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Trying my hand at short movies on Hindu temples in Tamil Nadu, India

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In February-March 2012 my wife and I made a tour of the Hindu temples in the state of Tamil Nadu, south-east India.

India had played a considerable role in my undergraduate and graduate training at Amsterdam University in the 1960s under Wim Wertheim and his co-workers such as Carla Vreede-Stuers, but after turning down the offer of doing well-endowed PhD research on the retail trade in Mumbai, India, I had decided to become an Africanist under my main teacher of anthropology, André Köbben – besides specialising on popular Islam, with introductory Arabic and first, short fieldwork in the highlands of Tunisia, North Africa, 1968. When I was an adolescent, travelling to India in the wake of the Beatles and looking for spiritual compensation for the existential shortcomings of the West, did not yet appeal to me – in my perception, that *vogue* hit the North Atlantic region a bit later. Much later I visited India, in 1998 and 2001, as a simple Africanist involved in the study of globalisation and the state, following up or establishing academic contacts there, and not particularly keen to get acquainted with India proper, not even as a tourist – although I visited a temple in Mumbai, and although the beauties I brought in the way of traditional textiles and clothing were impressive and are still being cherished in my family.

In 2012 my situation had considerably changed. Since 2004 I had been actively involved in the international revival of comparative mythology, which had always had a strong Indological orientation (Max Müller!), and whose then epicentre was the Harvard Institute for Sanskrit and Indian Studies, under Michael Witzel. (As a member of Witzel's conference circuit I would visit and revisit Japan, China, the United Kingdom and the USA, but not India, for Witzel's well-founded views of the origin of the Vedic scriptures *outside* the Indian subcontinent had brought him in head-on confrontation with Hindu fundamentalists; on this term, see below.) My own decades of comparative research, on African divination systems, on leopard-skin symbolism in its amazing global ramifications and continuities, and on ethnicity and *Black Athena* issues in Bronze-Age Mediterranean, had meanwhile alerted me to the recognised but little studied, massive continuities that exist between sub-Saharan Africa and South, South East and East Africa. Here initially my attention had been concentrated on Buddhism, but after extensive though still inevitably very superficial explorations into that world religion's present-day expressions in China, Japan, Indonesia (vestiges of Buddhism in ancient architecture and syncretistic Islam on the isle of Java), Thailand and Sri Lanka, and after initial personal encounters with Hinduism in Indonesia (the isle of Bali) and Sri Lanka (among the Tamils, whose civil war on the Lankan state had just ended), it became time to extend our acquaintance with Asian lived world religions by focussing on Hinduism. If I say 'our', it is in grateful recognition of the fact that much of these excursions were undertaken jointly by my wife Patricia – an Africanist MA now specialising in breathing therapy and Indian classical *dhrupad* music – and me, in a shared personal budget of time, money and interest (only the Sri Lanka trip was paid for by institutional money); just like the earlier years of my Nkoya research were constructively shared with my then wife, Henny). In 2012, when I was about to take up *dhrupad* percussion myself, I was finishing a globally comparative book-length study of element cosmologies, which at the end of that year appeared under the title of

Before the Presocratics: Cyclicity, transformation, and element cosmology: The case of transcontinental pre- or protohistoric cosmological substrates linking Africa, Eurasia and North America (special issue of Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy, 2012, 396 pp). This made it particularly attractive to allow a striking feature of Tamil Nadu Hindu temples to determine the stages and sequence of our 2012 travel in Tamil Nadu: among the state's numerous splendid and famous temples, many are dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva in his capacity of Destroyer (complementary to Brahma as Creator, and Vishnu as Perpetuator), and of these *Shivaite* temples (I use this term in recognition of the fact that, over the centuries, the cult of Shiva has developed into a well-defined, distinct identity within Hinduism, especially shunned by Vishnuism), five (one in the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh state) have been specifically devoted to the *lingam* (Shiva's main symbol, the erect male organ) under the five element aspects of Water, Earth, Fire, Air, and Aither. Certainly not all major temples of Tamil Nadu fall into this restricted categorisation, but as an ordering principle it proved very useful in allowing us to select, and base an itinerary, from what otherwise was an overwhelming plurality, a *mer à boire*.

The five temples (*panchalinga*) of Shiva as Lord of the Elements are:

element	<i>lingam</i>	locality	name temple	video already available?
Fire	Agni Lingam (Jyothi Lingam)	Tiruvannamalai	Arunachaleshvara	Yes (2014): http://youtu.be/goDbc4HWT7Y
Water	Appu Lingam (Jambu Lingam)	Srirangam / Thiruvanaikaval (near Trichi)	Jambukeshvara	Yes (2014) http://youtu.be/iXt0J0VbZvc
Earth / land	Prithivi Lingam	Kanchipuram	Ekambareshvara	yes, and already uploaded to YouTube in 2012: http://youtu.be/8kQWJUoQkhk
Air / wind (<i>Vayu</i>)	Vayu Lingam	Kalahasthi, state Andhra Pradesh (north of Tamil Nadu)	Sri Kalahastheeswara Swami Temple	no, and not forthcoming either
Sky / Aither (<i>Akasha</i>)	Akasha Lingam	Chidambaram	Nataraja / Chit Sabha or Chitambalam	no, but forthcoming



The Sri Kalahasteeswara Swami Temple in Andhra Pradesh, where Shiva is being venerated in the form of the *Air Lingam*

Clearly, on our trip we have missed out on the *Air lingam* temple, which finds itself outside Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, our temple tour was not entirely limited to the *panchalinga* series, nor to Shiva temples – and some of my short movies deal in some detail with other sanctuaries not in the above list: the magnificent Ranganatha temple at Srirangam / Tiruchirapalli (Trichi); the Brihadishvara temple at the major town of Thanjavur; and the Brihadishvara temple at the ruined town of Gangaikondacholapuram near Trichi, the latter being an ancient replica of the former of the same name. Finally, my data on the Minakshi / Shiva main temple in Madurai also await processing.

In my forty-five years of anthropological practice I have learned that the best way to gain a working knowledge of an initially alien cultural complex is to observe in detail its sensory manifestations, then to try and give a coherent account of these – however basic – against the background of the available literature, scholarly and otherwise. If I were to recognise and appreciate such South Asian influences on sub-Saharan Africa as decades of African fieldwork in combination with substantial exposure to Asian and comparative mythological studies were beginning to suggest to me, I would have to overcome my regional inhibitions as an Africanist, and try to produce accounts of Asian cultural and religious manifestations – as I had begun to do in regard of the Chinese aspects of divination and element cosmologies worldwide, and in regard of pilgrimage and syncretistic Sufism on Java and Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Thailand. YouTube and small, inobtrusive portable cameras with video function, in emergencies even cell phones, provided the technological means and encouragement to concentrate no longer exclusively on text production but also to extend the accounts into photo and video – applying the old adage to the effect that a picture is worth a thousand words. Producing coherent short videos on Shiva element temples would force me to grapple with Hindu cultural and cultic traits as never before, might help me ultimately to identify such

traits in Africa, or alternatively to identify Africa in such Asian traits – as well as protecting me from over-enthusiasm in the spurious claim of such transcontinental continuities. This rule of thumb would apply, even if my technological skills in film making were still as minimal as my familiarity with essential Hindu traits.

The point therefore about these ‘Tamil Nadu Temple Tour’ movies is not to add to the sum total (already very considerable, even on the Internet alone) of common knowledge about Tamil Nadu Hindu temples, but to force and apply myself to Hinduism in its most accessible local manifestations – its temples open to tourists and other non-locals. I have no illusions about the value of these accounts, and my only reason for uploading them onto YouTube is that that compels me to conclude the exercise to the full – probably with nobody else benefiting but myself.

I turned 65 in India, notably on the Andaman Islands which have played such an inspiring role both in early social anthropology (Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), and in recent microbiological genetics seeking to unravel the early migratory history of Anatomically Modern Humans after venturing out of Africa 80,000 to 60,000 years ago. We were almost stuck on the Andamans, for Kingfisher Airlines with which we had booked our return ticket to the mainland was on the brink of bankruptcy, could no longer maintain its regular services, and finding ourselves stranded in the middle of the Indian Ocean we had to buy a replacement with another airline at thrice the original price. Shortly after our return from India I retired from the African Studies Centre, Leiden. Mainly through the good services of Director Ton Dietz, PR Officer Marieke van Winden, and Grants Officer Gitty Petit; with additional subsidies from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, the Philosophical Faculty, the Erasmus University Rotterdam (where I served for years as Professor of Foundations of Intercultural Philosophy), and from *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*; and with the help of so many brilliant international participants and guests, this occasion could be celebrated with an international conference, now being edited for publication, on Africa’s transcontinental continuities in pre- and protohistory. However, soon afterwards, while I was busy processing my notes and visual materials on Tamil Nadu Hinduism, a serious medical problem that had already had a considerable impact on my life in 2011, deteriorated to the point where the rest of 2012 was entirely spent on hospitalisation, treatment and recovery. Of the five Hindu temple movies I had made so far, only one was uploaded onto the Internet, and the rest remained shelved on my computer for, hopefully, further use.

Now, two years later, and while much other material from heterogeneous provenances has been accumulating, it is time to return to these drafts of two years ago. I found I had initially shunned working on the two most complex and rewarding contexts: the temple of Nataraja (Shiva as Lord of the Dance) in Chidambaram (where the *akasha* / either *lingam* is kept, and where during our visit many young girls, with their parents, came from Jennai to give a dancing tribute to Shiva), and on the magnificent Minakshi temple in Madurai, in the South of Tamil Nadu, where our journey had ended, and where easily accessible rites including musical celebrations at nightfall accompany the daily transfer of Lord Shiva to the section of the temple reserved for his female companion, Minakshi.

Overlooking my 2012 draft films now, across a distance of two years, I am sometimes pleasantly surprised by the fool-proof tools that present-day camera and software technology put in the hands of cinematographic newcomers and Hindu near-ignoramus like myself. Some small sections do begin to convey the sense of beauty, devotion, *communitas* (Victor

Turner's term for boundary-effacing sense of fellow-humanity in ritual), piety that we felt during our temple visits – which often spilled over into personal devotion and offering, never mind whether we would consider ourselves Hindu or not (brought up in Christianity and with, on my side at least, considerable exposure to Islam, our current inclination is rather towards Buddhism; meanwhile, the *dhrupad* classical Indian music we study emerged half a millennium ago from Hindu hymns played by Islamic musicians).

Admittedly, even in 2012 I was not a total newcomer to Internet cinematography. Of the many videos I recorded in Zambia in 2011 during the annual festival of the Kazanga Cultural Association (since a quarter of a century a major cultural and artistic expression of the Nkoya people, whose lives I have shared since 1972), a dozen were provided with key words and a short description and uploaded onto YouTube that same summer. [All these movies are available from my website, from a special page presenting an extensive report on my 2011 Nkoya fieldwork in Zambia.](#) Some of these obtained more than 3,000 viewings, one even 10,000 viewings – but the fact that the klatter movie shows two pre-pubescent girls of about 10 years of age – dancing in public and in full daylight view before a crowd of several thousand people – with bare, budding nipples in a demonstration of the Nkoya female puberty rites, may have attracted not just enthusiasts of African traditional culture but, inevitably as a dimension of present-day Internet culture, also perverts... And a video I recorded in Western Java (visiting my Indonesian PhD candidate now Dr Stephanus Djunatan during his local fieldwork), of a Sunda village pilgrimage musically underlined by local musicians, attracted over 3,000 viewings and a few enraptured comments, even in the Sundaminority language, before a hassle over copyright of the popular song performed by these folk musicians brought YouTube to temporary (?) suspend the availability of this movie. The point is not that through YouTube I am reaching, with a low threshold medium, an additional audience that would never read my scholarly work even if posted on Internet . The point is that through YouTube I can mobilise additional means of discharging my life-long insistence on the counter-hegemonic, intercultural representation of people in the global periphery, and their cultural and religious achievements – and representing them at the imaginary and now virtualised rich and powerful centre of the world. However, such lofty goals are, so far, hardly reached in my Tamil Nadu Hinduism little movies, with perhaps sporadic exceptions when something of the architectural and sculptural beauty, or spiritual intensity and *communitas*, happens to come across despite all my ignorance and clumsiness.

I would not be rewriting all my papers at least six times before and after publication, and yet be happy with these very initial 2012 film results. I would like to make very drastic revisions of all my six '*Tamil Nadu Temple Tour*' films so far, but I find that the intuitive and pedestrian software used (Windows Movie Maker and Google's Picasa3) only allows for revision of the initial results if, and only if, the basic graphic documents are still on the computer in exactly their original location and arrangement, and no new file names have been given to intermediate and final products. After prolonged illness and a computer crash in 2012, these conditions can no longer be met, and the only way to make the revisions I would prefer now would be to start all over again from scratch. I cannot bring myself to do this, realising finally, for the first time in my life, that my days are numbered no less than those of my fellow humans.

So I see no alternative but to present the 2012 films here in their original form. There are a few points of content that I particularly regret, especially in the Ranganatha piece. There, temple sculptures of groups of denuded young women are presented, no doubt of the Gopis

(cow girls) who, according to common^[1] myth, are Lord Krishna's playful companions; but while I rhetorically – in an only all too familiar stance of knowing better – exclaim, in the subtitles, ‘but where is Krishna then?’, I failed at the time to identify the blue boy in the tree who could be no other than Krishna. Such are the traps into which an Africanist may fall when finally trying his hands at Asia – and inevitably falling ill in the process.



Elaborate painted sculpture on one of the *gopuras* (ornate towers) of the Ranganatha temple: the naughty Krishna (conventionally represented with a blue skin) had hidden the Gopis' (cow girls') clothes when the latter were taking a bath, and he himself hides in a tree – or course the myth is to be seen, mainly, as a metaphor of metaphysical enlightenment.

For my own delight as well as that of the reader's, let me quote the relevant passage in full:

‘Sukadeva Gosvami said: During the first month of the winter season, the young unmarried girls of Gokula observed the vow of worshiping goddess Katyayani. For the entire month they ate only unspiced khichri. My dear King, after they had bathed in the water of the Yamuna just as the sun was rising, the gopis made an earthen deity of goddess Durga on the riverbank. Then they worshiped her with such aromatic substances as sandalwood pulp, along with other items both opulent and simple, including lamps, fruits, betel nuts, newly grown leaves, and fragrant garlands and incense. Each of the young unmarried girls performed her worship while chanting the following mantra. “O goddess Katyayani, O great potency of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic power and mighty controller of all, please make the son of Nanda Maharaja my husband. I offer my obeisances unto you.” Thus for an entire month the girls carried out their vow and properly worshiped the goddess Bhadrakali, fully absorbing their minds in K??a and meditating upon the following thought: “May the son of King Nanda become my husband.” Each day they rose at dawn. Calling out to one another by name, they all held hands and loudly sang the glories of K??a while going to the Kalindi to take their bath. One day they came to the riverbank and, putting aside their clothing as they had done before, happily played in the water while singing the glories of K??a. Lord K??a, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and master of all masters of mystic yoga, was aware of what the gopis were doing, and thus He went there

surrounded by His young companions to award the gopis the perfection of their endeavor. Taking the girls' garments, He quickly climbed to the top of a kadamba tree. Then, as He laughed loudly and His companions also laughed, He addressed the girls jokingly. [Lord K???a said:] My dear girls, you may each come here as you wish and take back your garments. I'm telling you the truth and am not joking with you, since I see you're fatigued from executing austere vows. I have never before spoken a lie, and these boys know it. Therefore, O slender-waisted girls, please come forward, either one by one or all together, and pick out your clothes. Seeing how K???a was joking with them, the gopis became fully immersed in love for Him, and as they glanced at each other they began to laugh and joke among themselves, even in their embarrassment. But still they did not come out of the water. As Sri Govinda spoke to the gopis in this way, His joking words completely captivated their minds. Submerged up to their necks in the cold water, they began to shiver. Thus they addressed Him as follows. [The gopis said:] Dear K???a, don't be unfair! We know that You are the respectable son of Nanda and that You are honored by everyone in Vraja. You are also very dear to us. Please give us back our clothes. We are shivering in the cold water. O Syamasundara, we are Your maidservants and must do whatever You say. But give us back our clothing. You know what the religious principles are, and if You don't give us our clothes we will have to tell the king. Please! The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: If you girls are actually My maidservants, and if you will really do what I say, then come here with your innocent smiles and let each girl pick out her clothes. If you don't do what I say, I won't give them back to you. And even if the king becomes angry, what can he do? Then, shivering from the painful cold, all the young girls rose up out of the water, covering their pubic area with their hands. When the Supreme Lord saw how the gopis were struck with embarrassment, He was satisfied by their pure loving affection. Putting their clothes on His shoulder, the Lord smiled and spoke to them with affection. [Lord K???a said:] You girls bathed naked while executing your vow, and that is certainly an offense against the demigods. To counteract your sin you should offer obeisances while placing your joined palms above your heads. Then you should take back your lower garments. Thus the young girls of V?ndavana, considering what Lord Acyuta had told them, accepted that they had suffered a falldown from their vow by bathing naked in the river. But they still desired to successfully complete their vow, and since Lord K???a is Himself the ultimate result of all pious activities, they offered their obeisances to Him to cleanse away all their sins. Seeing them bow down like that, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Devaki, gave them back their garments, feeling compassionate toward them and satisfied by their act. Although the gopis had been thoroughly cheated, deprived of their modesty, ridiculed and made to act just like toy dolls, and although their clothing had been stolen, they did not feel at all inimical toward Sri K???a. Rather, they were simply joyful to have this opportunity to associate with their beloved. The gopis were addicted to associating with their beloved K???a, and thus they became captivated by Him. Thus, even after putting their clothes on they did not move. They simply remained where they were, shyly glancing at Him. The Supreme Lord understood the determination of the gopis in executing their strict vow. The Lord also knew that the girls desired to touch His lotus feet, and thus Lord Damodara, K???a, spoke to them as follows. [Lord K???a said:] O saintly girls, I understand that your real motive in this austerity has been to worship Me. That intent of yours is approved of by Me, and indeed it must come to pass. The desire of those who fix their minds on Me does not lead to material desire for sense gratification, just as barleycorns burned by the sun and then cooked can no longer grow into new sprouts. Go now, girls, and return to Vraja. Your desire is fulfilled, for in My company you will enjoy the coming nights. After all, this was the purpose of your vow to worship goddess Katyayani, O pure-hearted ones. Sukadeva Gosvami said: Thus instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the young girls, their desire now fulfilled, could bring themselves only with great difficulty to return to the village of Vraja, meditating all the while upon His lotus feet. Some time later Lord K???a, the son of Devaki, surrounded by His cowherd friends and accompanied by His elder brother, Balarama, went a good distance away from V?ndavana, herding the cows. When the sun's heat became intense, Lord K???a saw that the trees were acting as umbrellas by shading Him, and thus He spoke as follows to His boyfriends. [Lord K???a said:] O Stoka K???a and A?sus, O Sridama, Subala and Arjuna, O Visala, V??abha, Ojasvi, Devaprastha and Varuthapa, just see these greatly fortunate trees, whose lives are completely dedicated to the benefit of others. Even while tolerating the wind, rain, heat and snow, they protect us from these elements. Just see how these trees are maintaining every living entity! Their birth is successful. Their behavior is just like that of great personalities, for anyone who asks anything from a tree never goes away disappointed. These trees fulfill one's desires with their leaves, flowers and fruits, their shade, roots, bark and wood, and also with their fragrance, sap, ashes, pulp and shoots. It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words. Thus moving among the trees, whose branches were bent low by their abundance of twigs, fruits, flowers and leaves, Lord K???a came to the Yamuna River. The cowherd boys let the cows drink the clear, cool and wholesome water of the Yamuna. O King Parik?it,

the cowherd boys themselves also drank that sweet water to their full satisfaction. Then, O King, the cowherd boys began herding the animals in a leisurely way within a small forest along the Yamuna. But soon they became afflicted by hunger and, approaching Kṛṣṇa and Balarama, spoke as follows.^{2[2]}

Towards the end of the same movie, I imply that Hindu fundamentalism was the main factor in our being refused, as non-Hindus, into the Ranganatha temple's inner sanctum (whereas at several other temples in the series we were granted full or qualified access). On second thoughts, of course, this had little to do with fundamentalism, if we define the latter as the socially negotiated attitude based on the claim of having exclusive access to religious and cosmological truth. A similar refusal may be met by anyone doing research on sacred places anywhere in the world. As an anthropologist of religion I have personally met with such refusals dozens of times during fieldwork, for reasons that do not need the (implicitly reproachful) recourse to the concept of fundamentalism, especially where the latter concept has globally acquired overtones of fanaticism and violence in recent decades. For instance, in my 1983 fieldwork on the psychotherapeutic effectiveness of local treatment among the Manjacos of Guinea Bissau, West Africa (memorable because it was the first fieldwork Patricia and I shared), for months I had been promised access to the Sacred Forest, a nearby ecological sanctuary where my landlord (the region's major land priest) brought all supplicants' offerings including my own to be partly libated and partly consumed there with his elderly male fellow-initiates. This was not an encounter with fundamentalism either, because the implicit truth of Manjaco beliefs was hardly ever articulated verbally or debated in everyday life, it was a set of tacit representations that were simply not questioned and that were re-enacted and thereby tacitly confirmed – through the world-creating capability that is at the heart of belief systems, and that constitutes their principal social significance – by every new ritual offering, prayer, diagnosis, or curative act. If I resented that the promise of being granted access was not honoured, it was not out of a researcher's curiosity (I knew from other sources what went on there and what there was to see – the typical emptiness around which secrets are build), nor out of an intellectual combat over truth of the kind of debates Jews, Muslims and Christians staged during the Middle Ages (I was not excluded because I was taken for a non-believer, in fact, that every morning I, as member of the priest's household, was obliged to share in the tumblers full of rum as one of the ways in which supplicants' offerings were dispatched, showed (tacitly but beyond reasonable doubt) that I was a believer, and had been accepted as such to a considerable extent – my resentment came from the fact that exclusion is socially hurtful, admission socially gratifying (and that because of childhood experiences I am oversensitive to exclusion). The situation is really very simple, and was brought out over a century ago eloquently and elaborately by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (*Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris: Alcan, 1912) – while, surprisingly, my published scientific work is dotted with references to this immensely powerful and influential theory, on which for instance my entire analysis of popular Islam in the highlands of Tunisia has been based. Anyway, here goes: *Since the invisible, non-human entities referred to in religious contexts can hardly be claimed to have any tangible manifestations in our sense world, sacredness is not an intrinsic quality but must mainly be in the eyes of the beholder. Sacredness therefore largely depends on a mental, logical operation that separates between sacred and profane. Such operations are implemented, and kept alive in human interaction, by the imposition of boundaries and prohibitions, on access, movement, the discharge of bodily functions, etc. Denying the legitimacy of the enforcement of such boundaries, or resenting them, explodes the very essence of religion as a human mental construct, and is unbecoming for someone who considers himself a social scientist of religion, even when he is allergic to exclusion, and even when he makes his first little movies on Hindu*

temples! Perhaps Vishnuism (as the less dominant version of Hinduism) is simply more insistent on boundaries than Shivaism. The point is related to my overlooking the repeated representation of Krishna on the *gopuras*: for that god is one of the avatars of Vishnu. My apologies therefore, even though I cannot revise the film in question for technical reasons set out above.

Finally, a word about the musical backgrounds to these movies. Present-day viewers are used to images being supported by music, which in itself may scarcely register consciously. It stands to reason that movies on India are preferably supported by Indian music of some kind, on Africa by African music, on Czech explorers of Africa by Czech or African music etc. But while (as a writer and amateur photographer / cinematographer) I have made a point of presenting only stills and footage to which I own the copyright or which at least is in the public domain, on the musical side I have been more naïve in regard of these Tamil Nadu movies, and, as a novice to film making, have picked music that happened to be available on my laptop in the form of MP3 files. I may be forgiven for this insensitivity in the light of the fact that all over the web, without acknowledgment or prior permission, I find my own texts and images, published under explicit copyright on my own webpage. However, I certainly did not have the intention to infringe the copyright of the original composers and performers, but I was simply not aware that a problem might arise – this is a highly respectful, non-commercial, cultural and educational use, so surely the copyright owners would not mind. But I had no means of asking them. Fortunately YouTube picked up the copyright infringement and pointed it out to me, without yet blocking the movies straightaway. Depending on the software used, the duration of the movie is determined by the length of the musical track, or the musical track is alternated with my own voice over and makes for an attractive combination that cannot be removed without totally destroying the movie. I am now looking for means of remedying these unexpected faults, either by using fragments of live temple music that we recorded during the girl dancers' performances at Chidambaram, or by replacing the copyrighted pieces my Indian music of our own, amateur production (but for that we are still far from sufficiently accomplished!), or by gaining access to some repository of musical documents on which no copyright rests anymore – in its editorial pages YouTube does provide some such, copyright-free, audio documents, but most belong to modern North Atlantic popular music. Meanwhile I apologise for any violence unintentionally done to the copyright of others.

With these reservations and disclaimers, I can now safely present my little movies on Tamil Nadu temples for what little they are worth. If their main merit is that now I feel slightly more confident writing on African-Hindu relations in protohistory, they will have served their purpose.

³[1] The myth is so common that it is repeated all over the secondary scholarly and popular literature without an original Sanskrit source ever being given. After much searching I found it in the 10th chapter of the Sanskrit classic *Srimad Bhagavatam*, or *Bhagavata Purana*; cf. Dasgupta, S. N., 1992, *A History of Indian Philosophy, I-V*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, first published Cambridge 1922, Delhi 1975, IV, ch. 24; Prabhupada, His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami, no date [ca. 2010], *Srimad Bhagavata: Complete Commentary and Translation*, no publisher stated [International Krishna Consciousness Publishers] : no place, also at Internet Archive at: https://archive.org/details/SrimadBhagavatam_251

⁴[2] English translation from: *S'rimad-Bhagavatam*, at: Bhagavata Puran.a, Bhaktivedanta Vedabase: A treasure of spiritual knowledge, at: <http://vedabase.com/en/sb>, ch. 10, section 22, with thanks.

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