of the *yoni*-shaped receptacle are not mentioned either on the leaflet or the board at the temple’s entrance. Moreover, the receptacle in front of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl is not part of her iconography. Paintings of the goddess available at the temple (see fig. 5.4) do not depict it (contrary to most depictions of Kāmākṣī, where the *śricakra* forms a fundamental part of her iconography). Is this policy possibly influenced by the Śaṅkara Maṭha of Kanchipuram? At least in interviews and conversations, this legend is frequently told to explain the naming of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl and her relation to Kāmākṣī.

Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple as *śaktipīṭha*?

The board and leaflet also refer to the tradition of the *śaktipīṭhas* (‘seats of the Goddess’), which raises the question whether the temple of Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, or of Kāmākṣī, is regarded as a *śaktipīṭha*. On the leaflet it is stated: ‘The Goddess’s grace exists in different forms as eighteen, fifty-one, sixty-four and one hundred and eight *pīṭhas*. In all of them Kanchipuram is mentioned. When the Goddess burned herself in Dakṣa’s sacrifice and her

47 Interview with Dhandapani Gurukkal, Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple, 12.03.2011.

48 Interview with Suresh Gurukkal, Ekāmrānātha temple, 02.04.2010. The same view was expressed in interviews with Umapathi Sivacharya, 26.03.2009, Anand Gurukkal, 16.04.2009, and Dhandapani Gurukkal, 11.04.2009.

49 Interview with Senthil Kumar, head of the Visvakarma Trust, 13.03.2011.

body was cut into pieces, the hipbone fell in Kanchipuram. It was called as Kāmakōṭi Pīṭha, otherwise also called as Oṭṭiyāṇa⁵⁰ Pīṭha.⁵¹

The tradition of the *śaktipīṭhas* is linked to the Purāṇic myth⁵² of Dakṣa's sacrifice: Dakṣa, the father of Śiva's first wife Satī, conducted a great sacrifice. He insulted Śiva by not inviting him and his wife. Satī could not bear her father's insult and killed herself. Full of grief Śiva wandered through the universe with Satī's dead body on his shoulder. This caused major disturbance in the three worlds, so that the gods requested Viṣṇu to use his discus. He cut Satī's corpse into several pieces until nothing remained on Śiva's shoulder. The severed parts of Satī's body fell to earth and became sacred sites, which are venerated as *śaktipīṭhas*, the 'seats of the Goddess'.

The *śaktipīṭhas* are spread over the Indian subcontinent, though most of them are found in the northwestern and eastern parts. The tradition of the *śaktipīṭhas* is not canonized. Thus, the number of *pīṭhas*, the represented part of Satī's body (or body ornament), and the location can vary according to different texts. Some early texts, such as the *Hevajra Tantra* or *Kālikā Purāṇa*, describe four *pīṭhas*, but lists of ten, eighteen, fifty-one, fifty-two, sixty-four or one hundred and eight are also known.⁵³ Usually, the *pīṭha* lists presented in Tantric or Purāṇic texts give the name of the place, the associated body part, the name of the residing goddess and the Bhairava (form of Śiva) who protects the site.

Some texts name Kanchipuram as *śaktipīṭha*. For example, the *Rudrayāmala* list, as it is quoted in the *Tantrasāra*,⁵⁴ includes Kanchipuram as a *pīṭha* and links it to the hip (*kaṭi*) of Satī's body. Another *pīṭha* list comes from the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, which Sircar (1998: 24) dates to 1690–1720 CE. This text, as cited by Sircar (1998: 36), also lists Kanchipuram as a *pīṭha*. It enumerates *kaṅkāla* (skeleton, bones) as the body part, Devagarbhā as the name of the goddess, and Ruru as the accompanying Bhairava. A similar list can be found in the *Śivacarita*, which closely follows the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, as Sircar (1998: 39) observes. For Kanchipuram the body part is specified as *kaṅkāla* (skeleton, bones) and the accompanying Bhairava is Ruru, as in the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*. Only the name of the goddess is given as Vedagarbhā, which, could be a transcription error owing to the similarity of *b* and *v*, and thus refers to the goddess Devagarbhā as in the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*. Bhattacharyya (1974: 143) is of the opinion, that "the writer of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* had absolutely no idea of South India," because he lists Kanchipuram as *pīṭha* with its presiding goddess Devagarbhā, and not with

50 This is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit term *kāñcī*, which denotes a girdle-like ornament worn by women around the waist.

51 Translation from Tamil by Narayanan Subramanian.

52 See Sircar (1998: 5–7) for the different stages of the myth's development and Mertens (1998: 235–384) for a detailed study of the Śākta versions of the myth.

53 See Sircar (1998: 11–15, 17–31).

54 See Sircar (1998: 18). He suggests a date around 1670 CE for the *Tantrasāra* (Sircar 1998: 80), but regards the *Rudrayāmala* as "composed considerably earlier than 1052," because it is mentioned in a manuscript copied at this time (Sircar 1998: 17). However, this does not mean that the cited *Rudrayāmala śaktipīṭha* list can be dated to 1052 CE or earlier. The *Rudrayāmala* is often used as a source in other texts (for example, it is also referred to in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* 14.116), but the original text appears to be lost and what has survived are either fragments or new creations with the name *Rudrayāmala* (personal communication with Dominic Goodall). See also Galewicz (2017) on the use of the *Rudrayāmala* as a remote source of scriptural authority.

the “celebrated Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī.” It is indeed striking that the above cited lists do not name Kāmākṣī as the residing goddess of the *śaktipīṭha* in Kanchipuram. Is it possible that the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple is the *śaktipīṭha* of Kanchipuram?

A recent Tamil publication⁵⁵ about the fifty-one *śaktipīṭhas* explicitly points to the Kālikāmpāl temple as *śaktipīṭha* of Kanchipuram. It ascribes the hipbone as body part, Tēvakarppā (= Devagarbhā) as the name of the goddess and Kañkāḷār as the accompanying Bhairava. Further, on a webpage listing the *śaktipīṭhas* according to the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, a commentator wrote: “The modern Kāmākṣī temple is very big and famous, but the *śaktipīṭha* is Ādi Pīṭheśvarī or Ādi Pīṭha Paramesvarī. (...) Devī in this original temple is called Kīrtimatī/Devagarbhā in *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*. She has four hands containing in each of them respectively *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *abhaya* and a *kapāla*.”⁵⁶

However, most other recent sources highlight the Kāmākṣī temple as *śaktipīṭha*.⁵⁷ Usually, they do not name a protecting Bhairava or associated body part, but if they do, it is the navel.⁵⁸ On the contrary, older publications on Kanchipuram, such as Newell (1914) and Ayyar (1922), do not mention the *śaktipīṭhas* at all, while the *Kāñcipuram Ṭairekṭari* (1935: 44) states that ‘Madurai Mīnākṣī, Kāñcī Kāmākṣī and Kāśī Viśālākṣī are world famous,’ without labeling them as *śaktipīṭhas*. Only later, it seems, do publications and temple booklets link the Kāmākṣī temple to a *śaktipīṭha*, or regard the above-mentioned goddess triad as the three important *śaktipīṭhas*.⁵⁹ Chari (1982: 62) and Arivoli (1983: 50) again state that the three important *śaktipīṭhas* are “Jagannātha regarded as Oḍiyāna or Girdle Pīṭha, Jvalamukhi as Jālandhara Pīṭha, and Kanchipuram as Kāmarāja Pīṭha.” These examples show that the term *śaktipīṭha* is a very loose concept, at least in Tamil Nadu. As mentioned, the tradition of the *śaktipīṭhas* is not canonized, and the information given in the available sources about Kanchipuram is unclear and contradictory. It seems the term *śaktipīṭha* is above all used to designate an important place of goddess worship or a powerful goddess. Drawing conclusions from just a few examples would be premature; yet, I got the impression that the term only appears in publications from the second half of the twentieth century, or to put it in other words, after independency. This might be due both to Neo-Hindu propaganda of the Indian state as goddess,⁶⁰ and the rising fame of Kāmākṣī through the promulgation of Śāktism by the late head of the Śāṅkara Maṭha Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī.⁶¹ I did not encounter any form of worship of the associated body part or body ornament as it is known from other *śaktipīṭha* sanctuaries.⁶² The head priest of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple has ‘heard that the goddess’s hip fell’ there,

55 See Sharma (2007: 126–35).

56 <http://www.shaktipeethas.org/panchasat/topic191.html> (accessed 13.01.2018). Diacritics and italics added by me.

57 See, for example, Seshadri (2003: 150) and Rao (2008: 7).

58 Kanchipuram is regarded as ‘the navel of the world.’

59 For example, Śrinivasan (1958: 27).

60 The idea of the earth as personified goddess reaches back to the Ṛgveda, but the reverence of the Indian subcontinent as ‘Mother India’ became popular during the independence movement and is still cultivated. See Kinsley (1986: 178–87).

61 See Wilke (1996: 149).

62 Surely, the most known example is the Kāmākhyā temple in Assam, where a cleft in the rock is worshipped as the vulva (*yoni*) of the goddess.

but confirms that no place or formation in the temple is recognized and worshipped as the hip.⁶³ In the Kāmākṣī temple, however, a hole in a pillar in the Gāyatrī *maṇḍapa* in front of the sanctum is regarded as the goddess's navel, but it does not receive any special worship or offerings. This, too, gives the impression that the link with the tradition of the *śaktipīṭhas* is not firmly established in Kanchipuram, irrespective of which temple might be associated with it.

How are the goddesses related?

The considerations above have shown that a relationship between Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl and Kāmākṣī is established through the 'marriage-myth' and the 'taming' legend. In both cases, a transformation of the goddess is taking place: in the myth, from dark to bright, and in the legend, from fierce to benevolent. These identities of the two goddesses are partly reflected in their attendant iconography. Kāmākṣī's iconography underlines the bright and benign aspects, while Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl shows her dark and fierce side with protruding teeth, a skull cup, and the demon's heads, although this part of her character is today sometimes downplayed by underlining her calm facial expression, and the identification of the skull cup with a bowl. However, if one considers the statue installed in the *prākāra* of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl temple as her original statue, the iconography highlights ascetic features rather than fierce aspects, indicated by the goddess's matted hair, skull cup, and calm, meditative face.⁶⁴ This statue expresses rather the myth's motif of the dark goddess performing penance in Kanchipuram than the wild goddess that has to be tamed.

Another, obvious connection between the goddesses can be seen in the existence of the *yoni*-shaped receptacle installed in both temples, although the one in the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl temple currently contains no *śrīcakra* and is not part of the goddess's iconography. The absence of the *śrīcakra* supports the view of one priest of the Kāmākṣī temple who holds that the goddess housed in the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl temple cannot be the 'original' Kāmākṣī: 'There is no *śrīcakra* in that temple and there is no *bilākāsa*,⁶⁵ for this Kāmākṣī there will be *śrīcakra* and *bilākāsa*, both are here, so she is Kāmākṣī and this is the original temple.'⁶⁶ Obviously, she uses the name Āti Kāmākṣī much to the indignation of the Kāmākṣī temple's priests. From their perspective, the goddess housed in the temple is Kālīkāmpāl, one of the eight protecting goddesses of Kāmākṣī, but surely not the 'original' Kāmākṣī.

I have been told that the name Āti Kāmākṣī in addition to Ātipīṭāparamēsvari and Kālīkāmpāl has only been used in the last ten years.⁶⁷ It seems that the change of name

63 Interview with Dhandapani Gurukkal, Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl temple, 12.03.2011.

64 See also Seshadri (2003: 156), who interprets her iconography as a *sātvika* form of the same goddess, who is in the sanctum installed in *kālī* form.

65 According to some versions of the 'marriage-myth' the goddess stayed near a cavity called *bilākāsa* when she came to Kanchipuram. There is a hole in the ground in the sanctum of the Kāmākṣī temple, which is regarded as the *bilākāsa*.

66 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Kamakoti Sastrigal, 13.09.2003.

67 Donation boards on the temple walls from the years 1962, 1982, 1992 and 2004 designate the temple as "*srī ātipīṭāparamēsvari kālīkāmpāl tēvastānam*." The latest board from 2006 mentions the name Āti Kāmākṣī, it says "*srī āti kāmātcī aruḷmiku ātipīṭāparamēsvari kālīkāmpāl tirukkōyil*." However, the

influences how the goddess is perceived, as the following incident illustrates: One evening, while I was sitting in the small office of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl temple, an elderly lady came in. She was very excited and upset, because a chicken had been sacrificed behind the sacred temple tree that afternoon. She wanted to know who was involved in this and required the head trustee to stop such behavior, arguing that only small village temples with folk deities still perform blood sacrifices, adding that if he wants to bring the temple to the standard of the Kāmākṣī temple, he should not allow such practices to continue. I do not know whether the new name affix was chosen deliberately to elevate her to the rank of Kāmākṣī, but it surely affects the ritual practice and image of the goddess and may even increase her popularity.

5.3 Kāmākṣī, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī and Ēlavārkuḷali

Several subsidiary shrines are located in the inner hall that encloses the sanctum of Kāmākṣī in the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram. One of these shrines is known as the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī shrine. It is situated on the right-hand side of Kāmākṣī at the end of the upper *prākāra*. The goddess Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī is regarded as a manifestation of goddess Kāmākṣī, created to figure as a bride of Ekāmranātha. The idol of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī has probably been used for the marriage ceremonies with Ekāmranātha until the end of the seventeenth century. During this unstable political time the festival statues of Kāmākṣī, Ekāmranātha and Varadarāja had been secretly shifted to Udayarpalayam (see fig. 5.7, B), about 220 km south of Kanchipuram, to safeguard them from the so-called Muslim invasion. While Ekāmranātha and Varadarāja returned to Kanchipuram in 1710, the statue of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī travelled with several stopovers further to Tiruvarur (fig. 5.7, C), where the musician Syama Sastri composed hymns in her honor. Finally, at the request of the king of Thanjavur, she was brought to Thanjavur (fig. 5.7, D) and installed there in her present temple in 1786.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī never returned to her home place, the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram, she is today worshipped there in her original, but ‘empty’ shrine. Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī, the late head of the Śāṅkara Maṭha in Kanchipuram, installed a pedestal adorned with her footprints on the occasion of a *mahākumbhābhiṣeka* in 1941, to remember her. A large-sized photograph was placed on the wall of her shrine in Kanchipuram in 2009 (fig. 5.8). It depicts a painting of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī in the form in which she is today enshrined and worshipped in the temple in Thanjavur.

head trustee Senthil Kumar told me that the name Āti Kāmākṣī is not new. Apparently, it also occurred in older documents from the time of Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī (interview 13.03.2011). Also Seshadri (2003: 155) notes that the goddess is “locally known as Adi Kamakshi.” Thus, the appellation might have existed before, but is certainly more frequently used since the renovation in 2006.

68 This is not an isolated case. Festival statues have often been hidden or relocated in times of conflict. The keeping and protecting of statues became a source of (royal) power; see Davis (1993) and Peabody (1991).

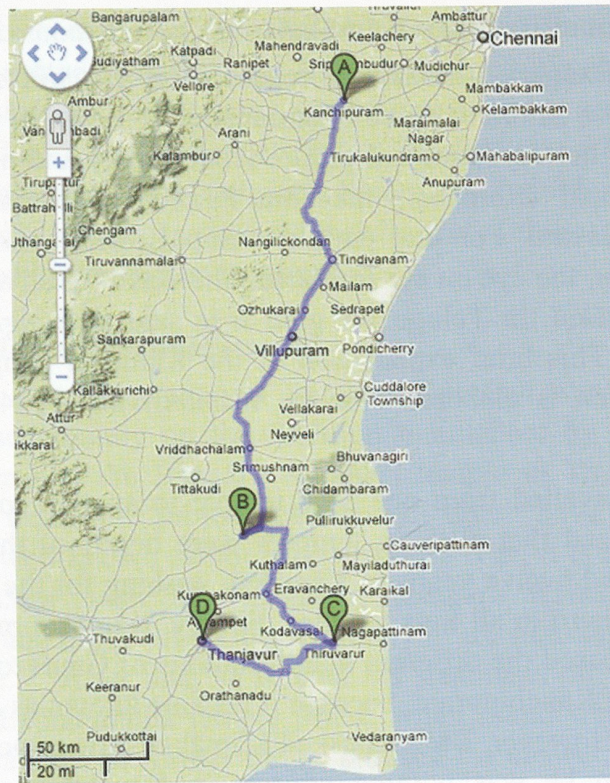


Figure 5.7 Travel route of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī
Source: Google maps 2011



Figure 5.8 Painting of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī

The mythological origin of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī

As mentioned above, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī is regarded as a manifestation of the goddess Kāmākṣī, created to serve as the bride of Ekāmranātha. A priest in the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram explained her mythological origin, iconography and naming in a few words: ‘Brahmā worships Ampāl (Kāmākṣī) that the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram marriage has to be performed to Ekāmbareśvara. For that purpose Ampāl makes another Ampāl with two hands from her *trinetrām*, the eye on her forehead. She was of gold and that is why she was called as Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. In Telugu for gold it is said as *baṅgāru*. So *baṅgāru* is of Telugu terminology.’⁶⁹ This brief explanation of the Kāmākṣī temple priest is a concise version of a myth which is elaborated in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (14.68–85).⁷⁰ It reads as follows:

Once, Brahmā travelled from one Śiva temple to another to pay homage to Śiva. Thereby he realized that all Śiva temples were bereft of the goddess (*ambikā*).⁷¹ Thus, he meditated twelve years on Kāmākṣī, wishing for the joint presence of Śiva and his consort Gaurī in all Śiva temples. Finally, Kāmākṣī manifested to grant him his wish. She released the different manifestations of Gaurī to all places as consorts of Śiva, except of Kanchipuram, because it became known as *śivajitkṣetra*, the place of Śiva’s defeat. However, Brahmā asked Kāmākṣī, how to perform Śiva’s marriage every year, when he was without consort in Kanchipuram. Thereupon a light emerged from Kāmākṣī’s third eye on the forehead and a beautiful, two-armed, golden goddess, manifested. Kāmākṣī instructed Brahmā to install this goddess in all Śiva temples in Kanchipuram, and to celebrate the marriage between her and Ekāmranātha.

The iconography of the goddess, which should be installed in all Śiva temples in Kanchipuram, is described in the following way: she has two arms, with a shining parakeet in the right hand and a pendent left hand; she stands in tri-bent pose and her body is bow shaped; she is adorned with jewelry and made of gold (*divyaloha*).⁷² This iconographical

69 Interview with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 18.03.09.

70 The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* is, besides its Tamil rendering, the *Kāñcimahimai*, and new reproductions of it, the only Sthalapurāṇa of Kanchipuram that gives an account of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. However, a verse in the *Lalitāmāhātmya* gives a hint to Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, too. A passage, in which Kāmākṣī describes her different manifestations in the temple in Kanchipuram, reads: “To my right is Mahāgaurī, created of my eye. She is the limit of the essence of beauty, adorned with all ornaments.” (*mamākṣijā mahāgaurī vartate mama dakṣiṇe / saundaryasārasīmā sā sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā // (Lalitāmāhātmya in BṅP 3.40.106)*). Yet, the text does not allude to the golden body of the goddess, or that she was created for the marriage with Ekāmranātha. The *Lalitāmāhātmya*, also known as *Lalitopākhyāna*, is found at the end of the printed edition of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. See Chapter Three for more information on the text.

71 This myth accounts for the episode in which Kāmākṣī imbibed the presence of the goddesses of all Śiva temples and remained as a concentrated power in Kanchipuram. With great longing for his consort, Śiva was looking everywhere until he reached Kanchipuram. There he saw Kāmākṣī and mistook her for his consort Gaurī. He expressed his love for her, but Kāmākṣī rejected him. When Śiva wanted to seize her forcibly she defeated him and made him surrender with the help of Kāma (KāVi 14.29–65).

72 For example: *tathā dvibhujasamyuktāṃ dakṣahastalacchukām / lambavāmakarāmbhojāṃ tribhaṅgīm dakṣakuñjitām // 84 // tāṃ dhanurvigrahāntanvīm sarvābharaṇabhūṣitām / divyalohena nirmāya*

description seems to be modeled on the statue of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. However, the name Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī never appears in the text. As the priest explained, *baṅgāru* is the Telugu word for gold; in Sanskrit the terms *hema* and *svaṛṇa/suvarṇa* are used. Thus, the name Hema Kāmākṣī is used in a few instances in the Sanskrit text *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*. But most often the goddess is addressed as Mahāgaurī, Śivā or Ekāmbikā, and characterized by a golden body (*svaṛṇāṅgī*, *hemāṅgī*, *svaṛṇaviḡrahā*). Her Telugu derived name, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, is usually used in the spoken language.

Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī as former festival statue?

The narrative relating that the statue of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was formerly used for the marriage rituals is based mainly on the tradition maintained by priests of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram and the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple in Thanjavur.⁷³ Priests of the Ekāmrānātha temple treat the subject cautiously; they ‘have heard about Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī.’ One of the well-known senior priests states: ‘Yes, it is a fact, once upon a time before Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī went to Thanjavur, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī will come to the [Ekāmrānātha] temple and they will do the ceremony of the marriage and then it will return to the Kāmākṣī temple.’⁷⁴ After this, he refined his statement: ‘It was heard, but we have not seen it.’ Another Ekāmrānātha temple priest, when asked whether Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was married to Ekāmrānātha in former times, phrased his answer, in a similar way: ‘It is only by way of hearing that it has taken place, nobody has seen it.’⁷⁵ Obviously, the narrative of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī as former bride is not so deeply routed in the oral tradition of the Ekāmrānātha temple priests.

More importance is given to the narratives of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī by priests of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram and the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple in Thanjavur, who have preserved the memory of her role in the marriage rituals in great detail. I conducted interviews with one Kāmākṣī temple priest and two priests of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple in Thanjavur.⁷⁶ A priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple recounted the following after I inquired about the performance of the marriage rituals with Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī and Ekāmrānātha:

How the *kalyāṇa* was done before was, it was done for two days, it is also in the book (*Kāmākṣīvilāsa*) (...) This Kāmākṣī Ammaṇ (Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī) went to Ekāmbareśvara, she will go to the Ekāmbareśvara temple entrance. They are Śivācārya and we are Smārtas. They will keep the *tirumāṅkalyam* at the feet of Ekāmbareśvara and then tie it. (...) For going out and coming itself the *śrīcakrayajana* (worship of the *śrīcakra*) has been done, then after coming here the

tāmāvāhya dhruveśvarīm // 85 // (KāVi 14.84–85).

73 The temple in Thanjavur is today most often called Kāmākṣī temple. I use the term Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple to make a clear distinction between the temples in Kanchipuram and Thanjavur.

74 Interview with Rajappa Gurukkal, Ekāmrānātha temple, 14.04.2009.

75 Interview with Nagaswamy Iyer, Ekāmrānātha temple, 05.04.2010.

76 Furthermore, I had access to interviews conducted by Srilata Raman and Ute Hüsken in the years 2003 and 2007.

sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka (ablution with one thousand water-pots) has been done to Ampāl.⁷⁷

Another priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple gave the following account:

As long as Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was in Kanchi, the marriage *utsava* took place during Paṅkuṇi Uttiram. At that time this Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī Ampāl starts from the *dhruvasthāna* (permanent place) and comes to the temple entrance, and Ekāmbareśvara will come to the entrance of his temple. Ēlavārkuḷali Ampāl, the *utsava* idol from Ekāmbareśvara temple will also come. She is a *pratinidhi* [representative] and the *kalyāṇa utsava* takes place. After she returns to the *yathasthāna* (her original place) *sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka* takes place. (...) Since Ampāl moved out of the *dhruvasthāna*, this *sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka* took place. Now she is not there, she is only here [in Thanjavur].⁷⁸

A priest of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram recollects the event in the following way: ‘The marriage is actually between Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī and Ekāmbareśvara only. So after this, when Ampāl returns, they perform the *sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka* after two days and then bring in Ampāl. Because this is Vaidika and that is Āgama. This is one reason. The second is, there is no *naivedya* for Ampāl in this *caṅṅati* (shrine) for two days. So, as a remedy they do the *sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka*.’⁷⁹ The same priest recounted in another interview, conducted six years later in 2009, that the goddess returned from the Ekāmranātha temple after three days.⁸⁰

These interviews show that narratives about the performance of the marriage rituals with Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī as bride have been transmitted differently in Kanchipuram and in Thanjavur. Both priests in Thanjavur recount that Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī has been brought to the entrance of the Ekāmranātha temple and one of them even mentions Ēlavārkuḷali as a representative. Apparently, in the memory of the Thanjavur priests, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī never entered the temple compound of Ekāmranātha, whereas according to the description of the Kanchipuram priest she stayed there for two (or three) days. The narrative of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī staying at the Ekāmranātha temple for two days may have been influenced by, or reflected in, an episode in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (14.86–90), in which Kāmākṣī instructed Brahmā how to perform the marriage rituals with Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī:

Bring Mahāgaurī (Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī) on an auspicious day near the great *liṅga* of the mango tree and celebrate with joy the marriage of both Śivas in the afternoon and the festival of both Śivas in due order until the evening. Then hand them over to their respective places, Mahāgaurī to her permanent home, Śaṅkara to Śaṅkara’s home. Great fault is created, when Ambikā is not worshipped in her permanent home for two days. O Vidhi (Brahmā), perform together with Durvāsas’s disciples⁸¹

77 Interview: Srilata Raman with Janakiraman, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 18.03.2003.

78 Interview with Kamesvara Sastrigal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

79 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 11.01.2003.

80 Interview with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 18.03.2009.

81 The disciples of Durvāsas are the priests of the Kāmākṣī temple. According to their tradition, the sage Durvāsas instructed and initiated them in worshipping goddess Kāmākṣī. The worshipping procedures

the ablution of Gaurī with one thousand water-pots according the way the Tantra has been described in the Veda. Thereafter worship (the *śrīcakra*?) and let the festivals of Maheśitr (Śiva) be performed every year in due order according the rules.⁸²

According to these verses, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī should not leave her permanent shrine for more than two days, and a *sahasrakalaśābhiṣeka* has to be performed when she returns.

One informant, affiliated to the Ekāmranātha temple, raised an interesting objection on the subject of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's former role in the marriage ceremonies, doubting that she has ever been taken out for festivals and processions: 'The original Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī will be in the temple only, it cannot be taken out, the idol cannot be taken out from any temple, that is why they make the replicas (...) a replica of her will be made in the form of a *pañcaloha vighraha*⁸³ and it comes out.'⁸⁴ This argument might be sound in terms of practical considerations such as the weight and security of the idol (if it was really made of solid gold, as narrated). However, this view also implies that two idols of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī existed, one permanently installed in the *mūlasthāna*, and one as portable festival statue.

Thus, it appears that questions relating to Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's former role in the marriage rituals in Kanchipuram cannot be sufficiently answered. To summarize, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was apparently used for the marriage rituals with Ekāmranātha until the idol was shifted to Udayarpalayam at the end of the seventeenth century. It remains unclear whether her idol was used or a replica of it, whether she entered the Ekāmranātha temple and stayed there or just came up to the temple's entrance, and whether the idol of Ēlavārkuḷali existed at that time and could have (already) been used as the representative for the marriage rituals.

The legendary history of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's travels to Thanjavur

Narratives about Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's move from Kanchipuram to her final destination, Thanjavur, are situated between legend and history. The following reconstruction of her journey is based on interviews, the biography of the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam⁸⁵, inscriptions, British reports⁸⁶ and references found in scholarly literature. Although opinions and details differ according the different sources, four points in time stand as landmarks for the reconstruction of this historical incident: a) the shifting of the statues in the last two decades of the seventeenth century; b) the return of Varadarāja (and

have been laid down in the ritual handbook *Saubhāgyacintāmaṇi*, which is used in the Kāmākṣī and Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temples.

82 *kalyāṇadvise cūtamahāliṅgasya sannidhau / tām ānīya mahāgurīm kalyāṇam śivayor mudā // 86 //*
kṛtvā parehnī sāyāhne śivayor utsavaṃ kramāt / dhruvālaye mahāgurīm śaṅkaraṃ śaṅkarālaye // 87 //
yathāsthāne nidhehi tvaṃ dhruvahīnālaye 'mbikā / dinadvayārcitā cet sā mahān doṣaḥ prajāyate // 88 //
vedoktatantramārgeṇa durvāsaśīsyakair vidhe / kṛtvā gauryabhiṣekaṃ ca sahasrakalaśais tadā // 89 //
yajanaṃ ca tataḥ kṛtvā varṣe varṣe krameṇa tu / utsavādīn yathāśāstram kārayitvā maheśituh // 90 //

83 This is an alloy of five metals, which is used to make the festival statues.

84 Interview with K. Balasubramanyam, 27.03.2010.

85 Vadivelu, A. *Family History and Biography – Zamindar of Udaiyarpalayam*. Reprint from "The Aristocracy of Southern India" Vol. II. Madras, 1921.

86 Crole, Charles Stewart. *The Chingleput, late Madras, district : a manual*. Madras: Government, 1879. I was unable to access Crole's report.

Ekāmranātha) in 1710; c) Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's stay in Tiruvarur when Syama Sastri was born there in 1763; d) the inauguration of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's temple in Thanjavur in 1786.

a) The shifting of the statues in the last two decades of the seventeenth century

The relocation of the festival icons of the three major temples in Kanchipuram is usually linked to the 'Muslim invasion' or 'Muslim rule', which is only vaguely defined. For example, a Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple priest placed the incidents 'during the seventeenth century at the time of Vijayanagara rule, when there was the Muslim invasion.'⁸⁷ One Kāmākṣī temple priest⁸⁸ attributed the shifting of the idols to a threat posed by the Nawab of Arcot.⁸⁹ A more precise reference to the historical background is found in a report⁹⁰ of the secretary R. Ramachandra Rao (ARE 1919/20: 122), where it is stated that "the Delhi Emperor Aurangzeb fitted out an expedition in about 1688 A.D. against the Mahrattas of the South, and Conjeeveram (Kanchipuram), in common with several other important centres of South-India, felt the shock of this iconoclastic invasion." Yet, the account of the family history of the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam mentioned Surap Singh (the commander or chieftain?) in this context: "Owing to the downfall of the Royar family and also on account of the disturbance caused by Surap Singh in that part of the country, Ekambaraiswerar, Varada Raja, Kamatchi Amman and other deities of Conjeeveram were all brought to Udaiyarpalayam" (Vadivelu 1921: 11). This account gives no date for the relocation, but mentions that Nallappa Udaiyar gave shelter to the deities. Likewise, the time of his reign is not given, but it is reported (Vadivelu 1921: 10) that he succeeded his father Kalyana Rangappa Udaiyar after the latter made a donation in Śaka 1600 (= 1678 CE). Thus, Nallappa Udaiyar must have ruled after 1678 and therefore, the shifting of the statues to Udayarpalayam probably took place in the last two decades of the seventeenth century.

The choice of Udayarpalayam as an asylum for the Kanchipuram deities is on the one hand explained by its strong fortification and location in a dense forest, and on the other by the history of the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam, who trace their roots to "members of the Conjeeveram royal family" (Vadivelu 1921: 5). It seems that their ancestors had previously been poligars (Tam. *pālayakkār*, 'watcher, chieftain') of Kanchipuram, and that land in the forest region of Udayarpalayam and the honorary title 'Kachi' were assigned to them by rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire in the sixteenth century (Vadivelu 1921: 1-5). Further, reference to an established connection between Kanchipuram and Udayarpalayam is made in a book titled *Jathi Sangraha*, which indicates that the deities of Kanchipuram were brought annually to Udayarpalayam.⁹¹

87 Interview with Kamesvara Sastrigal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

88 Interview with Babu Sastrigal, 18.03.2009.

89 The first Nawab of Arcot was appointed by Aurangzeb in 1692. Arcot is located, near Vellore, approximately 50 km west of Kanchipuram.

90 Order-No. 985, Home (Education), dated 31. August 1920. I assume that Rao's account is based on Crole's report in the Chingleput Manual from 1879.

91 See Vadivelu (1921: 12). I could not get hold of this book. However, the distance of ca. 220 km between Kanchipuram and Udayarpalayam seems to be too far for annual travels of the deities.

However, Udayarpalayam was not necessarily the first place of refuge for the Kanchipuram deities. A priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple⁹² and Venkataraman (1968: 40) mention the Gingee Fort as the first shelter, used before the idol of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was brought to Udayarpalayam.

The circumstances in which the deities were relocated are associated with the legend that the idols were disguised as corpses to bring them safely out of Kanchipuram. A priest of the Kāmākṣī temple described the events:

When they took [Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī] from here they applied this Plugu⁹³. If you apply that, it will look black in color. They prepared the statue in such a way as if a small child died. Even then the Muslims blocked and asked. So they said the child is suffering from chicken pox. They were afraid of that, they won't come near. So they thought the child has died due to chicken pox and so they left.⁹⁴

A reference to the disguise of the deities as corpses is also made in Crole's report in the Chingleput Manual of 1879 and the same account is given by Ayyar (1922: 77–78).

b) The return of Varadarāja (and Ekāmranātha) in 1710

Knowledge about the return of Varadarāja from Udayarpalayam is based on an inscription (ARE 1919/20, No. 639) on a slab of stone, placed in front of the goddess's shrine at the Varadarāja temple in Kanchipuram. The inscription is dated to Śaka 1632, which corresponds to 1710 CE. It consists of two Sanskrit verses in Telugu script, followed by a translation in Telugu prose and twelve lines in Nagari.⁹⁵ The inscription records that the chieftain Rāja Śrī Lālā Tōḍaramalla brought the idols of Varadarāja and his consorts back from Udayarpalayam according to the order of Srinivāsa, alias Attāṅ Tiruvēṅgaṇa Rāmānuja Jiyar, and reinstalled them in the temple at Kanchipuram.⁹⁶ The report of the secretary R. Ramachandro Rao explains the difficulty in regaining the festival statues from Udayarpalayam:

But when the danger was past and Conjeeveram was considered safe, the local chieftain of Uḍayārpālayam, who was much enraptured at the image of the god Varadarāja refused to restore it to its original abode at Kāñchī, with the result that, at the special intercession of Srīmat Paramahansa Parivrājākāchārya Āttāṅ Jīyar, his disciple Lālā Tōḍaramalla terrorised the chief with a strong contingent of troops at his back and safely brought back the image and reinstated it in the temple with great pomp and splendor. (ARE 1919/20, p. 122)

92 See interview with Kamesvara Sastrigal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

93 This ingredient is made of the secretion of the civet cat. Even today, it is smeared on the statue's face to disguise the gold and to recall the dramatic escape. Note the black face of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī (fig. 5.8).

94 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 11.01.2003.

95 The inscription is not published, but is described in detail in ARE 1919/20, pp. 121–22.

96 The ritual and sectarian consequences of Varadarāja's return are detailed in Hüsken (2017: 72–73).

The inscription at the Varadarāja temple does not record the return of Ekāmrānātha. However, Crole (1879) reports that after the shifting of the festival statues “the idol of the Siva Temple was restored to its place by a Brahmin called Sellambattu.”⁹⁷

In the account of the family history of the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam it is noted that “the Ekambaraiswerar and Varadarajar deities were clandestinely removed to Conjeeveram. The Swarna Kamatchi Amman [Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī] deity alone remained at Udaiyarpalaiyam” (Vadivelu 1921: 14). Why the deities Ekāmrānātha and Varadarāja were removed clandestinely, and why only Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī remained, is not explained.

It is worth mentioning that doubts were expressed about whether Ekāmrānātha had also been shifted to Udayarpalayam. A priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple spoke of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī’s times in Udayarpalayam: ‘When Ampāl was in Udayarpalayam, the *utsava murti* of the Varadarāja temple was also there. He returned to Kanchipuram.’⁹⁸ When asked whether Ekāmrānātha was also there at this time, he insisted: ‘No. People say he was there. No. Only Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī and Varadarāja came. Only this is the old history, nothing about Ekāmbareśvara.’ The authorities of the Ekāmrānātha temple have no records pertaining to Ekāmrānātha’s stay in Udayarpalayam. Their information about the relocation of the festival statue is based on the account of the family history of the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam.

c) Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī’s stay in Tiruvarur when Syama Sastri was born there in 1763

Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī remained in Udayarpalayam, while Varadarāja (and Ekāmrānātha) moved back to Kanchipuram in 1710. It is not known why she alone stayed in Udayarpalayam, or why she left. After several stopovers she eventually arrived at Tiruvarur, the place of her next prolonged stay. Information varies about the different stopovers and their durations, and very little is known about the background and motivation for the repeated relocations of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. A priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple in Thanjavur recollected the following stopovers:

She was worshipped for about fifty years by the Udayarpalayam Zamindar. Next she was in Karaikuruci (Karaikkudi?) for some time. This is the place where betel leaves are famous. She was for a short period at Anaikari (?). It has come to know that Ampāl, was also at a place called Kudikadu, which is near to Mannargudi and in Poondy (Pondy?). Then she was worshipped for about fifty years at Tiruvarur.⁹⁹

Another priest of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple remembered merely one stopover by name: Nagapattam. Further, he simply referred to ‘other small towns on the Eastern coast.’¹⁰⁰ Venkataraman (1968: 40) reports Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī’s journey from Udayarpalayam to Tiruvarur: “Dakṣiṇāmūrti Śāstri’s son Aiyā Śāstri and some others later took the idol to Aṅakkuḍi, then to Nagore and Sikkil before it reached Tiruvārūr where it was kept in worship for some years.”

97 Quoted in Sharma (1987: 80).

98 Interview with Kamesvara Sastriḡal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

99 Interview with Kamesvara Sastriḡal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

100 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Janakiraman, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 22.06.2007.

A comparison of these three statements reveals an inconsistent record of stopovers between Udayarpalayam and Tiruvarur. They are Karaikuruci, Anaikari, Kudikadu and Poondy according to one Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī priest, Nagapattam according to the other priest, and Anakkudi, Nagore and Sikkil as stated by Venkataraman. Most of the stopovers cannot be located with certainty, the duration of stay is not known, nor are the reasons for the repeated relocations. However, all sources concur that Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī had reached Tiruvarur by the time the musician Syama Sastri was born there in 1763¹⁰¹ as grandson of Vēnkaṭādri, then chief priest of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. Syama Sastri composed hymns in honor of the goddess and became renowned as one of the trinity of Carnatic music.

d) The inauguration of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's temple in Thanjavur in 1786

The statue of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī left Tiruvarur, probably in 1780 or 1781, when Syama Sastri was eighteen years old.¹⁰² Since he belonged to the priestly family of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, he and his father accompanied the goddess to her final destination, Thanjavur. It seems that the influence of the Rāja of Thanjavur was instrumental Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's relocation there.

On the desire of the King Thulaja Rāja of Thanjavur that he wanted Ampāḷ (Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī) to be in Thanjavur itself and he would construct a temple for her, Ampāḷ stayed there itself. Before the temple was constructed, Ampāḷ was in Mela Vidhi Street in the Konganesvarar temple for five years and Moolai Hanuman Koil for five years, and *pūjās* were performed to her. The stable where the horses used to be were given for construction of the temple, and in the year 1786, the first *kumbābhiṣeka* took place.¹⁰³

According to the priests of both temples, attempts have been made to restore Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī to her original place in Kanchipuram. The last such attempt is documented in a lawsuit that took place in the 1960s, in which the Śāṅkara Maṭha in Kanchipuram claimed the right of control over Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. However, the Maṭha only gained administrative rights, not the right of to bring the idol back to Kanchipuram.¹⁰⁴

Problems of dating

So far, I have described the events with reference to a date which connects the 'Muslim invasion' to Aurangzeb's time in the second half of the seventeenth century. However, a second date is provided by some sources, which relates the 'Muslim invasion' to Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, and which would place the events one century later, in the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, Irschick (1994: 16–7) discussed the battle of Pullalur near Kanchipuram, where Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan defeated the British. In this context he reported "that in 1780 the authorities of the three temples in Kanchipuram (...) decided that they had to find ways to protect the idols from Hyder Ali's armies" (1994: 17).

101 Alternatively, 1762 is given as his year of birth.

102 See Venkataraman (1968: 40). However, Kamesvara Sastrigal (interview 15.03.2010) refers to his sixteenth year.

103 Interview with Kamesvara Sastrigal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

104 See Mines and Gourishankar (1990: 776).

Further, he noted that they were disguised as corpses according to Crole's Chingleput Manual. The eighteenth century as the period for the relocation of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī is also mentioned in an article by Mines and Gourishankar (1990: 776). It could be possible that Crole's report in the Chingleput Manual led to this late dating. A note in the *Annual report on Indian epigraphy* (ARE 1919/20: 121) points to a miscalculation of the date of the inscription (ARE 1919, no. 639) that reports the return of Varadarāja. Crole misread Śaka 1632 as 1799 CE instead of 1710 CE, so it seemed an obvious choice for sources that based their information on Crole's report to associate the 'Muslim invasion' with Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

K. Balasubramanyam, a donor for the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram marriage ceremony, also connects the shifting of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī with Tipu Sultan. Balasubramanyam's ancestor Challambhotlu was, according to their family history, the spiritual advisor of the king of Kanchipuram at the time when Tipu Sultan lay siege to Kanchipuram in the second half of the eighteenth century:

At that time there was a golden idol of Kāmākṣī here. It is about life-sized in pure gold. The Kanchi Rāja assumed that the actual war was about taking away the gold idol and not for conquering the kingdom. Thus, he wanted to protect the presiding deity of Kanchipuram. Then, some people died a natural death in the city. The king's spiritual advisor (Challambhotlu) had the idea to send the dead bodies in a procession out of the city, where Tipu Sultan's camp was, and spread the rumor that Kanchipuram was plague-ridden. On those days plague was considered as a threatening and contagious epidemic disease, so people in the army camp got frightened and some ran away. In that funeral procession the golden idol of Kāmākṣī was disguised as dead body. The idol was carried by my forefather (Challambhotlu). Now it is kept near Thanjavur.¹⁰⁵

The story continues that, as a mark of respect, the king declared that for the generations to come Challambhotlu's family will have hereditary rights in the Ekāmranātha temple to perform whatever *pūjā* they wish (see Chapter Six). In a later interview, Balasubramanyam added that his ancestor Challambhotlu had also made the golden idol of Kāmākṣī (Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī).¹⁰⁶

As mentioned above, Crole (1879) reports that a Brahman called Sellambattu restored the idol of Ekāmranātha to its place. This could be a reference to Balasubramanyam's ancestor, Challambhotlu. The spelling of Sellambattu resembles Challambhotlu, considering that in Tamil the letter *c* in the initial position is often transcribed as *s*. To me it seems more likely that Balasubramanyam's ancestor was involved in regaining the statue of Ekāmranātha, rather than in commissioning Kāmākṣī's golden statue or assisting the relocation of her idol to Thanjavur. This would at least explain the close relationship of Balasubramanyam's family with the Ekāmranātha temple, and not with the Kāmākṣī temple.

105 Interview: Ute Hüsken with K. Balasubramanyam, 20.03.2008.

106 Interview with K. Balasubramanyam, 27.03.2010.

A dating of these events to Tipu Sultan's time, in the second half of the eighteenth century, is especially unlikely in the case of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī. She stayed in Tiruvarur in the middle of the eighteenth century and her temple was inaugurated in Thanjavur in 1786. However, it could be that the statues of Varadarāja and Ekāmranātha have been shifted twice: first, during Aurangzeb's time in the seventeenth century, and second, during the Carnatic wars in the eighteenth century. It is stated in the *Kāñcipuram Ṭairekṭari* (1935: 38) that the Ekāmranātha *utsava mūrti* was taken to Jambukesvara in 1767 and kept in a cut mango tree and worshipped there for twenty-five years. After the completion of the third Carnatic war the statue was brought back to the temple and reestablished in 1793. Likewise, Mukund (2005: 73) states that, according to records in the Madras Archives, the priests of the Varadarāja temple brought their festival statues to Madras to protect them from Hyder Ali.

Paṅkuṇi Uttiram in Thanjavur

Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī in Thanjavur is today considered the bride of Ekāmranātha.¹⁰⁷ She is also called Cūtalīṅgeśvarī, the 'Lady of the mango tree *liṅga*', since she was created for marriage to Ekāmranātha, as a priest in Thanjavur explained.¹⁰⁸ The same priest remarked in another interview that this lasting union is expressed by a sacred thread, which is adorned to her, because her husband is not present: 'To say that the Lord is within her, she is adorned with one *upanayana* thread daily, which is not in Kanchi. Every day in the early morning a sacred thread is put to her.'¹⁰⁹ Apart from this symbolism, the celebration of the wedding day on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram is an important event in the annual festival cycle. A significant difference to Kanchipuram is that the marriage ritual itself is not celebrated, but rather the wedding anniversary. A new sari is presented to and adorned upon the goddess on the day of Paṅkuṇi Uttiram, following the custom of an Indian wife on her wedding anniversary. Additionally, the *māṅkalyam*, a neck ornament, which signifies marital commitment, is symbolically renewed on this day. A priest in Thanjavur described the procedure in the following way: 'On the day of Paṅkuṇi Uttiram, the *tirukalyāṇa utsava* for Ampāl takes place. It is the tradition that the *neriñci mālai poṭṭu*¹¹⁰ was given by the Maharashtra king (of Thanjavur). That *poṭṭu* is taken in a palanquin to the Thanjavur senior prince's house. They will touch and give it, and it will be collected and brought and adorned [to Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī].'¹¹¹

The hereditary right to provide the *poṭṭu* rests with the family of the former Mahārāja of Thanjavur. The priest explained that the royal family is not able to give a new one every year.¹¹² Thus, the old *poṭṭu* is brought to their house, touched by one family member, and

107 However, one priest of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram denied that she was ever Ekāmranātha's bride.

108 Interview: Srilata Raman with Janakiraman, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 18.03.2003.

109 Interview: Ute Hüsken with Janakiraman, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 18.06.2007.

110 The *poṭṭu* is a special designed pendant hanging from the chain of the *māṅkalyam*. The term *neruñci mālai* refers to the chain (*mālai*), which looks like tiny thorns named after the *neruñci* plant (cow's thorn, *tribulus terrestris*).

111 Interview with Kamesvara Sastrigal, Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple, 15.03.2010.

112 In Kanchipuram, the right to provide the *poṭṭu* for Elavārkuḷali is within the Chettiar community. Every year they make a new one, which has exactly the same design as the old one. This newly made

handed over to the priests as if it was a new one made for the marriage. The priests then bring it to the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple and, as they emphasize, adorn it and do not tie it to the goddess, because ‘tying’ is only performed during the marriage rituals. Afterwards the goddess receives the eleventh *abhiṣeka*¹¹³ of the year.

Paṅkuṇi Uttiram is an important festival in the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple in Thanjavur. Food is served to devotees and the poor, as is customary in Hindu temples on such occasions. This service was initiated about ten years ago by Babu Sastrigal, a priest of the Kāmākṣī temple in Kanchipuram. When I interviewed him in 2009, he was about to leave for Thanjavur with about thirty people, including his family and cooks, to provide food on the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram day in a nearby hall (*kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*) which belongs to the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple. He says he initiated the service because Kāmākṣī instructed him to do so:

For every Paṅkuṇi Uttiram for the past ten years we are going there. Why I started doing this is, once when I was doing *alaṅkāra* to Ampāl (Kāmākṣī), I thought that she is my mother as well as my daughter. Then she said to me that: ‘You are saying I am your daughter, so keep ten Rupees aside daily.’ So that is why I am keeping that amount separately. In the first year I prepared and gave Laddus [in Thanjavur], in the second year about 150 people had lunch and now it has increased to this level. Now there are about one thousand people!¹¹⁴

It is interesting that he travels to Thanjavur for the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram festival, because priests of the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī temple and the Kāmākṣī temple usually stress that there are no relations between the two temples today. Yet, Babu Sastrigal’s priestly family, from the Kāmākṣī temple, certainly attributes increasing importance to Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī and the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram celebrations in Thanjavur.

A narrative about the events on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram in Thanjavur circulates among Ekāmranātha temple priests in Kanchipuram. One priest observed: ‘What she (Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī) has said is: ‘I am in Thanjavur and bless everybody, but one day I will not be in Thanjavur, on the day of Paṅkuṇi Uttiram. I will go to Ekāmbareśvara temple for the marriage.’ That is why during the marriage, after five o’clock they close the door and keep it closed.’¹¹⁵ The same narrative has been recounted by another priest of the Ekāmranātha temple: ‘Once upon a time, it is said that on the day of Paṅkuṇi Uttiram, even though the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī is in Thanjavur, that day the temple will be closed. On that day there will be no *darśan* of Ampāl. It is implied that she comes here [to the Ekāmranātha temple].’¹¹⁶ The temple in Thanjavur is not closed today; yet, the narrative of the Ekāmranātha temple priests sustains Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī’s status as bride of Ekāmranātha.

poṭṭu is tied to her during the marriage rituals, while the old one is put into the temple treasury year after year.

113 Eleven *abhiṣekas* are performed for Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī in one year: nine during the Navarātri festival, the tenth on her birth star *pūram* in the month of Aippaci (mid-October to mid-November), and the eleventh on the marriage anniversary on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram. The *abhiṣeka* is done in *ekānta* way, which means that devotees cannot witness it (opposite: *lokānta*, in public).

114 Interview with Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 25.03.2009.

115 Interview with Nagaswamy Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 05.04.2010.

116 Interview with Anand Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 16.04.2009.

5.4 Concluding remarks

Reviewing the material presented in this chapter, we can see that the three goddesses—Ēlavārkuḷali, Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl—are closely related, though their relationship is not clearly defined and remains open to change. Obviously, this situation sometimes leads to tensions and competitions, most visible in the relationship between Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl, but also more subtly between Ēlavārkuḷali and Kāmākṣī. Kāmākṣī is at present the superior goddess of Kanchipuram and it seems that the other two goddesses benefit from being linked to her. From a historical perspective, however, the goddess with the name Kāmākṣī does not appear before the fourteenth century. The Kanchipuram goddess's 'original' place will probably never be known. It is also possible that a number of shrines to different goddesses existed simultaneously. Orr (2005) has demonstrated that goddesses' images, and the vocabulary used to designate them in inscriptions from the eighth to thirteenth centuries, show so many similarities that sectarian categories and characterizations, such as fierce and benevolent, do not apply to them and have probably been assigned at a later stage. This assumption might be corroborated by the appearance of Śaṅkara's 'taming' legend no earlier than the fourteenth century.

What has become clear in the depiction of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's history and her present day situation is that the priests of the three temples, Ekāmranātha, Kāmākṣī and Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, transmitted knowledge about the goddess differently. Yet, all agree that Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was, and remains (in a sense), the former bride of Ekāmranātha. The status of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī as bride of Ekāmranātha is maintained, though to variable degrees in the different temples. Surely, her tradition is maintained in detail in her own temple in Thanjavur, but a rising interest in her can also be witnessed in one priestly family from the Kanchipuram temple. For the priests of the Ekāmranātha temple, she no longer plays an important role and knowledge about her compromises merely narratives and vague memories, which have faded into the recesses of history.

The account of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī's former role as bride in the marriage rituals in Kanchipuram clearly shows that the relocation of her statue to Thanjavur changed the rituals significantly. It must be considered that the entire temple festival stopped for some years, while the festival statues were kept in safe custody in Udayarpalayam. Then, it must have been unclear for some time whether Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī would be coming back to Kanchipuram, given her travels from one place to another over a period of about one hundred years and the attempts that have been made to restore her to her original place. Thus, it can only be speculated when, and under what circumstances, Ēlavārkuḷali replaced her in the rituals.

The origin of Ēlavārkuḷali is unknown. Priests of the Ekāmranātha temple assert that she has been housed in the temple long before Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī was shifted to Thanjavur. She is regarded as a long-established consort of Ekāmranātha, whose name can be traced back to the poet saint Cuntarar of the first half of the ninth century. He praises her in one hymn (7.61) on Kacci Ēkampam (Ekāmranātha in Kanchipuram). In one line Umā is characterized as having long, perfumed hair (with cardamom or unguent) (Tam. *ēlavārkuḷāḷ umai*), which gave Śiva's consort in the Ekāmranātha temple the name Ēlavārkuḷali.

However, priests of the Kāmākṣī temple trace the name Ēlavārkuḷali back to the *Lalitātrīśatīstotra*, the hymn of Lalitā's three hundred names. Here (verse 7), one of Lalitā's names is *elā-sugandhi-cikurā*, which means 'having hair that has the good smell of cardamom.' From this perspective is Ēlavārkuḷali the Tamilized form of the Sanskrit name *elā-sugandhi-cikurā*, which is an epithet of Lalitā. Thus, Ēlavārkuḷali is considered to be a manifestation of Lalitā/Kāmākṣī, whose statue has been produced to replace Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī, as one priest of the Kāmākṣī temple suggests.¹¹⁷ However, the shifting of the statue of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣī has a historical basis and might be one reason why Ēlavārkuḷali is the bride in the marriage rituals, while Kāmākṣī joins the marriage rituals as bridesmaid.

117 Interview Babu Sastrigal, Kāmākṣī temple, 25.03.2009.