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# For the Love of Tamil:

## Essays in Honor of E. Annamalai

a cura di
Margherita Trento, Constantine V. Nakassis
N. Govindarajan, and Sascha Ebeling

Napoli
2025

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E. Annamalai and his life-companion Nageswari (1940-2025)
stand in front of a map of the world they traveled together.

# *Introduction: For the Love of Tamil*

Margherita Trento and Constantine V. Nakassis

Elayaperumal Annamalai (b. 1938) is the pre-eminent Tamil linguist of his generation, with an illustrious career spanning four continents and six decades. He has held positions at the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in Japan, the Max Planck Institute in Germany and the University of Leiden's International Institute of Asian Studies, the University of Melbourne in Australia, and Yale University and the University of Chicago in the United States. He arrived at Chicago first as a Ph.D. student and Tamil instructor in 1966, and then returned, nearly five decades later, as a Visiting Professor of Tamil, the position from which he officially retired in 2021. Despite retirement, his life as a scholar continues on just as vigorously: ever the teacher and curious intellectual, he continues to read, write and publish, participate in conferences and workshops, and travel the world to engage discussions in and about Tamil.

Professor Annamalai's academic career began in Tamil Nadu in the early 1960s. He graduated with a master's degree in Tamil Language and Literature from Annamalai University (1960), where he worked with the renowned doyen of Tamil linguistics T. P. Meenakshisundaram (1901–1980), after which he began teaching Tamil at his alma mater. Inspired by his encounter with

disciplinary linguistics and the emergent generativist paradigm, Annamalai seized upon the chance invitation to teach Tamil at the University of Chicago that came from none other than the eminent linguist and folklorist A. K. Ramanujan (1929–1993)—but only on the condition that he also be able to matriculate in the Ph.D. program in Linguistics at the University. Focusing on the syntax of Tamil adjectival clauses, under the supervision of James MacCawley, Annamalai completed his dissertation in 1969 (which was published in 1997 as *Adjectival Clauses in Tamil*). It was at this time as well that Annamalai began his career as a teacher of Tamil as a second language, developing the famous "Jim and Raja" conversations, together with his University of Chicago colleague James Lindholm (1940–2020). Upon completing his Ph.D., Annamalai went on to the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore in 1971, where he remained until 1996, retiring as its director. From there, he took visiting positions at Tokyo University and the University of Leiden, followed by longer stints in the U.S., first to start up the Tamil program, alongside Bernard Bate (1960–2016), at Yale University, and then, after his former colleague and collaborator Jim Lindholm retired, to teach Tamil at the University of Chicago, from 2010 until 2021.

These different phases of his career correspond to Professor Annamalai's kaleidoscope of interests in all things linguistic and all things Tamil. Like all great linguists, Annamalai's research encompasses every aspect of language ("general linguistics" as it is sometimes called), from formal structures, as reflected in his dissertation and later work on Tamil syntax and semantics, to the social and political aspects of language. The latter aspect took on importance in his work as the Director of CIIL, where he focused on minoritized South Asian languages, processes of endangerment and revitalization, and language pedagogy. Annamalai continued his reflection on language pedagogy as an instructor of Tamil at Yale University and the University of Chicago, where he also began to focus more and more on Tamil poetics and literature. This element of his research was both what Annamalai began with as a master's student in India and what he eventually returned to, becoming a teacher and exegete of the long Tamil literary tradition to students and faculty alike at the University of Chicago, from the Sangam period to medieval works to modern literature.

There is no topic of Tamil that Annamalai's scholarly curiosity and intellectual acumen have not touched on.

This career path resulted in a resolutely cosmopolitan thinker, but one firmly rooted in his Tamil and Indian identity and education. Indeed, before he became a professional linguist, he was a student in 1960s Tamil Nadu, a period of intense political unrest and emerging political pride in the Tamil language and identity. It was the height of the Dravidian Movement. Following Independence and the 1956 States Reorganization Act, during the 1960s the political vanguard of the so-called Dravidian Movement—the DMK party—swept the Indian National Congress out of power in the newly formed state of Tamil Nadu, taking control of the Secretariat in 1967. A long-emerging political force, the Dravidian Movement in the 1960s captured the consciousness of a whole generation and much of its energy was invested in the question of language, particularly in shoring up the place of Tamil, in the nation, the region, and the hearts of its speakers. This took form in many ways, but most visibly in the anti-Hindi protests that exploded on college campuses across Tamil Nadu. January of 1965—the year when Annamalai took his master's degree—witnessed mass student protests on the campus of Annamalai University, one key epicenter of the unrest. A witness and participant to these transformative political movements, the anti-Hindi protests of the Dravidian movement left a deep impression on the young linguist-to-be, as it did on many of his generation.

It was in this context that Annamalai's interest and love for Tamil developed in many directions. While the academic study of the language would be his lifelong mission, he also experimented with poetry, and in the early 1960s some of his compositions were published in the literary magazine *Eḻuttu* edited by Ci. Cu. Cellappā (1912–1998), one of the protagonists of the "new poetry" (*putukkavitai*) movement in Tamil. As was typical of this movement, Annamalai experimented with free verse and new themes drawn from the everyday lives of people who had little representation in classical Tamil poetry. A taste for realism and the ethical concerns of representation always remained with him in his aesthetic and intellectual predilections, be it in literature or cinema. From the million Tamil films he could choose for his classrooms, for

example, he often used Balu Mahendra's rather somber 1988 *Vīṭu* ("House") to teach second-year Tamil students in Chicago. He also retained a fondness for writing poetry, as shown by his New Year poems in Tamil and English, which he shares via email with students, colleagues, and friends. His wife and lifelong companion of adventure, Nageswari (1940-2025), shared with him the joy of reading and writing about the world in Tamil and is a well-known author of nonfiction books in Tamil Nadu.

Perhaps as a result of his simultaneous rootedness and cosmopolitanism, it is with a certain love, pride, and attachment to Tamil that Annamalai approaches the language, as generations of students and colleagues can attest. It is also with curiosity, openness, and spirit of discovery—his knowledge gleaned through a lifetime of immersion in the seas of the Tamil language—that Annamalai approaches and teaches Tamil, as a language, a culture, and a way of being in the world. One result of this is that, as a scholar of the science of language, Annamalai has taken an ecumenical, if nonconformist, view of Tamil, one that led him to see certain limitations of the Dravidian ideological vision for a scientific approach to language. This is evident in his publications on issues of language purism and language ideology, and in his pedagogical publications and teaching style, always with a focus on colloquial Tamil, the language as it is spoken and used by everyday speakers. Exposure to different scientific approaches (at Chicago), different languages (at the CIIL, in his travels in Asia, North America, and Europe), different language ideologies, and different types of language learners (American political scientists and anthropologists in search of colloquial Tamil for their field research; Sanskritists seeking to understand premodern language contact; heritage language learners hoping to reclaim their "mother tongue"), have forged a scholar deeply passionate and committed to the Tamil language in all its facets, without ever succumbing to the chauvinism that can sometimes be found in the Tamil political landscape. In Annamalai's research and teaching, Tamil is many faceted: written and spoken, literary and colloquial, it is structure, practice, and culture, a political object and a medium of knowledge, and it is always embedded in all its complex and dialogic relations, with other Dravidian languages, with the Indo-Aryan languages of South Asia, and with English.

All this has meant a commitment to understanding Tamil as it *is* (and could be), not only to "correct" literary registers or purified styles, not only focused on a glorious past but on the wondrous, diverse fabric of Tamil as a living, breathing medium of thought, social relationality, and aesthetic beauty. In this, Annamalai perhaps stands out as something of a heterodox figure; but if so, this is what makes him special and what has made his scholarship—in its great diversity, from Chomskian generativism to anthropological views of the social life of language, from practical pedagogical primers to profound philological hermeneutics—stand the test of time.

**The chapters**

The chapters that follow hope to live up to this diversity, with contributions ranging from Tamil syntax and poetics to cinematic analysis, from the premodern to the medieval and the modern, and from disciplines that reflect all of Annamalai's own scholarship: literature, linguistics, history, and anthropology.

The first section of the book ("Literature, Language Encounters, and Poetic Form") gathers contributions on Tamil literature and its frontiers, both linguistic and geographical. It opens with an essay by David Shulman on a Tamil version of Kalidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* composed in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka, which honors Annamalai's lifelong engagement with Sri Lankan Tamil, a variety of the language for which he has recently prepared course materials for its teaching. The section continues with an essay by George Hart on a selection of ancient poems of the Sangam corpus and continues with a chapter by Jackson Cyril on the many lives of the famous Tamil ethical treatise, the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, through its commentaries. Talia Ariav's contribution investigates the boundary between text and performance, and the interplay of Sanskrit and Tamil in Maratha Thanjavur, while N. Govindarajan's chapter is situated at another frontier. A study of an early modern poem by a Dalit woman, Govindarajan excavates a kind of voice we do not get to hear often in classical literature. The last two chapters of this section deal with two topics that have also been at the center of Annamalai's own reflections over many decades, namely the "Pure Tamil" movement (Jesse Pruitt), and the history of the Tamil grammatical tradition (Victor D'Avella), in this

case through a close reading of the Tamil translation of Daṇḍin's Sanskrit compendium on poetics.

D'Avella's essay also marks the transition to the second section of the book, "Linguistics, Grammar, and the Social Life of Language." This section includes essays on the linguistic analysis of a number of different varieties of Tamil and other South Asian languages. It opens with a chapter by Eva Wilden on class-changing verbs in the classical corpus of Sangam literature. The next two chapters return to topics that were central to Annamalai's Ph.D. research: clausal and interclausal syntax. Sanford Steever revisits the topic of Annamalai's dissertation on adjectival clauses in Tamil and explores the unique syntactic properties among complement clauses (in particular, the adnominal form that Steever calls, after Annamalai, the Complement Adjectival Clause) that, while initially identified in Annamalai's thesis, have since failed to be properly differentiated and worked out by later linguists. While Steever's paper branches out from Tamil to the wider Dravidian language family (with comparisons with Kota, Toda, Kannada, Telugu, Parji, and Kurux), Probal Dasgupta's chapter shifts focus to the Indo-Aryan language Bangla. With intriguing parallels to Tamil, Dasgupta's analysis of complementization explores the distinct syntactic properties, specifically of omission, in the Bangla complementizers *je* and *bole* (akin to "that" in English, *enṟu* in Tamil). K. Rangan's chapter returns to the Tamil grammatical tradition. Rangan examines the ancient Tamil grammar *Tolkāppiyam* to determine its views on what linguists today call *pragmatics*, focusing on the categories of *vaḻu* (error) and *vaḻuvamaiti* (the sanctioned deviation from a grammatical rule). With Vasu Renganathan's chapter we move from ancient Tamil grammar to modern Tamil linguistics. The chapter studies the phonological phenomenon of lenition in different varieties of Tamil diglossia, arguing for lenition as a key factor in Tamil grammatical changes from the ancient to the medieval period. Both these chapters dovetail with Annamalai's own research on the *Tolkāppiyam* and on Tamil diglossia. The final chapter of this section, by Rama Kant Agnihotri, is a reflection on multilingualism and its politics in India more generally, a theme that is an undercurrent in many papers in the volume as well as a recurring topic in Annamalai's own scholarly work.

The third section of this book ("Culture, History, and Social Meaning") takes up themes from the previous sections (e.g., literature, language, society) from anthropological and historical perspectives. It opens with a study by Jean-Luc Chevillard on missionary lexicography at the boundary between linguistics and the history of science. In a similar vein, but at a different disciplinary boundary—between sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology—Cristina Muru analyzes the language of a tribal group in the Nilgiris, the Paniyas. The following chapter by Swarnavel Eswaran and Constantine V. Nakassis explores the richness of "double meaning" in modern Tamil cinema, while the next chapter, by Sascha Ebeling, examines how representations of the controversial figure of the Devadasi in early Tamil cinema can be traced back to nineteenth-century Tamil drama. With the following essay by Justin Henry, we travel once again to Sri Lanka, to examine the way in which Tamil language and literature and their long history on the island have left important echoes in Buddhist Sinhala literature. Margherita Trento's chapter focuses on religious Śaiva prose literature, in order to map changes in education and reading practices in precolonial Tamil Nadu, while the final chapter of this section, by Whitney Cox, reflects on the history of Buddhism in the region, and its early disappearance, by analyzing poems, inscriptions, and sculptures.

As one might expect for a proper *Festschrift*, the fourth and final section of this volume contains short essays of a more personal nature. Through their contributions, Dennis McGilvray, Robert Phillipson, and Margherita Trento provide a glimpse of what it is like to see Annamalai's critical mind and erudition in action, as a colleague and a student, to think with him and to be inspired by the breadth and depth of his vision.

In a way, the essays gathered here demonstrate that it takes at least twenty different types of scholars to reflect the breadth and depth of Annamalai's research over sixty years. While his work has traversed disciplines and historical periods, it has always remained firmly grounded in the Tamil language, using it as a lens to explore our being in the world in and through language. This volume honors and expresses our deep affection and gratitude for Professor Annamalai. He has been to all of us at different times a teacher, colleague, friend, *aṇṇaṉ*, and *aiyā*, and we have all learned at his feet. But if the contributions gathered

here are meant to honor the work Annamalai *has done*, they are also meant to honor the work he will *yet* offer us in return. We look forward to many future conversations, rubies and pearls on the garland of Tamil, and gifts from one of the greatest Tamil scholars of our time.

*A Bibliography of E. Annamalai's Works*

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*1. Books Written and Edited*

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|---|---|
| In Press | (Ed. with Francis Cody and Constantine V. Nakassis). *The Radiance of Tamil: Ten Years of the Chicago Tamil Forum.* Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan. |
| 2021 | (Ed. with Francis Cody, Malarvizhi Jayanth, and Constantine V. Nakassis). *Protestant Textuality and the Tamil Modern: Political Oratory and the Social Imaginary in South India,* by Bernard Bate. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. |
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*2. Published Papers*

NB: The year following the title of the paper is the time it was presented at a conference, seminar, or workshop. Some of the papers have been collected in the two books *Managing Multilingualism in India* (2001) and *Social Dimensions of Modern Tamil* (2011), listed above. Some recent papers are also available on Academia.edu at https://chicago.academia.edu/ElayAnnamalai.

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# Part I
# Literature, Language Encounters, and Poetic Form

# *"A Tall Mountain Singing Fine Words": Aracakecari's* Irakuvammicam

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**1.**

In the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth century, a poet of genius from Jaffna, Aracakecari, composed an elegant, expansive Tamil version (in 2,404 verses) of Kālidāsa's unfinished masterpiece, the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Aracakecari had married into the royal line of Jaffna kings, by that time in steep decline; he was the son-in-law of Pararācacekaraṉ, ruling (nominally) in Jaffna. We would be justified in calling that period the Jaffna Renaissance: truly original poets such as Ciṉṉatampip pulavar and Varatarāca paṇṭitar were producing major works with a distinctive Sri Lankan Tamil flavor in a milieu of shared allusions and quotations, also of great musical creations. The Jaffna poets—many of whose works have now disappeared in tragic circumstances—saw themselves as contributing to the scintillating tradition of new Tamil poetic texts in South India; they went back and forth easily and often to the Tamil mainland and composed brilliant *ciṟṟilakkiyam* works on some of the major shrines there (including, of course, Cidambaram) as well as much longer narrative *prabandhas*. Aracakecari's *Irakuvammicam*, composed on the banks of the Nāyaṉmārkaṭṭu Lotus Tank in Nallūr, had its first oral performance (*araṅkeṟṟam*) in Tiruvārūr. Clearly, an unbroken continuum of cultural creativity stretched from the deltas of the Kāveri and the Vaikai up to Jaffna and Batticaloa and farther

south along the eastern coast of Sri Lanka; yet that tradition was continually reworked in the Sri Lankan Tamil world in ways that we need to define. The great literary works of that period sometimes show both lexical and morphological features of Sri Lankan Tamil; moreover, as I have tried to show elsewhere,[1] there is good reason to believe that the Jaffna poets were well aware of what their contemporaneous Sinhala counterparts were composing and of the Buddhist ethos that shaped major early modern Sinhala poetic texts. The *Irakuvammicam* luckily survived the civil war in Sri Lanka, unlike many other Jaffna compositions; we have one excellent modern print edition as well as a printed excerpt of at least one *paṭalam*, both with commentary by Ci. Kaṇecaiyar.[2] The first full publication of the work was in 1887.[3] The following pages offer an initial exploration of the text, a prelude to a more comprehensive study. We will look at the metapoetic verses with which the poet begins and then at an extended narrative passage corresponding to *sarga* 5 of the Kālidāsa *mūla*, insofar as we wish to retain that term when discussing the Tamil work. There is little point in focusing on Aracakecari's slight innovations in plot; our interest lies in the imaginative world, with its very striking textures and associations, that the Jaffna poet inhabits and expresses. We could also develop an analytic model of what "translation" or "re-creation" meant to poets in early modern Tamil, and specifically in Jaffna.

There is no doubt that, in its time, the *Irakuvammicam* was seen as a major literary achievement; references to the poet and his *prabandha* in other poets' introductions to their compositions make this point. However, the modern editor, Ci. Kaṇecaiyar, has the following qualification in his appendix: "Because of its hard verbal usages (*kaṭiṉamāṉa cŏṟpirayokaṅkaḷ*), and because the poet was translating from Sanskrit, nobody but the highly erudite can understand and enjoy this book."[4] There is some justice in this remark. The *Irakuvammicam* is replete with rare Tamil words taken from all earlier strata of the Tamil tradition

[1] Shulman, in press.

[2] See the two editions of the *Irakuvammicam* (in 1931 and 2007) in the bibliography.

[3] Yāḻppāṇam: Vittiyāṉupālaṉayantiracālai, 1887.

[4] *Iramkuvammicam* 2007, 705.

and also with freshly Tamilized Sanskrit words, though the poet was in no sense actually translating literally from Sanskrit. He was creating a Jaffna *Raghuvaṃśa* of his own keyed in part to Kālidāsa's original. Moreover, his syntax, metrical experiments, and above all figuration are, to say the least, unusually innovative; one often needs to read a verse over several times before its meanings fall into place. The poet was well aware that he was challenging even highly educated readers or listeners. Here is what he has to say in the traditional *avaiyaṭakkam* apology for his book:

*uṭ ṭuḷakk' aṟu cŏṟpŏruḷ ūkkam uḷḷ-*
*iṭṭ' uḷat tamiḻ cŏlvaṉ ĕṉṟ'i yāṉ maṭak-*
*kaṭṭ' uḷatt' ĕṇaḵ kaiyili kaṟ kuḻi*
*tŏṭṭ' uḷ app' uṇac cuṭṭutal ŏkkume* (*pāyiram* 5)

Like a man with no hands
digging a hole in a rock
to find water locked inside,
I, fettered to my foolish mind,
thought I could sing Tamil poems of great vigor
in words unwavering in their meanings
if you think about them.

Reading Aracakecari does sometimes seem like prying open a rock; moreover, the phono-aesthetic effect of this particular verse, with its unvoiced geminate plosives, might well seem to convey the sound of pounding on stone. Still, he rightly claims that his verses have vigor, *ūkkam*, and that they are steady or lucid in meaning. Like nearly all *avaiyaṭakkam* statements, the poet displays a false modesty—in effect, a self-assured boast. He continues in the next verse:

*aṟiy akattai vĕl aṟputarc cēriṉ ĕṉ*
*ciṟiya cŏṟpŏruḷ cĕmmai ꞑayakkumāṟ*
*pŏṟiyalarꞑꞑakai kŏṇṭ' alavō ꞑuṇal*
*vaṟiya kaṟ ꞑaṉi vāriy aḷippatē* (*pāyiram* 6)

But fortunately, there are people of wonder
who hold wisdom in their heart.

[5] Note ellipsis from *ĕṇṇal*, the verbal noun; similarly the infinitive *uṇa*, below.

If my paltry words were to reach them,
brilliant meanings would burst into flower.
The arid moonstone gives cool water
when touched by the enemy of the lotus,[6]
as everyone knows.

Note that *cŏṛpŏruḷ*, "word-meanings," or simply "words," is carried over from the previous verse. The simile envisions the ingenious poet as the moon whose rays melt down the hard moon-stone of his listener's heart. Apparently, the meanings, and no less the sounds, of this poet's verses are anything but paltry, in his own eyes. We might want to compare these verses with the famous apology cum self-congratulation that Kālidāsa has placed at the opening of his poem (*Raghuvaṃśa* 1.34):

*mandaḥ kavi-yaśaḥ-prārthī gamiṣyāmy upahāsyatām |*
*prāṃśu-labhye phale lobhād udbāhur iva vāmanaḥ ||*

*athavā kṛta-vāg-dvāre vaṃśe 'smin pūrva-sūribhiḥ |*
*maṇau vajra-samutkīrṇe sūtrasyevāsti me gatiḥ ||*

Greedy for a poet's fame,
too dim-witted to attain it,
I'm as ridiculous as a dwarf
stretching his hands toward a fruit
only a very tall man could reach.

However, poets before me have already
opened a gate to this history
with their words, like a sapphire
threaded with a diamond needle.
So there is still some hope
for me.[7]

Note that Aracakecari focuses in his *pāyiram* on his sometimes-forbidding lexis, whereas Kālidāsa is seemingly worried about

[6] That is, the moon.
[7] *Raghuvaṃsa* 1.34 (all translations in this essay are mine).

creating a history that does justice to the whole of the Raghu line (did he indeed fail in this task? Or were the final canto or cantos lost by the vagaries of time?). The hard diamond needle has become, in Tamil, a gentle moonlight that liquefies stone. It's a telling culture-specific contrast. But Aracakecari offers another suggestive figure, giving credit where it is due:

*vaṉ ṟicaik kāḷitācaṉ vaṭamōḻi*
*tēṉ ṟicait tamiḻā' ṉani cĕppuke[n]*
*ṉaṉṟ' icaikkum urai vaḻi naṉ ṉĕṭuṅ*
*kuṉṟ' icaippatu poluṅ kuṟipp'aro* (*pāyiram* 8)

What Kālidāsa sang in the northern tongue [= Sanskrit],
I will now sing in Tamil, from far in the south,
like a tall mountain singing fine words
that echo another good song. (8)

We might ask ourselves just who is echoing whom, and how many echoes there are. Some weight lies on the final word, *kuṟippu*—a sign, an allusion, a suggestion. I think Aracakecari is telling us that his new *Irakuvammicam* carries the resonances of Kālidāsa's distant source along with those of the many South Indian Tamil works, closer to home, that the Jaffna poet often cites and that he may well seek to outdo.

**2.**

We shift now to a single, relatively self-contained passage, in 139 verses, from the *Ayaṉĕḻuccippaṭalam*, "Aja's Awakening/Departure," corresponding to Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* 5.42–60. Here is a short synopsis of this episode. Prince Aja's father, Raghu, thinks that his son's marrying into the family of King Bhoja in Vidarbha—specifically, a marriage with Bhoja's sister Indumatī—would be a very fine thing, politically and otherwise. Aja sets off with a substantial military entourage to attend Indumatī's bridegroom choice. In the Sanskrit text, the main adventure that Aja and his army encounter on the way is a confrontation with a massive, rampaging wild elephant; Aja's army—elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers—scatters in panic. Aja, knowing full well from the dharmic texts that a forest elephant is not to be killed (*avadhyo vanyaḥ karīti śrutavān kumāraḥ*, 5.50), shoots an

arrow (without drawing his bow to the limit) into the elephant's forehead. At once a transformation takes place: the elephant turns out to be a *gandharva* named Priyaṃvada, cursed by an appropriately named sage, Mataṅga, to become the elephant whom Aja has just shot; the escape clause in the curse postulated that the *gandharva* would be released and return to heaven when the Ikṣvāku prince would shoot him with an iron-tipped arrow. Priyaṃvada and Aja now become friends, though they have met only by chance (*daivayogāt*) or through some inconceivable causal chain (*acintya-hetu*, 5.60). The erstwhile elephant confers on Aja the useful *saṃmohana* mantra (which generates victory without actually killing one's foes); the two new friends then part, each to his own destination—Priyaṃvada to the *gandharva* world, Aja to Vidarbha and the bridegroom choice.

The poetic focus of the Kālidāsa version of this episode is on the strange configuration of karmic histories, or of pure chance, that produces an unexpected, benevolent outcome: an over-hasty curse, its potential correction by the irate sage who has uttered it, the arrival on schedule of the one person in the world who knows how to stop this particular wild elephant without killing him, and the latter's gift of a powerful weapon that works beautifully within the limits of the *ahiṃsā* ethos (*na cārihiṃsā vijayaś ca haste*, 5.57). There is something enchanting about this sequence; and the listener/reader may well be touched by the immediate separation of these two characters who have stumbled upon one another. The remainder of *sarga* 5 is mostly taken up with one of Kālidāsa's most lovely lyrical passages, the wake-up call (*suprabhātam*) that Aja receives from his bards on the day of Indumatī's *svayaṃvara* in Vidarbha. There is no trace of those verses (5.65–76) in the *Ayaṉēḻuccippaṭalam*.

However, Aracakecari's novelesque, and greatly extended, re-imagining of the story is replete with melody and emotion. Let us look at (or listen to) a few of the verses. The chapter begins with three narrative bridge verses:

*putit'uṟav iḷaval iṅṅaṉ vaḷartalum pocaṉ ĕṉṉum*
*vitiy amai vitarppar ventaṉ viḷaṅku taṉṉuṭaṉ ṟoṟṟ' intu-*
*mati maṇa viṉaikku valle vammiṉ ĕṉṟ' aracar yārkkum*
*utiy amaiy olaiyoṭun tūtaraiy uyttiṭṭāṉe* (12.1)

When the remarkable young prince (Aja) came of age,
King Bhoja of Vidarbha, famous for his integrity,
sent messengers to all kings along with a palm leaf
that said simply: "It's time for my sister Indumatī
to wed. Come quickly!"

*uyttapiṉ varaviṭṭā' ṉīṭ' uḷḷuṟaiy olaiy ācai*
*pattiṉin ĕṭṭum vĕṉṟoṉ aṅk' atu parintu keḷāt*
*tattu māp pocaṉoṭun tamar kŏḷkai takav' ĕṉṟ' āṇiṟ-*
*cittirat tilakam aṉṉa mainta nī ceṟiy ĕṉṟāṉ* (12.2)

He sent them off, making sure that the palm leaf
rich in meaning would reach the king [Raghu]
who had conquered all 18 stretches of the world.
The latter listened carefully, sympathetically,
and thought: "A marriage alliance with Bhoja
of the prancing horses would be just right."
So he told the prince, most colorful of men,
"My son: You'd better go."

*entalum aracar komāṉ iṇaiyaṭi tōḻutu poṟṟip*
*pontaṉan ṟiraṇṭa ceṉai pūttatu paṭala tūḷi*
*oyntaṉa paṟavaiy āṉav ŏṇkiri curitt'iṭṭ'eyntu*
*cāyntaṉav āḻiy eḻiṟ ṟaḻaittatu tamara māto* (12.3)

The prince bowed at the king's feet and set off
with a vast army that raised a smog of dust
so thick that all winged creatures perished,
while brilliant mountains swallowed the din
that outdrummed the roar of all seven seas
and sank into the earth.

These introductory verses look, at first glance, rather straightforward—not unlike Kālidāsa's two verses with the same content, more or less:

*atheśvareṇa krathakaiśikānāṃ svayaṃvarārthaṃ svasur indumatyāḥ |*
*āptaḥ kumārānayanotsukena bhojena dūto raghave visṛṣṭaḥ ||*

*taṃ ślāghya-sambandham asau vicintya dāra-kriyā-yogya-daśaṃ ca putram |*
*prasthāpayām āsa sasainyam enam ṛddhāṃ vidarbhādhipa-rāja-dhānīm ||*
(RV 5.39–40)

Then Bhoja, king of the Krathakaiśikas, sent a trusted messenger to Raghu in order to bring the young man [Aja] to marry his sister Indumatī. Raghu, upon reflection, felt that the match was well worthy and that his son was ready for marriage, so he sent him, with an army, to the royal capital of Vidarbha.

Informative, rather prosy (hence my translation), though one shouldn't underestimate the musicality and the syntactic suspense of even these simple, lucid Sanskrit verses. They are followed by one more verse describing the relaxed journey of the prince from Ayodhyā toward Vidarbha, with an important halt on the banks of the Narmadā—where the wild elephant will soon appear. Note that Kālidāsa doesn't even mention that Bhoja sent invitations to every eligible prince in India (the huge assembly of suitors will be depicted in Chapter 6). Aracakecari has read his *mūla* well. Bhoja has, in effect, already chosen his son-in-law-to-be. But the Jaffna poet has also added a few light touches to this preamble.

For example, we get a clipped but engaging portrait of palm-leaf literacy and its public enactment. The short message (a single sentence ending with an imperative) is engraved on an *olai* that is marked with wisdom, *uti* (perhaps from *yukti*, "logic" not attested elsewhere). Not only that: the few written words are *nīṭ'uḷḷuṟai*, pregnant with inner meaning or, perhaps, suggestion. *Uḷḷuṟai uvamam* is, as Tamil readers know, the primary poetic device of classical as well as medieval and early modern Tamil poetry.[8] Maybe we should not make too much of this phrase (but listen for the liquid alliteration). In any case, the great Raghu is not graphically literate. He has to *hear* what the *olai* states, as do we. Imagine the messengers untying the palm leaf, perhaps dusting it slightly and holding it high, then reciting the words in the king's presence, no doubt at his court.

Then, already in verse 3 of this long chapter, we begin to feel and hear the marching soldiers and cavalry; we can see the dust that fills all space, choking the birds, possibly also choking even the bright mountains—though it seems that the terrible roar of the procession is what finally shatters these peaks (thus the com-

[8] On *uḷḷurai uvamam* and its evolution in early modern Tamil literature, see Clare and Shulman 2023.

mentator, Kaṇecaiyar). The syntax of the verse is unclear about the subjects of the absolutive *viṉaiyĕccam* sequence in line 3. I think this pattern is deliberate: the dust and the sound mingle, becoming a single ear-boggling effect, beautifully iconic with the meaning. Note, too, the verb *curi*(*ttu*), unusual in the meaning "to take in, swallow." Aracakecari has a love for near *hapax legomena*.

The Tamil text now departs from its source. Aja's journey through the wilderness takes up 80 lyrical verses that focus on the landscapes through which the royal entourage passes and, toward the end, on the erotic nocturnal playfulness of the soldiers and their women (or maybe wives) who have come along for the ride. Many of these poems are remarkable—challenging at first reading, surprising in lexis, syntax, and figurative experiment. But I am going to skip to the moment that we see Priyaṃvada, still in the body of an elephant, rising out of the river.

Interestingly, Aracakecari begins by alluding in advance to the Priyaṃvada story:

*aṟi tara vĕṅkayam aḻuntiy aṅkai mūcc'-*
*ĕṟi tarap puṟputam ĕḻuta' ṉaṉṉurup*
*pĕṟum cāpame pirintu vāṉ cĕla*
*maṟi punaṉ meṟ patam vaippa poṉṟate*

*kaṉai kural aḷittŏkaik kāṭci kāṇkuvār*
*iṉaiyavum nokki uḷ viyakkum ĕllaiyiṟ*
*ṟuṉaivarum vāṉavar naṭuṅkat toṟṟu nañ-*
*c'ĕṉav ŏru kari puṉal iṭaiy ĕḻuntate* (12.85–86)

Placing his foot on the rolling waves—
like someone leaving behind a curse and going
to heaven in a new body—bubbles rose as he breathed,
as everyone could see

along with buzzing bees drawn to his rut—
a sight of wonder to the mind—
black as the poison that rose from the ocean
as the gods trembled in panic,[9]
an elephant emerged from the water.

[9] At the time of the churning of the ocean of milk, when the gods and anti-gods cooperated in order to produce the *amṛta*, the black Halāhala poison emerged first only to be swallowed by Śiva.

We're not finished with this vision, but note that the bubble, *puṟputam*, Sanskrit *budbuda*, stands out like the elephant himself in the rushing stream (of water, of words). The subject of this sentence is delayed, as is usual in this ornate style, preceded by two extended similes. Now that the mind can relax after we have heard a finite verb (*ĕḻuntate*), the poet fills in the open spaces left in his description:

*miṭal puri kaṉṉa pākattiṉ vīḻ mata-*
*kaṭal kaḻuvuṇṭ'iṭak kaṭaiyiṟ ṟīy iṉaic*
*cuṭar uṟav iraṇṭu cĕyt' ŏrumai tū niṟat*
*taṭa varai viḻitt' ĕṉat taṭaṅ kaṇ ṭoṟṟ' iṭa*

An ocean of rut pouring from his ears,[10]
washed away by the water, he opened
his wide eyes, blazing like the fire
that ends the world, like a mountain
that can see, single in color
but split in two on either side,

*cāṭiya kaṭantŏṟuṅ kaṉṉa cāmara'*
*nīṭiya tuḻiy iru maruṅku nī'ṭarac*
*ceṭ' iyal vĕm mukap pukarka' ṭīppaṭav*
*oṭiya pŏṉṉi' ṉiṉṟ' aḻakŏṭ' oṅk'iṭa*

ears flapping like fly-whisks against his cheeks,
spraying a mist on either side, his fierce,
magnificent head marked with tawny streaks,
lovely as gold dipped in fire,

*vaṭintaṉa nīḻa nūl vakirntu poṭṭ' ĕṉav*
*iṭintaṉa rekaikaḻ ilaṅka nīṇ mukil*
*paṭint' ĕṉav irukkavāṉ kiriyiṟ pāyntu kūr*
*maṭintaṉa koṭṭ' iḻa nilavu vāytt'iṭa*

like lines of smashed ochre brick,
like long dark threads split on either side,
like a falling raincloud, his gleaming tusks

[10] *kaṉṉam*, or cheeks.

curved like the crescent moon blunted
from scraping at Mount Irukkavāṉ,[11]

*tāv' ikal kāri mĕyk kariya caṭṭaiyiṟ*
*ṟūv' ikal caivalam ākañ cuṟṟ'iṭa*
*mī vicaitt' ĕtir ĕtir vĕṭi vĕṇ cāmarap*
*pūviṉiṟ puḻaikkaran tivalai potara*

shiny algae from the river wrapped round his body,
dark like the skin that Bhairava, the All-Destroyer, wears,
while his trunk, splashing drops of water,
was waving madly as if flashing white yak-tail fans,

*naṉ cĕliṉ ārppaṉa muḻakka' nacc' arā*
*maṉ cĕvi pukap piravākam eṟiye*
*muṉ cĕla vār tirai kiḻittu muntupu*
*piṉ cĕla niṉṟat' ap pĕriya yāṉaiye* (12.87–91)

as a roar like a thundercloud filled the ears
of the poisonous serpent who bears the world,[12]
and a vast torrent rose up and raced ahead
while the great elephant tore through the waves
and followed after.

The imagery is, on the whole, taken from Kālidāsa, sometimes with ingenious elaboration; there are also direct lexical borrowings (*śaivala*, *pravāha*, *taṭa*, *ṛkṣavān*, etc.). Just as we saw with the word for bubble, *budbuda*, *caivalam/śaivala* in the second *pada* of verse 89 calls attention to itself (replacing the usual Tamil word, *pāci*, for algae). There is nothing strange about such Sanskrit words in a Tamil poem; but they do intensify further an already overloaded, complex passage. That same verse, 90, also adds something new to the scene—the association to Kāri-Bhairava. The Tamil poet has also rearranged the order of the cascading images. Kālidāsa's verse 5.45 is one of the strongest in this passage:

*saṃhāra-vikṣepa-laghu-kriyeṇa hastena tīrābhimukhaḥ saśabdam |*
*babhau sa bhindan bṛhatas taraṅgān vāry-argalābhaṅga iva pravṛttaḥ ||*

[11] Mount Ṛkṣavat, from the Kālidāsa verse 5.44.
[12] Ādiśeṣa.

His trunk sucking in, spitting out,[13] quickly, with ease,
he stood resplendent, trumpeting, facing the shore,
forging past the waves that held him back, as if in chains.

Aracakecari: The water held back, for a second, the continuous flow of rut (*malar puṉaliṉāl kaṇatt' aṭaippiṉum*), but the elephants of Aja's army still could smell it and therefore opened wide their eyes. This final verse (92) delineating the unconstrained elephant is the bridge to what follows: the army elephants go crazy, uprooting thick trees as they flee in terror of this new apparition (93).

Let me repeat what I said at the outset, as we see clearly here: the Tamil *Irakuvammicam* often keeps relatively close to the Sanskrit prototype, at the same time replacing it with the strongly onomatopoeic and rhythmic effects, also the head-rhymes and alliteration of Tamil, and reconfiguring each narrative sequence as the poet sees fit. Look again at the rapidly unfolding movement, forward and back, of both sound and image; at the dramatic enhancement of the scene at several points (as in the appearance of the Doomsday Fire); the frequent repetitions, each one new in its own way; the somewhat unnerving lexis; the constant, breathless strings of non-finite verbs that eventually culminate in the subject and verb of a finite sentence. If you read through the verses, aloud, a few times, ordinary semantics (if there is such a thing) is soon overpowered by phono-aesthetics, which do the work of meaning more immediately. It is also worth noting that domesticated elephants were used to wave chowrie fans over kings and nobles; Priyaṃvada anticipates this convention, as if generating his own possible future without knowing it (or perhaps, in some way, he does know it). But anyway, just by coming out of the river he is, as the poet tells us at the start, on course to free himself from the painful curse that has held him in thrall.

**3.**

A change in meter now signals the transformation soon to take place. A string of sixteen verses reveals the chaos the elephant has created

[13] On this complementary duality, see Shulman 2014, 37–40.

in Aja's camp, with particular emphasis on the problem the soldiers now have with their vulnerable and frightened wives or paramours. It is as if all of Ayodhyā had come with Aja to the *svayaṃvara*: Brahmins are hastily conscripted to recite Vedic mantras to turn back the elephant (103); merchants tumble over one another as they try to escape through the thick undergrowth (104); the wilderness is littered with golden earrings, brooches, silk clothes, caskets of jewels left behind by the wealthy in their flight (106–107). All of this intense movement is keyed to a mere two verses in Sanskrit (5.48–49):

*saptacchada-kṣīra-kaṭu-pravāham asahyam āghrāya madaṃ tadīyam |*
*vilaṅghitādhoraṇa-tīvra-yatnāḥ senā-gajendrā vimukhā babhūvuḥ ||*

*sa cchinna-bandha-druta-yugya-śūnyaṃ bhagnākṣa-paryasta-rathaṃ kṣaṇena |*
*rāmā-paritrāṇa-vihasta-yodhaṃ senā-niveśaṃ tumulaṃ cakāra ||*

The elephants of the army caught the unbearable stink
of his flowing rut, bitter as the milk of the Devil Tree and,
defying the desperate efforts of their mahouts, turned away.

The wild beast turned the army encampment topsy-turvy:
horses broke their reins and fled, chariots lay upside down,
their axles smashed, and the warriors were helpless
to protect their women.

Here is a selection of Aracakecari's verses at this juncture:

*pŏṉṉiṭā niṉṟa vai vel entupu puliyiṟ cīṟi*
*vĕṉṉiṭāt' aṉaiya veka veḷa mā vilaṅka' ṟaṉṉai*
*muṉṉiṭā niṉṟu mātar mutir vaṭa mulaik kŏl yāṉai*
*piṉṉiṭā niṉṟu tattam pĕyariṉai viḷakku niṟpār* (12.94)

Some raised sharp iron spears and held their ground,
roaring like tigers, facing the mad beast, while women,
breasts taut as lethal elephants, drew back,
each group worthy of fame.

*viṭaṅ kuṭitt' iruṇṭa kāla vel ĕṉa viḷaṅku kaṇkaḷ*
*kuṭaṅkaiyiṉ aṭaṅkuṅ kŏllov ĕṉa kuṟitt' aḷappa polat*
*taṭaṅ kaiyiṟ puṭaittu nĕñcam vĕṟṟi varun taiyalāraiy*
*iṭaṅkaiyiṟ ṟaḻuvi vai vel valaṅkai tŏṭṭ' ĕtirttu niṟpār* (12.95)

Women covered their wide eyes,
black and deadly as spears smeared
with poison, as if measuring them
with their palms, as in terror they clung
to men who embraced them with their left hands
and brandished fierce spears
with their right.

*vĕṟṟi cĕy tuṇaikkaṇ velum vĕm mulaik kaḻiṟuñ cĕyyuṅ*
*kuṟṟumil ĕmmaṉoraik kŏllavo paṭaittat' ĕllām*
*maṟṟ'itaṉ meṟ cĕlāvo mātarīr ĕṉṉa vaṇ kaip*
*paṟṟupu piṭiy aṉṉoraip paipayak kŏṇṭu povār* (12.98)

"Ladies! Were the invincible spears you have for eyes
and the tough elephants that are your breasts
created to kill innocents like us? Or could you maybe
use them against that monster?" Men reached for the hands
of women graceful as elephants and gently
led them away.

*kaḻai pukum iṉ cŏ'ṉallār kāmaru kaṭaikka'nokkatt'*
*uḻai puku' nāṭṭa' nokkiv ūṭiyav ūṭa' ṟīrā*
*maḻai puku taṭakkai velar maruṅku poy ŏlki mārpiṟ*
*kuḻaimukam uṟutti niṟpār ciṟ cila kŏṭiyaṉṉāre* (12.100)

Speech sweet as sugarcane, a woman glanced
from the corners of her eyes at a man
glancing at her. She put aside
their lovers' quarrel. A little embarrassed,
she drew near him, a sharp spear in his hand
that was generous as a raincloud. Bending low
like a fragile vine, she rested her head
on his chest.[14]

[14] In the original, this verse is couched in the plural—many women followed the same course. The Tamil is ambiguous: *tīrā* could mean, as I have translated, that she (or they), in the presence of great danger, gave up her (or their) fit of pique; it could also mean that she or they were still *not* appeased yet came to rest on a lover's chest. The commentator thinks that some women, noticing the way the eyes of other women reflected the look of their lovers, put aside their anger and came to join their men. The commentator correctly identifies the figure as *samāhita* (in Bronner's terminology: "coterminous")—a coincidental conjunction that produces a (usually wanted) effect.

In this chaotic mélange of love and war—here an invention of Aracakecari's, though Tamil love poetry regularly describes love-making as a battle, and one major Chola-period war poem, the *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi*, sees the battle as the prelude to love when the soldiers come home—Aja suddenly takes control. Calm but swift in movement, he faces the elephant:

*maṇikkaḻal*[15] *araṟṟā mālai puraṇṭ'iṭā maruṅku koṭāv*
*aṇikkuḻaiy alampā kuñciy acaint'iṭāv aṅ kaiy āṭā*
*taṇikk' arum vicaiyiṉ oṭit taḻamb'iṭā taritti yārkkum*
*kaṇikk'arum katatta vekak kaṭāmalaiy ataṉaik kaṇṭāṉ* (12.109)

He ran. His jeweled anklets were not jangling,
his garlands unshaking, his body unbending,
his crafted earrings untinkling, his hair unruffled,
his hands not waving. Nothing could hold him back.
He took his stand, unwavering, when he saw
that mountain of an elephant stampeding, faster
than anyone could imagine.

Lots of negative verbs—as the commentator notes, only true heroes can race like that. Apparently, they also have time to think:

*valla věñ camattiṉ aṉṟi matikkuṟai maruppu māvaik*
*kŏlluta' ṟiruvai veṭṭor kuṟipparov ĕṉav uṭ kŏḷḷāv*
*ŏllĕṉav uravu noṉ ṟāḷ ŏṇ cilai kunivitt' uyttā'*
*ṉill ĕṉa taṭukkumāṟ' or nĕṭuṅ kaṇaiy ataṉaiy aṉṟe* (12.111)

"Except in the heat of battle, would warriors wedded
to the goddess[16] even think of killing an elephant,
tusks curved like the crescent moon?" That's what Aja
was thinking in his heart as he bent back his great bow
and released a long arrow, as if to say: "Stop!"

*niṟṟi mikk aṭarel ĕṉṉav uraittavā' ṉĕṟiyi' ṉĕṟṟi*
*kŏṟ ṟŏḻiṟ pakaḻiy aṟpaṅ kūrntalai kuḻittaloṭum*

[15] Correcting *kaṇikkaḻal āṟṟā* and *maṇikkarum* in *a* and *d*, in both printed editions. Note *tiṟipu* in the *etukai* of *c* and *d*.

[16] Tiru = Vīralakṣmī.

*paṟṟiya cāpa veḻap paṭivam viṭṭ' alaṅku coti*
*cĕṟṟiyav uruk kŏṇṭ' āṅk' or tevaniṟ*[17] *ṟoṇṟi niṉṟāṉ* (12.112)

As when someone says, "Stop! Come no closer!"
the tip of the lethal arrow bored only a little way
into his forehead. At once he cast off
the elephant's body, born from a curse,
and stood there like a god, gleaming,
stunning to see.

Now the erstwhile elephant can disclose to Aja his innermost thought (*taṉṉu'ṇiṉaippiṉil*), well suited to the rain of flowers falling, at this moment, from the wishing trees of heaven; and he can reveal his true name: Priyaṃvada, son of Priyadarśana in the Tantra family. He also explains how the sage Mataṅga cursed him for some (trivial) misdeed, and how Mataṅga had promised him that he would be released from the elephant's body when a scion of the Ikṣvāku line, named Aja, would appear. Since then Priyaṃvada has been waiting, his heart at peace—for water is cool unless heated by fire and reveals its true nature when the fire is quenched.[18]

*panta val viṉaiyiṉ cummaip paiyuḷ vaṉ vaṭiva' māṟiy*
*uyntaṉa' ṉiṉṉāṟ kaimmāṟ' ŏṉṟu cĕyt' ŏḻiyenel ĕṉ*
*cuntara nilaimaiy ĕṉṉā' naṅkulat tŏllor āya*
*tantirarkk' uriya pāṇan tarukuvaṉ ĕṉṉac cāṟṟā* (12.116)

"Thanks to you, I've been saved from the body
of heavy karmic pain that held me in chains.
Were I not to offer you something in return,
what would happen to my beauty? I will give you
a magic arrow that has been handed down
through generations of the Tantra family."

Listen to the elevated, formal politesse in this speech (also present in Kālidāsa's verse 5.56). And it is just at this point that the

[17] Correcting *teviṉiṟ*.

[18] Aracakecari retains the *arthāntaranyāsa* of RV 5.54, including the word *ātapa*: *cĕmmaiyiṟ cīta nīr vĕṉ tīyiṉ ātapattiṉ ŏṉṟiṉ vĕmmaiy uṟṟ' ŏḻinta kālait taṉ kuṇam viḻaikkum ā pol* (115) ≤ *uṣṇatvam agny-ātapa-saṃprayogāc chaityaṃ hi yat sā prakṛtir jalasya.*

Jaffna poet adds a slight but significant touch to his source. We know that the weaponized *saṃmohana* mantra can stop an enemy without killing him, and we hear Priyaṃvada begging Aja to accept it and explaining its merits. Aja agrees.

> *tiruttu maṉ uyirkaṭk' ĕllān tāy mulaippāliṯ ṟĕṇṇīr*
> *aruttu' naṉmatai nīr entiy ācamaṉañ cĕyt' aṉpāl*
> *urut tĕriv'ariya māraṉ uḷattaiyum uyir kŏḷ kālaṉ*
> *karuttaiyu' mayakku' mokak kaṇaiyatu kaik kŏṇṭāṉ* (12.119)
>
> He took a handful of limpid water from the Narmadā River,
> precious as a mother's milk that nourishes all living beings,
> sipped it and thus, with love, received the arrow of delusion
> that baffles the heart of Māra, god of desire, whose body
> no one can see, and distracts Death himself,
> killer of lives, from what he has in mind.

It appears that there is a way to get past desire and death; the key lies in acts of compassion, as the former elephant tells Aja: "Don't feel bad for having hurt me, who did you no harm; you have a soft heart, and you did me a favor" (109). He can see that Aja is feeling some remorse—a human achievement, especially for a prince or king—and also that he has a good and gentle heart. But the radical statement concluding this entire episode goes beyond the poet's terms of reference. We might even wonder if there is a Buddhist tinge to this final verse. As I have mentioned at the outset, the Jaffna poets of the eighteenth century read or heard the works of their Sinhala counterparts from other parts of the island. We are eavesdropping on a polyglossic, multicultural, porous literary matrix, open to the lively literary production in the Tamil mainland, indeed partaking naturally in that enterprise, but at the same time creating a new Jaffna–Sri Lankan synthesis in poetics (also meta-poetics), ethics, religion, and, not least, in style.

## 4·

Is the *Irakuvammicam*, then, a translation? Can we even use this word? If so, what do we mean by it in the context of early modern Jaffna? A tentative list of analytical components, all of which we have in operation in this Tamil work, would include the following.

The original text remains present, on many levels—but the new text is no less of an original in its own right. Links to the *mūla* include lifting words or even whole phrases verbatim, at the same time Tamilizing them; a resonance is set off, "like a tall mountain singing fine words that echo another good song." Narrative or plot, to the level of subplots like the story of Priyaṃvada, are retained along with free variation and expansion that may foreground their hitherto latent background. Sequence, both in syntax and in structure, is frequently jumbled or inverted, sometimes through adumbration of what both poet and audience know will come. Grammar-specific features (e.g., the *viṉaiyĕccam* strings, with potential causal implications) replace the syntactic suspense of the Sanskrit original. A new sonic universe is created, with hypertrophied metrical and *śabdālaṅkāra* modes of expression. The new original, by its very existence but also by explicit or implicit reference, is replete with metapoesis and recursive (intertextual) effects.[19] A distinctive, always singular linguistic register is created and explored, allowing privileged access to the entire preexisting canon of Tamil works—also, in the case of the *Irakuvammicam*, to the canon of Sanskrit *kāvya*. Accordingly, mixed registers regularly interact, sometimes producing surprising, perhaps dissonant textures.[20] In sheer content, incorrigible axioms, or intuitions, of Tamil civilization may well come into play in the crafting of linguistic textures and, at times, in overt formulation or strong suggestion. (No language, perhaps even no sentence in any language, lacks such axioms.) Extreme Tamilization emerges in the music of the verses, never in a lexical purism. The guiding principle throughout is the attempt to translate the poetry, not the meaning.[21] That attempt in itself is Aracakecari's genius. At the same time, Kālidāsa's original work maintains a resonant but slightly ghostly presence at every step.

We have looked at one self-contained segment of the vast *Irakuvammicam*. The features noted above are scattered in plenty, though I am not yet ready to address the aesthetic impact of the

[19] For parallel components in Latin, see Hinds 1998. My thanks to Whitney Cox for directing me to this study.

[20] See Ariav 2022.

[21] See Narayana Rao and Shulman 2012, 48–72.

book taken as a whole. It fits into the early modern category, or perhaps genre, of the sustained *prabandha*, with its known author who takes responsibility for his achievement, its strong intertextual relations, its thematic range, its attempt to generate a linear sequence for reading and recitation, and its changing audience of listeners or readers.[22] Among the latter who would have heard the *Irakuvammicam* recited, whether in Tiruvārūr or in Nallūr, there must have been scholars who knew the Sanskrit *Raghuvaṃśa* well and were thus intrigued by the intricate variations Aracakecari has worked upon his *mūla*—which he may, in some sense, have surpassed, at least in his own mind. Other listeners may have been mesmerized by the poet's astonishing command of an elevated (at times arcane) Tamil and by his metrical wizardry. And there were no doubt some who were drawn to his conceptual innovations and who thus saw Aracakecari as the voice of an entire, locally rooted tradition of Jaffna Tamil poets and scholars. Our challenge is to begin, at least, to understand that world, and to help in keeping it alive.

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[22] Shulman 2022.

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# *The Story of Pāri*

George Hart

It gives me great pleasure to publish this small paper on some poems of the Sangam anthology *Puṟanāṉūṟu* in a volume dedicated to the work of Professor E. Annamalai.[1] I have known him since I was a student and have benefited enormously from his learning and work. Tamil begins with the anthologies of Sangam literature, surely among the great monuments of world literature. Throughout his career, Professor Annamalai has drawn on these works, using them to describe the development of the language and culture. He has written extensively about the literary theory of the Sangam classics, and his expertise includes the entire history of Tamil literature and language up to and including modern times. His work ranks among the most important resources we have for the study of Tamil, but it is to the early phases of Tamil literary that the following pages will be dedicated

Poems 105 through 120 of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* are attributed to the great poet Kapilar (except for 112, which is supposed to have been sung by Pāri's daughters) and constitute the Pāri saga, one of the central and best known parts of the text.[2] The story is well-known:

[1] This paper was first presented at the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* conference in Washington, D.C. convened by Dr. Prabhakaran, who has published his excellent commentary on that work.

[2] For the editions of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* used as reference, please refer to the bibliography at the end of this paper.

Pāri, a minor king who ruled the hill named Paṟampu, was the patron of Kapilar, a Brahmin poet. Renowned for his generosity, he attracted the envy of the three great kings, the Cēra, Cōḻa, and Pāṇṭiya, who came against Paṟampu hill with their armies. (Some say the great kings wished to marry Pāri's daughters and that Pāri refused them). Pāri, probably defeated by treachery, was killed, and Kapilar took his two daughters to other kings, trying to have them married to someone worthy of their father. Unsuccessful, he is said to have put them under the care of other Brahmins and then to have taken his own life. In this paper, I will consider Kapilar's poems in this cycle to show that the poems, taken all together, make a remarkably coherent series.

The cycle begins with poems praising Pāri's generosity and kindness. In the first, Kapilar describes Pāri's kindness or grace:

> 105
> Woman of the caste of bards, whose face glows! When trailing
> down in a cascade from all the peaks of a mountain where
> rope ladders hang and running through canals in the wide fields
> plowed for horsegram, so that it does not matter if it fails to rain
> or does rain, to leave cool drops on the fresh flowers of blue waterlilies,
> their dark petals swarming with bees at the surface of mountain pools—
> water is less sweet than the grace of Vēḷ Pāri
> from whom you will win a crimson ornament if you go to him and sing!

This poem anticipates the siege of Paṟampu by using a powerful image found often in Tamil literature: water falling from hills and nourishing the land. Since it does not depend on the rains, the people who live on the land will not experience drought—and cannot be starved out of their land by besieging troops. The cool drops on the waterlily flowers that swarm with bees suggest unlimited fertility. So far, the image is a fairly standard one. But then the water is compared to the grace (*cāyal*—beauty, excellence, grace) of Pāri. The poem embeds the substance of the poem with a sentence split between the first and last lines of the Tamil, but joined in the translation: "You will win a crimson ornament" (first Tamil line) and "if you go to him and sing" (last Tamil line). As in many Sangam poems, the poem leads the hearer on a journey, traveling from one place and one phenomenon to another. It begins with a

vocative to the Viṟali (female bard), then moves to the waterlily, its bees, its flowers, cool drops on its flowers, rain, waterfalls, fields, canals, high hills with rope ladders, summits, water, grace, Pāri, and back to the Viṟali. The point of this progression is not merely to describe; it is to encompass all the aspects of Paṟampu hill along with Pāri's grace and generosity in one short evocation. And while the poet does not specify that the hill he is using in his image is actually Paṟampu, that is clearly his intent.

The next two poems embellish the first by praising Pāri's generosity. In 106, the poet compares Pāri to the gods who accepts the *erukkam* flower even though it has no fragrance. In the same way, Pāri's generosity is not conditioned by the status of those who come to him.

> The gods will not disdain whatever people bring them,
> even the *erukkam* flower, a middling thing, neither good
> nor bad, with its tight clusters and its brownish leaves.
> And so, if there are soft, foolish people
> who go to lord Pāri, he will reward them because he is a generous man!

In 107, Pāri's giving is compared to that of the clouds, which rain on all equally:

> "Pāri! Pāri!" they say and with their eloquent tongues
> the bards praise one man and sing of his many strengths.
> But more than only Pāri matters.
> The monsoons too are here to preserve the world!

In 108, we get the first suggestion that there is a threat to Pāri's kingdom, as the poet says that he can be compelled to give it up only through an appeal to his generosity rather than by force.

> Since dried ends of sticks have been kindled by a Kuṟavar woman
> and they are of sandalwood, their fragrant smoke is spreading
> through the branches of flowering *vēṅkai* on the slope near Paṟampu,
> which belongs to those who sing. Nor will Pāri, Righteousness
> his mantle, refuse to submit to them, if only
> their request is respectful, as if they were coming to him in need!

The poet does not describe the threat of the enemy kings. He does not even mention them, but rather describes how his hill

belongs to those who sing. He begins by again evoking the fertility of Paṟampu, so rich that Kuṟavar women can burn sandalwood, which is far more valuable than most wood. Kapilar suggests that if anyone wishes to take Paṟampu, they must appeal humbly to Pāri's generosity—and so this poem anticipates the next, where Pāri's hill is under siege by kings who wish to take it by force.

In the next poem, the kings who have besieged Paṟampu first appear as Kapilar continues the motifs of Pāri's generosity, his willingness to give everything he has to suppliants, and the fertility of his land.

109
Of course Pāri's city of Paṟampu is a miserable place!
Even if you three with your great royal drums should all
besiege it, four crops flourish there with no need of farmers!
For the first—from bamboo with its tiny leaves a rice springs up,
and the second, with its sweet pulp, is the ripening jackfruit,
and third, thickly growing, is the *vaḷḷi* root with its luxuriant vine,
and the fourth is honey, with its lovely darkness pouring out,
the color overwhelming the peak of the tall mountain dense with vines!
Like the sky is his mountain and in that sky the springs
are like stars! Though you have your elephants tied up
to every tree there, though your chariots are spread across
every field, he will not be overcome through any
of your efforts! Swords will not force him to yield.
But I do know how you can capture his land! If you should just
play on a small *yāḻ* with its tensed, polished strings,
while your women of the caste of bards, with their rich, fragrant hair,
follow you, and you come dancing and singing,
he will yield his country to you then and his mountain!

Here, Kapilar again evokes the fertility of Pāri's land, but this time in the context of the siege. By listing items that will allow the land to flourish even when it is cut off from other areas, he is able to bring even more emphasis to the land's exceptional nature than before—no one who reads the poem can forget the lines *vāṉ kaṇ aṟṟu, avaṉ malaiyē, vāṇattu mīṉ kaṇ aṟṟu, ataṉ cuṉaiyē* ("Like the sky is his mountain and in that sky the springs are like stars!") Then, after describing Pāri's land, which seems so wonderful it does not belong on this world, Kapilar segues to

the enemy kings, describing the huge force arrayed against Pāri. Finally, he returns to the theme of the previous poems: if you want his land, all you have to do is be a suppliant and ask. This poem and the next are the only two that are addressed to the enemy kings, who suddenly are present so that we are witnesses to the siege.

The next two poems repeat once again the idea that Paṟampu cannot be conquered by the sword but is easy to get if one is willing to be a suppliant and ask for it humbly.

110
Though the three of you with your murderous and victorious armies
unite in your enmity, Paṟampu will be very difficult to take!
There are three hundred villages in the good land
of cool Paṟampu, and all three hundred belong to those who have
come to him in their need! But if you will go
and you will sing to him, you win us and Pāri and his mountain!

In the second poem, the Viṟali reappears, as Kapilar wishes to emphasize once again that Pāri will give away everything to even the most humble and impotent woman. Viṟalis were female Pāṇaṉs who would perform and sing for the king and others. The Sangam poems suggest many times that Pāṇaṉs were a community of low status who served others.

111
Of course the great dark hill is a miserable place!
To conquer it by the spear would be hard for kings,
but easy to win for a woman with a drum, her blackened eyes
like two blue waterlilies, if she comes to it singing!

Suddenly, in poem 112, everything changes. Paṟampu has been taken, and the poem, almost certainly by Kapilar himself, is attributed to Pāri's daughters:

On that day, under the white light of that moon,
we had our father and no enemies had taken the hill.
On this day, under the white light of this moon, the kings,
royal drums beating out the victory,
have taken the hill. And we! we have no father.

Here, Kapilar masterfully describes the sudden change that happens from one month to the next. The poem begins and ends with an almost sing-song rhythm: *aṟṟai tiṅkaḷ avveṇ nilavil*, ¯ ¯ | ¯ ¯ | ¯ ¯ |˘ ˘ ¯. The second line becomes almost prosaic, as extra measures are added to the next-to-last *cīr* and the last *cīr* breaks the rhythm by making *koḷār* a *nirai* even though the last syllable is long: *entaiyum uṭaiyēm em kuṉṟum piṟar koḷār*, ¯ ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ ¯ | ¯ ¯ ¯ | ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ |. The third line repeats the first with the exception of *i-* ("this") for *a-* ("that"), but then in the fourth line, the rhythm changes from a sort of sing-song cadence to a martial one with only three *cīrs*: *veṉṟeṟi muraciṉ vēntar em*, ¯ ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ ¯ | ¯ ˘ ˘ |. This seems to imitate the beating of the royal drums of the kings who are assaulting the hill. Finally, the rhythm modulates back to the sing-song pattern of the other lines: *kuṉṟum koṇṭār yām entaiyum ilamē*, ¯ ¯ | ¯ ¯ | ¯ ¯| ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ¯ |. The final *cīr*, two *nirais* and a *nēr*, allows the poet to emphasize the girl's loss, as the final long vowel brings a closure to the line. Another thing to notice is the transposition in the last line: before, "our father" came first and "our hill" second, while in the final line, these are reversed and the poem ends with "our father," emphasizing that his loss is far more important than the loss of the hill. It is notable that the change of time and fortune in this poem happens exactly in the middle, line 3 of 5 in poem 8 of the cycle of 16. Kapilar repeats the feminine motif of the previous poems, only here instead of a Viṟali, it is Pāri's daughters. It is as if he were saying, "When Pāri was alive, low-status Viṟalis were given parts of Pāri's hill, while now even his daughters have no part of it." The poem twice brings three things together: the moonlight, the hill, and the father. In the Tamil poems, the cool, life-giving light of the moon is often contrasted with the intense, destructive light and heat of the sun. The king's umbrella is like the moon, emitting cool light and shading from the killing rays of the sun. By invoking the moon at first, the poet suggests the prosperous and happy lives of the girls when their father ruled, while in the last three lines, the poet uses the moon ironically to suggest how much they have lost. It is perhaps not too much to suggest that the hill in this poem is a symbol of feminine fertility and that the girls, without their father, will be deprived of a proper husband and of the ability to give birth to proper children.

The next poem brings us to the consequences of the death of Pāri:

113
Once there was friendship in you, and a profusion of wealth
to be used for giving rice when asked and fried and stewed meat,
cooked and never ending, while jars of liquor were opened
and male goats were slaughtered; but now, since Pāri is gone,
I am bewildered and there is nothing I can do. My eyes
stream with tears and I bow down to you and salute you,
far-famed Paṟampu! and I go, and as I go I wonder
what men will have the right to touch the black
fragrant hair of the girls who wear long rows of engraved bangles?

Distraught, Kapilar addresses the personified hill of Paṟampu. It is as if, with the death of Pāri, the hill is the only thing that embodies his patron. This is the first poem in which Kapilar expresses his own feelings directly and becomes a part of the ongoing drama. When he exclaims, "*naṭṭaṉai maṉṉō muṉṉē iṉiyē*, "You were friendly, but that is gone, before, but now" the nasal sounds almost comprise a dirge. Then the poem once again brings in the feminine, invoking the hair and the bangles of the Pāri's daughters. The fact that they wear bangles indicates that they are in an auspicious, marriageable state—something highly ironic, given the circumstances.

Poem 114 is also addressed to the hill, but it is no longer personified:

It rises up for those standing here and if you walk
a little way and stand there, O how sadly it rises,
where once the courtyards flowed with the fermenting
sap from masses of sugarcane fiber pressed out
as if they were balls chewed by elephants,
the hill of the lord who used to freely give away chariots!

Slowly, Kapilar is distancing himself from the hill, both literally and emotionally. In Tamil, the poem ends with the words "the great one's hill" (*neṭiyōṉ kuṉṟē*), making the hill the subject of the poem and Pāri peripheral. This, of course, simply stresses the terrible loss of Pāri for Kapilar, who seems to be unable to bring himself to say that Pāri is dead.

In the next poem, Kapilar speaks of the hill as something no longer present:

115
On one side, the sound of a waterfall. On the other,
filtered, clear, sweet toddy, eager to fill the bowls of bards,
poured out and spilling and flowing, carrying along stones!
All that, as it was, is gone now on the hill
of the kindly lord who was ferocious
to kings who commanded many spears and mighty elephants.

This poem, like the previous one, ends in Tamil with "hill" preceded by a word for Pāri (here *iṉiyōṉ*, "the sweet one"). Here, the martial attributes of Pāri appear again, echoing an idea common in the poems that a king should be kind to suppliants but cruel to enemies. It is as if Kapilar is slowly gaining perspective on what happened and is remembering his patron as he was. "Gone now" is *maṉṉē*, a particle (*acai*) that indicates something is past. Kapilar cannot yet bring himself to say that the fertility of the hill has been destroyed.

The next poem resembles many others in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* by using contrast for effect:

116
Skirts of waterlilies sway across their thighs, made of full-blown
blossoms that grew in large, deep springs where the water is sweet.
With their cool and beautiful eyes, their light laughter, the girls
climb up on a heap covered with dwarf datepalm, where sponge gourd
has rooted and calabash has spread, near a hut that has cotton
growing in the front yard, and there is a fence of thorns and near it
are twisting paths choked up with grass, and standing there on
the mound,
they count the wagons that carry the salt for the salt merchants.
I feel pain and how I wish that my life were over! There was a time
when they would climb the highest peak on the wide mountain
where prosperity was unending and the peacocks would rise up
and dance in gardens of cultivated flowers while on the great slopes
planted with crops, there were monkeys that were swinging and leaping,
and trees gave fruit in and out of season, so many that the monkeys
could not take them all; and as the kings with their great armies
came against the hill in war, ignorant of how difficult it would be
to prevail against their father Pāri, he who wielded a sharp spear,

he who was the master of abundant toddy,
from the peak the girls would count the proud horses bearing the iron
weapons of kings!

This magnificent poem once again invokes the hill of Paṟampu, but still more distantly than before, more as something remembered rather than as something real. It is a reprise of some earlier themes: the richness of the hill, the kings who came to take it, the daughters of Pāri and Pāri himself. This poem centers not on the hill, however, but on the role and feelings of the daughters. Kapilar suggests their youth and naiveté by showing them equally excited to count the wagons of merchants as the horses of enemy kings. The youth of the girls emphasizes the tragedy of the situation, as Kapilar, it seems, is the only one aware of its irony. It is also worth noting that before, when the three great kings besieged Paṟampu, the hill became the center of the world and of the power of the world, while now it has become an afterthought. By beginning the poem with the present and then describing the past, the poet emphasizes the break with the past. He does not yet actually say that Paṟampu has been destroyed.

The next poem, like the early poems of the cycle, centers on Paṟampu, but this time it brings in Pāri's daughters also.

117
Even if the Black Planet turned the color of smoke or a comet should
appear,
or the Silver Planet were to pass across the sky of the south,
still the fields were full of grain, the bushes blossomed with flowers,
and in a long line, wild cows with their huge eyes
who had calved right alongside the houses were grazing
on good grass, and the rains never failed because there were
so many noble men attracted by benevolent government,
even though the land lies in a dry zone, where jasmine with its green
leaves
blooms like the sharp teeth of a kitten,
there where the father of the girls with fine bangles was king!

This poem turns on the common Sangam theme that if a king is great, the prosperity of his land is not threatened by bad omens. It also uses the notion that if the rule of a king is excellent (here,

*kōol cemmai*), noble men—*caṉṟōr*—will come and live there. The poet still cannot yet bring himself say that Paṟampu is destroyed.

This is followed by a short poem whose imagery of the moon brings to mind the song of Pāri's daughters:

118
That small reservoir with its clear water and its sloping
shore like a half moon running along hills and knolls
now is shattered in the land that was once governed
from cool Paṟampu by Pāri who gave
chariots away and whose massive arm held a sharp spear.

Since Paṟampu was in a dry zone (see the previous poem), its reservoir was critical to the lives of its inhabitants. As one reads this, it is impossible not to remember the poem in which Pāri's daughters speak of the light of "that" moon and "this" moon. Here, by suggesting that the reservoir shaped like a half moon is broken and that the land is henceforth useless, Kapilar reprises the poem of Pāri's daughters and the other poems that describe Paṟampu's fertility. This is the first poem in which the poet can actually admit to himself that Paṟampu is destroyed.

The cycle ends with two poems that echo the beginning poems by describing Paṟampu hill and Pāri's generosity, but with the added statement that the land is now ruined.

119
Where, during the time sweet to the eyes when the monsoon rains poured down
and the flowers of the *teṟuḷ* vines bloomed like ornamental paint
on the faces of elephants, and there was curry with tamarind and sweet
buttermilk and termites from their red mounds and a wealth of soft millet,
there where the generous lord gave more than other kings with royal drums
to those who came in need to him, he who was like
a single tree on a long shadowless road—is that land ruined?

In Tamil, "Is that land ruined?"—*nantum kollō*—comes at the end of line 4 of the seven-line poem, exactly in the middle. This technique

is also found in the previous poem, where "now is shattered" comes in line 3, and in the poem attributed to Pāri's daughters. The first half of the poem is devoted to Paṟampu mountain as it existed before its destruction and the second to Pāri and his generosity.

The cycle ends with a poem that, like 109, contains a long description of Paṟampu.

120
In the fields on the red hills where the monsoon has brought
abundant moisture, though *vēṅkai* trees had grown there before
in the intense heat, they plow many furrows and mix in the dust
and do their planting, and when the many stems spring up mingled
with *palli* weed, they root out those weeds so that the ears
flourish and grow big, and then when the dark stalks rise high,
the color of a peahen that has just given birth, and are dry
at top and base, they cut the fresh common millet that has grown
so very well and they cut the little millet, and then when the green
sesame seed blackens, it becomes time to reap the white pods
of the densely growing bean vines and in every household, in the huts
roofed with grass, they share the clarified toddy that had been
buried
and matured in liquor jars, and frying *kaṭalai* seeds in fragrant ghee,
they cook their rice. And the woman of the house with her long arms
serves out the food so that people can mix it up together and eat it
from large plates, in that land ruled by the man who resembles
Murugan,
the man who longs for war, who has listened to the clatter
of the war anklets of his enemies running from him, the man used
to being sung
without end by poets, the father of the girls with luxuriant black hair,
his land where waving bamboo rustles on the peaks,
is his land of such wealth that no one ever feels pain now destroyed?

In Tamil, the description of the hill ends with "is it destroyed"—*nantum kollō*—and the description of Pāri (here never named) and of his daughters comes afterward in the final lines. Most of the elements of the previous poems find a place here: the mountain, the enemy kings, Pāri, his generosity and valor, and his daughters. It is notable that only in this last poem is daily life in Paṟampu described—and it is pictured in such detail that the reader almost

feels himself or herself present in Pāri's kingdom. It is as if Kapilar has finally managed to distance himself enough from the events that happened to remember the details of how wonderful his life had been. Yet at the same time, he cannot bring himself to say that the three great kings have been victorious, but rather simply says that Pāri was like Murugan and that he saw his enemies running from him. One might remark that nowhere in the whole cycle does Kapilar actually describe the victory of the enemy kings. He simply describes the results of their victory. Nor does he actually say that Pāri is dead, aside from the poem by Pāri's daughters.

**Conclusion**

When we look closely at this cycle, it is impossible not to be struck by how skillfully the story is put together and narrated. The poems are diachronic, not only describing events as they happened but apparently composed at different points in the story. This adds to their power. But the sequence of events is also mirrored by the repetition with variations of the same themes, which are given different nuances as the story proceeds. They begin with an evocation of Pāri's generosity and the fertility of Pāṟampu (105–108) and proceed to mocking the kings come to take the hill (109–111; 109–110 are actually addressed to these kings). So far, everything is going well. Suddenly, the poem attributed to Pāri's daughters appears, a short poem of five lines that, in line 3, moves to the period after the destruction of Paṟampu and the death of Pāri. Line 4 of this poem describes the victorious drums of the besieging king, and it is only here, in this transitional poem, that the enemy kings are actually said to be victorious and that Pāri is said to be dead. Poems 113–114 are again attributed to Kapilar as he slowly walks away from Paṟampu after its destruction (113 is actually addressed to Paṟampu). By poem 115, Kapilar has distanced himself from Paṟampu even further as he remembers it and Pāri, who first appears here after the girls' poem. Then, in 116, Paṟampu has receded into the background as Kapilar sees Pāri's young daughters counting wagons in a barren place just as, shortly before, they counted the horses of the enemy kings from the summit of Paṟampu. In 117, Kapilar reminisces, seemingly from a distance, about Paṟampu and its fertility, mentioning Pāri only

as the father of the girls with fine bangles. One can imagine him standing with the girls and remembering the past that is gone. In 118–119, Kapilar finally brings himself to say that Paṟampu is gone as he describes it as it was. The cycle ends with 120, where Kapilar vividly describes in detail everyday life on Paṟampu, then asks "is it destroyed" and ends by describing Pāri and his daughters and finally the land with the ironic *peruviṟal nāṭē*, "the land of great victories." Even at the end, he cannot bring himself to say, "It is destroyed," but rather asks, "Is it destroyed?"

On looking over the poems of this cycle carefully, I find myself struck by the extraordinary skill with which the anthologist has chosen and arranged them. Not one poem is out of place, not one strikes a false note. The events proceed inexorably, and the reader is drawn intensely into Kapilar's experience. It is impossible not to be struck by how the entire story is compressed into only about 135 lines. It is worth noting that there are three poems in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* in which Kapilar asks kings to marry Pāri's daughters (200–202). Had these been included in the cycle described here, it would have resulted in an anticlimactic ending. It seems likely that there once existed a far more extensive series of these poems by Kapilar (perhaps including also 200–202) and that the anthologist carefully chose poems from this longer series that told the story as economically as possible while still retaining its enormous power. Whatever the case, these poems form a coherent unit that comprises one of the great depictions of tragedy in any literature. Unlike most premodern literature of South Asia, this series does not make the experiences it describes anonymous or distant. They are narrated by the poet who actually experienced them, and this gives them enormous power and depth.

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# *How to Read a Classic? The* Tirukkuṟaḷ *and Various Ways of Reading the Text in the Medieval Tamil Country*

Jackson Cyril

*ituvō aṉṉāy kāmat tiyaṟcai?*
*ituvō yāyiṟ keṭukataṉ ṟiṟameṉa!*
"O girl, is this the nature of love? If so, let its qualities be cursed!"—
*Maṇimēkalai*

Since meeting Annamalai sir as a MA student many years ago, I doubt if a week has gone by where I haven't bugged him on some aspect of Tamil. Our emails seem to span everything from MGR's movies to Caṅkam etymology, but often we seem to end up discussing the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, a text that has not only captured the Tamil literary imagination for more than a millennium, but which in our case has served as a basis for innumerable conversations on grammar, etymology, and poetics, as well the way in which the classical Tamil past continues to haunt and vivify the Tamil present. In this sense, and despite my primary research interests being in modern Tamil, I propose in the following pages to examine the manner in which a string of influential medieval commentators shaped the way in which we still approach the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. Reading the medieval Tamil commentaries can also shed light on the diverse reading practices that existed during the medieval period and thus enrich our knowledge of how Tamil texts were read

in earlier periods. Indeed, there is a pressing need, as Jennifer Clare enjoins us to recognize, to "historicize the interpretive process itself" and point "out the range of ways in which literature has been read and appreciated outside the hegemony of Euro-American scholarship."[1] The following pages, therefore, discuss some of the strategies employed by medieval commentators of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, in order to reconstruct the vibrant interpretive atmosphere once present in the medieval Tamil country.[2] Looking closely at each commentary can reveal the various strategies used by the commentator to organize and read the text, and the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, since it supposedly generated ten commentaries in the medieval period, is an apt entry into the vibrant world of medieval Tamil literary and scholarly culture, as we can see how various commentators discuss and interpret the same core text.

Until recently, the commentarial literature has not received much attention in Tamil studies.[3] But the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* commentaries have benefitted from the penetrating gaze of three great Tamil scholars, T. P. Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār, Norman Cutler, and François Gros.[4] All three recognize that in the modern period the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has been read (almost) exclusively through the organizing principles expounded by the great 13th-century Vaishnavite commentator Parimēlaḻakar.[5] Indeed, even today, most printed editions of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* print the couplets in the order prescribed by Parimēlaḻakar.

But the text is supposed to have ten classical commentaries, though today only those written by five survive, those of "Maṇakkuṭavar

[1] Clare 2011.

[2] There is now a burgeoning literature on commentaries and other "meta-textual" elements and their role in the reading of Tamil texts. See Wilden and Anandakichenin 2020; also, Anandakichenin and D'Avella 2020.

[3] Sascha Ebeling's lucid study of the "appeasing of the assembly" (*avaiyaṭakkam*) is an exception to this, though it is worth noting, as Ebeling points out, that the *avaiyaṭakkam*, though it has metatextual elements, is ultimately considered a part of the original text. A commentary, on the other hand, is not considered part of the original text (*mūla nūl* in Tamil); Ebeling (2020).

[4] Gros 2009, 153–173; Cutler 1992; and Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār 2005.

[5] Cutler's essay (1992) chiefly discusses the role played by Parimēlaḻakar's commentary in the medieval period, while the other two studies (Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār's volume cited is actually an anthology of various texts he wrote on the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*) examine the larger available body of medieval literature.

(c. 950–1050), Paripperumāḷ (c. 1000–1100), Kāḷiṅkar (c. 1100–1200), Parimēlaḻakar (1250–1300), and Paritiyār (c. 1450)."[6] Each of these commentators prescribes his own organizing scheme for the couplets, and each draws on different theories of poetics to justify his decision.[7]

In this chapter, I examine in particular the commentarial introductions ascribed to four of the traditional ten commentators, Maṇakkuṭavar, Paripperumāḷ, Kāḷiṅkar and Parimēlaḻakar, to the last section of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, the *Kāmattuppāl*, or the "section on love."[8] These introductions outline four different ways of organizing and reading the text, which may emerge from different ways of approaching traditional Tamil poetics.[9] By carefully

[6] Gros 2009. The idea that there were ten medieval commentators arises from a free-floating verse (*taṉippāṭal*), which gives ten names (Aravindan 1968, 272). Aravindan moreover points out that a verse from the poet Kampan suggests that many commentaries to the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* existed in the medieval period (see Aravindan 1968, 272). Of the five commentators whose texts we do not have, we know very little, but Aravindan (1968, 273) suggests that the Tarumar mentioned here is the same Tarumar who wrote a commentary to the *Nālaṭiyār*. Speculations about who the others may have been has given rise to a theory (which has no proof I know of) that the Naccar mentioned here is the famed Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar (who wrote influential commentaries on a large number of texts), and an interesting anecdote that tells of his purported meeting with Parimēlaḻakar exists (see Iramacami Pulavar 1946, 47). Aravindan dismisses the idea that this Naccar is the famed commentator Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar as verses appended to Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's texts do not claim that he wrote a commentary to the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.

[7] Various scholars, from Pal Nadar (cited in Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār [2005]) in the early 20th century to David Shulman (see Shulman [2016]) today, have proposed that the text originally had no organizing principle; that these couplets existed separately, and were later collected by scholars. We cannot determine if this was true or not. From the time of the first known commentator in the 10th century onward, however, the text seems to have been recognized as part of a collection, and the versions known to us organize the text in individual chapters, each with a title and containing 10 couplets. The commentators all accept the chapter titles as authoritative, but each organizes the couplets differently. For tables depicting the couplets and their ordering by the various commentators, see the appendices to the various editions of Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar 1981.

[8] Attributing one of the divisions to Maṇakkuṭavar, as will be seen, is tenuous, as very little evidence exists that helps us identify the author of one old commentary. I follow Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār in hesitatingly attributing this text to Maṇakkuṭavar and will give my reasons below.

[9] In passing, I will also mention two other traditional ways of reading the text, that of Kāḷiṅkar and one that Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār attributes to Maṇakkuṭavar, but which may simply be a further elaboration of Paripperumāḷ's foreword.

reading these commentaries, we can learn how texts were read in the medieval period, and also better understand how poetological ideas (inherited from the *Tolkāppiyam* and other poetological texts, in both Sanskrit and Tamil) were used by commentators in the medieval period to read texts.

It is appropriate to begin with Parimēlaḻakar, the Vaishnavite brahmin whose commentary has been *the* standard commentary to the text since the 13th century. His name literally means "the the beautiful one on the horse." According to legend, when he approached the Paṇdya king for an *araṅkēṟṟam*, or celebratory "book launch," for his commentary, the king demanded that he demonstrate that his text was an improvement upon the previous nine commentaries. To do this he asked Parimēlaḻakar to sit atop a bronze horse and deliver his commentary, and that if the horse moved, he would accept the text. Naturally, the statue was so affected by the genius of the commentary, it moved![10] But one scholar has suggested that because his commentary superseded that of Paripperumāḷ, he was the one who was more beautiful than "Pari."[11] However he may have earned the name, the stories do reveal the high status that Parimēlaḻakar's commentary enjoys within the Tamil tradition, as none of the other commentators have legends circulating about them. In addition to his great commentary on the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, he also authored a crucial commentary on one of the Caṅkam classics, *Paripāṭal*.[12] About his life, as with many medieval Tamil writers, we know little else.

Parimēlaḻakar's commentary seems to have been well known in the precolonial period, as a 17th-century commentary and study of the commentary exists.[13] Many other tributes to the commentary exist, and it is significant that even Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār, who is quite critical of Parimēlaḻakar's (over)reliance on Sanskrit thought,

[10] Tiruvaḷḷuvar 1965, xv–xvi.

[11] Irākavaiyaṅkār 1928, 114–118.

[12] Parimēlaḻakar and Cāmināṭaiyar 1980.

[13] Tirumēṉi Kāri Irattiṉa Kavirāyar and I. Cuntaramūrtti 1980. This brief text attempts to clarify some of the more difficult portions of the commentary, as well as suggesting better interpretations of the original text. Kamil Zvelebil mentions two other 19th-century commentaries on Parimēlaḻakar text. There are also more recent commentaries on the commentary (Zvelebil 1973, 250).

concedes that "Tiruvaḷḷuvar's *Tirukkuṟaḷ* survives the dark sea of the middle period and reaches our shores only on the raft that is Parimēlaḻakar's commentary."[14]

When we turn to Parimēlaḻakar's introduction to the *Kāmattuppāl*, we see that his aim in this short introduction is twofold: first, he aims to show, as Gros eloquently puts it, the way the *Kāmattuppāl* "was speaking Sanskrit in Tamil, and the reverse."[15] The commentator has been charged by many with attempting to Sanskritize Tamil texts, but such a simplistic reading misses the full-force of Parimēlaḻakar's purpose; it is not his aim to show that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* simply translated Sanskrit ideas into Tamil, but also to demonstrate that Tamil texts were more than capable of eloquently expressing ideas otherwise only communicated through Sanskrit. Thus he divides love into *puṇarcci* "union" and *pirivu* "separation," which he then relists under the banner of the classical Tamil categories of *kaḷavu* "stolen love" (or love before marriage) and *kaṟpu* (the love after marriage). As Gros points out, this allows him also to draw a similarity between his division of the text and the Sanskrit categories of *sambhoga* and *vipralambha*.[16]

His second purpose is less about Sanskrit and more about Tamil grammar. The twofold division between *kaḷavu* and *kaṟpu* is old, and both terms have their own sections in the *Tolkāppiyam*. And while until recently it had been assumed that the *Tolkāppiyam* was one unified text, scholars of late have argued on the basis of internal contradictions that the text is not as homogenous as was once thought. For our purposes in particular, it is important that some have suggested that the *Tolkāppiyam* may in fact be proposing alternative literary theories: one that enumerates the famous "five landscapes" or *tiṇai* and another one that divides love into *kaḷavu* and *kaṟpu*.[17] That Parimēlaḻakar rejects the fivefold division in

[14] Quoted in Aravindan 1968, 427. For more premodern verse tributes to this commentary, see Tiruvaḷḷuvar 1968, xviii–xix.

[15] Gros 2009. He does not dwell much on how the commentator highlights the text's differences from Sanskrit, but examples of these can be found in Mīṇāṭcicuntaraṇār 2005, 235–238. This chapter does not seek to examine the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*'s relationship with Sanskrit texts, but Mīṇāṭcicuntaraṇār (2005) provides perhaps the most nuanced account of this that I'm aware of, especially pages 230–266.

[16] Gros 2009.

[17] Wilden 2006.

favor the twofold division may suggest that this claim regarding the various schools of literary analysis was recognized by the medieval commentator, who disagreed with an earlier division of the text because he belonged to a different grammatical school.

His predecessor Paripperumāḷ[18] does not favor the twofold division of *kaḷavu* and *kaṟpu*, and favors instead a threefold division (*puṇarcci makiḻtal*, "the joy caused by union"; *puṇarcci vitumbal*, "the joy caused by union after separation"; and *ūṭal uvakai*, "the joy derived from union after sulking"), which, though based on previous models, still strikes me as a unique development in Tamil.[19] And unlike Parimēlaḻakar, who cites Bhoja as his authority, Paripperumāḷ invokes the *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Iṟaiyaṉārakapporuḷ*, which is a medieval text on *akam* poetics.

Very little indeed is known about this commentator also, though he too is one of the ten classical commentators of the text.[20] According to a verse appended to the conclusion of his commentary, we know that he authored two other, now lost, texts, one on language and another on love.[21] There are some verses that indicate that his commentary was initially rejected, and that a bitter Paripperumāḷ penned two verses defending his text.[22] The publication history as well as the popularity of his commentary in the premodern period are also less known. We do not, for example, have a premodern commentary to Paripperumāḷ's commentary, as we do for Parimēlaḻakar. As for the publication of his commentary in modern times, we know that portions of it were first published in 1948, but we are unsure how well known it was in the premodern Tamil country.[23]

[18] Paripperumāḷ is sometimes referred to as Kavipperumāḷ (Aravindan 1968, 310).

[19] Makiḻcci and uvakai both mean joy and while vitumpu has multiple meanings, here it may just mean "desire." The meaning of the word, which appears in the title of two of the chapters in this section of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* (127, *avarvayin vitumpal* and 129 *puṇarcci vitumpal*) is fiercely debated by the commentators (see the introduction to chapter 127 of the *Kāmattuppāl* and Tēcikar's commentary). See also the *Tamil Lexicon*'s definition of these terms.

[20] Aravindan's classic text on the topic has less than ten pages on Paripperumāḷ (as compared to a generous 60 pages on Parimēlaḻakar; see Aravindan 1968, 399–400).

[21] Aravindan 1968, 401. See Irākavaiyaṅkār (1928, 15–16) for the verses.

[22] See Aravindan 1968, 311–312.

[23] See the author's introduction in Tiruvaḷḷuvar 1988, ii.

While reading the commentaries of Maṇakkuṭavar and Paripperumāḷ, it becomes quickly apparent that the latter is closely following the former. Both, for example, begin their commentaries of the *Kāmattuppāl* by noting that since love for another's wife was shown as sinful (*pāvam*) in the first section of the text, and since union with sex workers would bring about material ruin (*poruṭkēṭu tarum*, lit. "bring about material ruin"), the only union left was that with a single young woman, which is what this chapter deals with.[24]

Paripperumāḷ has often been dismissed as simply parroting the earlier Maṇakkuṭavar or, more generously, simply appending a few notes to his predecessor's commentary. Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār proposes an alternative, and more plausible theory. He argues that once Parimēlaḻakar wrote his commentary, the earlier commentaries were less-well regarded (and perhaps were imagined to have been superseded). Thus, scribes copying the earlier commentaries were less careful, leading to misattribution.[25] He argues that Maṇakkuṭavar's original introduction to the *Kāmattuppāl* was an old commentary found with the manuscripts of Maṇakkuṭavar's text first published by V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, and not the short paragraph, which is word-for-word the same as the introduction to Paripperumāḷ's commentary, that is nowadays attributed to him.[26]

I will return to Maṇakkuṭavar's supposed introductory text below, but for now it is worth examining Paripperumāḷ's innovative tripartite division. Paripperumāḷ is unique among the commentators in citing verses from two earlier grammatical texts, the *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Iṟaiyaṉārakapporuḷ*. And even though he suggests that Vātsyāyana's Sanskrit text (probably the *Kāmasūtra*) would also provide an appropriate model for the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, he ultimately settles in favor of the famous five-*tiṇai* division found in the *Tolkāppiyam*.

[24] Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar's edition of the commentary of "Maṇakkuṭavar" stops here, but as we will see below, Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār suggests that the text may have originally been significantly longer.

[25] Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār 2005, 247.

[26] Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār cites portions of the text, but the full text may be found in my appendix. By an interesting coincidence, I found this text appended, with a note saying this was found in some old manuscripts of Parimēlaḻakar's, in the standard edition of Paripperumāḷ's commentary! I follow Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār in attributing this mysterious introduction to Maṇakkuṭavar, but future research may demonstrate to whom this work actually belongs. See Tiruvaḷḷuvar 1988.

Then he proceeds to reduce this division into three new categories: *puṇarcci makiḻtal*, *puṇarcci vitumbal*, and *ūṭal uvakai*. Mīṇāṭcicuntaraṇār reminds us that this division is from Vatsyāyana and proceeds to highlight perceived errors within Paripperumāḷ's division.[27] That Paripperumāḷ ultimately took up a division from Sanskrit but chose to give Tamil terms may suggest an interest on his part to try to synthesize the two grammatical theories, in an effort to retain both the text's unique Tamil flavor, but also connect it to a larger, pan–South Asian literary tradition.

While these three terms are not (to my knowledge) found in the *Tolkāppiyam*, later Tamil grammars do mention them. According to the great twentieth-century pandit T. V. Gopal Iyer, *puṇarcci makiḻtal* is mentioned in the *Nampi Akapporuḷ* and *puṇarcci(yin) vitumbal* is mentioned in the *Ambikāpatikkōvai*.[28] As to *ūṭal uvakai*, Iyer cites only Parimēlaḻakar's commentary in his dictionary of grammatical terms.[29]

There is another threefold division among the commentators. Kāḷiṅkar (sometimes spelled Kāliṅkar) follows one of the poems in the *Tiruvaḷḷuvarmālai*, a medieval collection of praise-poems to the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, in dividing the text based on which of the characters in a traditional Tamil love poem could have uttered the poem.[30] Thus the first seven chapters are attributed to the hero, the next twelve to the heroine and the last six include verses spoken by either character. If Kāḷiṅkar ever wrote a detailed introduction explaining his division, it has been lost, and we can say little more than note that his commentary followed the division outlined above.[31] It should also be noted here that the practice of attributing

[27] Mīṇāṭcicuntaraṇār 2005, 242–243.

[28] Kōpālayyar 2005, vol. 10, 88–89. This text, aside from being an excellent resource, provides in many ways the best available text on the evolution of grammatical ideas over the centuries.

[29] Kōpālayyar 2005, vol. 7, 153.

[30] See the appendix in Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar 1990. Kāḷiṅkar follows the division proposed in the 27th poem.

[31] Instead of a detailed foreword, we do have tantalizing clues within his commentary which hint to his organizing scheme. For example, in the beginning of chapter eight he writes "the hero's speech is done, now the heroine's speech begins." In Tēcikar's edition (Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar 1990), this is mentioned in the section titled Kaṟpiyal.

verses to a speaker is followed by all the commentators, and it seems to have been a very traditional way of reading the poem.[32] What sets Kāḷiṅkar's scheme apart is that he divides the entire text based on who is speaking.

We now turn to the anonymous commentary that Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār attributes to Maṇakkuṭavar. As will be evident from the appendix, the preface serves as a general introduction to the entire work, not just the *Kāmattuppāl*. The text's portion on the *Kāmattuppāl* explicitly refers to the classic theory of the five landscapes outlined in the *Tolkāppiyam*. Equally interesting is that the text suggests that each kural can be broken-down into *mutal* ("nature of land and seasons"), *karu* ("distinctive regional features of each of the *aintiṇai* or five tracts of land, embracing 14 items"), *uri* ("that distinctive erotic mood in love appropriate to each of the five tracts of land"), a division the *Tolkāppiyam* prescribes for reading Caṅkam poetry.[33]

Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār follows his teacher Selvakesavaraya Mudaliar in (cautiously) attributing this foreword to Maṇakkuṭavar, but Maṇakkuṭavar's commentary does not explicitly interpret every couplet in the *Kāmattuppāl* on the basis of the five landscapes, or read any couplet on the basis of *mutal*, *karu*, and *uri*. If this were indeed Maṇakkuṭavar's foreword, we would expect his commentary to be occasionally referring to the theory of the five landscapes and to incorporate each couplet into this more foundational theory. But since the commentary does not do this, it is perhaps safest to say that the foreword was intended for a now-lost commentarial text, maybe even one of the five lost classical commentaries.[34]

The best candidate for Maṇakkuṭavar's original commentary may indeed be the simple foreword to the *Kāmattuppāl* we find in an early printed edition of this commentary, that by Ponnuswamy

[32] Detailed discussion of the various speakers can be found in Takahashi 1995. Gros attributes the practice of assigning speakers to the utterances to Kāḷiṅkar, but this seems incorrect as all of the commentators adhere to this practice.

[33] Definitions from the Madras Tamil Lexicon.

[34] Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar follows Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār in attributing this foreword to Maṇakkuṭavar, following Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉār's reasoning in the essay mentioned above. But he attaches a part of this section to the Uraippayiram, or general introduction to the whole *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. Taṇṭapāṇi Tēcikar 1981, 33–34.

Nadar in 1925, which has recently been reprinted.[35] This version, which Nadar seems to have found in manuscripts at Chennai, states simply:

> The book in 25 chapters declares, in three appropriate chapters "Mental disturbance caused by the Beauty of the Princess" and ending with "Rejoicing in the Embrace" the union in love, then [declares] from "The Praise of her Beauty" to Mutual Desire" the union after separation in eighteen appropriate chapters, then from "Soliloquy" to "The Pleasures of 'Temporary Variance'" the union after the lovers' quarrel is discussed in the appropriate four chapters.[36]

This foreword to the *Kāmattuppāl* is more in line with the commentator's own simple, straightforward style. Unlike the foreword mentioned earlier, which draws on a philosophical vocabulary not found elsewhere in Maṇakkuṭavar's commentary, this simple introduction, which outlines the chapters, is most likely the foreword he wrote for his text.

This short paper has, I hope, shed light on the various ways in which medieval Tamil commentators suggested approaching the *Tirukkuṟaḷ,* as well as the various ways in which each tried to recruit the text for his poetological theory of choice. Over the course of the twentieth century, the text has been read as a manifesto of feminism, Dravidianism, democracy and a host of other causes—all of which would have pleasantly surprised the original author(s) of the text, who most likely composed the text as a manual for princes.

I hope I have achieved two things. First, I have tried to show that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has always been read in multiple ways, and that even the readings or commentaries which have acquired the stamp of a 'classic' sharply disagree with each other. Secondly, I hope that I have demonstrated through this small case study that when we speak of the 'Tamil tradition', we should remind ourselves that this entity was hardly a monolithic one and that this 'Tamil tradition' has always been a heterogenous one, where various contrary views were voiced and debated. Texts such as the *Tirukkuṟaḷ,*

[35] Tiruvaḷḷuvar 2000, iiB.
[36] Tiruvaḷḷuvar 2000, 249.

which became enormously popular were read in different ways to expound a variety of poetological theories, many of which bewilder the modern reader. We can also see how receptive Tamil scholars were to poetological theories from Sanskrit, even as they sometimes sought to translate or adapt those theories into Tamil. Equally importantly, it is worth highlighting how quickly they dismissed theories they perceived as too Sanskritic as inadequate to explain a Tamil text.

## Appendix: The Commentarial Forewords

### 1. Parimēlaḻakar[37]

Now he [Tiruvaḷḷuvar] takes pleasure [*inbam*], which this life alone grants, as the matter that is in conjunction to material goodness [*poruḷ*]. Here what is said by pleasure is that karmic pleasure which in one season [grants] one reward [*poruḷ*] allowing one to enjoy the sensations of the five sensory organs [taste, sight, touch, smell, and sound]. [We] say that in a Sanskrit book King Bhōja has also discussed the special qualities of this, declaring excellently "let those who claim that there are many pleasures say that. What I discuss [in this book] is only sensual pleasure [*inbaccuvai*]." This [sensual pleasure] will be of two kinds: *puṇarci* and *pirivu*. If one asks whether the others, [namely,] remaining (behind) [*iruttal*], lamentation [*iraṅgal*], and quarrel between lovers [*ūdal*], are [also] here, since he [Tiruvaḷḷuvar] separated the book into *aṟam*, *poruḷ*, and *inbam* in the manner of Sanskrit books, we reply that he included [the missing three] into separation. Now in order to bring them in line with Tamil books also, calling union *kaḷavu* [union before marriage] and separation *kaṟpu* [union after a long period of separation and then marriage] according to majority usage, he calls them thus in order to provide great enjoyment and so they may be in accordance and not so in the manner of the world. In that conduct (*kaikōḷ*, i.e., the discipline that consists of both *kaḷavu* and *kaṟpu*), *kaḷavu* happens when two suited lovers—who are equal to one another in form, beauty, wealth, age, preeminence, character, affection and who belong to the same community—come together of their own volition without anyone else

[37] Tiruvaḷḷuvar 1965.

joining them or match-making for them. Having started to say this [*kaḷavu*] in seven chapters, he begins with the chapter on "Mental Disturbance caused by the Beauty of the Princess."[38]

**2. Paripperumāḷ**

The *Kāmattuppāl* tells of the pleasure occasioned by the union of young men and women. How the author tells this is thus: a man does not receive pleasure [here *inbam*] from all three types [of women], namely, young [unmarried] women, sex workers, and other men's wives, because by declaring in the *Aṟattuppāl* that union with other men's wives is sinful, and declaring in the *Poruṭpāl* that union with sex workers will bring about material evil, he demonstrates how *aṟam* and *poruḷ* are related to pleasure. This union is of eight kinds: *bramam*, *pirasāpattiyam*, *āriṭam*, *teivam*, *kāntaruvam*, *asuram*, *irākkatam*, *paisāsam*. In those, because the three starting from *asuram* are one-sided affairs, and since the four starting from *bramam* are unsuitable matches, they do not possess the special qualities of pleasure [*inbam*]. Thus, it should be taken that only *gandharva* marriage is discussed here.

> Why?
>
> Of the vicissitudes of mind noted above
> the first three
> Border on marks of love unrequited.[39]
>
> And
>
> The union of love between a man and a woman . . .
> Shares the nature of the love of the *gandharvas* adept at lyre play
> Which is among the eight forms of marriage vogue among the vedic folk.[40]

Because poetics [*ilakkaṇam*] declares it thusly, namely that this union ought not to be arranged [by others] nor should the bride

[38] I give chapter titles as in the popular translation by G. U. Pope, as these are readily available online and can be referred to easily.

[39] Tolkāppiyar 2001, 431.

[40] Tolkāppiyar 2001, 424.

be given, but rather should occur when two suited people join. How? Because:

That is,

> He and she, without anyone else's arrangement
> Feeling love for each other that is reciprocated.[41]

If one suggests that this verse [*sūtra*] is meant for literary behavior only, and whether the love [*kāma*] discussed here [in the *Kāmattuppāl*] is also purely literary, we say that since the matter declared by the *sūtra* is told by the commentator to be both compliant to and noncompliant to worldly practice, and thus meant generally, this [*Kāmattuppāl*] is thus meant to discuss worldly practices. Sanskrit authors call this feeling of love "the meeting of *arākattar*."

It is this that will be in three kinds: union in difficulty, [that is] because union is difficult, the lovers are thinking of each other from the moment they lay eyes on one another. Then union after separation, [namely] lovers who, because of a later difficulty, separate and then join once again. Then the union after sulking, [namely] a woman who ceases to sulk after finding fault with her lover and then joins him.

Because these three unions [that are found] in the *Kāmattuppāl* are not in the Tamil manner, where should a poetics for this be found? [If such is asked], if this is indeed in the Tamil manner, it [the poetics] should be of inside and outside [*akam* and *puṟam*]. If not, and if we call it dharma, material wealth, and pleasure [*aṟam*, *poruḷ*, *inbam*] in the manner of Sanskrit books, then it should be found in the chapter [called] "*Curavakiṟpam*" of Vātsāyana's book on *kāma*.

Besides, because it is said:

> Union, separation, endurance,
> Pining, and sulking,
> And the motives therein
> Are perceived to be
> The strands of *akam* love behavior.[42]

And in those, remaining [behind] and lamentation happen because of separation, containing them under separation, it would not

[41] Iṟaiyaṉār 1969, 28. My translation.
[42] Tolkāppiyar 2001, 378.

be wrong to call it [the manner in which the text is organized] union, separation, and reconciliation after a quarrel, in the Tamil manner.

In this [book], the three chapters from " Mental Disturbance caused by the Beauty of the Princess" to " Rejoicing in the Embrace" tell of the unions that happen through difficulty, the 18 chapters starting with "The Praise of her Beauty" and ending with "Desire for Reunion" deal with union after separation and the four chapters starting with "Expostulation with Oneself" to "The Pleasures of 'Temporary Variance'" deal with union after quarreling, and thus twenty-five chapters were told. Knowing this it can be stated that he called the difficult union without seeing each other before (*puṇarci makiḻtal*), then the reunion [because of the pleasure already experienced] after separation (*puṇarci vitumbal)*, then the final union after quarrelling (*ūṭaluvakai)*.

### 3. The anonymous commentary attributed to Maṇakkuṭavar[43]

In order to preach firmness to the people of the world [and to do it] succinctly, he took from many kinds of religious books the four aspects of dharma,[44] *poruḷ*, pleasure (*inbam*), and *vīṭu* (*mokṣa* or liberation).[45] Among those, since *vīṭu* is the benefit [reaped by] those who do dharma, he included that in [the section on] dharma and divided the three sections into *Aṟattuppāl*, *Poruṭpāl*, and *Kāmattuppāl*. Since dharma is the cause of all four things, including dharma, he discusses it first. Since *poruḷ* [here material well-being, but the chapter itself discusses all manner of worldly things] brings about everything save *vīṭu*, he discusses it afterward. Since pleasure largely only causes pleasure, we say that he discusses it last.

Now dharma is of four parts: gift-giving, asceticism, holy living (*viratam*), and worship. Since gift-giving and worship are

[43] Tolkāppiyar 1988.

[44] The word *aṟam* has multiple meanings, especially in older Tamil. I translate it throughout this introduction as "dharma" as the usage of aṟam in this particular document (which is heavily drawing on Sanskritic categories to discuss the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*) suggests that it is used in the sense of "dharma."

[45] These are four heavily loaded terms, and there is discussion of how closely the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* follows Sanskrit convention, and whether we can indeed take these words as mere translations of Sanskrit terms. For a discussion on the terms *inpam/kāmam* in particular, see Kothandapani Pillai 1965.

done by people of this world, and asceticism and holy living are practiced by those who have renounced the world, *Aṟattuppāl* was split into dharma of the household [*illaṟam*] and dharma of the renouncer. In these, [the chapters titled] "The Praise of God," "The Excellence of Rain," "The Greatness of Ascetics," and "Assertion of the Strength of Virtue" are categorized as one chapter, then the 20 chapters starting from "Domestic Life" and ending with "Renown" contain the dharma of the household, and the 13 chapters starting with "The Possession of Benevolence" and ending with "The Extirpation of Desire" contain the dharma of the renouncer. With the final chapter on *ūḻ*, 38 chapters are contained in the chapter on dharma.

Because within the precepts of the aims of life [Skt. *puruṣārtha*] it is impossible to attain liberation (*mokṣa*) without following these precepts, it is unnecessary to speak about that separately. [46] Thus excluding that, he calls the sections on the other precepts *Aṟattuppāl*, *Poruṭpāl*, and *Kāmattuppāl*.[47]

In an auspicious manner, beginning with the "worship of God" and [proceeding onto] the "praise of rain," which is an act of God without which the world would not exist, and then expanding upon the glories of those sages whose births are themselves fortuitous, he describes then the strength of dharma, which is declared by the sages in four chapters.

In the four kinds of dharma (namely *bramacaryam*, *kākarutam*, *vāna ṗirattam* and *sanyāsam*) since what a brahmacharya does is learn (*ōtutal*) as a student and nothing else, [he includes it] in the section called "*putalvarai peṟutal*," and [enumerating] *kākarutam* in 20 chapters, and discussing *vānaṗrattam* in 10 chapters and *sanyāsam* in three chapters, [he concludes] the 34 chapters of the *Aṟattuppāl* with one chapter titled "Fate," which is common to everyone.

[46] Tēcikar's edition only begins with this section. The previous paragraphs are not included in his edition. He also prints this word as *ṗuruṭārttamākiya*.

[47] In the original Tamil, the rest of the foreword is one long sentence, which breathlessly runs over a page and concludes with the verb 'he said' (*kūrinār*). I will translate it into smaller sentences for ease of reading. It is worth noting that this syntactic tour de force is again a departure from Maṇakkuṭavar's usual simple expository style.

The *Poruṭpāl* establishes the king as the first and then discusses in six chapters those peripheral to him, namely the army, the people, the growing of crops, the ministers, friendship, and fortification, [then] in 25 chapters discusses the qualities a king must have, the qualities a minister must have in 10 chapters, in one chapter of their own the qualities a country, fortification and wealth must have, the qualities of the army in two chapters, the qualities of friendship in five chapters [and] the qualities of enmity in six chapters.

The six chapters from "Not Offending the Great," which is an important aspect of kings, to "Medicine," and the related chapters [namely] those seven from "Nobility" to "Shame," then those chapters suited to kings and other *varuṇa*s [namely] "The Way of Maintaining the Family," then the chapter which excluding brahmins is mainly for Vellalas and less so for others [namely] "Agriculture," and finally by delegating four chapters for each of those good things that do not create wealth, [namely] "Mendicancy," "The Dread of Mendicacy," and one chapter to the character of those who do not give to mendicants, "Baseness," he concludes [the *Poruṭpāl*] with 70 chapters.

[He now] speaks of the *Kāmattuppāl*: Taking *uri* (from) the five landscapes called *kuṟinci*, *pālai*, *mullai*, *neital*, *marutam*, and the larger threefold division of *mutal*, *karu*, and *uri*, he calls the union (of the lovers) and the cause for the union *kuṟinci*, the separation (of the lovers) and the cause for the separation *pālai*, the remaining [behind] and the cause of that remaining [behind] *mullai*, the lamentation and the cause for the lamentation *neital*, and the reunion and the cause of that reunion *marutam*, assigning to each landscape five chapters, that is, a total of 25 chapters, he produces a 133 chapters, each of which contains 10 *kuṟaḷ veṇpa*s, thus in 1,330 verses, we learn that he declares all the subjects taught by Sanskrit books and Tamil books.[48]

[48] I would like to thank Prof. Sascha Ebeling for his help and advice in translating the language of the Tamil commentators. The clunkiness that remains is, of course, no fault of his. I have tried to render into English the dense and scholastic language employed by the commentators but have had to smooth out some parts to make the syntax readable in English.

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# *The* Mohinīvilāsa Kuṟavañci: *Staged Hybridity from Early Maratha Thanjavur*

Talia Ariav

## 1. Introduction

This essay presents a close reading of the *Mohinīvilāsa*, a dance drama staged at the Thanjavur court of King Śāhaji (r.1684–1710, hereon, Shaha).[1] Written by poet Saptaṛṣi (hereon, Saptarishi),[2] the *Mohinīvilāsa* is an early archetype of the *kuṟavañci* (hereon kuravanci) genre, which holds considerable presence in the Tamil

[1] This paper was written under the funding of the ERC project NEEM, led by David Shulman at the Hebrew University. I wish to thank Whitney Cox for reading parts of this piece with me in Chicago in 2018, David Shulman for his illuminations on some of the songs in 2024, and Margherita Trento for helpful comments on some of the songs as well as reading an early draft of this paper. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions.

[2] We know very little about our poet, Saptarishi: no other work of his survives, to my knowledge. The catalogs of the Saraswathi Mahal Library are the best sources for the works of Shaha's court, most of which remain unpublished. For a survey of musical genres in Thanjavur, see Seetha 2001. For several Tamil poets active in Shaha's court, see Aṟivuṭainampi 1994, which refers especially (along with a sample of their *padam*s) to Vasudeva Kavi and Iramaparati (65–183) as well as to Muttukavi (22–34). Muttukavi is said to be identical to the composer of another kuravanci (following Muilwịjk 1996, 233). We have far more information on the Sanskrit poets active at Shaha's court; the most extensive account of this is still Raghavan 2016. See also Ariav 2022.

literary and performative ecology of the 18th through 20th centuries. Rooted primarily in previous performative Tamil genres, notably of local origins, early kuravanci works like the *Mohinīvilāsa* also experimented with the emerging multilingual aesthetic of the Maratha court at Thanjavur.[3] Saptarishi's composition freely switches between languages—mostly Sanskrit and Tamil, and some Telugu—while retaining Tamil prosodic forms. In this, he is participating in the making of a Maratha artistic and linguistic ethos, where literary and linguistic hybridity was appreciated and funded. More broadly, this composition is part of the making of a renewed economy of genres in the Tamil south, a result of a productive artistic encounter between the Nayaka rulers—Telugu migrant warriors of contested social status, whose courtly culture the Marathas inherited in Thanjavur—the different communities they came to rule, and the growing movement of public temple festivals in the early modern Tamil country, which formed stages catering to a more extensive variety of audiences, and in different languages.[4]

At the level of the plot, the kuravanci most prominently features a female tribal fortuneteller (*kuṟatti*, hereon kuratti). She is summoned by a female protagonist from a courtly setting to help fulfill her love for a king or deity (whose presence is absent on stage). It also invariably features a glimpse of the fortuneteller's own love life with her husband, a Kuṟavar (hereon Kuravar or Kura tribe member) bird-catcher from the hills, who searches for her. The kuratti's literary identity enmeshes old conventions related to hunter tribes

[3] Most researchers agree that the earliest kuravanci is the *Kumpēcar kuṟavañci nāṭakam* written for Ekoji, Shahaji's father, between 1676 and 1684. In Shahaji's period, we have at least three. See Muilwijk 1996, 170–196 for further discussion of the generic family to which the kuravanci belongs, and the probable evolution of the genre, which has incorporated elements of earlier precedents and "generic siblings," classified in the *pāṭṭiyal* manuals such as the *kuṟam* (as early as the 16th century) and the *kuṟattippāṭṭu*, and evolved into others such as the *kuḻuvanāṭakam*.

[4] For an account of multilingualism at Shaha's court see Peterson 2011. For a comprehensive analysis of the Nayaka cultural and artistic ethos, a direct precursor to that of the Maratha successors in Thanjavur, see Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 1998. For further discussion of the shifting multilingual literary ecology in the early modern South, see Shulman 2019. Peterson 1998, 51, cites literary and painted depictions from the Maratha period as evidence for the performance of the early kuravanci plays.

from the hilly landscape (*kuṟiñci*) of the classical Tamil Sangam corpus, later Tamil myths related to God Murugan and his Kuravar wife, Valli, and representations of living Kuravar communities of hunter tribes in the contemporaneous early modern Tamil Nadu.[5] In the case of the *Mohinīvilāsa,* the fortuneteller's literary identity is also juxtaposed—through a conflation of terms that must have older roots—with Sanskrit Kīrāta tribes, whose literary presence dates back to the Sanskrit epics.

The kuravanci is a highly synthetic genre not only in its language and agents but also in terms of prosody, combining local and emerging musical dance forms of folk origin like *catir, padam* and *daru* with the classical meters of Tamil poetry. This aesthetic of hybridity was often tied directly, as a form of praise, to King Shaha, who prided himself on practicing and promoting many tongues and subcultures.[6] Like other poets around him, Saptarishi cast King Shaha as the main protagonist of his composition. A multilingual experiment such as the *Mohinīvilāsa* is thus a hyperbolic performance of praise for the king, both directly through his casting and through the multilingual aesthetic that he had actively tied to his name. Given that the *Mohinīvilāsa* is likely one of the earliest exemplars of the genre, the very consolidation of the genre is tied to the ethos of production at Shaha's court and thus to a performance of hybridity of language, register, and society. This multilingual courtly context of the genre's emergence is often overlooked but can be seen to survive in later examples of the genre, which continued to display a conflation of subcultures and registers even when confined to the Tamil language.

Indira Peterson notes more generally that the early modern formation of Tamil genres was a process of "continual and varied negotiations between what might be called 'classical' and 'folk'

[5] Peterson 1998, 42–44. Among the literary precursors, Peterson cites some ethnographic research linking living Kura tribes to the representations of the kuratti.

[6] There are several examples of this mixture of performative and "literary" meters in a single work from King Shaha's court. For a few instances see the Telugu *Pallaki seva prabandham* ascribed to King Shaha himself (Sambamoorthy 1955), or the Sanskrit *Chandrakala shahajeeyam* written by Cokkanātha (Srinivasan N. 1991). For Shaha's self-proclaimed ethos of multilingualism see Peterson 2011.

styles, genres and thematic material of heterogeneous origins."[7] Peterson further complicates the idea of a "folk" style since, in the context of these courtly productions, tribal identity, a spoken register, and performative prosodical forms were part of crafted representations of a folk (marked as *desi*) style, usually composed by learned poets. Peterson's distinction is an important reminder to consider the performative nature of these portrayals of hybridity and the standpoints from which they are composed. Keeping in mind the elite, courtly, and male outlook from which Saptarishi wrote, I characterize the crafted performances of multilingualism in the surviving textual form of this play. I argue that Saptarishi systematically and lightheartedly composed an artistic interpretation of Shaha's ethos of hybridity.

I further argue that Saptarishi's artistic vision is crafted through a productive technique of alignment of contrastive or mirroring elements. In the sections that follow, I analyze these alignments at the level of the plot (section two), language and prosody (section three), and the sociopolitical questions and tensions these alignments pose (section four). At the level of the plot, I show how the double tale of passion in the piece poses a network of mirroring subjects that places the king at the very heart of his kingdom, as a single embodiment of all different voices on stage. At the same time, the structure of alignment poses an irreducible multiplicity of voices—including that of the poet—celebrating the king's vision of cosmopolitan hybridity. In this, Saptarishi builds a productive tension between metaphorical and metonymic alignments of the king and his subjects, which I find pertinent to Saptarishi's interpretation of the genre that he is helping to coin.

In section three, I go on to discuss how this piece's striking praxis of alignment of different languages, meters, and registers is designed to pass as random, transparent transitions. I argue that these transitions, in effect, craft a vision of artificiality tied in with the king's image. This vision of artificiality poses questions like what defines a language and a genre, what the role of art is, and what is to be gained by multilingual visions of the world. Finally, I address in section four the sociopolitical implications

[7] Peterson 1998, 40.

of the genre, and of the *Mohinīvilāsa* more specifically. I show how the method of alignment has the potential to flatten out differences between a kuratti and a king. This is a deliberately provocative realm of possibilities in the early modern south (and particularly in Thanjavur), in which a poet can wed Tamil prosody to Sanskrit poetry, align Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu songs and verses, and pose a low-caste fortuneteller as the protagonist, costarring alongside the king. And yet, this performative vision of hybridity is not designed to exit the stage: the fortuneteller speaks in a voice and language that are not hers. She even worships the wrong and markedly Sanskritic wife of God Murugan, rather than his local wife Vaḷḷi (hereon, Valli), traditionally associated with the Kura tribe. I ultimately suggest that Saptarishi's novel generic experiment poses an ironic distance between the stage and the world, one that prompts the audience—as well as 21st-century readers—to assess the performance of hybridity against the living realities that it knowingly leaves outside.

## 2. Doubles aligned: A syntax of praise

Perhaps the most striking feature of the kuravanci as a genre, so central that it may strike insiders of the tradition as obvious, is the doubled structure of the plot, relating not one but two love stories. The fortuneteller's role in the story starts as a go-between of sorts; this is a triangle with a long history in the premodern poetic ecology of the subcontinent. Toward the end of the play, she is also a lover herself: the plot shifts sideways, as it were, to include her own husband. This generic parallelism of love stories carries inherent sociopolitical overtones: the fortuneteller and her husband are representatives of a tribal background of low-caste bird-catchers living on the hilly outskirts of civilization, whereas the protagonists overwhelmingly belong to the urban world of the court and are typically royal or divine.[8] If David Shulman's sugge-

[8] Indira Peterson insightfully analyzes the nature of the relationship between the two couples. She shows how (building on the famous *Kuṟṟālak kuṟavañci*) the play forms a complex link and contrast between the clever and potent kuratti and the helpless protagonist, in turn complicated by their dependent relationship; likewise, Cinkan the bird-catcher depends on the king as he catches birds in irrigation projects sponsored by the latter. Peterson suggests

stion regarding a possible paper trail between the 18th-century kuravanci genre and Mozart's Vienna is correct, it is plausibly this feature of the genre that struck Mozart's imagination: in his *Die Zauberflöte* or *Magic Flute*, the plot features a doubled romance—that of the prince and the princess in captivity, and that of Papageno the bird-catcher (another bird-catcher) who ends up marrying Papagena, including a concluding dialogic duet of the two, much like the concluding dialogue at the end of most kuravanci plays.[9]

This second love story disturbs the expectation for a single organizing logic of the plot, especially within a relatively short composition for the stage. The relationship between the two storylines is predominantly metonymic in structure, in the Jakobsonian sense regarding the development of discourse through contiguity.[10] Is this metonymy meant to invite metaphors,

that the double structure of the kuravanci plot, which forms an apparent (if complicated) balance between upper- and lower-class characters, is one of the reasons for its acceptance (unlike other genres of folk origins) into the classical canon in the 19th and 20th centuries. Interestingly, in Rukmini Devi's notable and successful "translation" of the genre into classical Carnatic dance repertoire, the bird-catcher was entirely omitted from the play. See Peterson 1998, 51–62.

[9] For this suggestion, based on the striking similarities of plots, see Shulman 2016, 279. For an insightful and relevant analysis of the crafted exoticism in the *Magic Flute* that draws on several traditions—notably, Galland's popular French edition of the *Arabian Nights*—see Head 2023. Head does not acknowledge any connection with early modern India. However, and notably for our purposes, Head links Papageno's relationship with birds to the idea of birdsong as the origin of music, making Papageno a representative of "a (fictional) glimpse of the art before its scientific and aesthetic rationalization" (Head 2023, 216). The contrast between the exotic and the artificial lies at the center of the aesthetics of the kuravanci, and makes for a key tension with which to assess the social and ethical discourse that inform the genre. While I partly discuss some of these crafted contrasts and their implications in the final section of this chapter, the idea of crafted exoticism in the kuravanci and the Thanjavur court more broadly invites further thought.

[10] Metonymical contiguity is the opposite of similarity, which is associated with the metaphoric pole of semantic development. Jakobson 1971, 129–133. Note that the Tamil classical linguistic category of *ākupeyar,* often translated into English as "metonymy," has little in common with the Jakobsonian framework. E. Annamalai translates *ākupeyar* as "transference noun" and is hesitant to accept "metonymy" as a translation from the Western tradition of semantics, largely because this grammatical notion primarily involves the substitution of a proper noun—rather than its alignment—with a neighboring term. Annamalai 1990. A. K. Ramanujan proposed *uḷḷurai* as a classical Tamil equivalent of a metonymical

such that the love stories are designed to mirror or contrast with each other? Or are they insistently metonymic, so to speak, posing an irreducible plurality of subjects and protagonists? I believe that the answer, in the case of the *Mohinīvilāsa* at least, is a playful performance of a "both/and."[11] The double tale of love and passion poses an open comparison that gestures to a playful sociopolitical commentary. Simultaneously and relatedly, this doubled structure poses a multiplicity of aligned subjects, irreducible to a single metaphorical structure. Both options are happily (and somewhat paradoxically) aimed at celebrating the king's vision of cosmopolitan hybridity. I now explore Saptarishi's treatment of this theme in the benedictive verses of the piece.[12]

*surapati-sadṛśa-kīrtteḥ sundarāṅgasya śāha-*
*narapater vaibhavāni nāṭyataḥ sadasi vaktum*
*sarabha-samāgatāyās sādaraṃ kirātikāyāḥ*
*caritam āracayituṃ tāṃ caturmukha-dayitāṃ vande* || 1

His fame equals that of Indra, king of gods;
he is Shaha, the handsome king of men.
To convey his striking powers as he dances in the hall,
and to tell the tale of a fortuneteller, monkey on her shoulder,
I bow to her: Brahma's wife, Sarasvati.

This opening, a Sanskrit verse in the Tamil *aṟucīr viruttam* meter, constructs an essential doubling on multiple levels. First, the author invokes Goddess Sarasvati for inspiration for not one but two

framework from the world of Tamil grammar. In the Sangam grammar, he writes, "[man] is continuous with the context he is." Ramanujan 1999, 43–44. See footnote 20 below for thoughts on early modern Tamil poetic usage of *uḷḷurai* alongside other poetic systems in relation to the composition in question.

[11] Jakobson's well-known "poetic function" presents a more complex dynamic of the metonymic and the metaphoric, which is at play in poetry. Jakobson 1960, 350–377.

[12] The benediction consists of four verses in Sanskrit in varying Tamil meters and a fifth *toḍaya daru*, or introductory dance song in Sanskrit. This opening set became quite standard in later major Tamil kuravancis: see Muilwijk 1996, 71, for a survey of benedictive songs and their functions in five different kuravanci plays. All the citations that will follow from the *Mohinīvilāsa* are numbered according to the number of verses in *Mohinīvilāsa* 2016, and the translations are mine.

practical purposes: conveying King Shaha's powers as the protagonist and narrating the story of the fortuneteller. This is an explicit reference to the aforementioned doubled structure of the plot. On another level, the verse builds a doubling around King Shaha: here, we have an alignment of something or someone who is identical to themselves. Shaha is both a living king of worldwide fame and the protagonist on stage (literally, *nāṭyataḥ sadasi*, he dances, as we speak, in the assembly). This opening remark about the king's dance is striking. While it also serves to connect, in yet another doubling, Shaha's character with God Shiva, the famous dancer in the assembly,[13] it further implies that the king somehow performs his own role. Shaha does not make an appearance in the play itself, but everything revolves around him and his lauding descriptions. King Shaha was the protagonist of many stage plays that he had commissioned at court and even authored himself.[14] It is not impossible to imagine that these roles were designed for the king as an active participant while sitting on stage or next to it. The force of this identification is that the stage becomes a microcosm of Shaha's kingdom, where he dances and rules.[15]

It is my sense that the doubling force of the genre, captured in this opening verse, enables Saptarishi's ensuing chain of doubles, which feed into the praise of the king. This is apparent, for instance, in the fourth verse of this benediction:

*kanaka-śailendra-cāpaḥ kalita-karpūra-gātraḥ*
*tanaya-sahacarībhyāṃ veṣṭito ratnasiṃhā-*
*-sana-patis* ***tyāgarājaḥ śāhabhūpāla****-mauleḥ*
*anudinaṃ maṅgalānām āvaliṃ saṃvidhattām* || 4

His bow is the foremost golden mountain,
his body smeared white with camphor.
Accompanied by his wife and son, he is the King on the jeweled seat;
God Tyāgarāja. Every day, may he inlay
a string of auspicious blessings on King Shaha's crown.

[13] Smith 2003, 80–102.
[14] See Ragahavan 2016, 22–25 for works ascribed to or written about Shaha.
[15] See Ariav and Trento, forthcoming.

This verse begins with the lauding description of God Tyāgarāja, Shiva's local manifestation in Tiruvārūr. This conflation of the king and his God is typical of the Thanjavur kingly ethos, as is the subversion of roles described in the verse, where the God serves the king rather than vice versa.[16] In this verse—not unlike Shaha's and Shiva's conflation of dances—the tangible image of God in the temple is designed to infiltrate the description of King Shaha. This suggestive identification is driven home through the technical alignment of proper names in the third line (marked in bold, lost in translation): when Tyāgarāja's name is revealed, following over two metrical feet of predicatives, it is closely followed by King Shaha's name. The morphological connection between the two, namely the fact that King Shaha is part of a compound in the genitive case, on which the row of *maṅgala* verses is to be inlaid by the God, is only revealed thereafter. This metonymy—first of immediate sequencing of sound and then of grammatical sense—is created under the initial impression of comparison: the God is distinctly kinglike as he is described on his throne.

Here is a possibility of a metaphor that remains open as the king and the God attain their metonymic grammatical standings. I believe this tension is a productive and crucial element of Saptarishi's interpretation of this genre in the making. It is a structure that undoes the binary of metonymy and metaphor we began with. Saptarishi crafts doublings or alignments of different kinds that form a layered reality on stage, in which the king belongs to a lively and multi-subjective microcosmos and is also identified with this cosmos and its inhabitants. To add another layer to the logic of doubles, this verse aligns the benedictive *maṅgala* verses that open the work with those that the God inlays on the king's crown. This final set of doubles brings in the poet's craft, akin to the divine craft of decorating the king's crown, into the set of relationships described thus far. The poet inserts himself into his work and its dense network of relationships, and this will occur again as the piece evolves: the final verse of the composition forms a direct syntactical bond between poet and king, this time in a final address to King

[16] On subversion and irony as one of the features of the ethos of Nayaka rule, see Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 1998.

Shaha in Tamil: *cantatamum captarisi kavi koṇṭāṭum* (48), "poet Saptarishi constantly celebrates you."[17]

This consistent structure of alignments is tied to the economy of praise that King Shaha had built around him. This mechanism is most acutely tested in the final third of the piece, dedicated to the relationship of the fortuneteller and her husband, who allegedly have nothing to do with the king. Here is how Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ—a bard of sorts known from other Tamil genres—describes the bird-catcher's search for his wife, the kuratti.[18] Of interest to my discussion is the third and final "foot" of the *daru*:

*Taiyalar mōhasarasakuṇākaraṉ*
*Tuyyavar pōṟṟum turairājaṉ*
*Vaiyam pukaḻ cakaji maṉṉaṉ kuṇamtuti*
*Ceyyum kuṟattimēl cintaiyuṭan* || 44.3

His body makes women go crazy;
a king of kings, he protects pure men;
he is King Shaha, of worldwide fame.
The kuratti praises his virtues,
while her husband thinks of her.

Even within Cinkan's iconic search for his wife, the king is brought into the picture: while Cinkan thinks of her, she is thinking of the king. This description is probably meant to portray Cinkan's jealousy for her (this is more pronounced in later kuravanci works).

[17] In song 22, we have an address to God in the same spirit: *saptaṛṣikavibhaktitoṣita*, "the devotion of poet Saptarishi makes you happy." In the second foot of this very song, we have: *śāhaṇṛpārcita*, "King Shaha worships you," in the same vein. This juxtaposes the king's and the poet's roles vis-a-vis their God within the space of a single song. One other telling self-insertion of the poet occurs in verse 45, a Sanskrit *padam* that connects the plots of the two love stories.

[18] There is a curious problem with the gender of the Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ in this composition: generically, he is meant to be a male friend to Cinkan. But in the *Mohinīvilāsa*, there are clues that the Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ is, in fact, a female platonic friend of the hunter. In *padam* 45, Cinkan seems to be addressing a female friend as he describes his wife ("*sumukhi*," he addresses his companion in the feminine), and the following Sanskrit verse (46) was accordingly marked in the manuscript: "*śiṅgasya sakhī vacana*": "what the female friend of Cinkan said." This was amended by the modern editor to "*sakha*," or "male friend," as he remarks in a footnote. See *Mohinīvilāsa* 30, v. 46.

It is also Saptarishi's way of weaving the network of connections that centers on the king through a catalog of possible alignments. This technique is consistent: the king is again mentioned in the middle of the most intimate conversation between the fortune-teller and her husband.[19] While the register of this composition is simple and the atmosphere intentionally light, this tendency to insert simultaneous modes of alignment resonates with major trends from the larger world of Tamil aesthetics, where different systems of poetic alignments were being actively put in conversation in the early modern period.[20]

Saptarishi builds on (and fashions) the genre's doubled structure to form a network of connections, some of which function as mirrors or metaphors, and all revolve around the king, the major present-absent of this composition. The result is a playful praise of King Shaha, which paints one answer to the unanswered, generative question: why two? Because, Saptarishi seems to have answered, it allows the poet to construct a lively world on stage, which both celebrates and is deeply identified with the king's unifying presence.[21] I will return to some of the social and ethical implications of this below: I now turn to inspect the linguistic and prosodic side of this open-ended system of alignment.

[19] *vārāyō cāhaji maṉṉaṉaiṗ pōṟṟa nī ciṅkā- aṭi | vārē ṉuntaṉkaṉi vāyūral tārāyō ciṅki- ākil cakaji makiṗaṉai canticcu vantē nāṉ ciṅkā- collu | vakavakaiyā yeṉṉa varicaikkuṟi coṉṉē ciṅki* ||47.9-10

Cinki: Cinka, won't you come to praise King Shaha with me?

Cinka: I will come; just give me a single kiss!

Cinki: Well, Cinka, I just met the king before coming.

Cinka: Cinki, speak! I gave you my courteous signs of love—what did you predict for him?...

[20] I draw here on the work of Jenifer Clare and David Shulman, who paint an arc-narrative of alignment of different poetic systems, each with long and differing histories and roots, throughout the history of Tamil poetics and praxis. The height of this story they find in the work of Kavirāyar, who both theorizes and composes poetry through a condensed combination of the Tamil *akam* grammar of love, a template of oblique reference to God in the genre of *kōvai*, and the increasingly dominating system of ornamenting dynamics of comparison under the influence of Tandi (the Tamil rendition of the Sanskrit poetician Daṇḍin). See Clare and Shulman 2023.

[21] See Ariav and Trento forthcoming for a similar praise mechanism of King Shaha at play in Vasudeva Kavi's *Pañcadautya*.

## 3. On multilingualism(s) as alignment

The *Mohinīvilāsa* stands out in its distinct combination of languages and mediums. It adheres to Tamil meters and musical arrangements while alternating between Tamil and Sanskrit, with an addition of two Telugu songs.[22] This mixture is a clear statement of hybridity, designed as active participation in the image that the king was building around himself and his kingdom.[23] The experiment with form is, therefore, yet another aspect of the king's silent presence on stage. Linguistic hybridity in early eighteenth-century Thanjavur was a source of pride and a marker of erudition, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. Even prior to the early modern forms of hybridity of Nayaka and Maratha rule, local Tamil traditions displayed a readiness to expand through encounters with other languages and traditions.[24] In this sense, Saptarishi's experiment is not alien to a dominant line of aesthetics in the history of Tamil writing. And yet, it also presents a new notion of hybridity, which has to do with the Thanjavur courtly ethos. We should remember that multilingual Maratha Thanjavur was primarily based on the Nayaka world of Telugu migrant kings of the Shudra caste that preceded it, with its own imported aesthe-

[22] The editor of the published version, N. Srinivasan, has identified the Tamil meters and supplied an appendix with a transcription of the Tamil alphabet. The edition is based on a single manuscript, donated to the Sarasvati Mahal Library from a private collection of the Goswami family of Thanjavur. *Mohinīvilāsa*, iii.

[23] I use the notion of hybridity loosely, to analyze the aesthetics and ethics in the premodern context of Thanjavur's court in potential conversation with postcolonial contexts with which it is most identified.

[24] Describing the world of Tamil literature in the medieval period, David Shulman writes that: "In the works of all these poets, [Kumarakuruparar, Tuṟaimaṅkalam Civappirakācar, Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar, Antakakkavi, and others] we find a far-reaching blending of the two literary languages [i.e., Tamil and Sanskrit], often accompanied by passages reflecting on this very theme. The poetic fusion of two ancient linguistic traditions is predicated on the initial distinctiveness of each of them but always entails a new stage in which this distinctiveness is superseded in the interests of forging a new, highly charged idiom. We call this new idiom "Tamil," and Tamil it is, largely by virtue of the linguistic synthesis we have been exploring. As we will see, in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpus of Tamil poems, this kind of reflection is deepened, and other languages and registers are added to the volatile concoction I have described." Shulman 2016, 246.

tic from the Deccan, including Marathi, Persian, and early Hindi sensibilities.

One out of several articulations of this ethos is found in the *Pañcabhāṣavilāsa*, "the play of five languages," attributed to King Shahaji himself and thematizing the coexistence of languages at court. As Indira Peterson writes about this play and others,

> Thanjavur court's polyglossia privileged a 'cosmopolitan' confluence of multiple vernacular literary languages. These languages acquired a cosmopolitan character precisely by sharing a hybrid local literary aesthetic, a character that contrasted with the conception of vernacular literary languages as strictly local… A combination of polyglot texts and public performance was central to the Thanjavur court's cosmopolitan literary aesthetic.[25]

This archive, as Peterson further writes, challenges the dominant cosmopolitan-vernacular model that scholars of precolonial India strongly rely on.[26] By way of an alternative prism to this archive, Davesh Soneji suggests thinking of music as the "central idiom for the expression of Tanjorean multilingualism," noting that everything composed in the Maratha court was meant to be performed or sung.[27] To continue this line of inquiry in the micro-level discussion below, I add two reminders. First, this is a staged multilingualism (what Soneji calls "public multilingualism") whose relationship with the sociolinguistic situation on the ground requires scrutiny.[28] More specifically, the lived experien-

[25] Peterson 2011, 290.

[26] Ibid. See also Pollock 2006.

[27] This observation is apropos of his analysis of the Thanjavur court's role in shaping the long-term formation of the Sampradāya Bhajana tradition. Soneji further unearths some of the central dynamics of power in the history of this court and especially its legacy, with an emphasis on the role of Smarta Brahmins. Soneji 2013, 342.

[28] Peterson notes apropos of the question of the social conditions that fed into this ethos, that "a stimulus for this kind of hybridizing yet pluralistic discourse on languages might have been the sensibility of an age in which South India was becoming a land in which the boundaries between 'outsider' and 'insider' identities were being continually blurred, and linguistic and cultural diversity were becoming a norm. In 18th-century Thanjavur, at least in imaginative literature and in artistic representation, the gap between polyglot kings and

ce of language use in early modern South India—arguably closer to semi-aware navigation of a continuum of languages and registers than to marked transitions among linguistic entities—is quite far from the crafted ethos on stage, as we shall see momentarily.[29] Second, even when treated as a performed ethos, it was one composed and performed by different people from various backgrounds and therefore articulated and interpreted in different ways from within this very court.[30] In this section, I attempt to sketch Saptarishi's interpretation of the image of cosmopolitan hybridity.

To begin with, there is remarkably no functional distribution of languages among the actors of the *Mohinīvilāsa*.[31] Rather, there seems to be a deliberate disturbance of expectations of such a distribution.[32] The narrator, Kamalavati, the fortuneteller, her husband, the bard—all alternate between the languages for no apparent reason. It is as if the author is proclaiming that in the

nomadic fortunetellers was not a wide one" Peterson 2011, 318. The "at least" in the sentence makes for one entrance point of this present chapter.

[29] For a short discussion of multilingual experience as a continuum, see footnote 49, referencing Annamalai 2001.

[30] See Ariav and Trento, forthcoming, on Vasudeva Kavi's different linguistic worlds in parallel genres. One interesting precedent of staged multilingualism that depicts a complex vision of power among languages is Jayarama Pindye's *Radhamadhavavilasacampu*. This work and/or others like it seem to have inspired Shaha, who was educated in the Deccani court of Bijapur. See Guha 2004, 27–29. See also Busch 2014, 47–48, for an instructive note on the "unequal division of linguistic labor" in this text.

[31] In the *Pañcabhāṣavilāsa* mentioned earlier, for instance, the functional distribution is extremely marked, as the languages the dancers speak are distributed according to their region, and they do not comprehend each other's speech. God Krishna, however, speaks Sanskrit but addresses each in her own tongue, and the play ends with a happy dance of reconciliation and devotion in multiple languages. See a detailed analysis of this piece in Peterson 2011. See Annamalai 2001 for a discussion of the functional distribution of languages in modern India.

[32] This expectation stems from the longstanding norm of over a millennium of Sanskrit plays at this point in time, in which men of nobility speak Sanskrit, and the *vidūṣaka*, the characters from non-noble backgrounds, and most women—with the exception of characters who deviate from the standard model of womanhood, such as Buddhist renunciants or courtesans—speak a form of Prakrit. For an insightful analysis of the structuring of masculinity and femininity according to this language division, see Vasudeva 2011.

world of the Thanjavur court, all languages and all mediums are accessible to everyone and appropriate for anything. Rather than thematizing multilingualism, as in the play of five languages mentioned above, here we have an anti-thematization of this dramatic feature: Saptarishi constructs extreme linguistic hybridity as if it were a random, transparent fact of life. And yet, the excess of mediumal transitions is hardly transparent. It is the most prominent feature of this piece, and it governs its tempo and its aesthetic effect.

Second, while insistently random, the sequencing of languages occasionally seems to function as loose translation. To demonstrate: Kamalavati's girlfriends introduce her and describe her beauty and her pain of separation from the king in a Tamil verse (7) and a Tamil *daru* (8), followed by a Sanskrit verse (9) and a Sanskrit *daru* (10). She is named twice, in both languages: "her name is Kamalavati," *kamalāvatip pēr* (7) and: "there was a princess called Kamalavati," *kācana nṛpatikanyā kamalāvatī nāmnā* (9). The kuratti is similarly described, in rough repetitions, in a Sanskrit verse (23), a Tamil *daru* (24), and a Sanskrit *daru* (25). We have a longer sequence of rough translations (10–21), this time trilingual, in which Kamalavati addresses her friends. Alternating between Tamil, Sanskrit, and two Telugu *darus*, she begs for help and describes her misery over the king's involvement with other women.[33] These are not exactly translations: they coalesce only partially, each providing additional information in different musical patterns and meters.

And again, in the proleptic promise of the fortuneteller for a union: in verse 36, Kamalavati asks the fortuneteller for a prediction in Sanskrit—"Tell me everything you know about my own heart." This is followed by a Sanskrit *daru* (37) in which the fortuneteller promises: "My friend, in the evening your bed will bear fruit!"[34] The following Tamil sequence gives another rough version of this, where Kamalavati protests (38): "you didn't give me a sign!" and receives another promise in Tamil (39): "Once your marriage to the man takes place, all-encompassing fame shall be your sign" and again in the refrain of a Tamil *daru* (40), "he

[33] I thank Karri Ramachandra Reddi for his kind help in transliterating and translating the Telugu verses.

[34] *manasi me vidyamānam akhilam ākalaya bāle* ||36 . . . *sāyaṃ bhavad-āśayaḥ saphalo bhavitā tanvi* ||37

will come here.[35]" Kamalavati seems to need further affirmation (or is she patting the kuratti's ego?) as she asks in Sanskrit (41) for the kuratti's credentials: "Who were the lovesick women that you previously united with their lovers?" The kuratti replies with a final promise in Sanskrit (42): "my friend: I had Damayantī, Rukminī, and others here on earth united with their lovers, all thanks to my powers. You also will live happily ever after with King Shaha, ruler of the Cola land!"[36] This bold and somewhat ironic statement is the last we hear of Kamalavati's relationship with Shaha, as the fulfillment of this promise is left to our imagination.

To complete this survey, there are two significant moments with no aligned "translation": one is the kuratti's description of the gifts she received, places she has seen, and so on, a familiar trope of the genre given entirely in Sanskrit (v. 30–35). The other is the final teasing dialogue of the fortuneteller and her husband (47), again a signature of the genre, given only in Tamil, in *kaṇṇi* couplets, a folk meter that allows for a fast-paced dialogue. There is, therefore, no anxiety on the part of the poet to explain the words interlinearly. The medium shifts might take the possibility of a language gap in the audience into consideration, but they mostly serve, I propose, to dictate a certain tempo and aesthetic, which illustrate the nuanced multilingual mastery of this poet and bring the very fact of staged multilingualism into focus.

The pattern of rough translation across languages would have benefited the understanding of audience members who were less comfortable with one of the three or four—counting the *abhinaya* gestures of dance—languages.[37] And yet, my feeling is that even for those audience members who understood all languages, there was no sense of redundancy. This praxis of alignment forms

[35] *cuṭṭiṉāl uṉakku māṉē kōṭippoṉ tarukuvēṉē* ||38 . . . *kuṟi nikaḻttum pōtu* ||39 *Ippō varappōrāṉ* ||40.

[36] *Kāmaśaradīnāḥ ghaṭitavatī kāḥ pūrvaṃ* ||41 . . . *me prabhāvāt āli bhuvi damayantī rūkminī cānyāś ca yojitās tat colapatinā tvam api śāhabhūpena bhava sukhavatīha* ||42.

[37] Peterson addresses the issue of diverse audience at court and writes: "Eighteenth-century South Indian dramas relied on generic and thematic conventions and performance strategies, character types and plot conventions, rather than on familiar narratives for comprehensibility for diverse audiences. Such means were crucial to the aesthetic of the polyglot Maratha court *yakṣagānas*, which were composed in an array of languages." Peterson 2011, 301, 313.

a healthy tension, an engaging comparison between how every language communicates, what it sounds and "looks" like, if we try and envision the performative context of the experience and the challenges it poses its performers.[38] In reference to this play and others, Peterson similarly notes that while there is some work of translation in the codified gestures, the governing effect is one of bewilderment at a playful virtuosity as well as a "combination of exoticism—the aesthetic enjoyment of difference—and tolerance of otherness"[39] I return below to think of some of the political implications of this ambivalence.

Moreover, to complicate the notion of "loose translation," there is a sense that within the framework of crafted randomness, each language invites slightly different imagery and content. For instance, the kuratti states, while praising Shaha: *centamiḻ vāṇarkaḷ collukk(u) ukant(u)* (40.3), "he relishes in the words of fine Tamil poets." This might seem trivial, but this statement could not have been made in another language and gestures towards a community of possible audience members who appreciate the Tamil language. We also find Tamil colloquialisms, marking the presence of a more spoken register within the work, less available in Sanskrit, and again aimed at Tamil-speaking communities.[40] Similarly, the kuratti's bold and somewhat ironic claim to her involvement in the marriages of Damayantī and Rukminī might not be entirely coincidentally given in Sanskrit, the language in which these famous women were initially brought to life through canonical stages like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The force of the matter is that the fortuneteller, a signifier of the rural, local vernacular, can speak, here and now, to far and wide traditions in their own language. She can compose alternative histories of age-old canons, implying that there are other versions to the well-known stories and histories—ones that include female participants from the margins and that challenge our very notions of time (she is, after all, an expert on time). The general sense is

[38] On a compelling case for alignment as comparative poetics in the poems of Lalla, see Kachru and Mikkelson 2019.

[39] Peterson 2011, 315 and 310 correspondingly.

[40] Such colloquialisms include for instance *tōṇiṇaḷ* v. 8; or *paritavikkutē* (for *paritavi-kkirutu*), v. 18.3.

that all actors can speak in whatever medium they like, but once they do, each medium invites a slightly different thematic and rhythmic bend.

To this effort toward linguistic hybridity, let us add perhaps the most experimental feature of this work: the prosodical logic governing it. With the sole exception of a single Sanskrit meter (the basic *śloka*, or *anuṣṭubh*),[41] this work is entirely composed in Tamil prosodical forms, either versified or in the *padam/ daru* meters of dance.[42] This separation of prosodic convention from language is a very audible experiment, a statement of artificiality. Perhaps for the first time in history, the audience in nascent Maratha Thanjavur got to hear what a Sanskrit *veṇpā*, or a Sanskrit *ārucīr viruttam*, sounds and looks like. The oddities and experimentality that the prosodical program consciously creates speak to a vision in which languages and the cultural baggage they come with can be actively aligned, compared, stripped of their lived forms, and dressed with others. This artistic choice is designed, I think, as a statement of performed multilingualism. As such, it poses open questions. What defines a language? Is it, in effect, Sanskrit that Saptarishi is composing? And again, what defines a genre? Would a kuravanci still be one in Sanskrit classical meters? What is, and why, multilingualism? Finally, what is the relationship between the stage and the world? In the next and final section, I raise questions regarding the sociopolitical assumptions folded in Saptarishi's vision of the hybrid.

## 4. Othering the Goddess: On sociopolitical inversions

Can we hear sociopolitical resonances in the *Mohinīvilāsa*'s statement and vision of aligned multilingualism? To begin with, we

[41] Numbered 22 in the printed edition, labeled as "daru" and joined (I believe mistakenly) with the *daru* that follows it.

[42] This became the norm in the genre: kuravanci plays usually shift between several Tamil verse forms and *daru* song and dance patterns. Muilwijk 1996, 101–121, looks for a connection between form and content and finds some occasional match between a given prosodic form and the role in the plot, but these are far from definite, as she too writes. Relying on Muilwijk's survey of seventeen different kuṟavanci plays, the most frequent meters are *āciriyaviruttam*, *kaṭṭaḷaikkalippā*, and *akaval*.

know that Saptarishi participated in the coining of a genre that structurally aligns a royal/divine couple with a tribal one. Further, we saw how the disturbance of expectations of a division of labor among languages already forges a literary world that actively addresses issues of caste and social status through alignment and loud disregard. The poet seems to build a universe in which king and kuratti can be aligned, a point that he literally crafts in the following alliterative and chiastic parallelism, taken out of a lengthier description of the fortuneteller:

*gīta**jita**kokilā gamana**jita**marālā*
*pāda**jita**kamalā paṭhi**ta**śāha**ji**līlā* || 25.2

She outsings the cuckoo, she outwalks the goose;
She outblooms lotuses with her feet, she echoes King Shaha's charm!

The fortuneteller literally recites, repeats, or studies (*paṭhita*) the king's erotic charms (his *līlā*), but the structure of the other comparisons implies that she outdoes the original as she follows him.[43] The final compound deconstructs "*jita*," literally "won over," which appears in all previous compounds, with Shahaji's name (see the markings in bold). This alliterative game reinforces the implication that she outwins the king, even as it also suggests the contrary: that the difference of the last compound from the previous ones, both phonemic and semantic, marks a divergence from the pattern, speaking to Shaha's unique greatness. In any case, the method of alignment has the subversive potential to rhetorically flatten out differences between kuratti and king.

The social tensions built into the genre are made explicit in the following Sanskrit *daru*. It is sung by the kuratti in reply to the protagonist's questions about her tribe and daily habits (What are the laws and codes of the wild? What is your tribe (*jāti*) known

[43] The structure is that of the ornament *vyatireka*, "distinction," whence the noncontextual object usually being compared to the contextual object is no match for it. See Gerow 1971, 276–286 for an introductory survey. For the Tamil version of Daṇḍin's definition of this ornament see Clare and Shulman 2023, 221–230.

by?[44] Who is your family deity? *vanabhuvi caratāṃ rītiḥ? kīdṛśī jātir vidyā? kiṃ tava kulasya daivam?*) She replies:

*vanite me jātividyāṃ*
*vadantyāḥ śṛṇvan avadyām*
*ghanajaghane prāpya tu yāṃ*
*kalayāmo bhuvam abhayām* || 28.1

Of my tribe, you wish to know?
Listen, girl: it is low!
But sister, if you dare come close,
we can paint a fearless world.

The fortuneteller not only states that she is of an inferior tribe (*jāti . . . avadyām*). She makes this low nature into the alliterative and counterintuitive pun of her song. The Sanskrit gerundive *avadya*, usually meaning "inferior, low," is made to rhyme with the peculiar combination *jātividyā*—or "the knowledge of my tribe"—echoed from the question that the protagonist asked her. It phonemically brings to mind the category of knowledge or truth (*vidyā*). This productive and audible contrast sets the stage for the rest of the song that describes the magnificent powers of the Kura tribe, worth quoting in full:

*abdhim api hasitalavaiḥ*
*ayi śoṣaṃ gamayāmo*
*dugdham iva viṣam api ca*
*tūrṇam ayi kalayāmo* || 28.2

We can dry up the dark ocean
with a white hint of a smile, and
make venom seem like milk:
Girl, we will be very quick!

[44] For a note on the history of translations of *jāti* to "caste," which came to replace *varṇa* in the second half of the twentieth century in Indian languages, see Béteille 1996. See Buck 2005, 44–50, for a reflection on the known histories of different Kuravar tribes and their representations. See also Alex 2009, for a short consideration of the historicity of textual or artistic representations of the Kuravar community, comparing representations of Kuravar medicinal practices with modern-day Narikuravar men practicing traditional medicine.

*ākāśād indum api*
*hanta bhuvi galayāmo*
*sākāram api kālaṃ*
*sapadi layaṃ neṣyāmo* || 28.3

Hell, we'll drag the moon
from space to earth,
and we shall easily destroy
the embodied form of death

*mṛtam api no mantrabalaiḥ*
*yutajīvaṃ kalayāmo* |
*drutataram āneṣyāmo*
*dūragatam api savidhe* || 28.4

with our forceful mantras, we can
bring the dead to life!
Fast and horrible, we take on
the impossible. Just like that.

kiñca kare jagad akhila*ṃ*
*kiṃ darśayiṣyāmo* |
*vañcanayā vibudhān no*
*vacanavaśaṃ neṣyāmo* || 28.5

What else? The world is in our hands.
Would you like me to demonstrate?
With the spell of our words we manipulate
wise Brahmin men.

*pākam api jvalanaṃ vinā*
*paśya sakhi kalayāmo* |
*sākam adarśanam akhilaiḥ*
*sapadi layaṃ kiṃ yāmo* || 28.6

We do our cooking without fire.
Watch, my friend, as we do!
Does Yama, God of Death himself, cause
such grand and instant ruin?

s*enānāthaṃ hṛdayeśaṃ*
*saṃsevya nivasāmo* |

*vanabhūmiṣv aniśam api*
*viṗinacarair viharāmo* || 28.7

We live to serve our God at heart,
Murugan, Sena's man.
We belong in the wild,
with creatures of the night.

*bhāvanayā bhuvanam idaṃ*
*paśyāmo vallimayam* |
*devasenākṛpayā*
*divi bhuvi vā vicarāmo* || 28.8

With our mind's eye
we see this world as-is.
With Goddess Devasena on our side,
we move on earth or through the skies.

This song continues the playful inversion of the meaning of "inferiority" toward a potent description of boundless power over the entirety of the world. This depiction of the unnatural potency of the fortuneteller became one of the signatures of the genre. Here, I will limit my analysis of this song to the identity of the tribe's family Goddess: Devasenā (hereon, Devasena), Murugan's first, Northern, and Brahminic wife. This is a curious and provocative choice. Murugan's by far better-loved wife in the Tamil South, and particularly identified with the Kura tribe, is Valli. Kamil Zvelebil traced an ancient and consistent link between Valli and the mountain tribe of Kuras. His survey begins from the earliest layers of Tamil Sangam literature through the *Cilappatikāram* epic, the authoritative *Kandapurāṇam*, and local folklore. Zvelebil's account emphasizes that Devasena (or Tevyayānai) has become a symbol of a "regular" Hindu marriage, while Valli is identified with the idea of *kaḷavu*: premarital love, a "traditional non-Brahmanized, Tamil love affair." Valli becomes even more prominent than Murugan in later Southern literature, such as Arunakiri's 15th-century poems.[45]

[45] Zvelebil 1977, 238. Zvelebil ultimately suggests that the reason for the complex synthesis between karttikeya-devasena and murugan-valli stories, which led to a preservation of the two wives alongside the single God, was due to the

Saptarishi builds the inversion of Goddesses as a surprise. In the Sanskrit invocation (v. 3), we have: "May Guha's wife be my companion here."[46] At this point, an 18th-century audience member, like an informed 21st-century reader, would presumably assume that the reference is to Valli. This continues as the kuratti is later described as follows: "She creates, with her mind, the lotus feet of the wife of [Murugan] the brother of [Ganeśa] the God with the elephant's head"[47] It is not until about halfway through the composition that her Goddess is identified as Devasena in the song cited above.

Why would Saptarishi assign his Kura fortuneteller with the "wrong" Goddess, whose name is attached to Sanskritic and Brahminical traditions? I suggest it is part of the playful and counterintuitive alignments this poet crafted throughout this composition. If Tamil meters can be wed to Sanskrit sentences, if Sanskrit songs can be aligned with Tamil and Telugu ones, if the king and the kuratti can share a single stage—if not compete over their charms—why not replace the Tamil Goddess with her Sanskritic double? On the level of the aesthetic experiment, the poet functions as a fortuneteller of sorts who holds the world in his hand and can alter it at will. There are charged social and ethical implications to this experiment. The fortuneteller, who is traditionally meant to signify a peripheral, markedly lower strata of society, not only speaks Sanskrit in the same way she does Tamil: her own Goddess becomes, in the hands of Saptarishi, the first wife of Murugan, Devasena, whose role in the Tamil versions of the myth is insignificant to nonexistent. The character of the kuratti, designed as an exotic other (as we glimpsed in the song cited above), turns her own Goddess into the "other" wife.

The appropriation-cum-invention of this genre by Saptarishi and his colleagues at court seems to be interested in fantastically featuring all strata of society and linking it with the king's totality of rule. The characters are not meant to approximate real-life figures. Rather, they are meant to celebrate a plurality of voices who defy

fact that the two of them were so different from each other, that they could not be merged. See Zvelebil 1977.

[46] *iha sahāyā guha-dayitā me bhūyāt* || 3.

[47] *karimukhānuja-vadhūṭī-caraṇa-nalinaṃ mṛgākṣī cetasā bhāvayantī* || 23.

literary and social conventions. These fantastic representations create a distance that allows for a reflective and ironic perspective, while remaining lighthearted.[48] But the swapping of the Goddess is also a telling example of how these experiments, allegedly celebrating a world free of boundaries, do not exit the stage. They do not intend to do so, either (if we take seriously the implication that the stage is the world, why should it?). In fact, I am unsure if these representations would have been received as relevant or welcome if they ever reached an audience of the Kuravar community. While the kuratti is displayed in a favorable light and given ample space of expression, she speaks in a voice markedly not hers, and others her own Goddess for the sheer joy of the experiment.

## 5. Conclusion

No multilingual dynamic is identical to the next, and even the same multilingual world can be experienced differently by its inhabitants. E. Annamalai has observed that in 20th-century India, multilingualism is bifocal: at the elite level, it is English bilingualism, and at the mass level, it is "neighborhood bilingualism," informally acquired. Further pertinent to Annamalai's analyses of language use is that speakers of these languages experience language as a continuum on which they inadvertently move back and forth rather than as boxed entities among which they transition.[49] It seems safe to assume that Tamil speakers in 18th-century Thanjavur similarly experienced language as a continuum. The expectation of stark transitions between linguistic entities has much to do with the post-independent reorganization of provinces into linguistic states, irrelevant to the precolonial world at stake. And yet, it seems to me that the celebrated artificiality of the linguistic and prosodic experiment we have seen in the stage-world of the court testifies to a fundamental notion of difference between linguistic and social worlds. I suggest that Saptarishi enacted Shaha's vision of hybridity as a contrastive celebration of human achievement, set against a "natural" experience of fuzzy continuums. The possi-

[48] This mixture of lightheartedness and critical, ironic distance is a signature of Maratha Thanjavur. See Venkatkrishnan 2020. See also Ariav 2022.

[49] Annamalai 2001, 35–36.

ble influence of this late precolonial courtly model of multilingualism on modern India is a question I leave open.[50]

As we have seen, the Thanjavur ethos of hybridity infiltrates the nascent genre of the kuravanci in more ways than one. In Saptarishi's version, at least, I find this ethos is mainly about the freedom to craft artificial artistic formations markedly distant from the world of living realities. It presents its audience with the larger-than-life realm of the stage, metonymically and metaphorically linked with the king as its ultimate and all-encompassing subject. Saptarishi built around his patron a world where difference—social, linguistic, formulaic, prosodic—is marked as transparent. The result is a reaffirmation of differences in the "real" world, artificially and deliberately left out. Somewhat like Roland Barthes' "reality effect" in realistic novels, the crafted performance of King Shaha's condensed universe allegedly points to the hybrid and plural world behind the stage. But in fact, it merely signifies it, such that the very act of performing hybridity comes to the fore.[51] This is also why the exotic other is gradually othered from herself. Saptarishi is not interested in voicing others, nor is he invested in the idea of authenticity. Rather, he is composing a staged hybridity premised not on the democratic values of dialogism, but on the idea of artistic and linguistic potency.[52] At the same time, his hybrid aesthetics form a certain reflective irony, one that—at the very least—poses the ratio of the stage and the world as an underlying question.

[50] On lasting reception histories of Thanjavur genres and artistic-social structures, see Soneji 2012.

[51] "Just when these details are reputed to *denote* the real directly, all that they do—without saying so—is *signify* it; Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the real*; it is the category of 'the real' (and not its contingent contents) which is then signified." Barthes 1986, 148.

[52] Leading scholars of the field have tended to use the metaphor of democracy when analyzing the multilingualism in Thanjavur. David Shulman writes that "by now [i.e., the Nāyaka period and particularly Maratha Thanjavur] the very notion of a hegemonic Sanskrit, if it ever really existed, has given way to a democratic multilingualism" Shulman 2016, 278. Peterson writes Sanskrit's cosmopolitan status is "yielding to a dialogic cosmopolitanism of the vernaculars." Peterson 2011, 312. These observations are undoubtedly true of Shahaji's rhetoric, but they tend to obscure the possibility of a hybridity predicated on inequality.

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# *Poems of Protest by a Tamil Dalit Woman: Editing and Translating* Pāyccalūr Patikam

Govindarajan Navaneethakrishnan

## Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate a rare text by a female Tamil poet who lived in precolonial Tamilnadu some time before the 17th century. It is unusual in that it comprised a collection of poems under which runs a theme of protest. Moreover, along with a handful of Caṅkam poems and of *taṉippāṭal* (single songs) composed by Tamil poets, this is one of few poems excluded from any of the classical and medieval anthologies and uncategorized in a precise genre. The name of the text is *Pāyccalūr patikam*, and the name of the author is Uttara Nallūr Naṅkai according to the tradition.

This text holds a significant place in the annals of Tamil literary scholarship. The author Uttara Nallūr Naṅkai was a woman of the Paṟaiyar caste, considered a low caste in the Tamil caste system. The tone of the *Pāyccalūr patikam* emphatically advocates universal respect for all human beings, without any form of discrimination. The poems present a range of logical inquiries in a vocabulary that is somewhat accessible, although not always explicit in their intended meaning. Alternatively, one might suggest that we have strayed from the art of interpreting the text to fully grasp its essence.

This chapter has two distinct sections. The primary objective of the initial section is to present a comprehensive account of

the historical background of the text, together with Uttara Nallūr Naṅkai's personal background. The second section focuses on editing and translating the first four poems of the text, in order to demonstrate that these poems contain oral-textual variants, unidentified spaces of meaning and lineage from past Tamil views about the biases in human society, and a complex multiplicity of possible meanings and readings (despite presenting itself as a univocal, easily accessible text). The final section consists of the four poems that have been edited, together with all of their many variations, a translation, and a commentary.

I had the privilege of utilizing Professor Annamalai's Tamil materials during my teaching years at the University of Chicago. The materials he has made available through open access are commonly referred to as UChicago Tamil. In the example texts, notes, and exercises he provided, Annamalai emphasized the spoken form known as *Pēccut tamiḻ* for both basic and advanced Tamil learning. This is not solely to assist the heritage speaker; he firmly believed and asserted in numerous lectures and during personal discussions that classical Tamil (*Eḻuttut tamiḻ* or *Centamiḻ*) is intricately embedded within modern Tamil. He firmly believed that a grammar of *Eḻuttut tamiḻ* should be constructed from *Pēccut tamiḻ*, rather than the reverse approach typically adopted by language historians. He contemplated the historical existence of the language within its current state of being, the *past life* of Tamil in its *present being*. He consistently perceived an enduring thread in the existence of Tamil as a language. This chapter serves as an homage to him and his concept.

## 1. The text

*Pāyccalūr patikam* was initially recognized as a literary piece by a literary anthology comprising a proto literary history, which was compiled in the 17th century and was titled *Tamiḻ nāvalar caritai* (hereafter *Caritai*). The only poem from the anthology that is presented with a one-line introduction, *Pāyccalūr patikam* is introduced as being sung by Uttara Nallūr Naṅkai (hereafter Naṅkai) who in the poem "reproaches Brahmins." The introduction does not elaborate on the underlying circumstances or the events that transpired (Cuvāmi Tillai Naṭēca Ceṭṭiyār 1916, 51). Tillai Naṭēca Ceṭṭiyār, who was one of the early editors of the *Caritai*, has written a little note in which he states that it is impossible to determine who this Naṅkai was and

the reason why she detested Brahmins. In addition, he mentions that a book titled *Pāyccalūr patikam* was published, and that each of the poems concludes with the phrase "Oh! The villagers of Pāyccalūr" (Cuvāmi Tillai Naṭēca Ceṭṭiyār 1916, 176). Although he does not give the total number of poems in his remarks, he does mention that the poem that is included in the *Caritai* is the ninth among the poems. The later editor, Auvai Turaicāmip Piḷḷai, continues the remark left by the previous editor with more information, such as identifying the village, Pāyccalūr, and pointing out the presence of two additional poems in other manuscripts of *Caritai*. In expanded remarks, he includes additional comments about the meaning of the songs (Auvai Turaicāmip Piḷḷai 1949, 163–164).

This text is included and discussed by the renowned literary historian Aruṇācalam in his volume on the literary history of 15th-century Tamil. He provides a highly detailed account of the text and was the first to offer such comprehensive information. When recounting the details Naṅkai, I am relying upon his discussion. Here, I present the necessary details that he provides regarding the historical location of the poem. As is customary, Aruṇācalam endeavored to ascertain the age of the text and arrived at the conclusion that it must be from the 15th century. Unlike his approach to other texts, which involves providing detailed descriptions of conclusions, he omits doing so here. In addition, he provides information regarding the number of poems in the text as well as the meter in which they were composed. Following his investigation into the printed copies of *Pāyccalūr patikam* during his time, he discovered that there existed eleven poems, and that they were written in *viruttam* meter. Additionally, he claims that the transcription of the text was done orally, leading to inaccuracies in the editions currently in circulation. He only submits nine poems that he thinks are worthwhile; the other poems are rejected because he believes they are flawed, incomplete, or inaccurately transmitted (Aruṇācalam 1969, 359–362).

The phrase *Pāyccalūr patikam* comprises two nouns. The first, Pāyccalūr, refers to the name of a village. Both Aruṇācalam and Auvai Turaicāmip Piḷḷai are of the opinion that the village in question is the ancient settlement today known as Tirupāccilākirāmam. The second, *patikam*, refers to the number of songs, which often indicates "ten in number." It is common practice to append the suffix *patikam* to Śaivite devotional songs and more specifically to

*Tēvāram* hymns. Except for Śaivite poetry, this poem is the only one in the history of Tamil literature to be given the suffix *patikam*, a particular fact that literary historians have failed to note, and which is important for understanding this particular work.

*The author*

The *Tamiḻ nāvalar caritai* does not include Naṅkai's history. As indicated previously, it simply contains a brief comment: "Naṅkai sang this, reproaching the Brahmins." Furthermore, the book's editors included no information regarding her past. It is only Aruṇācalam who gives us a detailed account of her past, saying that Naṅkai's history is based on available references he had collected. However, he does not list those references. What follows is the account that Aruṇācalam (1969, 360–361) provides:

> Naṅkai was born into the Paṟaiyar caste. During her childhood, as she was taking care of her cows on the banks of the river, she encountered a Brahmin lad from a nearby village who had come to bathe. He was reciting the Vedas, chanting mantras, and performing his daily rituals. Initially, she observed his ritual acts for amusement, but gradually she began to observe them with deep dedication and eventually acquired the skill herself through years of practice. Given their youth, they did not consider caste distinctions. She acquired knowledge from him, gradually mastering all the scriptures he had learnt, thus attaining the status of a scholar. When Naṅkai reached puberty and joined the realm of education without facing any discrimination, it caused a stir. Despite facing condemnation from their neighbors, they continued to maintain their relationship. The Brahmins believed that she was enticing the Brahmin boy, and one night they arrived in her impoverished neighborhood to punish her by setting her on fire. The cowardly young man was unable to prevent his community's decision. Her courage gave her the strength to counsel them, stop their plan, and bring them back to their senses. Thanks to his companionship, she acquired extensive knowledge and was able to engage in conversations with Brahmins on an equal footing.

There is no reference of this story in any literary history that was written after Aruṇācalam, despite the fact that the *Pāyccalūr patikam* is included in the literary history of Aruṇācalam. Even literary histories that are produced in the form of textbooks do

not include specifics about this work. Concise books in English also carry no information about it. Thus, we are forced to accept Aruṇācalam 's account of Naṅkai (Vēṅkaṭarāmaṉ 2004, 87), if with a healthy dose of skepticism about the veracity of the account.

## 2. Editing and translating the text

Herein, a preliminary effort is undertaken to present the *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP) as a *cutta pāṭam*, a clear and error-free text (both typographically and orally). In this case, five different printed editions are taken into consideration:

1. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP I; figure 1). Chapbook. Published in 1858. It appears to be the first or oldest print version. It has one invocatory stanza and ten poems. The text does not include the name of the editor, nor does it provide an introduction or a list of editing principles.
2. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP II; figure 2). Chapbook. Published in 1914. It adheres to the same structure as PP I, including the identical invocatory verse.
3. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP III; figure 3). Chapbook. Published in 1923. It adheres to PP I and PP II's structure.
4. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP IV). Published in 1969. Edited by Aruṇācalam in his literary history of Tamil literature in the 15th century. Only eight poems are provided. It is not in the same order as the chapbook prints listed above. Despite his claim that the text contains eleven poems, he has only included eight, with no explanation. He most likely would have concluded that those were either poorly written, interpolations, or rife with mistakes.
5. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP V). Irā. Iḷaṅkumaraṉ is the editor. The only edition featuring an editor's name. The publication year of this edition is not stated. It was most likely published in the latter half of the 20th century. Though it looks like this text has tried its best to deliver the poems error-free, there are alterations in the poems with no supporting explanations for either the changes or the choice of textual alternatives. A short synopsis of the poems is found at the end of the book in this edition. Not every song has a detailed explanation. All that is given is a summary of the concepts of the poems. Nevertheless, there is no order in which the meanings of the poems are delivered. Nor is the order of the poems discussed.

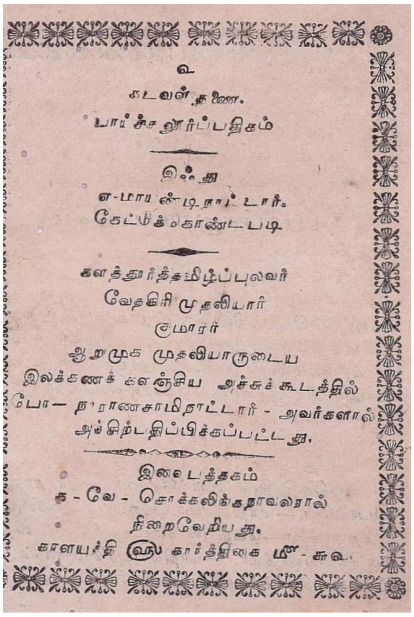


**Figure 1.** The cover page from the 1858 edition. It appears to be one of the earliest editions. Image in the public domain.

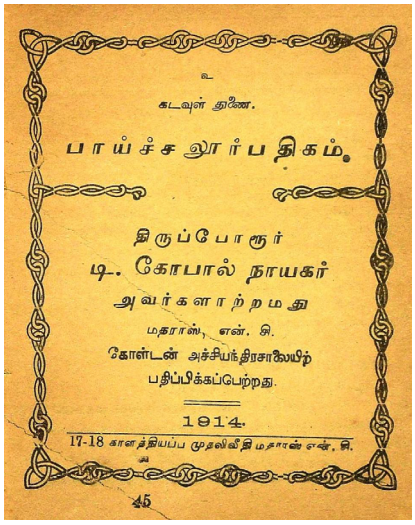


**Figure 2.** The cover page from the 1914 edition. Image in the public domain.

**Figure 3**. The cover page from the 1923 edition. Image in the public domain.

Additionally, I have also consulted a palm leaf manuscript of *Pāyccalūr patikam*:

6. *Pāyccalūr patikam* (PP PL). This palm leaf manuscript from the collection of Tamil University, Thanjavur, also contains ten poems. Like PPI, PP II, and PP III, the palm leaf manuscript adheres to the same sequence of poems with the same invocatory verse. The manuscript's date is indeterminate, likely copied in the early 19th century.

For the purpose of producing a text that is easily understandable for translation, I have compared all of the editions that were listed above with the manuscript. For reasons of space, I refrain from providing a comprehensive explanation of the editing process for each poem in this book. As an illustration, however, I use the

fourth poem to describe the editing process that I went through. The PP IV does not contain this poem. However, this is present in all other editions, including PP PL.

For providing an elaborate discussion that follows my translation, I marked each line of the poem with a number. The textual variants that I discovered in the editions and that I did not consider to be my text have been reported in the footnotes. The textual variants that are footnoted are not being provided in this section; rather, I am only supplying the text that I have arrived at to translate.

*tīppaṭaik kaṭainta kōlum* (1)
*cīvaṉum cīvaṉ(ṉum) vēṟō* (2)
*vārpaṭait tantai tāyār* (3)
*makkaḷum cuṟṟattārum* (4)
*mōr paṭaikkaṭainta veṇṇey* (5)
*mōruṭaṉ kūṭāvaṇṇam* (6)
*pāṟ paṭat tiraḷavēṇṭum* (7)
*pāyccalūrk kirāmattārē* (8)

This poem explores the concept that there is no distinction or variation in the experience of human existence. Every living organism originates from a preexisting living organism, resulting in the formation of an interconnected system of life. Life is not generated exogenously, but rather originates from preexisting life forms. Each individual existence contains another existence within. The two are indissoluble. This seeming duality is analogous to the fire that arises from the stick that was employed to ignite it. Although life is inherently interconnected, it is inevitable that it must both experience existence and eventually face mortality. None shall return to the progenitor. It resembles the separation of butter from curd. It has to be outside to live and perish.

In contrast to the other lines, which appear to be identical in every edition with the exception of a print error, the second line contains two different variants (emphasized in bold).

1. ***cī***vaṉuñ cīvaṉ vēṟō (PP I & PP III).
2. ***ci***vaṉuñ cīvaṉ vēṟō (PP I & PP III).

For the sake of my edition and translation, I settled on the first variant. Naṅkai discusses equality solely in the context of humanity,

and at no point in the text does she draw a comparison between humans and the divine; in fact, she does not reference deities at all throughout the poem. Thus, *cīvaṉ* "human being" represents the correct variant instead of *civaṉ*, "Śiva" or more generally "god." Following Naṅkai's stylistic choice of employing binaries (e.g., in the second poem, there is a play of binaries "muṉṉō piṉṉō (3) peṇṇō āṇō" (4),) I also opt to maintain the *um* suffix (which communicates its relationship to another line of the poem) from *cīvaṉum* in the subsequent word *cīvaṉ(ṉum)* but indicate it as an editor's addition by using brackets. The following is my translation of the text that I went through and fixed:

Is the fire different from the stick which lights it?
Do humans vary from each other?

In this world
from father and mother
offspring and kinship
come forth like butter churned from curd.

Like butter churned from curd
which will never become curd again
they must live in this world.

O! the villagers of Pāyccalūr.

However, prior to providing sufficient evidence to support my choice of first variant, I discuss the text in case we accept the second variant, which I translate as follows:

*tīppaṭaik kaṭainta kōlum* (1)
*civaṉum cīvaṉ vēṟō* (2)

Is the fire different from the stick which lights it?
Do human and God differ?

This textual variation in Naṅkai's usual binary play transforms her poem into a Tamil Siddha philosophical poem. Moreover, if we read the poem with this siddha-protest voice in mind, the

second variant appears to make sense and to be compatible with the larger poem. While we might read this second version as an interpolation, or perhaps as a purposeful alteration of the language of the text, instead we might follow literary historian and renowned Tamil editor Vaiyāpurippiḷḷai, who believed that when a text exists in both oral and written forms within a community, the written text will inevitably incorporate the variances seen in the oral version. According to him, thus, a variation like the one discussed above should not be seen as a written textual variant, but rather as an *oral* textual variety that is inscribed in different versions of the written text. He refers to the oral textual variant as *pāṭa rūpa pētam* (Vaiyāpurippiḷḷai 1955, x–xi). If we accept this hypothesis, the oral textual variant *civaṉum cīvaṉ* may have emerged throughout time in the oral transmission of the poem. But how are we, thus, to interpret these two variants? In particular, given that this oral textual version has a sense of filial affinity to the Tamil siddha texts, are we to interpret *civaṉ* as a reference to the divine? I argue, no.

As literary historians have pointed out, the ability of a text to make sense rests in its filial relationship to earlier ideological works. But this leads to the text's underlying philosophy being excluded, uniting all of the texts under a single theme. The Naṅkai poem is typically regarded as a form of protest poetry, drawing inspiration from the tradition of Tamil Siddha poems. Her poems were classified as works influenced by the Siddha philosophy. Naṅkai was not a Siddha, and she never promoted yogic poses, interior devotion, or experiencing the divine through inner eyes. Rather than the siddha consciousness of the inner god, the inner self she speaks of in several of her poetry is the human race's rational common sense. Below, I explain the two primary reasons that led me to choose the first variant and interpret *cīvaṉ* as a reference to "life" and not the divine (*civaṉ*).

1. Naṅkai, in her initial poem, questions the authenticity of both the physical body (*uṭal*) and the intangible essence (*uyir*) that animates it.

> *uṭal uyir tāṉum poyyē*
> The body and life are both false.

Through careful analysis of her ten poems, the two variants previously discussed were identified as the author's original expressions. Not even one of Naṅkai's poems contained any kind of allusion to the divine. She does not state any of the names of gods or any of the yogic characteristics that are described in the Siddha literature of Tamil. In point of fact, she has not been specific about any of these things. Hence, she does not acknowledge in any of her poetry the existence of a godlike life within the body. While *civaṉ* is a widespread technical term that is used in Tamil Siddha literature to glorify the inner life as if it were God or Lord Śiva, Naṅkai does not acknowledge this existence in any of her songs.

2. Nowhere in Naṅkai's poetry does she make the assertion that humans are godlike, and that there is no god other than humans herself. Her statement, thus, does not provide any evidence or reaffirm the Tamil Siddha belief that life and the human being can be elevated to the status of a god. At the same time, it is apparent from her poems that Naṅkai is discussing the existence of a simple life, and that she simultaneously equates and values all of life as the equal of human beings. It is her recommendation that respect be shown to every single human being.

Given these two reasons, I have concluded that the first variant is the variant that should be the basis of my translation. It is essential to approach Nankai's poems with a specific perspective, particularly one grounded in rational common sense, rather than adopting a Siddha viewpoint. This is crucial, even though certain aspects of the texts may suggest a reading that aligns her with Śaivite or Tamil Siddha traditions. Upon recognizing this—as I have elucidated previously—we are then positioned to interpret the subsequent four poems in the ensuing manner.

## 3. The poems

The first translation of the entire *Pāyccalūr patikam* was carried out by Vijaya Ramaswamy in the year 1997 (Ramaswamy 1997, 70–74). She utilized PP IV as the basis for her translation. Furthermore, she offered annotations for a few poems in order to elucidate a few of Nankai's usages. After making the necessary corrections to

the text, I have made an attempt to translate the first four songs and include a little commentary.

**[POEM I]**

*ōtiya nūlum poyyē* (1)
*uṭal uyir tāṉum poyyē* (2)
*cātiyum*[1] *oṉṟē ākum* (3)
*cakalamum vēṟatāmō* (4)
*vētiyaṉ paṭaittatu allāl* (5)
*viti*[2] *taṉṉai*[3] *vellal āmō* (6)
*pātiyil paḻiyē*[4] *cūḻum* (7)
*pāyccalūrk kirāmattārē* (8)

**Variants**

1. *cātipa.* (PP IV)
2. *vitit.* (PP I)
3. *vitiyiṉai.* (PP V)
4. *pātiyē paramē.* (PP I), (PP II), (PP III)

*Translation*

The book you read was a lie.
Body and life are both false.
Caste is one.
Will anything else be different?
Nothing more than a Brahmin fabrication.
Can you defeat fate?
O! the villagers of Pāyccalūr
Enveloped in deceit.

*Interpretive translation*

The message of this song is that all people are created equal. Below is a more interpretive translation:

The texts of the Brahmins are all untrue. Both the human body and the life it contains are transient. Teaching inequity by accepting it as true is ignorance. We are fragmented into different castes—a Brahmin invention. There is only one caste: humans. Fate has great power. It is impossible to stop or defeat destiny. Brahmins are lying when they claim that sacrifices and the like

can change one's destiny. This Pāyccalūr village's residents are held accountable for their errors.

**[POEM II]**[1]

*uṟakkamō*[2] *ūṉa*[3] *uḷḷam* (1)
*uḷḷamō*[4] *puṟampō*[5] *cīvaṉ* (2)
*iṟappatu*[6] *muṉṉō piṉṉō* (3)
*īṉṟatu peṇṇō āṇō* (4)
*kaṟappatu mulaiyō pālō* (5)
*kāṇpatu maṉamō kaṇṇō* (6)
*paṟappatu*[7] *iṟakō kālō* (7)
*pāyccalūrk kirāmattārē* (8)

**Variants**
1. This song has been omitted. (PP IV)
2. *urakkamō*. (PP III), (PP PL)
3. *ūṉamō, uṇarvō*. (PP V)
4. *uḷḷatō*. (PP V)
5. *paṟampō*. (PP II). *Purampō*. (PP PL)
6. *iṟappavi*. (PP III)
7. *paṟappatum*. (PP V)

*Translation*
Is the crippled mind asleep?
Is the soul inside or outside me?
Does the death occur before or after?
Who gave birth? Male or female?
Are we milk breast or m
Does the eye see? Or does the mind?
Does the wing fly? or the leg?
Respond! O villagers of Pāyccalūr!

*Interpretive translation*

This song is about the people of Pāyccalūr village, who have closed minds and refuse to learn the truth. Below is a more interpretive translation:

{1}
Villagers of Pāyccalūr! Is your crippled mind asleep?

{2}
[Please respond to my questions]

Is there life inside the body? Is it outside of the body?

[Life exists within the body.]

{3}
Can death happen earlier in one's life? Or can it happen later in one's life?

[Death signifies the end. After death, there is no more life.]

{4}
Is it a woman who gives birth to a life on this earth? Or is it a man?

[Only women give birth. Both males and God are incapable of giving birth. What Brahmins say, that they were born out of God's head, is a lie.]

{5}
{1} Is it milk we get from the cow's udder or the udder itself?

{2} Is it a cow's udder that secretes milk? Or does the milk secrete itself?

[To obtain something, some action must be taken. Nothing will happen to you if you don't try. Per the teachings of the Brahmins, your current life is determined by the actions of your previous birth. Furthermore, no one can emerge from nothing. The residents of Pāyccalūr seem to be unable to perceive what is readily visible and logical.]

{6}
Do we see things in this world through our eyes? Or do we see with our mind?

[We see the world through our eyes. The organ that serves as a doorway between the world and us is the eye. It's authentic. The mind is blind. It is also dishonest to tell someone to believe in the mind and deny the, the eye. This implies that you cannot see or live in an imagined world. The purpose of the mind is to think. Our minds enable us to lead moral lives.]

{7}
Do birds fly with their feathers? Or does it fly with its legs?

[Legs are used for walking. Not for air travel. There is no extraordinary force that one ought to accept.]

**[POEM III]**

*veṟṟilai tāḻai vāḻai* (1)
*vittu oṉṟu muḷaippatu oṉṟō*[1] (2)
*paṟṟiya yōṉi pētam* (3)
*pāruḷōr aṟintiṭāmal*[2] (4)
*peṟṟavar tammait tēṭip* (5)
*piṟantu iruntu*[3] *iṟantu pōṉār* (6)
*paṟṟi niṉṟu alaivatu ēṉō* (7)
*pāyccalūrk kirāmattārē.* (8)

**Variants**
1. *uṇṭō.* (PP II), (PP V)
2. *aruntiṭāmal.* (PP II) *arintiṭāmal* (PP PL)
3. *arintu.* (PP II), (PP III), (PP PL). *aṟintu.* (PP I)

*Translation*

Will seeds of betel, coconut, or banana
sprout into something different?

Unaware of the diversity of birth that ensnares.
Everyone on the earth
In searching their originator
They are born, they live, and they die.

Just wondering
For what reason are you, villagers of Pāyccalūr
Aimlessly holding heredity?

*Interpretive translation*

Below is a more interpretive translation:

{1}
If you sow betel nuts, you will only get betel nuts.
If you plant a coconut seed, only coconuts will grow.
If you plant a banana seed, only one banana will grow.

{2}
If we plant a seed of a particular species, that species's tree will grow. Does it make a different tree?

[That's how human birth works. Humans give birth to other humans. Nobody is born as superior or inferior. Similarly, humans are born by humans; not by gods or animals.]

{3}
Births in this world are uncountable.
[Humans aren't the only ones born. Animals are births. Insects are also births. No one in the world is aware of this.]

{4}
Some argue that humans did not give birth to us. They seek the gods by claiming to be god-born.

{5}
Such seekers, like all living beings, are born, live, and eventually die.
[Seeking God and claiming He is the source of everything is a deception.]

{6}
Why are you, the villagers of Pāyccalūr, clinging to your own birth when you know these things about the world?

[See the world through your eyes. Not through the mind. Nothing exists except what the eyes see. Whoever denies this is wrong.]

**[POEM IV]**[1]

*tīppaṭaik kaṭainta*[2] *kōlum* (1)
*cīvaṉum cīvaṉ(ṉum)*[3] *vēṟō* (2)
*vārp paṭa*[4]*t tantai tāyār* (3)
*makkaḷum cuṟṟattārum* (4)
*mōr ppaṭa*[5]*kkaṭainta veṇṇey* (5)
*mōruṭaṉ kūṭāvaṇṇam* (6)
*pāṟ paṭa*[6]*t tiraḷavēṇṭum* (7)
*pāyccalūrk kirāmattārē* (8)

**Variants**
1. This song has been omitted. (PP IV)
2. *tīppaṭak kaṭanta.* (PP I), (PP PL)
3. *cīvaṉum civaṉum.* (PP V), *civaṉum cīvaṉum.* (PP II)
4. *vārpaṭai.* (PP III)
5. *mōrpaṭai.* (PP III)
6. *pārpaṭa.* (PP I), (PP PL)

*Translation*

Is the fire different from the stick which lights it?
Do humans vary from each other?

In this world
from father and mother
offspring and kinship
come forth like butter churned from curd.

Like butter churned from curd
which will never become curd again
they must live in this world.

O! the villagers of Pāyccalūr.

*Possible interpretive translation*

Below is a possible interpretive translation:

The rod used to create fire contains the fire. The body operates due to the presence of a phenomenon known as life. There is no distinction between one human being and another. Human beings are conceived by the union of a female and male parent. Resembling the emission of flames from the rod. Relationships proliferate rapidly like wildfire. Butter forms as a result of the curdling process. The coagulated butter does not return to the curd. Both undergo differentiation. Likewise, despite being born from a mother and father, all individuals are interconnected. Even though infants are born in the likeness of their parents, all human beings are one. There is no distinction. The inhabitants of Pāyccalūr village ought to comprehend this!

It is implied in the opening two lines of this poetry that one is born from another one already existing. So, there is no difference between them. In order to illustrate this point, a comparison is made between the rod that generates fire and the body that is propelled by life. A rod that has been used to start a fire does not go into that rod. The rod, on the other hand, is always ablaze within it. The same is true for life that has left the body; it does not come back to that body. At the same time as fire

can be re-created from a stick, human beings may give birth to another live being. Life is therefore God. The two are identical to one another.

The implication of the next two lines is that humans descended from humans. They are born and develop rapidly, resembling the ignition and growth of fire from a rod. People can create personal ties with one another. If a child is born to a mother and a father, then the child does not belong to the mother and father who gave birth to them. Similar to how the fire that originates from the rod does not belong to the rod itself. Offspring are derived from their male and female parents, like how butter is produced from curd. The butter does not reintegrate into the curd. Likewise, a kid born from biological parents does not return to them. However, lives are the result of multiple progenitors. They become separated, lead independent lives, and eventually perish. So, there is no caste system or discrimination among people.

**Conclusion**

*Pāyccalūr patikam* is a unique text that, despite not being referenced in any commentaries, has secured significant position in the early history of Tamil literature. A critical edition will illuminate the distinctions between written and oral variants, emphasizing the significance of engaging with the text on its own merits. Employing *Pēccut tamiḻ* variants for an *Eḻuttut tamiḻ* text might not garner significant interest from the community of written Tamil editors and manuscriptologists. It is important to emphasize that this chapter asserts that spoken Tamil will unveil new possibilities in the realm of text editing. The utilization of the *Pēccut tamiḻ* for selecting variants will comprehensively fulfill the concept of *cutta pāṭam* (clear and error-free text), a notion previously assessed through the comparison of written manuscripts to establish standard variants. Furthermore, the poems themselves encompass a multitude of enigmatic ideas; a commentary might not offer a comprehensive explanation of the poem. In analyzing the poems, an effort was undertaken to elucidate those perplexing concepts. It is important to acknowledge that the translation and its accompanying commentary do not assert that additional interpretations of the poems are unfeasible.

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# *A Preface to Purism: Pāmpaṉ Kumarakurutāca Cuvāmikaḷ's* Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ

Jesse Pruitt

In the southern Chennai neighborhood of Tiruvaṉmiyūr, just a few blocks north of the eponymous temple and busy bus stand, stands a newer edifice, the temple-tomb of Pāmpaṉ Kumarakurutāca Cuvāmikaḷ (1848/50–1929). Located in a rectangular enclosure seemingly carved out of a Theosophical Society campus, the resting place of the Śaiva mystic poet predates its flanking neighbors, the U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer Library and the Kalakshetra Foundation founded by Rukmini Devi Arundale. Against the backdrop of these abutting institutions with their famed namesakes or founders, the comparatively diminutive interval that is Pāmpaṉ's Jīvasamādhi aptly reflects his reception in the history of modern Tamil religion, literature, and language.

As his name suggests, the protagonist of this essay hailed from Pamban Island, home to the temple of Rameswaram and the shoal-bridge to Lanka. He, too, was caught between the two streams of mainland radical-populist and insular conservative Neo-Śaivism, as named by Ramaswamy (1997). The former stream coalesced in the figure of Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ during the first decades of the 20th century and saw nominal victory over the latter in the second flowering of Aruṭpā-Maruṭpā debates (Vaithees 2015, 26). Insofar as he resorted to Vedic and Āgamic Sanskrit sources to lend authority to his prose and autocommentarial works, Pāmpaṉ might be considered a conservative. Devoted to the deity Murukaṉ, within his life he not

only composed but oversaw the organization of his poetic works as six "maṇḍalas" amounting to 6,666 verses that he published as a novel canon, in a manner similar to other non-orthodox, populist actors.

The binary model of colonial Śaivism has already been questioned by Raman, who instead suggests that we speak of a range of Modern Śaiva perspectives that can be categorized and compared according to various productive criteria (Raman 2022, 188). To the degree that Pāmpaṉ is not neatly classified, the following study will contribute to the reevaluation of the dualistic model. Just as a study of Maṟaimalai's religious labors complicates the figure of a man most commonly associated with linguistic reform, this article approaches Pāmpaṉ, primarily a poet and theologian, from the vantage of his intervention in an ongoing conversation about language. Through the study of *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* (*CC* in brief), a single, seemingly out of character publication, one can see that he occupies an idiosyncratic and interstitial place with respect to Tamil language politics in a manner that accords with his religious positionality. There is much to be gained by resisting the urge to enforce disciplinary boundaries on these public intellectuals. Were I to limit this investigation of *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* to Pāmpaṉ's method of generating a purified vernacular, his reflections on the relationship of Sanskrit and Tamil, and his place in the related historiography of the Pure Tamil Movement, the connection of his linguistic project with his theological labor would be lost. For instance, under the aegis of a linguistic enterprise with many necessary semantic shifts, Pāmpaṉ smuggles his own Murukaṉ-oriented Vedantic theology within *kaṭavuḷ*, arguably the most important word denoting "god" to survive the purge. In order to progress to that conclusion, I will begin with a survey of the historiography before attending to the author's substantial introduction, and only finally glance upon the content of the poem.

## 1. An introductory note to introductions

When published in 1906, *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* arrived in the midst of a flurry of writings and events concerned with the history of, and roles played by, the Tamil language.[1] It also emerged during a pro-

[1] In 1903 Suryanārayaṇa Sastri's *Tamilmoḻiyiṉ Varalāṟu*, and the second batch of Aruṭpā-Maruṭpā debates, in 1904 V. Kanakasabhai's *The Tamils 1800 Years*

ductive and tumultuous period of the author's own life.[2] In 1902, Pāmpaṉ took a tour of North India. Based on this experience, he published his versified impressions in 1907 as the *Kāci Yāttirai*. Reading the *CC* and *Kāci Yāttirai* together reveals that during this period Pāmpaṉ couched the issue of Tamil dignity and autonomy in a larger anti-Brahmin/anti-Vaiṣṇava discourse, best embodied in his two openly polemical books, the *Nālāyira Pirapanta Vicāram* (1905) and *Caiva Camaya Carapam* (1908). All these publications can be folded into an extended period of litigation against a group of Vaiṣṇava publishers between 1904 and 1911 when Pāmpaṉ's party apparently saw victory (Kumarakurutācar Veḷiyīṭu 1987, 85–95).

In its first edition, *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* amounted to a thin booklet of 48 pages. Of this, the first 38 comprised the front matter and introduction (*muṉṉurai*). The final 10 pages were devoted to the "*mūla*/root" pure Tamil poem in *veṇpā* verse titled "Fifty on Fitness" (*Amaiti Aimpatu*). It is important to note that from its inception *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* referred not just to a versified demonstration of pure Tamil, but to the book in its entirety. I emphasize the book's proportions in order to question the notion that the 50 verses at the end should be regarded as the "true" text. The first four-fifths of the book are not merely an optional formality.

Pāmpaṉ leans on generations of grammatical precedent in assigning significant responsibility to the introduction. Though in the Pure Tamil historiography a prominent role is played by the *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, a roughly 18th-century technical work that argues for unity in Tamil and Sanskrit grammar, the influence of a related early modern grammar, the *Pirayōkavivēkam*, seems to have been

*Ago*, in 1905 Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ's founding of the Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam and delivery of the speech titled *Paṇṭaikkālat Tamilarum Āriyarum*, which saw publication 1906, alongside Chelvakesavaroya Mudaliyar's *Tamil: An Essay*, Amirtam Piḷḷai's publication of the *Maturai Cokkanātar Tamil Viṭutūtu*, and so on.

[2] In the final years of the 19th century, Pāmpaṉ had embraced the path of a renunciant and moved from the dry region around Ramanathapuram and the island of Pāmpaṉ to the flourishing colonial city. There he published such works as the *Tiruvalaṅkal Tiraṭṭu*, the prose manual *Civañāṉa Tīpam*, and *Civañāṉa Tēcikam*, a set of 32 encyclopedic dialogues. In 1897, while staying in Chidambaram, he composed a pair of theological poems, titled *Paripūraṇāṉantapōtam* and *Takarālaya Rakaciyam*. In 1914 and 1916 he would append extensive auto-commentaries to these works.

specifically influential on Pāmpaṉ. Only a few years after publishing the *CC*, in order to justify his auto-commentarial efforts Pāmpaṉ invokes the *Pirayōkavivēkam's* own auto-commentary, which reads "Northern [scil. Sanskrit] authors make both the preface (*patikam*) and commentary (*urai*) themselves."[3] For *patikam* to denote "preface," one need look no further than a grammar of the 13th century that possibly reached the height of its influence in the era of print. The *Naṉṉūl* lists the *patikam* alongside six other forms of preface (*pāyiram*) in the first sutra of its own general preface (*potuppāyiram*)[4]

In the era of prose and print, the introductory essay (*muṉṉurai*) gets new life. Unconfined to verse and the provision of prefatory context concerning author and motivation, it steps beyond the scope of a preface (*payiram* or *patikam*). It rather acts as a forerunning (*muṉ*) commentary (*urai*) that elucidates specific portions of the text that follows. Prior to the provision of a more conventional running commentary on the "Fifty on Fitness", the verses' purified, contrived, and impenetrable register would require a reader to turn repeatedly to the introductory essay for clarification. With the elimination of a significant technical and poetic lexis, the remaining stock of "pure" words undergoes semantic widening. Forced to bear an ungainly burden of signification, the challenge of reading is eased through lists of equivalence and justification in prose. What's more, the *muṉṉurai* does not merely serve to make sense of the poem; Pāmpaṉ's introduction is additionally served by, or rather, *justified by*, the existence of the rigorously constructed poem. In being the first (and perhaps, last) of its kind, the "Fifty on Fitness" makes demands on the attention of an expectant literary community conditioned to consume the front matter of any book, not to speak of a book founded upon such unprecedented artifice.[5]

[3] Cuppiramaṇiya Tīṭcitar 1882, 4: *vaṭanūlar tāmē patikamum uraiyuñ ceyvār*. I employ Victor B. D'Avella's translation and refer the reader to the original note as it pertains to the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*; D'Avella 2020, 34–35n27; Pāmpaṉ 1914, 8; Pāmpaṉ 1916, 28.

[4] Of course, one could look beyond the *Naṉṉūl* to other second millennium technical treatises, or, failing that, to Wilden and Anandakichenin 2020. For a word on the ascendance of the *Naṉṉūl* in the 19th century, see Ebeling 2009, 244–246.

[5] For more on the changing form and role of prefatory material with the rise of Tamiḻ print, see Ebeling 2010 and Venkatachalapathy 2012. Ebeling's discussion

## 2. Pāmpaṉ in the history of the Pure Tamil Movement

The initial reception of *CC* is hazy. It is a text that has only flashed in and out of scholarly awareness in the historiography of the Pure Tamil Movement (*taṉittamiḻ iyakkam*). Whether situating him at the center or the conclusion, these histories invariably converge on the career of Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ, the "father" or watershed of the linguistic political movement. On the other hand, the *CC* is a text written to make history as the first work of "Pure Tamil," though subsequent historical studies of the Pure Tamil Movement do not universally consent to this achievement. But no matter if the *CC* is cited or disregarded, the specific arguments that Pāmpaṉ sought to package with this brief, ambitious work have failed to capture the attention of readers.

A reception history can only truly begin with the first available publication that confirms anyone actually read the text. For the time being, that moment must come decades after the death of the author in the *CC's* 1965 second edition. Now over 200 pages, the book was augmented with three new introductions, a full commentary (*patavurai*, *vicēṭavurai*, *kuṟippurai*) on the 50 verses, and the addition of a third significant section. The alphabetical Sanskrit-Tamil dictionary titled "The Embroidery of Wit" (*Pulaṉ Vaṉappu*) sits between the original introduction and the poem. Depending on how one counts, its 2,456 or 5,400 entries constitute a massive addendum to the long word-lists at the beginning of Pāmpaṉ's introduction, which he originally included to chart all the lexical items disqualified in pursuit of a truly pure Tamil composition.

The tenor of "The Embroidery of Wit" is quite different, offering easy alternatives and calqued replacements for Sanskritic vocabulary. It functions as a tool markedly similar to that of Nīlampikai Ammaiyar's 1938 *Vaṭacoṟ Ṟamiḻ Akaravaricai*, which contains 1,239 entries (Tiruvāṭṭi 1952). It has been claimed that Pāmpaṉ himself assembled the *Pulaṉ Vaṉappu*, edited the lexical commentary (*patavurai*), and authored the specific commentary (*vicēṭavurai*), grammatical notes, and verse headers (*makuṭam*) between 1925 and 1926. Yet, there is reason to be skeptical of this

of Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai's essay-poem pair *Peṇ Kalvi* and *Peṇmati Mālai* is particularly instructive in contextualizing such a hybrid text as *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* (2010, 193–202).

story for at least two reasons. First, his addition both precedes in time and eclipses in scope the puristic literary legacy of Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ's own daughter. And second, these additions only appear in print decades after his death at a time when the roots and legacy of the Pure Tamil Movement had begun to see critical reflection (Pāmpaṉ 1965, 10; Kumarakurutācar Veḷiyīṭu 1987, 119–120). Additionally, Pāmpaṉ's student and publisher of the second edition, Tā. Veṅkaṭācala Mutaliyār, explains his guru as being motivated to refute claims of Tamil deriving from Sanskrit akin to how other languages such as Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam have been proven to derive from their neighboring languages.[6] Thus, the 1960s moment of *CC's* expansion and reissuing is one where Pure Tamil is a fact rather than a hypothesis and Tamil doesn't simply contend against Sanskrit, but against a range of subnational languages, in particular Hindi. Such doubts about "The Embroidery of Wit" and the understanding of Pāmpaṉ's student point to a reading of the *CC's* second edition as an attempt by Pāmpaṉ's successors to reframe it in light of the Pure Tamil Movement's political success.

Beyond the expanded *CC*, two 1970s treatments of the Pure Tamil Movement now take center stage. The above pan-Indian perspective on language continues to be well-represented in the 1979 volume *Language Movements in India*, edited by E. Annamalai. As the direct source for information on the *CC*, in his own chapter, Annamalai relies on a piece by Irā. Muttukumaracami on Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ found in the 1975 volume titled *Pioneers of Modern Tamil*. Therein the reader finds a narrative starting from Caṅkam times when Sanskrit admixture was at a low and progresses to the period of the second millennium commentators where all hell broke loose, yielding mass linguistic miscegenation (Muttukumaracami 1975, 70). The real common thread for the histories of Pure Tamil thence begins with Cāmināta Tēcikar's circa 18th-century *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, specifically where he poses the

[6] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 10–11: *ivvāṟu innūl eḻunta kāraṇam yāteṉiṉ—tūyatamiḻ moḻiyiṉ māṇpaṟiyātu, vaṭamoḻip payiṟci maṭṭum peṟṟuḷār cilar, vaṭamoḻiyiliruntu teluṅkum, itiṉiṉṟu kaṇṇaṭamum, tamiḻiliruntu malaiyāḷam, turukkar moḻikaḷōṭu cila vaṭacoṟkaḷaik kalantu inti moḻiyeṇavum tōṉṟiyavāṟu, avvaṭamoḻiyiliruntē tamiḻ moḻiyum tōṉṟiyuḷḷateṉṟu kūṟuvārāyiṉar. ivvāṟu kūṟum kūṟṟai maṟuttaṟ poruṭṭē innūl eḻuntatākum.*

provocative question: "Though the Tamil works are indeed large in number, is there a single work in pure Tamil?"[7] To account for more than a century of pregnant silence, Muttukumaracami notes that "without a suitable answer, for a long time the question Tēcikar raised continued to circulate."[8]

The next plot point is the demonstration of Tamil's familial independence from Sanskrit found in Robert Caldwell's *A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*. Annamalai, who to this point in the narrative aligns with Muttukumaracami, adds mention of 19th-century archaeological, philological, and lexicographical work that reinforced the idea of Tamil having an independent existence. Differences aside, both scholars cite Caldwell's own provocation: "Tamil, however, most highly cultivated ab intra of all Dravidian idioms, can dispense with its Sanskrit altogether, if need be, and not only stand alone, but flourish without its aid [and] by dispensing with it rises to a purer and most refined style" (Annamalai 1979, 44; Muttukumaracami 1975, 71). Primed by these two claims, namely (1) the *Ilakkaṇakkottu's* assessment that no pure Tamil text exists, and (2) Caldwell's affirmation that one day there might be one, Muttukumaracami and Annamalai cite the 1906 publication of the *CC* as a direct response. Regarding this book, a further pair of points are made: (1) the author took pains to not permit a single Sanskrit word to enter the work, and (2) in subsequent works, the author continued to employ Sanskrit as he wished.[9]

[7] Cāmināta Tēcikar 1866: *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, 6: *aṉṟiyun tamiḻnūṟ kaḷavilai yavaṟṟu / ḷoṉṟē yāyiṉun taṉittami ḻuṇṭō*; citing translation from Annamalai 1979, 43.

[8] Muttukumaracami 1975, 70: *tēcikar eḻuppiya viṇā neṭuṅkālattiṟkut takka viṭai yiṉṟiyē nilavi vantatu*. Even in 2024, Annamalai continues to lead the historical study of Tamil language autonomy. He draws attention to the long prehistory of the question, going back at least to the 12th-century *Vīracōḻiyam*. This grammar goes so far as to claim "As the treatises in Sanskrit function as the mother to all Tamil words, all the explanatory practices there will apply here, too" (*vaṭaccoṟkellām vaṭanūlē tāyāki nikaḻkiṉṟamaiyiṉ aṅkuḻḷa vaḻakkellām iṅkum peṟum*). Though Annamalai argues this is not an early example of a claim for a genetic relationship between the two languages, it might still be worth considering this to have been a source for claims about Sanskrit motherhood. Annamalai 2024, 118–119.

[9] Muttukumaracami 1975, 71–72; Annamalai productively amends the second point to discard the temporal aspect of this inconsistency, stating that other, not subsequent, works still have Sanskrit vocabulary; Annamalai 1979, 44–45.

The two historians diverge in the final stages before Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ and the Pure Tamil Movement. Muttukumaracami wraps up achronologically, citing Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai's comments on Sanskrit contamination in the Tamil literature of the middle ages,[10] followed by the famous name change of Vi. Kō. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Cāstiri to Paritimāl Aṟiñar, which the author notably says had a precedent in Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi's self-fashioning as Tairiyanāta Cuvāmi and Vīramāmuṉivar.[11] Annamalai, on the other hand, moves from his remark on Pāmpaṉ to a conclusive summary of remaining sociocultural conditions from which the Pure Tamil Movement arose. He then offers the following transition: "After the basic fact about the independence and vitality of Tamil was established, more philological, literary and historical research about the past was undertaken in the past and present centuries by the native scholars with rewarding results" (Annamalai 1979, 45). Although the treatment of the *CC* is strikingly brief, there is a consensus among both scholars that Pāmpaṉ Cuvāmikaḷ's work is best considered as the conclusive synthesis of two prior postulates. An effect of this reading is the representation of Pāmpaṉ's literary labor as settling an issue, while such figures as Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, Paritimāl Kalaiñar, and Cuntaram Piḷḷai are cast as anticipating the Pure Tamil Movement, though most passed before having an opportunity to browse the *CC*.

Looking further at the roles of the *CC* in Pure Tamil historiography will show two competing and equally obfuscatory themes for Pāmpaṉ's work: elision and teleology. Among other historical studies of the 1970s there is no mention of the *CC* to be found.[12] For example, K. Kailasapathy links the heightened presence of Sanskrit among commentators and the influence of the *Ilakkaṇakkottu* to reactions of the 20th century by saying that

[10] Muttukumaracami does not give the specific reference. It is to be found in the introduction to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai's 1881 publication of the *Vīracōḻiyam*.

[11] Muttukumaracami 1975, 73–74. If we allow for this comparison, at least a couple other Jesuit precedents should also be named, such as João de Brito called Aruḷāṉanta Cuvāmi (Trento 2022, 174) and Bertoldi called Ñāṉappirakkāca Cuvāmiyār (Trento 2022, 88n7). Both of Beschi's referenced names date to the later 1720s, adopted after the composition of the *Tēmpāvaṇi* in 1726 and attested in the *Vētaviḷakkam*, which Trento has dated to 1728. Trento 2022, 149, 200, 215.

[12] Sivathamby 1978, Kailasapathy 1979, and Arooran 1980 (I have been unable to access his 1976 dissertation).

"the 17th century grammarian Swaminatha Designar [*sic*], asserted that Sanskrit grammatical rules applied to Tamil as well. These trends naturally provoked reactions among Tamil scholars and Vedachalam [Maṟaimalai] was, in a way, giving form and shape to such sentiments"(Kailasapathy 1979, 32). It is most clear in this elision that there was no general recognition that the *CC* appeared as the solution to the problem of the *Ilakkaṇakkottu*.

The next moment of historiographical significance is a pair of monographs published by Irā. Iḷaṅkumaraṉ in 1991 and Ku. Tirumāṟaṉ in 1992 that share the title "Pure Tamil Movement" (*Taṉittamiḻ Iyakkam*). Though the *CC* is indeed referenced in both texts, for all their proximities they assign remarkably divergent roles to Pāmpaṉ. Published first, Iḷaṅkumaraṉ's study allocates a total of two simple sentences to Pāmpaṉ to convey that he wrote a text in *Taṉittamiḻ* and that it is 50 verses long. There is no sense that this was the *first* pure text (Iḷaṅkumaraṉ 1991, 70). Iḷaṅkumaraṉ comes to the topic by quoting authors of the 19th century who proclaim the superiority of Tamil, specifically Rāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ and Taṇṭapāṇi Cuvāmikaḷ.

Gone before even arriving, the reader is ushered along without a single exemplary verse from the 50. Instead, the historian returns to Rāmaliṅka, making special mention of his *Tiruvaṭi Pukaḻcci* (1.1/3.1).[13] As this poem is likewise granted no space for a demonstrative verse, it might start to seem odd that both Pāmpaṉ and Rāmaliṅka are invoked in quick antichronological succession without any link that connects these authors to a belief in the superiority of Tamil over Sanskrit. However, the subtext is quite loud: by the end of the 1980s the close association of Rāmaliṅka, Taṇṭapāṇi, and Pāmpaṉ had been demonstrated in print with respect to their commitment to Tamil, their claim that it was to be considered the father tongue, and their record of extensive devotional writing to Murukaṉ, specifically the deity situated in the Chennai temple of Kantakōṭṭam.[14] It seems that, depriving the trio of the Murukaṉ-devotional context and father-

[13] Iḷaṅkumaraṉ claims part of this poem is composed in pure Tamil. Rāmaliṅka's *Tiruvaruṭpā* can be found in two formats: (1) the original Toḻuvūr Vēlāyuta Mutaliyār organization, which was roughly fixed by 1885 and (2) the "chronological" canon of Ūraṉ Aṭikaḷ, who in the early 1970s brought Ramalinga's hagiography and writings into accord. On this see Raman 2022, 23–24.

[14] P. Krishnan, *Tamil Nūlkaḷil Tamil Moḻi, Tamil Īṉam, Tamil Nāṭu* (1984, 197–199), later cited in Ramaswamy 1997, 264n36 and Valavaṉ 1985, 30–37.

tongue frame, Iḷaṅkumaraṉ distributes Taṇṭapāṇi's thesis of Tamil superiority to the two other poets.[15] Furthermore, he suppresses Pāmpaṉ's claim to writing the first pure Tamil poem by suggesting that Rāmaliṅka, his predecessor, accomplished the feat first.

In its discussion of the *CC*, Ku. Tirumāṟaṉ's 1992 *Taṉittamiḻ Iyakkam* offers a stark contrast to the Iḷaṅkumaraṉ's by devoting a three-page subchapter to the book. This includes extensive quotations from Pāmpaṉ's own introduction and a recognition of the additions that accompanied the second edition.[16] The degree of attention paid to the *CC*, unseen elsewhere in the Pure Tamil Movement's historiography, can be ascribed to Tirumāṟaṉ's strong conviction that Pāmpaṉ must be considered a pillar of the movement. In closing the subsection, he concludes: "One might say that Pāmpaṉ Cuvāmikaḷ's production of *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* occurred more than ten years prior to Maṟaimalai Atikaḷ embarking on the implementation of Pure Tamil, and was constituted as a forerunner to the appearance of the Pure Tamil Movement."[17]

In an essay published in 2017, Tirumāṟaṉ tries his case from a new angle, quoting a famous phrase of the early conceiver of the Pure Tamil Movement's historicity, Tēvanēya Pāvāṇar (1902–1981). It reads: "Caldwell made the world know of Tamil's antiquity, Paritimāl Kalaiñar spread the seeds of Pure Tamil, Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ, the mountain of abounding Tamil, made it sprout as a shrub—I am growing as the tree."[18] Tirumāṟaṉ, discontent,

[15] Taṇṭapāṇi's claim is supported by the first verse from his *Tamiḻalaṅkāram:* "Once upon a time, Skanda gave me a note that read '*Centamiḻ* is superior.' O bright white witness, see the truth. Even if Agastya, the Sage-King of the Sandal Mountain, were to approve of another language, I would resolutely say that he had lost his ancient mind." Iḷaṅkumaran 1991, 69–70: *centami ḻē-uyarv eṉṟumuṉ ṉāḷoru cīṭṭeṉakkut / tantaṉaṉ kantaṉ; tavaḷamiṉ cāṭci, caratamkaṇṭīr / cantaṉak kuṉṟiṉ muṉikkōṉmaṯ ṟoṉṟaic caricoliṉum / muntaṟi vaṟṟaṉaṉ eṉṟē tuṇintu moḻikuvaṉē.*

[16] An unfortunate error makes it seem like Tirumāṟaṉ claims the second edition was published in 1915, prior to the formal founding date of the Pure Tamil Movement and Nīlāmpikai Ammaiyar's *Vaṭacoṟ Ṟamiḻ Akaravaricai.*

[17] Tirumāṟaṉ 1992, 126: *pāmpaṉ cuvāmikaḷiṉ cēntaṉ centamiḻp paṭaippu maṟaimalaiyaṭikaḷ taṉittamiḻaic ceyaṟpaṭutta muṉaivataṟkup pattāṇṭukaṭku muṉṉarē nikaḻntu taṉittamiḻiyakkat tōṟṟattiṟku muṉṉōṭiyāka amaintatu eṉalām.*

[18] Tirumāṟaṉ 2017, 11: *tamiliṉ toṉmaiyai ulakukkaṟivittavar kāḷṯuvel, taṉittamiḻukku vittiṭṭavar paritimāṯ kalaiñar, ceṭiyākat taḻaiyac ceytavar niṟaitamiḻ malaiyām maṟaimalaiyaṭikaḷ, nāṉ maramāka vaḷarntu varukiṟēṉ.*

rattles off a revised list of actors: "Tamil is an ancient language of a linguistic family completely different from Sanskrit. Robert Caldwell established through his comparative research that it is a language that functions on its own without the support of Sanskrit. Eyeing an alias, Paritimāl Kalaiñar assumed a pure Tamil name. Through his book titled *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ*, Pāmpaṉ Aṭikaḷ made plain the fact that one can compose a text without admixing even a single Sanskrit word. Virutai Civañāṉa Ōkiyār graciously delimited the rules of his 'Tiruviṭar Kaḻakam' in pure Tamil."[19] Having surveyed the instrumentalization of the *CC* in the historiography of the Pure Tamil Movement, it is time to approach Pāmpaṉ in his own words.

## 3. Lexicon for redaction

Pāmpaṉ's *muṉṉurai* takes not a sentence to greet the reader. Instead, it begins a list composed of six numbered sections divided according to the manner of presentation of lexicographic entries, with the sixth section dominated by an essay more akin to what most would expect of a book's introduction. The descriptions of the first five lists follow:

> I. These come to be through phonetic change, deletion, and Tamil usage—in and of Sanskrit.[20]
> II. And these words matched with their meanings come to be through phonetic change, deletion, and Tamil usage—in and of Sanskrit.[21]

[19] Tirumāṟaṉ 2017, 11: *tamiḻ, camaṟkirutattiliruntu muṟṟilum vēṟāṉatoru moḻik kuṭumpattiṉ mūtta moḻi. atu camaṟkirutattiṉ tuṇaiyiṉṟiyē taṉittiyaṅkum moḻi eṉat taṉ oppiyaṉ āyvāl niṟuviṉar. irāparṭṭu kālṭuvel. puṇaivu nōkkil tūyat tamiḻp peyar pūṇṭār paritimāṟ kalaiñar. camaṟkirutac col oṉṟēṉum kalavāta nūl iyaṟṟa muṭiyum eṉpatait taṉ 'cēntaṉ centamiḻ' eṉum nūlvaḻit teḻivuṟuttiṉār pāmpaṉ aṭikaḷ. taṉatu 'tiruviṭar kaḻaka' vitimuṟaikaḷait tūyatTamilil varaintaḷittār, virutai civañāṉa ōkiyār.*

[20] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 4: *ivai vaṭamoḻit tirivum, aḻivum, teṉmoḻi vaḻakkumām eṉavum.* There are 243 entries in this section. A sample of the first four follows: *amrutam = amirtam, amutam, amutu, amiḻtu; ahaṅkāram = akaṅkāram, āṅkāram, akantai; aruku = akaru, akil; attikā = akkāḷ.*

[21] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 13: *ivvāṟu poruḷākat takka immoḻikaḷum vaṭamoḻit tirivum aḻivun teṉmoḻi vaḻakkumām eṉavum.* There are 394 entries in this section. A sample of four follows: *akram – akkiram = nuṉi; lōham – ulōkam = poṉ mutaliya poruḷ. haraṉ – araṉ = aḻipput toḻiṟkaṭavuḷ, epporuṭkum iṟaivaṉ; hō – ō = aḻaippil nikaḻ col.*

> III. And these words matched with their meanings are Sanskrit words; Among them, some come to be through phonetic changes of Sanskrit words and some are common to Sanskrit and Tamil by measure of sound.[22]
> IV. And the following are Sanskrit.[23]
> V. And the following are Sanskrit.[24]

These descriptive sentences provide some information about the formation of words. But they are not explicit about their intended function. At the very close of the introduction, Pāmpaṉ notes that all words not preceded by an equals sign (excepting those in parentheses) or clearly indicating the meaning of the following

[22] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 17: *ivvāṟu poruḷākat takka ivaikaḷum vaṭamoḻikaḷē; ivaṟṟuṭ cila vaṭamoḻittirivum, cila oliyaḷavil vaṭamoḻikkun teṉmoḻikkum potuvumām eṉavum.* The collocation "by measure of sound" (*oliyaḷavil*) functions to signal *tatsamas* and *tadbhavas*, as Pāmpaṉ makes explicit late in the *muṉṉurai*. There are 282 entries in this section. A sample of four follows: *ām, ōm = oppukkōṭaṉ moḻi; iṉaṉ = ceñcuṭarōṉ, āḷvōṉ (prapu); kaḷaṅkam = uṭalaṭaiyāḷam, kuṟṟam, paḻimoḻi (apavātam); kō, kau = poṉṉāṭu, ampu, āṉ, nūṟṟumuṉai (vajrāyutam), vicumpu (tik), viḻi, ñālam, puṉal.*

[23] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 22: *varupavaikaḷum vaṭamoḻikaḷē yeṉavum.* There are 49 entries in this section, accounting for 473 Sanskrit words. A sample of two entries follows: *ceñcuṭariṉ peyarāk – sūraṉ, sūryaṉ, ātityaṉ, tivākaraṉ, pāskaraṉ, arkkaṉ, mārttāṇṭaṉ, aruṇaṉ, pānu, tapanaṉ, savitru, ravi[,] pariti, virōcanaṉ, prapākaraṉ, hamsaṉ, krukapati, patmanīvallapaṉ eṉṟum; maṇṇavaṉ peyarāka – manuṣyaṉ, mānuṣyaṉ, mānavaṉ, naraṉ eṉṟum.*

[24] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 25: *eṇa varupavaikaḷum vaṭamoḻikaḷē yeṉavum.* It should be apparent that Pāmpaṉ uses the same description of this section. However, the structure of presentation is quite different. Accordingly, he presents 430 Sanskrit words in nine paragraphs each with a roughly discernable unifying principle. The first three paragraphs follow, with the second and third organized in conceptual pairs and triplets, and the first possibly grouped by *etukai*:

[1] *aṇṭam, piṇṭam, taṇṭam, cantam, mantam, pantam, kantam, paṭam, maṭam, kaṭam, kuṭam, pati, viti, yati, kati, niti, tati, titi, kali, pali, nayam, mayam, varam, taram, caram, patyam, katyam, mattam, pittam, apattam, amalam, vimalam, nirmalam, caraṇam, kiraṇam, kaṇitam, kuṇitam, natam, matam, vatam, atam, vitam, kālam, kīlam, jālam, cīlam, cūlam, nīlam, mūlam, kōram, vīram, tāram, sāram, cōkam, yōkam, pōkam, vēkam, māṉam, pāṉam, kāṉam, tāṉam, māṭam, pīṭam, kāmam, tūmam, pīmam, vāmam, kītam, vētam, pētam, kētam, pūtam;* [2] *utayam, astamayam; jaṉaṉam, maraṇam; samīpam, tūram; saṅkalpam, vikalpam; sukam, tukkam; cuttam, acuttam; asti, nāsti; āpat, sampat; ukram, cāntam;* [3] *āti, matyam, antam; uttamam, matyamam, atamam; rēcakam, pūrakam, kumpakam; sat, cit, āṉantam; kāraṇam, kāryam; nātam, pintu; mātā, pitā; ākṣēpam, samātāṉam;*[...]

words as in list four, are Sanskrit words[25] of three varieties: those which appear in verse and prose that are like Sanskrit words, some other Sanskrit words, and some words rare even in Sanskrit literature but which are Sanskrit nonetheless.[26] Pāmpaṉ thus casts a wide net in order to assure "purity" in the subsequent composition. However, there is a strong countercurrent of subtext here, especially in the fourth and fifth lists: one gets the sense that Pāmpaṉ wants to generate awe for the challenge of writing anything deprived of this productive vocabulary. Or even more, he may seek to instill a sense of loss for the diversity of poetic, theological, or anatomical signifiers.

Moving to the sixth and final section of the introduction, one gleans that the provenance of some words requires explanation:

> *Rākṣasa* – is said as *irākkatar*: indeed this is also said to have become "demons (*arakkar*)." *Rakṣaka* – is also said to have become "pity (*irakkam*)"; *Lēśa* – pronounced "*ilēcu*": it is also said that from this the expression "ease (*eḷitu*)" came into being; [....] *yāna* = conveyance which bears a burden, and thus it is said that one among the animals that are conveyances became "elephant" (*yāṉai*).[27]

Pāmpaṉ walks the reader through 32 proposals of Sanskrit etymological origin.[28] At the conclusion of this list, he makes indirect

[25] A common difficulty of translation arises up here when it comes to clearly representing Pāmpaṉ's intellectual project. What I refer to here as "Sanskrit words" are *vaṭaccoṟkaḷ*, "northern words." Jennifer Clare (Kannan and Clare 2009, xxv–xxvi) draws attention to the problematic relationship between the notion of a Northern word and a Sanskrit word, tracing the issue back to the *Tolkāppiyam* and its commentaries, through the *Naṉṉūl*, and into the *Ilakkaṇakkottu* and 18th-century grammars.

[26] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 36: *immuṉṉuraiyil – perumpāluñ ceyyuṇaṭaik kaṇṇum urainaṭaik kaṇṇum vaṭacoṟkaḷ pōla vaḷaṅkappaṭu coṟkaḷum, piṟa vaṭacoṟkaḷum, vaṭacoṟkaḷuṭ cila aruñ coṟkaḷumē (akarāti) akara niralākak kāṭṭap paṭṭaṉa.*

[27] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 25–26: *rākṣasar – irākkatar eṉavām: ituvē arakkar eṉavāyiṟṟ eṉavum; rakṣakam – irakkam eṉavāyiṟṟ eṉavum; lēcam – ilēc eṉavām: itiṉiṉṟum eḷitu eṉpatuṇṭāyiṟṟ eṉavum: kariya niṟattāṉ eṉum poruṭarat takka kruṣṇaṉ eṉpatē kaṇṇaṉ eṉavāyiṟṟ eṉavum; [....] yānam = cumai cumakkum ūrti; ataṉāl ūrtiyām vilaṅkukaḷil oṉṟu yāṉai yeṉavāyiṟṟ eṉavum.*

[28] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 25–27. The resultant words in Tamil being: *arakkar, irakkam, eḷitu, kaṇṇaṉ, karuvi, kālai, kuṭai, caṇṭai, tarittal, tāy, tī, tītu/tīmai/tīṅku, turumpu, tokuttal/tokal/tokai, namaṉ, nilam, nilai, paḷḷi, pākittal/pakuttal/ pākupāṭu/paṅku, pū, pēṭi, makiḻ, mātu, mukiḻ/mukiḻttal, yāvum, yāṉai, vāḷ, viṇ, vēntaṉ, vēli, kō, maṅkai.*

reference to the problem laid out by the *Ilakkaṇakkottu*: "and it is said that not a single Tamil text has gone without using any words of those that have come so far."[29] While he does not say that this is a comprehensive list of off-limits vocabulary, it is representative of the imposing obstacle that is the Sanskrit expressive heritage. Pāmpaṉ then addresses a person's qualification to speak: "And as it must still be so, might some of those educated in Sanskrit respond?"[30] Indeed, it would make little sense to attempt to extract Sanskrit without first acquiring a working knowledge of the language in question. As the phrase goes "it takes a thorn to remove a thorn" (*muḷḷai muḷḷālē tāṉ pōkka vēṇṭum*).

And it wouldn't even matter if in reality the sum total of words listed were confirmed to be Sanskrit, turned out to have been Tamil all along, or were a medley of originally Southern and Northern expressions. Since it is established here that the measure of a pure Tamil text is the non-presence of any term arrayed in the six lists, one can be certain that by this standard no such text exists.[31] Pāmpaṉ refers to this effect of his own book, "thus, the ability to say that Tamil poetry proceeds with only its own vocabulary when one but dispenses with many words has been made public."[32] Does one detect a whiff of Caldwell here? Having stated the potential for Tamil literature to operate in a state of purity, Pāmpaṉ does not rest. He accepts Caldwell's method of adjudicating linguistic purity, shifting from the *Ilakkaṇakkottu's* evaluation of a language's essential identity through the grammatical authorities it relies upon. The move, of course, is instead to measure impurity by the proportion of a given Tamil text's wordstock etymologically deriving from Indo-European roots. This move might be productively characterized as a lateral shift from the problem of

[29] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27: *ivvaḷavil vanta moḻikaḷil emmoḻi yēṉum pukāmal, teṉmoḻi nūl oṉṟum iṉṟ eṉavum;[…].*

[30] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27: *iṉṉum vēṇṭiyavāṟākavum vaṭamoḻi kaṟṟāruṭ cilar kūṟutal kūṭuṅkol.*

[31] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27: *itukāṟum kāṭṭappaṭṭa coṟkaḷ ellām vaṭamoḻiyēy āyiṉum, teṉmoḻiyēy āyiṉum, cilaccila palappala avvāṟāyiṉum avar kūṟṟuppaṭiy ivaṟṟuṭ pala cila pukāmal, teṉmoḻi nūl oṉṟum iṉṟ eṉṟal uṟutiyēyām.*

[32] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27: *ivvāṟu pala coṟkaḷ nīṅkuḻiyun tamiḻ ceyyuḷ taṉmoḻiyāṉē naṭaipeṟūum eṉum āṟṟalum itaṉāl veḻippaṭṭatu.*

language autonomy to that of lexical purity.[33] Giving the lie to the *Ilakkaṇakkottu* without Caldwell or 19th-century orientalist linguistics would be a very different project.

## 4. Etymological reorientations

I suspect this is the point where historians of pure Tamil stopped reading. Confident that the reader has been assured of the forthcoming poem's rigorous cleansing, henceforth Pāmpaṉ applies pressure to the purism effected through etymological consensus. He transitions by way of divine proper names, the exclusion of which Pāmpaṉ characterizes as perhaps a step too far:

> Even if it's appropriate to accept settlement [names], [personal] names, sacred texts (mantras), simple onomatopoeias, reduplicated onomatopoeias, and ideophones of light as they occur in all languages, the names "*Kārttikeya*, *Mahāsena*, *Śarajanman*, *Ṣaṭānana*, *Pārvatī Nandana*, *Skanda*, *Senānī*, *Agnibhū*, *Guha*, *Bāhuleya*, *Tārakajit*, *Viśākha*, *Śikhivāhana*, *Ṣāṇmātara*, *Śaktidhara*, *Kumāra*, *Krauñcatāraṇa*, *Vallīśa*, *Kukkuṭadhara*, *Subrahmaṇya*, *Dviṣaṭbhuja*, *Sūra*, *Svāmin*, *Gajamukhānuja*, and *Śaravaṇabhava*" that come in Sanskrit texts as names of that lord, as well as others that come amongst the thousand Sanskrit names, have not been employed in this *Centamiḻ*, the pure Tamil that eulogizes Cēntaṉ called Lord Murukaṉ.[34]

Pāmpaṉ makes a couple points. On the one hand, he considers names of places, people, and texts to be alike with ideophones insofar as they transcend simple belonging to a language. On the other, he signals a willingness to avoid names of the poem's target god so long as they appear to be deployed somewhere in Sanskrit literature. This is a heavy restriction for a poem that is at its core

[33] Personal communication with E. Annamalai, May 2, 2024.

[34] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27: *ūrum peyarum (mantram) maṟaiyum, ōr olik kuṟippum, īrolik kuṟippum, oḷikkuṟippum, emmoḻiyiṉum ēṟpaṭṭapaṭi kōṭal kūṭumāyiṉum, murukappirāṉ eṉuñ cēntaṉ mītu pāṭun tūyatamiḻām iccentamiḻil, antap pirāṉ peyarāka vaṭanūl uḻai varūum kārttikēyaṉ, mahāsēnaṉ, carajaṉmaṉ, ṣaṭānananaṉ, pārvatī nantaṇaṉ, skantaṉ, sēnāni, aknipū, kuhaṉ, pāhulēyaṉ, tārakajit, vicākaṉ, cikivākanaṉ, ṣaṇmāturaṉ, caktitaraṉ, kumāraṉ, krauñcatāraṇaṉ, vallīcaṉ, kukkuṭataraṉ, suprahmaṇyaṉ, tviṣaṭpujaṉ, cūraṉ, svāmi, kajamukānujaṉ, caravaṇapavaṉ eṇa varuvaṇavum; ivaiyiṟṟiṟku vēṟāka vaṭamoḻi āyiram peyaril varupeyarkaḷum pukavillai.*

devotional. Inching towards a strategic play, Pāmpaṉ stays with the analysis of divine names:

> And the words *Devasena* and *Vallī*, the names of goddesses, haven't been employed. They say that in the expression *Teyvayāṉai* the word *teyvam* is a Sanskrit word. And *yāṉai*, the word compounded with it, has been dismissed above [on account of] some people saying that it's Sanskrit. One should see that the expression *Teyvayāṉai* and the expression *Vallī* stand in this book in accord with proper Tamil usage as "Cow Elephant of God" (*kaṭavuṭ piṭi*) [and] "Vine Girl" (*koṭicci*) [respectively].[35]

In analyzing the compound *teyva-yāṉai*, the components' respective claims to be of Sanskrit origin are evaluated differently. *Teyvam* is unproblematically stated to be Sanskrit derived.[36] However, only *some* are said to claim the latter half of the compound, *yāṉai*, to come from Sanskrit. Recall that the tentative etymology was provided above as one of the 32. Insofar as both members of the compound are said to have Sanskrit origins, whether by wide consensus or by the claims of some, the goddess's name is rejected for use in the 50 *veṇpā* verses to come. But the seed of doubt is planted. That *yāṉai* is excluded without unanimous consent problematizes all proposed etymologies of the sixth list.

Capitalizing on this uncertainty, Pāmpaṉ produces 18 refutations of Sanskrit-origin etymologies, excusing himself from the exercise of redeeming all prior terms for fear of an over-extended introduction.[37] His purpose is to prove that educated people like him are capable of demonstrating that, via the identification of Tamil roots, suffixes, and infixes, a great deal of questionable

[35] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 27–28: *pirāṭṭikaḷiṉ peyarākiya tēvasēnā, vallī yeṉuñ coṟkaḷum pukavillai. teyvayāṉai yeṉpatil "teyvam" eṉpatu vaṭacoll eṉpa. ataṉōṭu civaṇiya "yāṉai" eṉpataiyum cilar vaṭacoll eṉak kūṟutal mēlē viḷakkappaṭṭatu. teyvayāṉai yeṉpatu "kaṭavuṭ piṭi" eṉavum, vallī (vaḷḷi) eṉpatu "koṭicci" eṉavuñ centamiḻ vaḻakkāka innūṟkaṇ niṟṟal kāṇka.*

[36] Oddly enough, the word does not appear in that form in the *Muṉṉurai's* preceding lists of off-limits vocabulary. However, *tēvaḥ* appears in the first list, *tēvaṉ* appears as a Sanskrit parenthetical glossing *amaraṉ* in the third list, and *tēvaṉ* and *tēvī* appear in the fifth list.

[37] The 18 terms are *arakkar*, *irakkam*, *eḷitu*, *kaṇṇaṉ*, *karuvi*, *kālai*, *kuṭai*, *tāy*, *nilam*, *nilai*, *pū*, *mātu*, *mukiḻ*, *vāḷ*, *viṇ*, *ōṭam*, *paḻam*, *piṭṭu*, *mīṉ*. Note that the last four had not appeared in the sixth list.

vocabulary can be reclaimed as proper Tamil. More importantly, he shows that words are not the only candidates for retention and rejection based on evaluations of purity. Their lexical genealogies are also fair game. Upon the rejection of an etymology, a qualified scholar (read: Pāmpaṉ) can propose new verbal origin stories. New stories bear significant new connotations.

Having demonstrated the educated person's approach to language, Pāmpaṉ next turns his eye to the imagined opposition. These people are characterized at first as not understanding the previously articulated thesis and as only studying Sanskrit, but later are revealed to be "twice-born who, being those who primarily speak and write only in Tamil, defame it by asking 'is Tamil even a language?' like people who insult the very food they eat."[38] Their positive claims include (1) the language called Drāviḍa came from the language called Sanskrit, therefore (2) Sanskrit is the mother language, and (3) that it is the language of the gods. Pāmpaṉ does not seek to attack these claims directly but chides this group for their failure to attend to the reasoned responses of those who emphasize Tamil. The reader is given no sense about the background of this newly invoked group except for Pāmpaṉ's relative sympathy for their views.

Through these Tamil proponents, Pāmpaṉ ventriloquizes two apparently ignored arguments: the Southern Language (1) is both Mother and Father tongue,[39] and, (2) insofar it was taught by Śiva and Murukaṉ to Agastya, is an ancient and divine language that has been in use as long as there has been a Southern Country.[40] The first argument is supported by two subordinate claims. Rather than some significations having come into the Southern language from specific Northern words, Southern words of 10 categories,[41] actually entered Northern speech *prior* to the composition of lists

[38] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 32: *peritun tamiḻē pēcunarum eḻutunarumāki, tāmuṇṇum uṇavait tāmēy ikaḻvār pōlat "tamiḻum oru pāṣaiyā!" eṉat tamiḻaiy ikaḻum iru piṟappāḷar.*

[39] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 31: *teṉmoḻi tāy moḻiyun tantai moḻiyum ām.*

[40] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 31–32: *kuṟaivil (akastyar) kuṟu muṉivarkku mukkaṭ kaṭavuḻum murukap perumāṉum aḻakelām amaiyav uṇartta niṉṟav oṉṟāy, eññāṉṟu teṉṉāṭuṇṭāyatō vaññāṉṟē āṇṭup payilav amaintu parantuḻatāyt tikaḻun teṉmoḻiyāṉa toṉmoḻi kaṭavuṉ moḻiyēyām.*

[41] These consist of the four indivisible (nominal root, verbal root, infix, and modifier) and six divisible (substance, locus, temporality, component, quality, and function) categories.

of Northern verbal roots specified as *dhātus*; in the same way that the *dhatus* acquired those significations as givens, or irreducibles (*iṭukuṟi*), Tamil acquired meanings for the aforementioned roots of divisible words as well as the indivisible words, that is, nominal givens.[42] There has been a temporal development from Southern Language to Tamil and likewise for Northern Language to Sanskrit. Both languages developed simultaneously from a Southern linguistic source.

The second subordinate claim should now make more sense: "As the Northern Language is the joy of the Mother who is the Goddess, the Southern Language constantly introduces novelty as the joy of the Father, God inseparable from that Goddess."[43] Śaivism's copulative theology is put to work here in the service of arguing a historical linguistics. However one chooses to translate *uvappu*, above rendered as "joy," it is clear that these languages are not identical with the divine couple but rather something belonging to or produced by them—their progeny.

After rehearsing the Sanskrit proponent's beliefs and Tamil proponent's predicted retorts, Pāmpaṉ renders judgement on the dispute: Northern and Southern languages, though distinct, are employed by speakers unconfined to their native climes. Even still, there is no conflict in saying that resultant homophones—that is, words alike "by measure of sound (*oḻiyaḷavil*)," *tatsamas* and *tadbhavas*—may yet produce different significations. The remainder of his introductory essay is devoted to demonstrating this thesis, selecting *tatsama/bhavas* and redeeming their Tamilness through the provision of alternate etymologies. These words, despite sounding the same and basically denoting the same thing, are examples not of lexical borrowing but of linguistic morphological convergence. In undertaking this toil, Pāmpaṉ is able to stake out some desirable connotations as being indigenously

[42] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 31: *evvetteṉmoḻi yevvevvaṭamoḻiyiliruntuṇṭāyiṉav eṉṟu kūṟa iyaikiṉṟaṉavō avvatteṉmoḻiyiliruntē avvavvaṭamoḻiy uṇṭāyiṉa: avai – peyar, viṉai, iṭai, uriy eṉu nāṯ ṟiṟap (pakāppatam) piriyā moḻiyum, poruḷ, iṭam, poḻutu, ciṉai, paṇpu, toḻil eṇumāṟuṅ koṇṭu varu (pakupatam) pirimoḻiyumām: vaṭamoḻi mutaṉilai (tātu) nūl piṉṉiyaṟṟap paṭṭatu: anta (tātu) mutaṉilaikaḷiṉ poruḷkaḷ eppaṭi yiṭukuṟiyāy amaintuḷavō appaṭit tāṉ tamiḻp pirimoḻi mutaṉilaikaḷukkum, piriyā moḻiyākum iṭukuṟip peyarkaḷukkum poruḷkaḷ amaintuḷa veṇum āṟṟāṇum.*

[43] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 31: *tēviyākiya tāykku uvappāyuḷḷa vaṭamoḻipōla, attēviyai nīṅkāt tēvaṉākiya tantaikkum uvappāy putumai kāṭṭi niṟpatu teṉ moḻiy eṇum āṟṟāṇum.*

Tamil. For instance, with *mukha / mukam*, he suggests that the word historically was semantically limited to an entrance in Sanskrit and a face in Tamil. Or with *muni / muṉi:* while in both it roughly connotes one who has a distaste for the terrestrial world, in Sanskrit it implied someone in possession of quiescence (*maunam*) and in Tamil it was one whose attention (*muṉṉam*) proceeds (*muṉṉum*) only to God.[44] As before, though redeemed, these words do not make it into the poem.

A final example will see us to some actual verses from the "Fifty on Fitness", and also to the end of this brief study. Signifying God, the word *Pirāṉ* is invoked without mention of its assumed Sanskrit lexical source, *bṛhat*, or the masculine nominative declension, *bṛhan*. No, says Pāmpaṉ, this instead is the product of elision, deriving from *piri.y-ā-ṉ*, which he defines as the "man who remains in all things without separating" (*epporuṭkaṇṇum nīṅkāt' iruppōṉ*, Pāmpaṉ 1965, 40). As should be predictable, he retains his rigor by still shying away from employing this redeemed word within the 50 verses. However, he does coin a calque corresponding to his proposed definition and available for use in a Pure Tamil context: *viṭāpporuḷ*, "the unparting thing." The concept features in the second and third verses:

> 2. The Qualities of God
> As that which is unlimited by appearance, disappearance,
> delusion, suffering, and disease,
> As power, knowledge, and existence/truth,
> As purity,
> As the heart's measure for those who measure with praise,
> The unparting thing (*viṭāpporuḷ*) exists without deviating from vast virtue.[45]
>
> 3. Saying that He Becomes the Guru
> Divine is one
> who, through unspoiling love, knows the scarcely attainable Divinity (*kaṭavuṉ*),

[44] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 33–34.

[45] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 146: *iṟaivan tanmai*
*tōṟṟa maḻivumaruḷ cūrnōy varaippilatā / yāṟṟa laṟivuṇmai yāyttūytāyp - pōṟṟu / maḷava ruḷattaḷavā yāṉṟavaṟaṅ kōṭā / tuḷatu viṭāpporuḷā kum.*

> the unparting thing (*viṭāpporuḷē*),
> who has the ability to study treatises that don't succumb to decline,
> who, without hurting any lifeform, has benevolence that approaches divine compassion (*aruḷ*) itself.[46]

Quite early on in his poetic proof of concept, Pāmpaṉ foregrounds his conceptual placeholder for *Pirāṉ* as both being the size of the devotee's heart, yet limitless, and also equivalent to arguably the most common word for god acceptable to a purged vocabulary, *kaṭavuḷ*. At a point from his introduction so far unmentioned, Pāmpaṉ proposes a related definitional equation to address the loss of *Guha*, one among Murukaṉ's common Sanskrit names: "In that way one should say that many names of Murukaṉ stand in the manner that the expression 'Guha' stands as 'the heart-internal man (*uḷḷiṭattāṉ*)' and *'kaṭavuḷ'*."[47] This *uḷḷiṭattāṉ*, employed once in the 40th verse of the poem, directly corresponds to the Upaṇiṣadic-Vedantic concept of the transcendent being located in the small chamber of the heart. Being that this is the central concept of Pāmpaṉ's *Takarālaya Rakaciyam* and his 1916 autocommentary titled *Catāṉanta Cākaram*, I will set detailed discussion of Pāmpaṉ's particular mobilization of this concept aside for another time. The point at present is to say that *uḷḷ-iṭatt-āṉ*, "interior-place-man," functions both as an etymologically transparent coinage substituting for *Guha*, and as a mediating term that allows Pāmpaṉ to link this theological concept to the far more common and well attested word, *kaṭavuḷ*. Read backwards, *kaṭavuḷ* means *Guha*, or Murukaṉ. In *kaṭavuḷ* and *pirāṉ*, two common terms for divinity, Pāmpaṉ smuggles in something of a linguistic theological determinacy. This condition permits lexical items to bear connotations that predate their encounter with Sanskrit terms and concepts yet closely conform with notions found within Vedic theological writing. Paired with the linguistic morphological convergences demonstrated above, one can see how Pāmpaṉ conclu-

[46] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 147: *aṭikaḷāvār ivarenal*
*viṭāpporu ḷēkaṭavuṇ mēvariya vaḥtaik / keṭāppuri vāṉuṇarntu kiḻmai - paṭāppaṉuva / lāyvaliyu mevvuyirkku mallal koṭā varuṭā / ṉēynalamu muḷḷō ṇiṟai.*

[47] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 28: *aṅṅaṉam kuhaṉ eṉpatu uḷḷiṭattāṉ, kaṭavuḷ eṉa niṟkumāṟu niṟpaṉa palaveṇka.*

des his *muṉṉurai* by setting Tamil and Sanskrit on equal footing. For this author, comparison of both languages ultimately reveals that prior to the manifold lexical convergences and divergences of historical time, Northern and Southern tongues shared equal access to metaphysical truth.

## 5. Conclusions

One could do worse than let Pāmpaṉ speak to the purpose of his own work. With the last words of his *muṉṉurai* the reader is given a list of intended results: it is to receive those words determined to be Tamil and those that are Sanskrit, to write in Tamil prose, to know the significance of words, to form those words into verse in conformity with Tamil usage, to understand Tamil excellence, and to live well, nurturing one's devotion to God.[48] There isn't much to surprise here, though it is easy to lose track of Pāmpaṉ's spiritual aims whether one is reading about him in Pure Tamil histories or his introductory essay itself. Still, situating the *CC* in a history of Tamil linguistic purism points to a still more obvious, unarticulated motivation. At the dawn of the 20th century, the writing was on the wall. Pāmpaṉ set out to compose the *CC* with a singular unspoken certainty: there was no pure Tamil text, there could be a pure Tamil text, and there *will* be a pure Tamil text. The matter of "if" was settled, but the questions of "when" and of "who" remained. It would be reasonable to assume that whoever responded successfully to the challenge of the *Ilakkaṇakkottu* would receive as reward an attentive audience comprising the greatest Tamil intellectuals of the day and of days to come. For now it seems that prize was never truly delivered.

That a *first* work of pure Tamil exists has often been a point of note in the history of the *Taṉittamiḻ Iyakkam*. However, the work with the strongest claim to that title happened to be written by an author demonstrably committed to the prolific use of Sanskritic vocabulary. This posed a problem for that history. While they

[48] Pāmpaṉ 1965, 36: *itu vaṭamoḻi, itu teṉmoḻiy eṉat tērntu koḷpavaṟṟaik kōṭalum, tamiḻil urainaṭaiyil eḻututalum, poruḷ aṟitalum, accoṟkaḷ tamiḻ vaḻakkiliṉitu poruntac ceyyuḷkaḷaic ceytalum, tamiḻiṉ mēmpāṭuṇartalum, kaṭavuḷ vaḻipāṭu pēṇiy uytalum innūlāṯ peṟumpēṟām.*

did not explore the content of the text in depth, authors such as Muttukumaracami, Annamalai, and Tirumāṟaṉ recognized that Pāmpaṉ sought to respond to the challenge of the *Ilakkaṇakkottu*. On the other hand, scholarship never took the step to independently test the purity of Pāmpaṉ's product in the same way it has with Maṟaimalai's writings (only to find them wanting).[49] Indeed, for as little attention as the *CC* has received, one would be hard pressed to identify the *second* Pure Tamil text.

But let us not be resigned to this anticlimax. *Cēntaṉ Centamiḻ* is an optimistic work with deep roots in the premodern grammatical tradition. Pāmpaṉ mobilizes innovations in print, prose, and modern linguistics to answer a reverberating intellectual summons. And when he finally felt prepared to write, he addressed his in-dwelling highest self, his teacher, his God—the only qualified judge of good language. Through rigorous restriction placed on an expressive medium, Pāmpaṉ saw potential for conceptual development—the extent of which I have only touched upon here. Finally, in this moment of linguistic negation, he saw no contradiction to both celebrating his native tongue and reasserting the close bond between South and North.

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[49] Nambi Arooran prepared quite the table comparing the average presence of Sanskritic vocabulary in Maṟaimalai's works across themes and across the first four decades of the 20th century. While the percentages gradually decreased, Arooran notes that age and health interfered. Kailasapathy suggests instead that he "had reached the limits of pure Tamil writing and the inevitable compromise was taking place." Kailasapathy 1979, 41.

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# *Defining Poetry in the* Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram

Victor D'Avella

## Introduction

In this contribution, I will offer a translation and discussion of the first seven *cūttirams* of the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram* (TA) by Taṇṭi, a 12th-century rendering of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* (KĀ) into Tamil, along with its ancient commentary. I have selected this text because it takes up a topic that has fascinated both myself and Professor Annamalai for many years now: the interaction between linguistic theories (broadly defined) in the learned literature of Sanskrit and Tamil.[1] This field of research thrives on reading texts together across languages and with other individuals for mutual understanding, benefit, and enjoyment. Furthermore, the close reading of Tamil and Sanskrit texts in tandem helps us to recover the vibrant, multilingual communities that existed throughout South India, especially during the first centuries of the second millennium when Sanskrit theories and poetic models were being digested to form the new literary languages of Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and the so-called Manipravalam. Tamil too, despite its long history of poetry and theory, took on these ideas to enrich itself. The *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*, which would become the standard work on poetic figures (*aṇi*, *alaṅkāram*) for generations, is but one product of these interactions.

[1] Annamalai 2024.

The translation and annotations below will further add to our understanding of this important moment for Tamil literature.

The specific section of the TA that I have taken up for this article primarily focuses on the categorization of poetry based on the kinds of verse listed in KĀ 1.13, namely *muktaka* "self-contained verse," *kulaka* "group of syntactically related verses," *kośa* "a collection of verses on various topics,"[2] and *saṅghāta* "collection of verses on the same topic." Although Daṇḍin himself does not elaborate these categories—he in fact refuses to do so—Taṇṭi incorporates their definitions into the main body of his work much like his predecessor Puttamittiraṉ, the author of the *Vīracōḻiyam* (VC).[3] On the Sanskrit side, however, we do have access to several commentators on the KĀ who provide precise definitions and in some instances examples that help us to contextualize the Tamil material. From among them, the two earliest, Ratnaśrījñāna and Vādijaṅghāladeva,[4] are of most importance as they are relatively close in time to the VC and TA, living about a century or two earlier. I have also included the remarks of Taruṇavācaspati (late 13th cent., Tamil Country),[5] who, though probably a bit later than the Tamil authors, represents an additional strain of interpretation that is in places germane to the Tamil material. Furthermore, we have old Tamil commentaries on both the TA and VC[6] that provide helpful glosses and examples. With this wealth

[2] I have opted for the spelling *kośa* throughout though, in some sense, *koṣa* may well be more correct.

[3] The VC, a compendious work on grammar, poetics and meter, contains a precis of the KĀ in its fifth chapter, which is much briefer than the TA. It was written a century or so before the TA under the Chola king Vīrarājendra (r. 1063–1069/70). On the VC, see D'Avella 2021 for further detail. Vīrarājendra and his literary representations are discussed at some length in Cox 2016, 60–69.

[4] Both are dated to the 10th century. See Pollock 2005. On Ratnaśrijñāna, see Dimitrov 2016.

[5] See Cox 2023, 294f.

[6] The VC commentary is attributed to one Peruntēvaṉar and shares some of its examples with the TA commentary. The anonymous commentary to the TA not only explains the *cūttirams* but also provides example poems with a gloss. Peruntēvaṉar may well have known the TA, and there are some similarities between the two commentaries, which were no doubt composed in the same intellectual sphere. I briefly note that there are at time significant differences in the commentaries as transmitted in manuscripts. I have discussed one such

of material, my aim is to synthesize the various explanations and detail the relations between the Sanskrit and Tamil texts (both within and across the languages) by presenting a translation of TA 1.1–7 along with its commentary[7] and providing parallels from the KĀ, VC, and the commentaries on KĀ. Notes and annotations follow the translations. I hope that in this way the reader will be able to follow how each author creates his own interpretation of these four categories and works them into a larger system. We will also see where one author appears to be following another or, alternatively, both are aware of the same tradition of exegesis.

Before presenting the translation, I would like to briefly outline the opening of the TA and how it differs from the KĀ. This will also give me the opportunity to present one of the main topics in the section, namely the definition of the Tamil anthology (*tokai*) and its mention in the Sanskrit commentaries of Vādijaṅghāladeva and Taruṇavācaspati under the name *draviḍasaṅghāta* ("Tamil anthology"), one of the rare mentions, or even acknowledgements, in Sanskrit of Tamil literature. As we will see below, the Tamil anthologies are also linked with those of Prakrit through the same literary genre.[8] Both the KĀ and the TA open with an invocation to the goddess Sarasvatī, but thereafter the two texts diverge significantly. Daṇḍin has a delightful discussion about the importance of speech for mankind (3–9) and the purity of its/her body for poetic composition (1.10–11). After a verse extolling metrics, he mentions his first classification of poetry in KĀ 1.13 (*muktaka*, etc.) with no further elaboration on the individual types. Rather he then delves into the definition of the *mahākāvya* (also termed *sargabandha*) by describing its various thematic constituents and other broad, defining features (KĀ 1.14–22). The TA, on the other hand, begins properly with a similar fourfold division of

example from the TA commentary in D'Avella forthcoming. For this article, however, I will follow the text as given in the editions found in the bibliography.

[7] I have not included the glosses on the poem cited under TA 1. I follow the text of Kōpālakiruṭṭiṇamācāryar's edition (1962) and simply transliterate the Tamil without undoing sandhi. Space has been added between words. For the sake of length, I do not reproduce the original Tamil although I do give the original for the other parts of the text.

[8] The link in the ancient commentaries is reminiscent of modern theories on the relation between Prakrit and Tamil poetry.

poetry into *muttakams* and so on, clearly inspired by KĀ 1.13, but defines each of them in the following nine *cūttirams* (TA 1.3–12). Besides providing definitions for categories left undefined by Daṇḍin, the Tamil rendition even incorporates the *peruṅkāppiyam* "great poem" (= Skt. *mahākāvya*) into the last category and thereby turns Daṇḍin's almost trivial categorization into an overarching scheme for all of Tamil literature, the details of which will be made clear below. In my translation and discussion, however, I have had to omit the *cūttiram*s that define the *peruṅkāppiyam* (TA 1.8–11) mainly because of limitations of space and time, but I believe I may also partially justify this neglect by noting that the Tamil version follows the Sanskrit original fairly closely. The final *cūttiram* of the section, TA 1.12, is briefly discussed in the notes.

Since Daṇḍin, who must have had specific notions in mind for the categories mentioned in KĀ 1.13, nevertheless chose not to define the *muktaka*, *kulaka*, *kośa*, and *saṅghāta*, later commentators and translators were free to impose their own definitions based on their individual learning or intellectual projects, some of which may well reflect Daṇḍin's own original conception. The only certainty, however, is that Daṇḍin considers each of the four types of poetry to form part of the *mahākāvya*, and it is for this reason that they are not further discussed (*sargabandhāṃśarūpatvād anuktaḥ padyavistaraḥ*).[9] The commentators on the KĀ and Taṇṭi did find the topic of interest, and I will go into detail about the various differences between them in my notes, but it is worth highlighting a few points at the outset. We may first present KĀ 1.13 alongside its Tamil counterpart:

*muktaka* > *muktakam* ("self-contained stanza")
*kulaka* > *kuḷakam* ("group of connected stanzas")
*kośa* > *tokai-nilai* ("[composition] in the form of a collection")
*saṅghāta* > *toṭar-nilai* ("[composition] in a linked form")

As an initial observation, the first two terms are simply borrowed wholesale into Tamil[10] whereas the latter two are "translated" and

[9] This disinterest in formal categories for poetry brings to mind Daṇḍin's remarks on the *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* in KĀ 1.27f.

[10] Although not likely to be the primary reason, the borrowed terms fit neatly into the phonology of Tamil.

are more complex as we will see. Furthermore, when we begin to look at examples of each category, there is a discrepancy between where the Tamil anthology (*tokai*) fits into the scheme. The Sanskrit commentators believe it is a type of *saṅghāta*, a composition of verses on a particular topic, whereas in the TA and VC it falls under the *tokai-nilai*, the "translation" of *kośa*. Lastly, the *toṭar-nilai* is further subdivided based on whether the linkage is through subject matter (*poruḷ*) or sound (*col*). In the former we have a range of larger poetic compositions—if we follow the commentator—including the *peruṅkāppiyam* (= *mahākāvya*) whereas the latter encompasses the *antāti* genre (TA 1.12), in which a series of poems is linked by the repetition of the same word at the end of one poem and at the beginning of the next. It will be important to keep these differences in mind while reading the translation and notes.

Looking more widely at theories of literature in Sanskrit, one may note that the definition of these categories never took a place of prominence in *alaṅkāraśāstra*, and rarely does a Sanskrit author offer a systematic presentation of them as a main part of his work. There are stray references, for example in the commentary to *Dhvanyāloka* 3.7,[11] and Bhoja produces a lucid set of definitions in *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 8 (p. 471),[12] which Hemacandra more or less follows in *Kāvyānuśāsana* 8.11–13 at the end of his work.[13] The authors of the TA and the VC, however, did feel it necessary to define the four individual types of poetry as the first order of business. This may reflect, I would argue, the importance throughout early Tamil literature of larger poetic structures that we find in the Caṅkam anthologies[14] and then throughout much of the first millennium: the 18 collections of the *Kīḻkaṇakku* including the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, and the devotional poems of the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas such as the *Tēvāram* and *Tivviyappirapantam*.[15] This interest is in fact reflected in other

[11] Ingalls et al. 1990, 419ff.

[12] Ollete 2017, 239 n. 54 mentions yet another discussion in chapter 11 (p. 727 of the edition I cite) in verse.

[13] *Agnipurāna* 337.27 gives a similar list but excludes *saṃghāta*. The ensuing definitions are laconic and not taken into consideration here.

[14] The more complex internal structure of some of the anthologies such as the *Akanāṉūṟu* and the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is not explicitly taken into consideration in the TA.

[15] The *antāti* genre, in which a series of poems is connected by the first word of one poem being the same as the last word of the previous poem, is the definition

works on Tamil poetics such as the roughly contemporaneous compilation, the *Paṉṉiruṗāṭṭiyal* (10th cent. [?]),[16] where a range of compositions are provided based on various criteria including meter. A later text that elaborates the basic scheme in the TA is *Māṟaṉalaṅkāram* 67–70, a work of the late 16th century, that I regretfully cannot treat here even in way of comparison. In Sanskrit, on the other hand, the anthology was much slower to develop as a genre, the two earliest single-author collections being those of Amaru and Bhartṛhari[17] and the first *kośa* not appearing till the 11th century with Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*.[18] Nevertheless, as we will see in the translation below, both texts in both languages contribute a more complete understanding of poetic forms as conceived around the turn of the second millennium.

**Translation**

Chapter 1: On General Matters.

**Verse 1.1 *Kāppu*** (Protective Verse)
*colliṉ kiḻatti melliyal iṇai yaṭi*
*cintai vaittu iyampuval ceyyuṭku aṇiyē*

After placing the pair of naturally soft feet of the mistress of speech in my thoughts, I proclaim the [treatise on] the adornments for poetic composition.

of *col-toṭar-nilai-ceyyuḷ* in TA 1.12 and thereby within the same larger category as the *peruṅkāppiyam*.

[16] I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer who pointed me to this text, where the *toṭarnilaicceyyuḷ* is included in 349–352 as a type of *pā* ("verse"), and there is in fact some overlap with the TA, especially in the inclusion of the *puruṣārtha*. Cf. TA 1.9 (*nāl-poruḷ payakkum naṭai-neṟittu ākit*) and KĀ 1.15 (*caturvargaphalāyattam*). This has also reinforced my initial decision to exclude a detailed discussion of the *peruṅkāppiyam*/ *mahākāvya*, which would require more attention than I have room for at present.

[17] The exact content and date of the centuries of Amaru and Bhartṛhari are far from certain. On the *Amaruśatakam*, see Friš (1951) and Warder (1977, 179–197); on the *Śatakatrayam*, see the introduction to Kosambi (2000).

[18] In discussing the importance of the anthology for Prakrit, Ollett (2017, 102–110) touches upon the same genre in Sanskrit and Tamil with references to some of the Sanskrit commentators on the KĀ discussed in this article.

**Commentary:**
If one asks, "what title does this chapter (*atikāram*)[19] have?" [we respond] that it has the title *aṇiyatikāram* "Chapter on Ornaments" because it teaches the definition of poetic ornaments.
If one asks, "what title does the section at the beginning of this chapter have?" [we respond] that it has the title *Potuviyal* "On General Matters" because it teaches the definitions of both poetry that acquires ornamentation as well as the ornamentation itself.[20]

If one says, "what is the purport of this first *cūttiram* within this section?"[21] [we respond] its purport is to give obeisance to the deity and the topic to be discussed.

**Parallels:**
KĀ 1.1
*caturmukhamukhāmbhojavanahaṃsavadhūr mama |*
*mānase ramatāṃ nityaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||* 1.1 ||

May all-white Sarasvatī always tarry in my mind,
The lady goose among the cluster of lotuses
That are the faces of the four-faced god [Brahmadeva].

[19] Here *atikāram* ("chapter") refers the general topic within the larger framework of Tamil *ilakkaṇam* (grammar broadly defined) that encompasses five *atikārams*: *eḻuttu* "letters," *col* "word," *porul* "poetic subject matter," *yāppu* "meter," and *aṇi/alaṅkāram* "ornamentation, linguistic embellishment." In other words, the TA itself is an *atikāram*.

[20] The *alaṅkārams* proper do not come until the second section, *Porulaṇiyiyal*, but the qualities of poetry (*kuṇam/guṇa*) that are described in the first section and are definitive of the Vaidharbha and Gauḍa styles also add beauty and so can be considered ornaments. Cf. KĀ 2.2. I have discussed these in D'Avella 2020.

[21] The question and answer about the *cūttiram* are formulaic among scholastic commentaries. A closer reflection of the Tamil syntax in English would be "if one says, 'what did the *cūttiram* intend?' it intended to…" The main verb *nutaliṟṟu* is strictly speaking past tense. This opening follows the first *tantiravutti* (Skt. *tantrayukti*), namely, *nutaliyatu aṟital* (Ilampūraṇar/Pērāciriyar) or *nutaliṉ pukutal* (in the preface to the *Naṉṉūl*), whereby one states the general purport of what is about to be discussed. Chevillard (2009) has discussed in detail the various lists of the *tantiravuttis* and their Sanskrit counterparts.

**Notes:**
The Tamil verse only vaguely echoes the Sanskrit original.

**Verse 1.2**
*ceyyuḷ eṉpavai teriv' uṟa virippiṉ*
*muttakam kuḷakam tokai toṭar nilai yeṉa*
*ettiṟattaṉavum īriraṇṭu ākum.*

To understand what is called poetry (*ceyyuḷ*) in detail, whatever sort it may be, it is of four types: *muttakam* "independent verse,"[22] *kuḷakam* "connected verse," *tokai-nilai* "in the form of a collection," and *toṭar-nilai* "in a linked form."

**Commentary:**
If one asks, "what is the purport of this sutra?" [we respond that] above he has said that he will teach the definition of poetic ornamentation; since, only after understanding how poetry is, the ornaments can be stated, its purport is to inform about the names, the types, and the collections of the poetry that receives such ornamentation.

The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*:[23] When one explains in detail what is called "poetry," however one classifies a verse,[24] it is divided into four types: *muttakam*-poetry, *kuḷakam*-poetry, poetry in the form of a collection, and poetry with a connected form.

[22] The word may be derived from *mukta* "freed" with the addition of a further suffix *-ka* such as *kaN* by P. 5.3.87. This is the derivation presented by Abhinavagupta in the *Locana* ad *Dhvanyāloka* 3.7, trans. Ingalls et. al. 1990, 419. As Ingalls notes, this particular *-ka* suffix forces the word to be a designation (*saṃjñā*) for something specific and hence not applicable to any (small) freed thing.

[23] The expression here is *itaṉporul* "its meaning." These words introduce a standard part of a commentary on a Tamil *sūtra*-text that constitutes a basic paraphrase. It is usually abbreviated to *i-pu*. Although the editors have placed it in parentheses, it is usually included without demarcation in the text as found in manuscripts. The paraphrase ends with *eṉṟa vāṟu* "the manner in which one says, how one says," usually abbreviated to *e-ṟu*. I have not included it in my translation.

[24] The commentator here uses the word *pā* "verse, stanza," which can have many different varieties. The term *ceyyuḷ* "poetry" is more general for a poetic composition.

[The *cūttiram*] is explained by connecting *ceyyuḷ* ("poetry, poetic composition") with all four words and *nilai* ("form") with the latter two.

The words *muttakam* and *kuḷakam* are Sanskrit names. The others are Tamil names. How these occur will be understood later.

**Parallels**:
*Kāvyādarśa* 1.13
*muktakaṃ kulakaṃ kośaḥ saṃghāta iti tādṛśaḥ |*
*sargabandhāṃśarūpatvād anuktaḥ padyavistaraḥ* || 1.13 ||

A detailed explanation of verse such as *muktaka* "individual stanza," *kulaka* "connected stanzas," *kośa* "collection," *saṃghāta* "assemblage," has not been stated here because they form part of the great poem.[25]

*Vīracōḻiyam* 178.1f.
*yāppai iyampiṭiṉ muttakamōṭu kuḷakan tokai*
*kāppiyam ām.*

When one speaks of verse, there is the *muttakam*, *kuḷakam*, *tokai*, and *kāppiyam*.

**Notes:**
The four types of poetry listed in TA are easily derived from the Sanskrit terms found in the KĀ, two of them being straightforward borrowings with minor phonetic alterations (*muktakam* > *muttakam* and *kulakam* > *kuḷakam*) and the latter two translations (*koṣaḥ* > *tokai* (*-nilai*) and *saṃghāta* > *toṭar-nilai*). The commentator points out that the full designation for each of these is got by subjoining the word *ceyyuḷ* to all four and *nilai* to the third and fourth: *muttakac-ceyyuḷ* "a poetic composition in a single verse," *kuḷakac-ceyuḷ* "a poetic composition in more than one syntactically connected verses," *tokai-nilaic-ceyyuḷ* "a poetic composition in the form of a thematic collection," and *toṭar-nilaic-ceyyuḷ* "a poetic composition in a (thematically or phonetically) connected form." Within these

[25] The word *sargabandha* is a synonym for *mahākāvya* "great poem, epic." Cf. KĀ 1.14.

four categories we may distinguish between the first two, which are defined in terms of the syntax, and the latter two, which are defined in terms of unifying themes or phonetic structure. The individual definitions will be discussed in the subsequent *cūttirams*, where further differences and similarities vis-à-vis the Sanskrit texts will be noted. At this point, I simply draw the reader's attention to the fact that by leaving out Daṇḍin's dismissal of the *padyavistara*, the authors are now free to explain the four categories.

**Verse 1.3 *Muttakam***
*avaṟṟuḷ*
*muttakac-ceyyuḷ taṉi niṉṟu muṭiyum.*

Among these, a *muttakam*-composition is complete when standing by itself.

**Commentary:**
If one asks, "what is the purport of this *cūttiram*?"[26] [we respond] that its purport is to teach what a *muttakam*-composition is.

The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*: among the four [types] stated above, the one called "*muttakam*-composition" becomes complete when standing alone. For example:

*eṉṉēy cila maṭavār eytaṟk' eḷiyavō*
*poṉṉē yaṉapāyaṉ poṉ neṭum tōḷ muṉṉē*
*taṉayē yeṉṟ' āḷum cayamaṭantai tōḷ ām*
*puṉa-vēy miṭainta poruppu.*

O my gold![27] Is it easy for common women like me to obtain the beautiful, high shoulders of Anapāyaṉ[28]—a veritable mountain

[26] The question is omitted in the edition but present in manuscripts, even if abbreviated to *eṉ - ṉiṉ*. I have added it throughout.

[27] The vocative is an affectionate name for the female speaker's girlfriend. Commentators make the obvious expansion into a simile: *poṉṉai yoppāy* "O you who are like gold!"

[28] A well-known title of King Kulōttuṅka II, r. ca. 1133–1150. Cf. Sastri 1955, 348–351.

covered in lush[29] bamboo [stalks] that are the shoulders of the victorious maiden [= Durgā], who rules thinking "they are mine from long ago"?

**Parallels:**
*Vīracōḻiyam* 178.2:
*muttakan taṉporuḷ ōr kaviyiṉ muṟṟum.*

A *muttakam* has its content complete in one verse.

Commentary ad VC 178:
*muttakam āvatu oru kaviyilē viṉai muṭivatu.*

As for the *muttakam*, it completes an action in a single verse.

**From the KĀ commentaries:**
RŚJ ad KĀ 1.13: *ekaḥ ślokaḥ samāptārthaḥ svatantraḥ ślokāntaranirapekṣa iti muktakam.*

The *muktaka* is "a single verse, semantically complete, independent and without any need for another verse."

VJD ad KĀ 1.13: *muktakam ekaṃ subhāṣitam ity ucyate.*

A *muktaka* is said to be a single well-turned verse.

TV ad KĀ 1.13: *muktakam itarānapekṣam ekaṃ subhāṣitam.*

A *muktaka* is a single well-turned verse that does not require another [verse].

[29] I am not aware of parallels for the compound *puṉa-vēy* "bamboo of the upland fit for dry cultivation," to repeat the definition in the TL s.v. புனம். The dictionaries record two similar compounds with *puṉa(m)* as their first member, *puṉa-malli* "wild jasmine" and *puṉa-murukku/-muruṅku = puracu* "East Indian satin-wood." The commentators take *puṉa-* as suggestive of density (*ceṟinta vēy*, TA 1962 p. 9) or flourishing (*ceḻitta vēy*, TA 1920, p. 3), a logical conclusion of bamboo growing on fertile ground.

**Notes:**
All the cited definitions[30] hinge on the idea of (syntactic) completeness within a single "verse," which in the context of Tamil and Sanskrit is defined in terms of several smaller metrical units and is more akin to a stanza in English as it usually has one or more patterns repeated that are now printed on different lines. Ratnaśrījñāna provides the most detailed definition, and it is crafted so as to include both syntactic as well as semantic independence. The VC also foregrounds semantics (*taṉporuḷ*), but on the whole the Tamil definitions are less explicit although the root *muṟṟu-tal* "to finish, be complete" is often used in linguistic contexts to express completion as in *viṉai-muṟṟu* "completion of the action, finite verb." Across the various literatures of India, such stand-alone verses are loved and recited by heart at the right moment to the delight of all.[31]

**Verse 1.4 *Kuḷakam***
*kuḷakam pala pāṭṭ' oru viṉai koḷḷum.*

A *kuḷakam*, many a verse, has a single action.[32]

**Commentary:**
If one asks, "what is the purport of this *cūttiram*?" [we respond] its purport is to teach what a *kuḷakam* is.

The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*: A *kuḷakam*-composition, being many verses, is completed by taking a single action [= verb]. Because of the special mention of "a single action," you can say that it

[30] There are no doubt others, e.g., by Abhinavagupta ad the *Locana* on *Dhvanyāloka* 3.7, who highlights the fact that syntactic completion is not necessarily enough and that we should not call a verse a *muktaka* within a *mahākāvya* because of its contextual dependence. Cf. Ratnaśrījñāna's *samāptārthaḥ* and the definition in the VC. Ānandavardhana *ad loc.* goes on to describe the power of a well-crafted *muktaka*: "it is well known that a single *muktaka* of the poet Amaru, for example, may flow with a flavor of love . . . equal to that of a whole volume." Trans. Ingalls et al. 1990, 421.

[31] The phenomenon is explored with care in Narayana Rao and Shulman 1998.

[32] The word *viṉai* could also be translated as "verb."

is complete also by taking a single noun. Look out for where it occurs.[33]

**Parallels:**
*Vīracōḻiyam* 178.3:
*vāyppiṟ kuḷakam pala pāṭṭ' oru viṉai.*

A *kuḷakam* of beauty,[34] consists of many verses concluded[35] by one verbal action.

Commentary ad VC 178:
*kuḷakāvatu pala kavi oru viṉaiyāl muṭivatu.*

As for the *kuḷakam*, it is many verses completed with a single action.

**From the KĀ commentaries:**
RŚJ ad KĀ 1.13: *ekakriyādvāreṇa parasparasāpekṣāḥ samāptārthāḥ pratyekam asamāptārthāḥ ślokāḥ kulakam. tadviśeṣa eva yugalakam.*

The *kulaka* is [defined as] verses that are dependent on each other through a single action, syntactically complete [when taken together], syntactically incomplete when taken one by one. The *yugalaka* "pair" is a particular instance of it.

VJD ad KĀ 1.13: *kulakaṃ dviprabhṛtiślokānām ekavākyabhāvena pradhānakriyāyām upasaṃhāraḥ.*

The *kulaka* is a grouping of two or more verses forming a single sentence with a primary action.[36]

[33] In lieu of giving examples, the commentator tells the reader: *itaṟku ilakkiyam vantuḻik kāṇka.* This and similar instructions are used when examples are particularly abundant.

[34] Because of the *kārikai* meter, in which the VC is composed, there are many expletive words such as *vāyppiṉ* "of/with/in favorability/fitness/beauty" that add little to the overall meaning of the sentence.

[35] Supply *muṟṟum* from the preceding line.

[36] Vādijaṅghāladeva cites as an example the beginning of *Kirātārjunīya* 4.27, which starts a *kulakam* of four verses.

TV ad KĀ 1.13: *kulakam ekakriyānvitāni pañcaṣāṇi padyāni.*

The *kulaka* is [defined as] five or six verses containing a single action.

**Notes:**
The definitions of the TA and VC both concur with their Sanskrit counterparts in that the *kuḷakam* consists of several verses that are linked by a single action or finite verb. Again, Ratnaśrījñāna offers the most detailed definition, which is in essence the same as that for the *muktaka* except the sphere of completion is extended to more than one verse. Many Sanskrit sources, however, are more precise in naming such concatenations and give specific names for the groups consisting of two up to five verses.[37] In such schemes *kulaka* is usually five or more, which is what Taruṇavācaspati had in mind. Daṇḍin, however, must have used the term in a less specific sense to denote group of verses of any number greater than one.

**Verse 1.5 *Tokainilai***
*tokainilaic-ceyyu ṭōṉṟak kūṟiṉ*
*oruvaṉ uraittavum pallōr pakarntavum*
*poruḷ iṭaṅ kālan toḻil eṉa nāṉkiṉum*
*pāṭṭiṉum aḷaviṉuṅ kūṭṭiya vākum*

If one speaks clearly about composition in the form of a collection, it, whether spoken by one person or told by many,
is unified by (one of) the (following) four: theme, place, time or action
or it is connected through [the type of] stanza [i.e., meter] or length.

**Commentary**:
If one asks, "what is the purport of this *cūttiram*?" [we reply] its purport is to teach what a composition in the form of a collection is. The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*: If one speaks clearly about "compositions in the form of a collection," they, whether occurring

[37] A group of two is termed *yugala(ka)*, of three a *sandānitaka/viśeṣaka*, of four a *kalāpa(ka)*, and of five or more a *kulaka*. We find them listed and defined as such in the commentary ad DhL 3.7 (with s*andānitaka* instead of *yugalaka* and then *viśeṣaka*) and in ŚṛPra 8, p. 471 (with *sandānitaka*).

as multiple songs (*pāṭṭu*)[38] spoken by one person, or occurring as multiple stanzas spoken by many people, are collected together based on place, based on time, based on deed, based on stanza [i.e., meter], or based on length (of the stanza).
Among these, one that is spoken by a single person is the *Tiruvaḷḷuvappayaṉ* [i.e., the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*]; one that is spoken by many people is the *Netuntokai* [i.e., the *Akanāṉūṟu*]. This is a general feature of all collections. One that is connected by a theme is the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*.[39] One that is connected by a place is the *Kaḷavaḻiṉārpatu*.[40] One that is connected by time is the *Kārnāṟpatu*.[41] One that is connected by action is the *Aintiṇai*.[42] One connected by song [i.e., meter] is the *Kalittokai*.[43] One connected by length is the *Kuṟuntokai*.[44] These are the special features.

Now, because of the special mention of the word *kūṭṭiya* "it is connected," understand that they are collected according to other categories in addition to these six.[45]

[38] Reference is to the specific metrical form of the "song" or stanza.

[39] One of the eight Caṅkam anthologies that contains poems on *puram* or war and heroism. Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 581.

[40] One of the 18 anthologies of the post-Caṅkam *Kīḻkaṇakku*. The 40 poems of the collection by Poykaiyār all pertain to the battleground at Kaḷumalam where the Chola king Ceṅkaṇṇaṉ defeated the Chera king Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai. Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 306f.

[41] Another anthology of the *Kīḻkaṇakku* by Maturai Kaṇṇaṉ Kūttaṉār. Here, however, the unifying theme is the rainy season (*kār*). Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 336.

[42] Presumably the *Aintiṇai Eḻupatu* by Mūvāttiyār, a collection of 70 poems (only 64 extant) divided into the five "landscapes." Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 6. How *toḻil* "action, work, occupation" serves as a unifying theme is not entirely clear, perhaps as the occupation of the man in each *tiṇai*?

[43] All of the poems of this Caṅkam anthology are composed in the *kali* meter. Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 307 and 309.

[44] The poems of this anthology are *kuṟu* "short." Cf. Zvelebil 1995, 386.

[45] Commentators will try to squeeze more meaning out of a *cūttiram* by identifying words that hint there is more than meets the eye, often on the grounds that such words would otherwise be superfluous. This is akin to the idea of a *jñāpaka* in Sanskrit although it is less rigorously applied in Tamil. Cf. Abhyankar and Shukla 1986, s.v. *jñāpaka*.

**Parallels:**
*Vīracōḻiyam* 178.3–4
*maṉṉu tokai / kōppiṟ poruḷaṉa.*

An enduring collection has ordered subject matter.

Commentary ad VC 178.3–4:
*tokainilai yāvatu poruḷ iṭam kālam toḻil ātiyavaṟṟiṟ pala pāṭṭ' oruṅkum tokkatu.*

*poruḷāṟ ṟokkatu puṟanāṉūṟu. iṭattāṟ ṟokkatu kaḷavaḻināṟpatu. kālattāṟ ṟokkatu kārnāṟpatu. toḻilāṟ ṟokkatu aintiṇai. pāṭṭāṟ ṟokkatu kalittokai. aḷavāṟṟokkatu kuṟuntokai.*

As for the [composition] in the form of a collection, it is something collected together in which many songs have been grouped on the basis of theme, time, action, etc.

[Examples:] *Puṟanāṉūṟu* has been collected on the basis of topic. *Kaḷavaḻināṟpatu* has been collected on the basis of place. *Kārnāṟpatu* has been collected on the basis of time. *Aintiṇai* has been collected on the basis of action; *Kalittokai* has been collected on the basis of song (meter). *Kuṟuntokai* has been collected on the basis of (verse-) length.[46]

**From the KĀ commentaries:**
RŚJ ad KĀ 1.13: *nānābhittayo bhinnakriyāḥ svatantrāḥ ślokāḥ kośavat sthāpitāḥ kośaḥ.*

A *kośa* is [defined as] independent verses that have different subject matters,[47] different actions [i.e., verbs] arranged like in a treasure chest.

[46] See my notes to these texts mentioned above in the TA commentary. This is one of the many instances where we find overlap between the Peruntēvaṉar's commentary and that on the TA.

[47] I understand *nānābhittayaḥ* to refer to the fact that the verses have different topics.

VJD ad KĀ 1.13: *kośo 'py anekabhinnārthagāthāgrathitaḥ gāthākośaḥ*[48] *kṛṣṇasāraḥ tārāgaṇa iti.*

As for the *kośa*, it is composed of verses on many different topics [for example] the *Gāthākośa*,[49] the *Kṛṣṇasāra*, and *Tārāgaṇa*.[50]

TV ad KĀ 1.13: *kośo nānākartṛkasubhāṣitaratnasamudrayaḥ.*

A *kośa* is an ocean of well-turned, jewel-like verses with various authors.

**Notes:**
The Sanskrit commentators define the *kośa* as expected: a collection of *muktakas* on various themes and, possibly, by various authors. Although Taruṇavācaspati alone explicitly mentions multiple authors, the other two do not insist upon such a restriction, a fact underscored by the inclusion of the *Tāragaṇa*. Vādijaṅghāladeva, however, makes an interesting lexical choice. Up to this point he has consistently used *śloka* to refer to "verse" but now switches to *gāthā*, a word that strongly suggests Prakrit poetry. Moreover, two of the example-texts he mentions, the *Gāhākośa* and *Tārāgaṇa*, are well-known Prakrit anthologies (the third might have been as well for all we know). Vādijaṅghāla could have closely associated the *kośa* with Prakrit poetry, which, as Ollett (2017, 103) discusses, has been a part of its literature from the very beginning. Whether

[48] I tentatively follow the reading of Upadhye 1974, 70, where *kathā* is twice changed to *gāthā*. Cf. Ollett 2017, 103 with n. 53. Although *gāthākośaḥ* ("collection of [Prakrit] verses") is certainly correct, one must also resolve the emendation of *kathā* > *gāthā* in the compound *-gāthāgrathitaḥ* ("composed of [Prakrit] verses") with Vādijaṅghāla's subsequent comments, translated below, that there is a *kośa* within the *Mahābhārata* because it has *anekakathāprapañca* "a wide variety of various stories." Although the original reading *-kathāgrathitaḥ* would not be an entirely suitable description of the Prakrit anthologies, perhaps it is nonetheless better to retain the first *kathā*.

[49] Most likely a reference to Hāla's *Sattasaī*. In Prakrit, *Gāhākoso* appears to be a much older name for the anthology than *Sattasaī*. Cf. Chiarucci 2014, viii and 194n5.

[50] The *Kṛṣṇasāraḥ* is not otherwise known. The *Tārāgaṇa*, or *Tārāyaṇa* in Prakrit, is an anthology of poems attributed to Bappabhaṭṭi and compiled by Śaṅkuka, likely a close friend of the author. For further details, see Bhayani's introduction to his edition of the *Tārāgaṇa*.

or not Vādijaṅghāla wished to exclude, or had no examples of, the *kośa*-genre in Sanskrit literature is difficult to say for certain, but he does seem to exclude *śatakas* ("centuries") based on his inclusion of the *Sūryaśataka* under the *saṃghāta* (see below). If, indeed, the *śatakas* such as those of Bhartṛhari and Amaru do not count as *kośas*, then Sanskrit literature, based on this evidence, lacks the *kośa* entirely till the second millennium and the concept was then introduced on the model of Prakrit.

Both Taṇṭi and Puttamittiraṉ identify the *kośa* with the Tamil *tokai*, or more specifically the *tokai-nilaic-ceyyuḷ*, in which verses are collected on the basis of some unifying feature of theme or form, a definition that patently clashes with that of the Sanskrit commentators and a discrepancy that I will take up again in the notes to the following *cūttiram*. Nonetheless, our Tamil authors saw this as the appropriate place within the Sanskrit śāstric system to incorporate one of the most important genres of their literature. One might further argue that its importance is underscored by the use of a Tamil word instead of retaining the Sanskrit original as with the previous two categories. In regard to the unifying factors of the *tokai*, the TA improves upon the VC by producing a list into which many of the Caṅkam anthologies may be categorized as the examples demonstrate. In the TA commentary are included four of the older Caṅkam collections and four from the *kīḻkaṇakku* with the famed *Tirukkuṟaḷ* at the head. The VC commentator, Peruntēvaṉar, may well have drawn on the TA. Although he leaves out the division into single and multiple authors, his examples, leaving aside the first two, are identical to those in the TA commentary and in the same order. Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish a relative chronology between Peruntēvaṉar and the TA, but such instances as these demonstrate that they were written in the same scholastic community.

**Verse 1.6 *Toṭarnilai***
*poruliṉum colliṉum iruvakai toṭarnilai.*

[A composition] with a linked form is of two types: based on content and based on sound.

**Commentary:**
If one says, "what is the purport of this sutra," [we reply] its purport is to make known how poetry with a linked form occurs.

The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*: a composition with a linked form is divided into two categories: linkage based on content and linkage based on sound. Therefore, it is divided into poetry with a form linked through meaning and poetry with a form linked through sound.

Because of the excess[51] in using the word *vakai* "category" and not just *iraṇṭu* "two," understand that there is a third type that is linked on the basis of both meaning and sound.

**Notes:**
This *cūttiram* only further divides the *toṭar-nilai* ("linked composition") into two subcategories, a division not made by any Sanskrit author for the *saṃghāta* to the best of my knowledge. As we will see below, this allows for the inclusion of two important genres in post-Caṅkam Tamil literature, the *peruṅkāppiyam* and the *antāti*. I will present and discuss the Sanskrit material in conjunction with the following *cūttiram*, where we learn about the first subcategory.

Regarding the Tamil rendering of *saṃghāta* with *toṭar*, I believe Taṇṭi made a good effort to reflect the semantics of the Sanskrit complex verb *sam* + *han*[52] "to join together, unite," which implies a more intimate connection or linkage between the elements of a group than *kośa* or *tokai*.

I have omitted the *cūttiram* on the *col-toṭar-nilai*, TA 1.12, as it occurs after the lengthy description of the *peruṅkāppiyam*, but in it Taṇṭi defines it as the *antāti* (*ceyyuḷ antāti coṛ-ṟoṭar-nilaiyē*), the ordering principle of a fair number of Tamil works, the most famous of which is probably the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḻvār.

[51] Here the commentator more clearly indicates that the additional meaning results from the superfluity of the word *vakai*. He believes that one could have expressed the same idea with just the word *iraṇṭu*.

[52] √*han* is transformed into *ghāt-* before various suffixes.

**Verse 1.7 *Poruḷ-totar-nilai***
*peruṅkāppiyam-ē kāppiyam eṉṟāṅku*
*iraṇṭā iyal-um poruḷ-totar-nilai-ē.*

Composition with a form linked through subject matter has a twofold nature:
The great poem (*peruṅkāppiyam*) and the poem (*kāppiyam*).

**Commentary:**
[If one says, "what is the purport of this *cūttiram*," we reply] its purport is to divide [into categories] and teach the composition with a form linked through meaning from among those [just listed].

The Meaning of the *Cūttiram*: Poetry with a form linked through meaning occurs in two ways: the great poem and the poem.

Because the teacher (Taṇṭi) has added a qualifying[53] word in the word *peruṅkāppiyam* "great poem" it is gathered that *kāppiyam* "poem" is something small. This is what is understood based on careful investigation. Although it is called a small poem it is without fault.

Or rather, if one asks, "don't we consider it to be appropriate for him [Tolkāppiyar] who says, 'understand that (TC 1.60c) a selected utterance has the capacity to also express its class,'[54] that [the utterance] could also *not* express [its class]?" [in response we say that] he [Tolkāppiyar] has spoken in this way because one can understand a single object on the basis of a class and one can also not understand many objects on the basis of a class. Given that this is so, if one says, don't we say that (TC 1.18c) "the use of

[53] I.e., the adjective *purum* "great, large," equivalent to Sanskrit *mahā-*, in the word *mahākāvya*.

[54] The *cūttiram*, somewhat enigmatic, is taken to mean that a selected utterance can imply something about other members of the same class. Cēṉāvaraiyar gives the example that if we say a man who has performed virtuous deeds goes to heaven, then that same utterance can also imply that a man who has committed sins goes to hell. See further the discussion in Subramanya Sastri (1937, 47) and the complete translation of Cēṉāvaraiyar's commentary on the *cūttiram* in Chevillard 1996, 135f.

a noun with a qualifier that does not point to a class . . . ,"[55] [in response] we say that these are ways of expressing some things that are suited to poetic composition: this is not like that.[56]

Given that this is so, if one asks, "isn't it the case that all poetry (*kāppiyam*)[57] is what is produced by a poet (*kavi*)? So, why is poetry said to have a form linked through topic?" Understand that even though all things that appear in the mud could acquire the name *paṅkayam* (Skt. *paṅkaja*) "mud born," that name only applies to the lotus and in a similar way the term *kāppiyam* only applies to a composition with a form linked through subject matter.[58]

[55] The *cūttiram* continues: "is not the way of ordinary language but rather the way of poetry." The meaning is that in ordinary language one should not use qualifiers/adjectives that do not signify that the qualified object belongs to a more particular class. For example, one would not usually say "the red sun" because the use of the adjective "red" does indicate that the sun is part of any other more specific class (*iṉam*) as the sun is always red and, in any case, only refers to one object. See Chevillard (1996, 67ff.) for a translation of Cēṉāvaraiyar's commentary and further discussion of the *cūttiram*.

[56] The discussion is rather scholastic and opaque. The commentator wishes to explore the relation between *peruṅkāppiyam* and *kāppiyam*. In doing so, he draws in two *cūttirams* that pertain to the use of adjectives (*paṇpu* "quality") with nouns. TC 1.18c declares that we cannot use "superfluous" adjectives except in poetry, whereas TC 1.60c says that a selected expression can suggest something about the other members of the group, somewhat along the lines of Sanskrit *arthāpatti*. This logic appears to be used to justify that the *kāppiyam* alone should refer to the category of small (*ciṟitu*) poems. I admit, however, that I don't fully understand all the details of the commentator's remarks.

[57] Here it is important to keep the original word *kāppiyam* in mind since it is derived ultimately from the Sanskrit word *kavi*, "poet."

[58] The discussion is not uncommon in Sanskrit sources and is usually brought up to demonstrate that conventional usage (*rūḍhi*) can restrict the application of a word from applying to all objects that fit its meaning as determined by its constituent parts or derivation. In Sanskrit, the word *kāvya* is derived from *kavi* "poet" with the suffix *ṢaÑ* by P. 5.1.124 and means the act (*karman*) of a poet. Hence, anything that a poet does could, according to the word's derivation, be termed *kāvya*. It is only the convention (in Tamil) that restricts *kāppiyam* to a poetic composition with a linked form and not any poetic composition. Note that strictly speaking, Pāṇinian commentators take *karman* in P. 5.1.124 to mean *kriyā* "action" and not in the technical sense of "patient" or "what is done," which is what the Tamil implies. Cf. *Kāśikāvṛtti* ad loc.

Because of the excess in stating *iyalum* "nature" in addition to *iraṇṭu* "two,"[59] understand that the ten-fold *nāṭakacāti* and the *kōvai* are included among the compositions with a form linked by subject. These are what make up the ten-fold *nāṭakaccāti*: *nāṭakam*, *pirakaraṇam* [Skt. *prakaraṇa*], *pāṇam* [Skt. *bhāṇa*], *pirakacanam* [Skt. *prahasana*], *ṭidam* [Skt. *ḍima*], *viyāyōkam* [Skt. *vyāyoga*], *camavākāram* [Skt. *samavakāra*], *vīti* [Skt. *vīthi*], *aṅkam* [Skt. *aṅka*], *īhāmirukam* [Skt. *īhāmṛga*].[60] The *kōvai* is *tamiḻmuttaraiyar-kōvai*, etc.[61] Moreover, because of this bit [i.e., the hint], understand that the three [types of poetry]—the *muttakam*, etc. mentioned above—also have the occurrence as being a part of poetry with a form linked by subject matter.[62]

**Parallels:**
The following are not exactly parallels, but they are the fourth element in the similar lists in the *Kāvyādarśa* and *Vīracōḻiyam*.

*Vīracōḻiyam* 178.4

*kāppiya mā nūl koṭiyiṭaiyē.*
*kāppiyam* is a great book,[63] O vine-wasted girl![64]

[59] As discussed in n. 45, the commentator is trying squeeze out more information by claiming that the word *iyalum* would be superfluous if it did not hint that there are in fact more varieties of *poruḷ-toṭar-nilai*.

[60] The list derives from *Daśarūpa* 1.8.

[61] The *Tamiḻmuttaraiyar-kōvai* is a lost work in praise of the Muttaraiyar dynasty that ruled from Thanjavur in the 7th to 9th centuries CE. Another reference to it is found in the commentary to the *Yāpparuṅkalam*, a work on metrics composed around the 11th century. Cf. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1956, 89.

[62] This last sentence is an obvious nod to the Sanskrit original but gives the impression of being tacked on.

[63] The word *nūl* is an odd choice to describe a work of poetry since it is more often used to refer to a treatise, but no doubt what is meant is the *peruṅkāppiyam* = Skt. *mahākāvya*. The translation "book" is intended to reflect the general nature of the Tamil word. Note that neither Puttamittiraṉ nor Peruntēvaṉar use the term *peruṅkāppiyam*, but the latter once uses *kāppiyam* on its own to refer ad VC 129 to the *Kuṇṭalakēci*, a lost work but generally numbered among the five *peruṅkāppiyams*.

[64] Verses in the *kārikai* meter are conceived of as being addressed to a lady (*kārikai*). Hence such vocatives.

Commentary ad VC 178.4
*kāppiyamāvatu perunūlām.*

As for the *kāppiyam*, it is a big book.

**From the KĀ commentaries:**
RŚJ ad KĀ 1.13: *ekāṃ bhittiṃ prāvṛḍādikāṃ varṇayituṃ samudāyena pravṛttā bhinnakriyāḥ ślokāḥ saṃghātaḥ.*

An assemblage is [defined as] verses that have different actions [verbs] employed collectively in order to describe a single subject matter such as the monsoon.

VJD ad KĀ 1.13: *saṅghāto 'py asargabandho 'bhimataikavastunirūpaṇapravaṇaḥ yathā draviḍasaṅghātameghadūtasūryaśatakādiḥ. etau kośasaṅghatāv api sargabandhāṃśarūpau. tathā bhārate anekakathāprapañco himavatparvatavarṇanaṃ ceti kośasaṅghātau.*

And as for the assemblage, it tends toward describing a single, chosen topic but is not a *mahākāvya*, for example the Dravidian "assemblages," the "Cloud Messenger",[65] the "Century for the Sun".[66] Both of these, the collection and the assemblage, can be part of a *mahākāvya*. For example, a collection and an assemblage are in the *Mahābhārata* since there are a wide range of various stories and a description of the Himalaya mountain.[67]

TV ad KĀ 1.13: *saṅghāta ekārthaviṣayaḥ ekakartṛkaḥ padyasaṅghātaḥ śaratsaṅghātadramiḍasaṅghātādivat.*

[65] Kālidāsa's famous poem, sometimes referred to as a *khaṇḍakāvya*. Cf. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 6.329ab.

[66] A hundred stanzas composed by Mayūra in the 7th century and dedicated to the sun.

[67] As noted above, this statement is difficult to reconcile with Upadhye's emendation to Vādijaṅghāla's definition of the *kośa*, especially if *kathā* is twice changed to *gāthā*.

The assemblage is an assemblage of verses that has a single topic and a single author like the Autumn assemblage,[68] the Dravidian assemblages, etc.

**Notes:**
In dealing with the final type of poetic composition, the Sanskrit commentators had to distinguish two terms that both refer to something like a collection. As we have seen, the definitions given for the *kośa* emphasize a lack of thematic continuity (*nānābhitti*, *anekabhinnārtha*) and, in the eyes of Taruṇavācaspati at least, multiple authors (*nānākartṛka*). This accords well with what we find in the extent Sanskrit *kośa* and the collections of Prakrit verses such as Hāla's *Sattasaī* and the *Tārāgaṇa*. It also suits the metaphor: a treasury can contain a variety of different precious objects. The second type of collection, the *saṃghāta*, must then be defined in opposition to the previous type by unity and closer connectivity. Each of the commentators highlights these features by altering a plurality to a singular: *nānābhittayaḥ* > *ekaṃ bhittim*, *anekabhinnārtha-* > *abhimataikavastu-*, *nānākartṛka-* > *ekakartṛkaḥ*. Yet there are some differences between the explanations. Ratnaśrījñāna has formulated his definition to allow for any collection of verses that focus on one topic such as the monsoon. A *saṅghāta* thus defined can easily be incorporated into a larger work such as a *mahākāvya*. Vādijaṅghāla likewise emphasizes that the *saṅghāta* should treat only a single topic but specifically includes that it is not a *sargabandha* (=*mahākāvya*), a condition that is intended to counter any objection that a *mahākāvya* also has a single topic.[69] He also adds examples, which are enormously helpful in understanding how he envisioned the category in practice. In addition to the Dravidian assemblages (= the Caṅkam anthologies but perhaps also the bhakti anthologies *Tivviyappirapantam*, *Tēvāram*, etc.), he lists the minor lyric poem of Kālidāsa, the *Meghadūta*, and Mayūra's *Sūryaśataka*. We may infer two points from this list: a *saṅghāta* is primarily thought of as an

[68] This is unlikely meant to refer to a specific work.

[69] The obvious problem is that there are always multiple ways to unite or divide a collection of objects depending on the features selected.

independent work on one theme and that the *śataka* genre was assigned to this category and excluded from the *kośa* because of its focus on a single topic. In bringing his commentary to a close, Vādijaṅghāla remains mindful of Daṇḍin's declaration that these categories form part of the *mahākāvya*. Accordingly, he shows that the *Mahābhārata* contains both the *kośa* and the *saṅghāta*. The latter could be a description of the Himalaya (a single topic), whereas the former is satisfied by the inclusion of a wide range of stories (*anekakathāprapañcaḥ*), a description that seems at odds with his earlier definition of *kośa*.[70] Lastly, I would make the general observation that works like the *Meghadūta* also evince a sonic linkage or concatenation between verses through the repetition of lexemes as has been noted by modern scholars.[71] Although none of the ancient commentators note this phenomenon, it may have contributed, even if subconsciously, to the term *saṅghāta*.

The Tamil authors of course had a more obvious type of verbal repetition in mind with the *col-toṭar-nilai-ceyyuḷ*, that is, the *antāti*. We can now fully see how the Sanskrit commentators and Tamil authors diverge in explaining the last two terms. As laid out above in the introduction, the Sanskrit commentators take *saṅghāta* to include the Tamil (*draviḍa*) anthologies as well as other short works (by a single author) on a single theme. The Tamil authors, however, include the anthologies under the previous category of *tokai* (= Skt. *kośa*) and use the final category to encapsulate a range of compositions linked either by a particular subject matter or sound (i.e., the *antāti*). The difference lies in the two concepts expressed by the verbs *tokutal* "to collect" (whence *tokai*) and *toṭartal* "to link": in the first instance we have various poems with the same topic or theme but are not dependent upon one another; there is no progression or closer interconnection. The linked composition, on the other hand, requires that the poems relate closely to one another through mutual dependence and by furthering a narrative or a particular topic. Accordingly, under the umbrella of *poruṭ-ṭoṭar-nilaic-ceyyuḷ* both Taṇṭi and Puttamittiraṉ

[70] If one retains *kathā* in the definition of the *kośa*, this latter statement makes a bit more sense, but then the definition of the *kośa* is rather odd unless we understand *kathā* very loosely to include longer stories as well as vignettes.

[71] Salomon 2016 studies this feature in a number of texts.

include the *peruṅkāppiyam* (= Skt. *mahākāvya*), the most complex form of poetry in Sanskrit and Tamil literature, in sharp contrast to Vādijhaṅgāla, who makes sure to exclude the genre from the *saṃghāta*.[72] In other words, the authors of the TA and VC take the fourth category listed in KĀ 1.13 as another type of poetry that includes the *mahākāvya* despite the fact that Daṇḍin himself has said these four kinds of poetry are not discussed because they themselves are *part* of the *mahākāvya* (*sargabandhāṃśarūpatvād anuktaḥ padyavistaraḥ*). This must have been a conscious decision on the part of the Tamil authors to rework the KĀ in a manner that retains the four basic categories listed in KĀ 1.13 but also forces them to encompass all the major poetic genres.

Although the TA and VC both agree on the inclusion of the *peruṅkāppiyam* within this variety of composition, the TA adds a second type of *poruṭ-ṭoṭar-nilaic-ceyyuḷ*, the plain *kāppiyam*, an addition that caused the commentator some distress based on his discussion. Nevertheless, he is certainly right in concluding that *kāppiyam* must refer to a variety of other smaller but by no means faulty works of poetry. It is further discussed in TA 1.10, where it is said to not include a full treatment of all the *puruṣārthas* such as we would have in the *peruṅkāppiyam*. Given this open category of lesser poetry, it is not surprising that he goes on to propose the inclusion of the *kōvai* and ten types of drama based on a hint we can derive from the seemingly superfluous use of *iyalum*. Regardless of the means, the inclusion signals the importance of two more types of poetry, the Tamil *kōvai* and *nāṭakam*. The former, an important genre of post-Caṅkam literature, refers to a collection of poems that illustrates the various stages of love but, unlike the earlier anthologies, in a connected narrative.[73] It is surprising to find it only mentioned in passing but still fits well into the definition of a composition linked through content. The various types of *nāṭakam*, however, reflect the Sanskritic theory of drama as found in the influential tenth-century work of Dhanaṃjaya, the *Daśarūpa(ka)*.

[72] One wonders if he includes the caveat *asargabandhaḥ* in his definition of the *saṃghāta* to push back against other authors who chose to include the *mahākāvya* in the category.

[73] See Zvelebil 1995, 359 for a brief description. The genre emerges at the start of the 8th century with the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* and became thereafter very popular.

Although these two genres of literature are no doubt important, their brief mention at this point comes across as an afterthought and begs for greater integration into a theory of taxonomy for Tamil literature.

We may now step back and reflect on the relation between the Tamil and Sanskrit texts. The situation is slightly complex since we are dealing with a combination of root-texts (KĀ, VC, TA) and commentaries (three on the KĀ and one each on the TA and VA). Although several questions present themselves, I would like to focus on intertextuality (who is reading whom) and the possible motives for why the VC and TA (and their commentators) have modified the scheme presented in the KĀ and its commentaries. Among the possible relationships between our authors, we only know for certain that Puttamittiraṉ and Taṇṭi read the KĀ;[74] Taṇṭi likely read the VC, but the evidence is rather circumstantial. Since they are both rendering the same Sanskrit text into Tamil, similarities would inevitably arise even without any link between them. In the section analyzed here, we can note that the treatment of the four categories of poetry is somewhat similar in that the first two Sanskrit terms (*muktaka* and *kulaka*) are retained in Tamil (*muttakam* and *kuḷakam*) and the third (*kośa*) appears as *tokai*. The definitions themselves, however, show fewer similarities. In the VC the *muttakam* is defined as having a complete *poruḷ* ("sense"), a word that is absent in TA 1.3. The definition of the *kuḷakam*, on the other hand, is almost identical in both texts:

TA 1.4 *kuḷakam pala pāṭṭ' oru viṉai koḷḷum.*
VC 178.3 *vāyppiṙ kuḷakam pala pāṭṭ' oru viṉai.*

But the similarities dissipate in the next two definitions. Most striking is that in the VC the final category is simply given as *kāppiyam* (the *peruṅkāppiyam* being implied), whereas Taṇṭi, though eventually including the *peruṅkāppiyam* here, has captured the semantics of *saṃghāta* with *toṭar-nilai-ceyyuḷ* and offers two subtypes (*poruḷ* and

[74] Cf. VC 143 where Taṇṭi (= Daṇḍin) is named as the author the text that Puttamittiraṉ is following. The TA makes no allusion to its Sanskrit counterpart but see Wilden 2021 for a discussion of a *pāyiram* ("introduction") found in some editions and manuscripts of the TA.

*col*) with the first subtype being further divided (*peruṅkāppiyam* and *kāppiyam*). Despite the differences, both authors appear to be following a tradition[75] that differs significantly from what we find in the KĀ and its commentaries where the *saṃghāta* cannot be a *mahākāvya* as Vyādijaṅghāla reminds us. This is compelling evidence that the TA knew the VC, but a more extensive comparison between the VC and TA is still needed to untangle the relation between the two texts.[76]

Turning to the Sanskrit commentaries and the TA/VC, there is good evidence that all of the authors had similar notions of the *muktaka* and *kulaka* in mind. The former is independent and complete by itself (*taṉi niṉṟu muṭiyum*, *svatantraḥ*); the latter a collection of verses that have a single verb (*oṟi viṉai*, *ekakriyā*) and are only complete when taken together. From this we need not infer that Taṇṭi or Puttamittiraṉ read these particular Sanskrit commentaries, though chronology makes this possible, but that they were drawing on common ideas in circulation, a scenario that other texts like the *Dhvanyāloka*, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, and *Agnipurāṇa* attest to.[77] When we come to the last two categories, however, the differences belie a conscious reworking. Two factors likely led to this divergence. On the one hand the *kośa*, that is, a collection of verses on *various* themes like the *Sattasaī*, *Tārāgaṇa*, or the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*, was foreign to Tamil literature, the closest example being the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*[78] and an observation supported by Vādijaṅghāla, who includes the Tamil anthologies under the *saṃghāta* not the *kośa*. On the other hand, it had a rich tradition of anthologizing poems based a number of criteria beginning with the Caṅkam corpus and its grand division between love (*akam*) and heroic (*puram*) poetry with further sub-criteria such length and *tiṇai* ("poetic landscape"). Accordingly, it was possible

[75] Does the innovation, *saṃghāta* = (*peruṅ*)*kāppiyam*, originate with the VC? Did it have a Sanskrit authority?

[76] Cf. D'Avella forthcoming, where I discuss the lists of the *citrakāvya/ cittirakkavi* figures in the KĀ, VC, and TA. The same problem remains for the commentators on the VC and TA.

[77] See the Introduction to this essay.

[78] The size (over 1,300 poems) and range of topics included in the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* make it unique in Tamil literature.

to dispense with the notion of the Sanskrit *kośa*, a collection of poems on various topics, and instead focus on anthologizing based on a unifying theme as in the Sanskrit *saṃghāta*. The TA and the Tamil commentators reflect the importance of this literary activity by offering a number of divisions for grouping poems as well as examples. It is therefore not surprising that the commentator on the VC specifically targets the short definition of the *tokai* for additional elaboration and exemplification to a degree surpassing the other three categories. The detail the Tamil authors give to the possible categories is highlighted when compared with the Sanskrit commentators who do not spill any ink on listing unifying themes for the *saṅghāta*.

By creating the *tokai* as the only category for collections of poems based on a particular unifying feature, Taṇṭi was free to further exploit the fourth category to better encapsulate the practices of Tamil poets. Although *toṭar* well reflects the semantics of *saṃghāta*, the *toṭar-nilaic-ceyyuḷ* encompasses, as outlined above, three important larger poetic forms in Tamil (and more if we follow the TA commentator), none of which explicitly fall under the Sanskrit *saṃghāta*.[79] The *peruṅkāppiyam*, the *kāppiyam* (left undefined but includes drama and the *kōvai* following the commentator), and the *antāti* were major genres in early second millennium Tamil literature and ones that were now being incorporated into a new taxonomy. Recall that Taṇṭi's predecessors, Puttamittiraṉ and Peruntēvaṉar, left the fourth category at *(peruṅ)kāppiyam* without mentioning the remaining genres. Although crude, this reworking of the original four Sanskrit terms makes a first step toward a theory of Tamil literature that would be further elaborated in later works such as the *Māṟaṉalaṅkāram*.

## Conclusions

In this small contribution to the study of Sanskrit and Tamil interactions, I have endeavoured to advance our understanding of how the material of the KĀ was transformed into the TA based not on semantic translations but by taking into account literary

[79] One might speculate that the Sanskrit commentators would have included the *kōvai* under *saṃghāta*.

developments in both languages and the subsequent needs of Tamil literature. Although my focus was on a fairly small selection of *cūttirams*, they nonetheless represent the range of decisions the authors had to make. Where the KĀ entirely ignored the definitions of the different types of verse, the TA (and to a lesser degree the VC) defined them by drawing on definitions circulating in Sanskrit poetics and attested in the commentarial literature on the KĀ. Furthermore, the categories themselves did not remain isomorphic in translation. As I have shown, the *muktaka* and *kulaka* map easily onto the "Tamil" *muttakam* and *kuḷakam*, but the equivalents of *kośa* and *saṃghāta*, the *tokai* and *toṭarnilai*, are effectively new categories that better represent the Tamil genres of Taṇṭi's time including not only the Tamil anthologies (*tokai*) but also the post-Caṅkam Tamil literature like the *peruṅkāppiyam* (*poruḷ-toṭar-nilai*) and the *antāti* (*col-toṭar-nilai*).

*Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| KĀ | *Kāvyādarśa* |
| TL | *Tamil Lexicon* |
| P. | Pāṇinian *sūtra* from the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* as given in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* |
| RŚJ | Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary on the KĀ, the *Ratnaśrīṭīkā* |
| ŚṛPra | *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* |
| TA | *Taṇṭiyalakāram* |
| TV | Taruṇavācaspati's commentary on the KĀ, *Vivṛti* |
| TC | *Tolkāppiyam Collatikāram* |
| VC | *Vīracōḻiyam* |
| VJD | Vādijaṅghāladeva's commentary on the KĀ, the *Śrutānupālinī* |

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# Part II
# Linguistics, Grammar, and the Social Life of Language

# *Class-Changing Verbs in Classical Tamil Literature: A First Exploration*

Eva Wilden

## Introduction

The fact that old Tamil verbs can be irregular will not surprise anybody. In fact, the usual grouping into 12 verb classes, as observed in the Tamil Lexicon (TL), is supplemented with a 13th class for the irregular verbs.[1] The verbs in this last class are, like in most languages, some of the most frequent ones. Yet this is not all that can be said on the subject. Already in the TL, when, directly after the lemma heading of a verb, the verb class is mentioned, we occasionally find an entry that records more than one verb class, for example with the verb *uḷar-tal*, registered for classes 4 & 5. The phenomenon of class migration is very familiar also from other languages, such as Sanskrit, but, to my knowledge, it has not been described in detail for Tamil. This felicitation volume offered to

[1] Whatever the Tamil verb classes may be as a concept, they are extremely useful in describing the basic morpho-phonetic patterns of the Tamil verb. Both Fabricius (preface 3rd ed.) and the TL (vol. I, preface p. lvii) ascribe the basic classification of weak, medium, and strong verbs to Karl Graul (Graul [1855] 1969). Some users apply Roman numbers with subclasses for different sandhi cases; some, like the TL, apply Arabic numbers. Both in parallel can be seen in Beythan's *Praktische Grammatik der Tamilsprache* (1943, 84f.). Since most dictionaries make use of this system in order to classify their verb entries, I continue to teach my students on the basis of this classification (see Wilden 2018, first folding table).

Professor E. Annamalai appears as a befitting occasion for making a tiny step in furthering our knowledge of Tamil morphology, a subject that has always been close to his heart. To the reader of early Classical Tamil poetry, in particular the Caṅkam corpus, it is obvious that the TL merely scratches the surface. Migration is in fact far more frequent than the lexicon suggests and may include more than two classes. So, V. S. Rajam for one stayed away from naming verb classes at all, giving information instead on how the perfective stem was formed (Rajam 1992, 495–500).

I would not want to go quite as far as that. Let us begin with the question as to the various ways in which Tamil verbs may be irregular. By "irregular" at this point I mean simply that they either produce forms that belong to more than one paradigm, or that they produce more than one form for a particular slot in a paradigm, such as two types of absolutive (*ceytu-viṉaiyeccam*). Currently I have identified five types, four of which are of immediate relevance to the current question:

- "irregular" verbs ~ verbs with multiple stems: *kāṇṭal – kāṇpeṉ, kaṇṭēṉ*
- verbs with variation inside the class: *taḻuvutal – taḻuvi/ taḻīi*
- irregular forms: *toku(t)tal – tokaii*
- verbs with spelling variants: *ñekiḻtal/ nekiḻtal*
- class-changing verbs

The second question to be asked is in what context are those verbs irregular. In order to finally get away from impressionistic statements based on selected examples, I propose instead to do statistics for a well-defined corpus, namely the earliest *akam* portion of the *Eṭṭuttokai*, consisting in *Kuṟuntokai* (KT), *Naṟṟiṇai* (NA), and *Akanāṉūṟu* (AN). The reason for this choice is that we have reliable critical editions of these three anthologies, which also record all remaining meaningful variants.[2]

Now, the verbs generally (in grammar books and dictionaries) qualified as "irregular" are, as mentioned, the ones identified as

[2] These correspond to *Naṟṟiṇai* 2008; *Kuṟuntokai* 2010; and Wilden 2018; the two latter books of the *Akanāṉūṟu*, *Maṇimiṭaippavaḻam* and *Nittilakkōvai*, are not yet available in print, but are completed and will soon be added to the Tamilex web page.

belonging to class 13. Among these, eight verbs are attested in our corpus, namely *ā/ āku-tal*, *kāṇ-tal*, *cā-tal*, *taru/ tā-tal*, *no/ nō-tal*, *pō/ pōku-tal*, *varu/ vā-tal*, *ve/ vē-tal*. The majority of these have in common that they have two stems, one with a long and one with a short vowel, such as *kāṇṭal*, with a long vowel in the imperfective and a short vowel in the perfective stem. Among the eight, two seem to stick out. The first is *cātal*, which, in addition to strong and weak forms, basically has one outstanding absolutive *cettu*, which may rather point to a type-3 verb, the one with isolated irregular forms. The second is *pōtal*, which in fact has three stems, namely *pōtal*, *pōkutal*, and *pōtutal*, plus a perfective *peyareccam* that may be *pōṉa* or *pōkiya*. In other words, this verb does not only have multiple stems but also changes class.

The second type of irregular verbs is characterised by minor alternations of forms within a particular class. Here I would count the numerous verbs of class 5 and 11 that have an alternative perfective stem based on a metrical lengthening (*aḷapeṭai*), such as *taḻuvutal* with the absolutives *taḻuvi* and *taḻīi* (the latter far more frequent in our corpus), or *vakaittal* with *vakaittu* and *vakaii*.

Distinct from this I would count forms isolated in a paradigm, such as the already mentioned *cettu*. Another example is *tokaii*, from *tokutal* or *tokuttal*. No matter from which one of the two roots this form originated, it is irregular and isolated since it is not parallel to the above-mentioned 11th-class formation, and furthermore, it is restricted to the absolutive only and not a possible parallel form to the rest of the perfective forms of these roots.

Verbs with spelling variants are numerous, and I only mention them in this context because they have some statistical relevance. Unlike complex verbs (verbs with a nominal prefix such as *talai-taru-tal* or *etir-koḷ-tal*) and compound verbs (contracted verbs such a *mēvarutal* from *mēvuvarutal*), which get a separate column in the basic table of verb-class statistics that follows in the next section (**Table 1**), they have been counted as separate simple verbs but are added in a special list.

The actual focus of this article, however, will be on the class-changing verbs, that is, verbs that appear in more than one class.

## Examples

In order to put the irregularities into proportion, it is first of all necessary to give and overview of the number of verbs and their

distribution that are attested in KT, NA, and AN. The corpus all in all makes use of 1,353 verbs, among which 94 are complex or compound verbs. The table below (**Table 1**) divides these verbs by class and shows how many form pairs in two classes (pairs), and how many move across three classes (trios).

| Verb class | count | pairs (classes) | trios | complex/compound verbs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 12 | 1 (1./5.) | | 2 |
| 2. | 23 | 3 (2./5.) | | 6 |
| 3. | 38 | 10 (3./5.) | | |
| 4. | 309 | 88 (4./11.)<br>6 (4./5.) | 4 (4./11./5.) | 9 |
| 5. | 480 | 62 (5./5.)[3]<br>4 (5./11.) | | |
| 6. | 57 | 14(6./11.)<br>3 (5./6.) | | 28 |
| 7. | 5 | 1 (7./5.) | | 1 |
| 8. | 18 | | | 14 id.[4] |
| 9. | 11 | | 1 (9./4./11.) | |
| 10. | 6 | | | |
| 11. | 309 | (see class 4) | | 13 |
| 12. | 55 | 1 (12./12.)<br>6 (5./12.) | | 4 |
| 13. | 29 | 4 (13./5.) | 1 (13./5./5.) | 20 |

**Table 1.** Verb classes in KT, NA, and AN

For the sake of completeness, I add here a list with the 25 attested verbs that come with spelling variants:

*alamvarutal/alamarutal*
*uṭampaṭutal/-ttal/uṭaṉpaṭutal/-ttal*
*uriñcutal/uruñcutal*
*ulamvarutal/ulamarutal*
*uḷkutal/uḷḷutal*

[3] In the case of a paring 5th class to 5th class, the verbal root is changed for the transitive/causative (i.e., *tūṅkutal/tūkkutal*).

[4] Here the ideophones are counted as a special type of complex verb.

*kaliḻtal/kaluḻtal*
*kavvutal/kauvutal*
*keḻumutal/keḻuvutal*
*ñekiḻtal/nekiḻtal*
*ñimirtal/nimirtal*
*ñemartal/ñemirtal*
*ñemital/ñemiṭutal/ñemirtal*
*tavveṉṟal/tauveṉṟal*
*tuṭaṅkutal/toṭaṅkutal*
*tuṭaittal/toṭaittal*
*tulaital/tolaital*
*teviṯṭutal/tevuṯṭutal*
*navital/naviḻtal*
*nerēreṉṟal/nerōreṉṟal*
*pulkutal/pullutal*
*pōttarutal/pōtarutal*
*vavvutal/vauvutal*
*vāyppaṭutal/vāypaṭutal*
*viyarttal/veyarttal*

Some of these spelling variations are found in different contexts, but many are variations recorded in different manuscripts transmitting the same passage. It is difficult to tell which of these reflect traces of the poets' original dialects and which are simply spelling variants used by scribes from different regions.

Going back to table 1, it is well known that many verbs form pairs in different classes, especially between classes 4 and 11 (*uṇartal/ uṇarttal*) and between classes 5 and 5 (*tūṅkutal/ tūkkutal*) in order to form the intransitive versus transitive or causative forms. The verbs under discussion here, however, are those that do not change their meaning but that make use of more than one class to express the same notion. Only 22 of such verbs are recorded in the TL with respect to our corpus—the total is considerably higher. The TL moreover gives different treatment to the different cases. If verbs can appear in classes 4 and 11 without shift in meaning (*niṉaital/ niṉaittal*, "to think"), the TL makes two entries and repeats the meaning. If other classes are combined, the TL records the two verb classes (making use of "and" or "&") in the same entry.

In addition to those 22 cases, in the tables to follow (**Table 2, 3, 4, and 5**) another 63 cases are enumerated, with full statistic

documentation following in the appendix. This makes for a total of 85 class-changing verbs. These can be separated into a number of subgroups. My count currently makes four subgroups of very uneven distribution:

- 32 verbs with variation between 4th/11th class, without change in meaning (**Table 2**)
- 43 verbs spilling over into the 5th class (**Table 3**)
- 2 verbs attested in 6th and 4th class (**Table 4**)
- 8 isolated cases (**Table 5**)

The following table records all these verbs with identification of the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (DEDR) entry, plus the treatment in the TL. The class identifications not recorded in the dictionaries but attested in the corpus are marked with an asterisk and the attestations are documented in the appendix. In cases where the occurrences attested deviate from what is stipulated in columns 3 and 4, column 5 (attestation) points out what is amiss.

| count | verbal root | entry and class | TL treatment | attestation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *akai* | DEDR 15: v. 4./11. to sprout | two entries | |
| 2 | *aṭai* | DEDR 83: v. 4.*/11. to lock | | |
| 3 | *icai* | DEDR 470: v. 4.*/11. to sound | | |
| 4 | *ī* | DEDR 2598: v. 4./11.* to give | | |
| 5 | *oli* | DEDR 997: v. 4./11. to sprout | 2nd entry for the strong verb, but referring to the weak one | |
| 6 | *ōr* | DEDR 1059: v. 4./11. to regard, to know; to listen | two entries | |
| 7 | *katir* | DEDR 1193: v. 4.*/11. to shine | | |
| 8 | *kaḷai* | DEDR 1373: v. 4./11.* to weed; to remove | | |
| 9 | *kaṉai* | DEDR 1404: v. 4./11.* to be intense, dense | | |
| 10 | *kāy* | DEDR 1458: v. 4./11.* to grow hot | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | *kiḻar* | DEDR 1583: v. 4./11.* to emerge, to shine | | |
| 12 | *kiḻai* | DEDR 2018: v. 4.*/11. to multiply, to crowd | | |
| 13 | *tuṇar* | DEDR 3308: v. 4./11. to cluster | two entries | 11th class not attested |
| 14 | *nikar* | DEDR 3660: v. 4./11.* & 5. to be similar, to rival | two entries | 4th and 5th classes not attested |
| 15 | *nirai* | DEDR 3673: v. 4./11. to put in a row | two entries | free variation |
| 16 | *nilai* | DEDR 3675: v. 4./11. to be permanent, to be settled | two entries | 4th class not attested |
| 17 | *niṉai* | DEDR 3683: v. 4./11. to think | two entries | free variation |
| 18 | *pacai* | DEDR 3828: v. 4./11.* to be kind | | 4th class not attested |
| 19 | *pari* | DEDR 3963: v. 4./11. to run; tr. to spread over | two entries | |
| 20 | *paṟai* | AN index (not TL): v. 4./11. to fly | | |
| 21 | *piḻi* | DEDR 4183: v. 4./11.* to press out; to shed | | |
| 22 | *purai* | TL (not DEDR): v. 4./11.* to resemble | | |
| 23 | *puṉai* | DEDR 4340: v. 4./11.* to decorate, to fashion | | |
| 24 | *mukiḻ* | DEDR: 4893: v. 4./11. to bud | two entries | |
| 25 | *mukai* | DEDR: 4893: v. 4./11. to bud | two entries | |
| 26 | *muṇai* | DEDR 5021: v. 4./11. to dislike | two entries | 4th class not attested |
| 27 | *muṉai* | DEDR 5021: v. 4./11. to dislike | two entries | 4th class not attested |
| 28 | *moci* | DEDR 5030: v. 4./11.* to swarm | | |
| 29 | *moy* | DEDR 4915: v. 4.*/11. to enclose – DEDR 5030: v. 4./11. to swarm | | |
| 30 | *vakai* | DEDR 5202: v. 4./11.* to be divided; to arrange | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | *vaṉai* | TVG (not TL): v. 4./11. to embrace[5] | | |
| 32 | *virai* | TL (not DEDR): v. 4.*/11. to emit fragrance | | |

**Table 2.** 32 verbs with variation between 4th/11th class without change in meaning

| count | verbal root | entry and class | TL treatment | attestation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *acai* | DEDR 37: v. 4./5.* to move | | |
| 2 | *acai* | DEDR 39: v. 4./5.* to be weary ~ to rest | | only 5th-class finite forms attested |
| 3 | *amar* | TL (not DEDR) v. 5.*/11. to be at strife | | |
| 4 | *amai* | DEDR 161: v. 4./5.* to become still | | |
| 5 | *iyal* | DEDR 469: v. 3. and 5. (TL) to move forward | | |
| 6 | *iruḷ* | DEDR 2552: v. 2./5.* to become dark | | |
| 7 | *uṭal* | DEDR 2722: v. 3. & 5. (TL) to quarrel, to be enraged | | |
| 8 | *uṇ* | DEDR 600: v. 7./5.* to eat, to absorb | | |
| 9 | *uyar* | DEDR 646: v. 4./5.* to be high | | |
| 10 | *etir* | DEDR 795: v. 4./5.* to be opposed | | |
| 11 | *ēy* | DEDR 899: v. 4./5.* to be similar; to meet | | |
| 12 | *kañal* | DEDR 1404: v. 3./5.* to be dense | | |
| 13 | *kaviṉ* | TL (not DEDR) v. 5. & 8. (TL) to become beautiful | | |

[5] TVG indicates T.V. Gopal Iyer, oral communication.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | *kaṉal* | DEDR 1406: v. 3./5.* to glow, to be hot | | |
| 15 | *kūr* | DEDR 1899: v. 4./5.* to be in abundance | 2nd entry for 11th class | |
| 16 | *kol* | DEDR 2132: v. 3./5.* to kill; to fell; to boil | | |
| 17 | *koḷ* | DEDR 2151: v. 2./5.* to take | | |
| 18 | *cāy* | DEDR 2456: v. 4./5.* intr. to bend | | |
| 19 | *cāy* | DEDR 2453: v. 4./5.* to be emaciated | | no obvious form of the 4th class attested |
| 20 | *cuṭar* | DEDR 2654: v. 4. & 5. (TL) to give light | | |
| 21 | *cel* | DEDR 2781: v. 3./5.* to go | | |
| 22 | *ceṟi* | DEDR 1980: v. 4./5.* to be close, tight, to be restrained | | |
| 23 | *ñekiḻ* | DEDR 2923: v. 4./5.* to become loose, to become emaciated | | |
| 24 | *ñemir* | DEDR 2926: v. 4./5.* to be crushed; to extend | | |
| 25 | *taru/tā* | DEDR 3098: v. 13./5.* to give, to bring | | |
| 26 | *talai* | TL (not DEDR): v. 5.*/11.* to offer, to bestow, to shower | prob. v. 4. | |
| 27 | *timir* | DEDR 3234: v. 4. & 5. (TL) to smear; to press | | |
| 28 | *tuṉai* | TL (not DEDR): v. 4./5.* to hasten | | |
| 29 | *teṟi* | DEDR 3438: v. 5.*/11. to leap | | |
| 30 | *teṟu* | DEDR 3440: v. 5.*/6. to scorch | | |
| 31 | *toṭar* | DEDR 3480: v. 4./5.* intr. to be linked; tr. to pursue | | |
| 32 | *tōy* | DEDR 3556: v. 4./5.* to touch | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33 | *nacai* | DEDR 3576: v. 4./5.* to yearn | prob. v. 4 | |
| 34 | *naḷ* | DEDR 3588: v. 5. & 9. (TL) to befriend | | 5th class not attested |
| 35 | *paṭu* | DEDR 3852/3853?: v. 6./5.* to happen, to undergo | | |
| 36 | *payir* | DEDR 3943: v. 4./5.* to call | | |
| 37 | *payil* | DEDR 3943: v. 3./5.* to utter | | |
| 38 | *pāy* | DEDR 4087: v. 4./5.* to spring – DEDR 4088: v. 4. to spread | | |
| 39 | *piṟaḷ* | DEDR 4201: v. 4./5. to be irregular, to be dislodged; to leap | | |
| 40 | *puṇar* | DEDR 4160(a): v. 4./5.* intr. to unite | | |
| 41 | *peṟu* | DEDR 4422: v. 5.*/6. to obtain | | |
| 42 | *matar* | DEDR 4687: v. 5.*/11. to flourish | | 11th class not attested |
| 43 | *maruḷ* | DEDR 4723: v. 2./5.* to be confused, to resemble | | |

**Table 3.** 43 verbs spilling over into the 5th class

| count | verbal root | entry and class | TL treatment | attestation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *puku* | DEDR 4238: v. 4.*/6. to enter | | |
| 2 | *miku* | DEDR 4838: v. 4.*/6. to become much | | |

**Table 4.** 2 verbs attested in 6th and 4th class

| count | verbal root | entry and class | TL treatment | attestation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *ēl* | DEDR 905: v. 10. & 3. (TL) to awake; to receive; to be suitable; to be exposed | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | *kaṭa* | DEDR 1109: v. 4.*/12. to surmount | | |
| 3 | *kaṇpaṭu* | TL: v. 6./11. to close one's eyes | TL 2 entries | |
| 4 | *cē* | DEDR 1990: v. 11./12.*? to dwell | | |
| 5 | *nil* | DEDR 3675: v. 3./1.* to stand | | |
| 6 | *māl* | DEDR 4822: v. 3./10.* to be confused, to be dim | | |
| 7 | *mīḻ* | DEDR 4883: v. 2./9.* to return | | |
| 8 | veruḷ | DEDR 5489: v. 2. & 5. (TL) to be startled | | no distinct form attested |

**Table 5.** 8 special cases

## Preliminary conclusions

The overall number of verbs attested in the early *akam* corpus (KT, NA, AN) can be calculated to be about 1,350. From these we may deduct the number of verbs with spelling variation, the complex and compound verbs, and the regular pairs of transitive/intransitive/causative verbs which form pairs in classes 4/11 and 5/5. This brings the figure down to about 1,230. Of these 1,230 verbs, 85 are class-changing, and only 22 of them are recorded in the TL. The 85 of 1,230 attested verbs would still amount to a share of less than 1% of the verbs attested in the corpus under scrutiny.

However, statistics can only tell us so much. Many of the verbs are rare and simply not attested in a sufficient number and/or variety of forms to allow us to see whether the class is stable. What is clearly visible is that the more frequent and especially the very frequent verbs have a marked tendency to change class.

Moreover, the corpus is still very limited. Once the inquiry can be extended to critical editions of the whole Caṅkam corpus, the figures will go up significantly, especially once we will be able to include the material from *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Kalittokai*. Also, although the early anthologies are supposed to be compiled from the whole of the Tamil-speaking area, most of them were redacted in the vicinity of Maturai, that is, in the Pāṇṭiya region. It remains

to be seen whether texts that clearly belong to another dialectal substratum, such as the *Cilappatikāram*, or various parts of the *bhakti* corpus, will make any significant difference.

However, it also has to be noted (although it is not yet backed up by statistics) that a good part of the phenomena described has a tendency to vanish at the latest at the transitional stage from Old to Middle Tamil by the late first millennium.

Another line of investigation pertains to the differences of behavior between the verb classes. As could be shown, almost any other class can also have forms of class 5.[6] Verbs of that same class, however, do not seem to migrate into other classes at all, but remain stable. The particular behavior of verbs shifting between classes 4 and 11 remains puzzling. For the most part, as is well established, class 4 gives the intransitive with a transitive or causative counterpart in class 11. But there are 43 cases where both simply mean the same. In addition, my impression is that in some cases the strong verb rather expresses an intensive of the weak one, as can be seen in the following example from the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*:

PN 213.2
*veḷ kuṭai viḷakkum viṟal keḻu vēntē*
O victorious king whose white parasol shines brightly

It remains to be seen whether it is possible to find a sufficient number of examples to make such a hypothesis plausible.

[6] Of course, one could speculate about the reasons why in the earliest phase of literary production so many verbs migrated into this class, and a possible explanation is that one of the dominant dialects that formed the basis of what became, in the Caṅkam age, the common idiom of Classical Tamil language favoured that type of inflection. One may further speculate about the possible role the nascent discipline of Tamil grammar may have had in regulation, but in the absence of direct evidence to that extent it may be more useful to make more statistics that would allow a clearer picture of when most of the additional forms vanished out of use.

**Appendix: Verbs and verb forms in the early *akam* corpus (KT, NA, AN)**

[The full set of attested forms is given, except in the case of common, frequent verbs where only the unexpected forms are given. For a list of abbreviation, see Wilden 2018, col. III, p. 143ff.]

| | |
|---|---|
| akai | DEDR 15: v. 4./11. to sprout |
| akaippa | inf. NA 5.4 |
| akaintaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 245.15 277.14 351.7 |
| akaiya | inf. NA 172.2 |
| | |
| acai | DEDR 37: v. 4./5.* to move |
| acainta | pey. p.a. KT 52.2v |
| acaiyiṉaṉ | p.a. m.sg. AN 102.13 |
| | |
| acai | DEDR 39: v. 4./5.* to be weary ~ to rest |
| acaintaṉar | p.a. 3.h. AN 345.21* |
| acaiyiṉa | p.a. n.pl. NA 279.9 |
| acaiyiṉam | p.a. 1.pl. AN 287.12v |
| acaiyiṉar | p.a. 3.h. AN 277.11v |
| acaiyiṉaḷ | p.n. f.sg. AN 280.4 287.12v |
| | |
| aṭai | DEDR 83: v. 4.*/11. to lock |
| aṭaippa | inf. KT 118.3v |
| aṭaiya | inf. KT 118.3 |
| | |
| amar | TL (not DEDR) v. 5.*/11. to be at strife |
| amariya | pey. p.a. AN 5.1 |
| | |
| amai | DEDR 161: v. 4./5.* to become still |
| amaiyiṉīr | p.a. 2.pl. KT 173.7v |
| | |
| icai | DEDR 470: v. 4.*/11. to sound |
| icainta | pey. p.a. AN 65.10* |
| icaintu | abs. AN 144.19v |
| | |
| iyal | DEDR 469: v. 3. and 5. (TL) to move forward |
| iyaṉṟa | pey. p.a. KT 288.3 NA 0.5 82.4 AN 66.9 |

| | |
|---|---|
| iyaṉṟatu | part.n. p.a. n.sg. AN 379.8 |
| iyaṉṟaṉar | p.a. 3.h. AN 259.1 |
| iyaṉṟu | abs. AN 81.4* 127.9° |
| iyali | abs. KT 264.2 NA 260.3 362.1 AN 82.9 117.9 188.10 219.1 261.6* 279.15 332.6 |
| | |
| iruḷ | DEDR 2552: v. 2./5.* to become dark |
| iruṇṭa | pey. p.a. NA 284.1 |
| iruṇṭu | abs. AN 188.2 283.11 |
| iruḷi | abs. NA 153.1 289.4 346.1 AN 139.1 374.1 |
| iruḷiya | pey. p.a. KT 314.3 NA 96.5 AN 126.20 128.8 131.3 197.10 |
| | |
| ī | DEDR 2598: v. 4./11.* to give |
| ītta | pey. p.a. NA 130.4v AN 136.18° 209.14 |
| īnta | pey. p.a. AN 136.18* |
| īntaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 339.12v |
| | |
| uṭal | DEDR 2722: v. 3. & 5. (TL) to quarrel, to be enraged |
| uṭali | abs. NA 37.9 |
| uṭaliṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. AN 306.14* |
| uṭaṉṟa | pey. p.a. AN 378.12 |
| uṭaṉṟaṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. AN 176.18 |
| uṭaṉṟu | abs. KT 397.4 NA 51.2 201.9 383.8 |
| | |
| uṇ | DEDR 600: v. 7./5.* to eat, to absorb |
| uṇīi | abs. AN 59.7* 276.2° |
| uṇīiya | pey. p.a. AN 222.2v |
| | |
| uyar | DEDR 646: v. 4./5.* to be high |
| uyari | abs. AN 189.5 |
| uyariya | pey. p.a. AN 149.15 215.11v |
| | |
| uḻar | DEDR 689: v. 4. & 5. (TL) tr. to smooth; intr. to whiffle |
| uḻarntu | abs. AN 207.15 |
| uḻari | abs. KT 82.1 110.3 |
| uḻariya | pey. p.a. KT 278.1 AN 39.22° 101.14v |

| | |
|---|---|
| uḷariya | inf. KT 110.3v |
| uḷariṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. AN 102.5° |
| | |
| etir | DEDR 795: v. 4./5.* to be opposed |
| etiri | abs. AN 84.3* |
| etiriya | pey. p.a. NA 302.4 337.3 340.4 362.3 AN 10.1 41.8 204.5 |
| etiriya | inf. AN 93.3 |
| etiriṉa | p.a. 3.pl. » 159.4 \| 315.2 |
| | |
| ēy | DEDR 899: v. 4./5.* to be similar; to meet |
| ēyntu | abs. NA 145.5v 252.8 |
| ēyiṉar | p.a. 3.h. » 180.5v |
| | |
| ēl | DEDR 905: v. 10. & 3. (TL) to awake; to receive; to be suitable; to be exposed |
| ēṟṟa | pey. p.a. KT 29.2 121.3 291.8 382.1 AN 26.24 27.13 |
| ēṟṟaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 395.2 |
| ēṟṟaṉa | part.n. p.a. n.pl. KT 29.2v |
| ēṟṟāaṅku | abs. NA 88.4 |
| ēṟṟāṅku | abs. NA 308.10 |
| ēṟṟu | abs. NA 2.7v AN 328.8v |
| ēṉṟa | pey. p.a. AN 168.6v |
| ēṉṟaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. AN 164.7v |
| ēṉṟu | abs. AN 35.1° |
| | |
| oli | DEDR 997: v. 4./11. to sprout |
| olitta | pey. p.a. AN 176.10v |
| olittaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 211.16 |
| olittāṅku | comp. abs. KT 133.3 |
| olinta | pey. p.a. AN 176.10 |
| | |
| ōr | DEDR 1059: v. 4./11. to regard, to know; to listen |
| ōrkkum | pey. KT 396.6 NA 244.4 AN 88.12 147.7* 395.12 399.15v |
| ōrttaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 176.8 AN 151.14v 212.7 |
| ōrntaṉa | p.a. n.pl. AN 44.4v |
| ōrttu | abs. NA 176.9v AN 28.9v 88.3 144.18 207.3 |
| ōrntu | abs. KT 138.5v |

| | |
|---|---|
| ōrppa | inf. NA 178.9 |
| ōrppaṉa | i.a. n.pl. KT 278.6v 278.6v |
| | |
| kañal | DEDR 1404: v. 3./5.* to be dense |
| kañali | abs. KT 240.3v AN 141.12 368.5 |
| kañaliya | pey. p.a. NA 339.10 348.5 AN 18.2 152.18 277.16 368.5v |
| | |
| kaṭa | DEDR 1109: 4.*/12. |
| kaṭavai | part.n. i.a. n.pl. KT 392.4 |
| | |
| kaṇpaṭu | TL: v. 6./11. to close one's eyes |
| kaṇpaṭa | inf. NA 198.4 378.2v |
| kaṇpaṭukkum | pey. AN 371.8 |
| kaṇpaṭuppa | inf. NA 18.7 |
| | |
| katir | DEDR 1193: v. 4.*/11. to shine |
| katirtta | pey. p.a. AN 103.2 288.16v |
| katirnta | pey. p.a. AN 288.16* |
| katirppa | inf. KT 376.3v |
| | |
| kaviṉ | TL (not DEDR) v. 5. & 8. (TL) to become beautiful |
| kaviṉṟa | pey. p.a. AN 245.14 |
| kaviṉi | abs. AN 41.8 70.10 134.1 283.10 |
| kaviṉiya | pey. p.a. AN 84.5 302.10 366.1 |
| | |
| kaḷai | DEDR 1373: v. 4./11.* to weed; to remove |
| kaḷaii | abs. KT 322.5v AN 72.12* 288.12° 367.9v |
| kaḷaiiya | inf. KT 37.2 NA 322.5v AN 72.12v 85.7 285.4* |
| kaḷaiiyar | inf. NA 137.6 322.5 AN 3.14v 72.12° 285.4° 288.12* 367.9 |
| kaḷainta | pey. p.a. KT 354.6 AN 88.7 343.13 |
| kaḷaintaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. NA 364.1v |
| kaḷaintu | abs. KT 156.2 NA 312.4 AN 24.2* 262.5 |
| kaḷaintōḷ | part.n. p.a. f.sg. AN 170.13 |
| kaḷaintōr | part.n. p.a. 3.h. NA 335.11v |
| | |
| kaṉal | DEDR 1406: v. 3./5.* to glow, to be hot |

| | |
|---|---|
| kaṉali | abs. AN 55.1 |
| kaṉali | sun NA 163.10 |
| | |
| kaṉai | DEDR 1404: v. 4./11.* to be intense, dense |
| kaṉaika | sub. 3.sg. KT 400.2v |
| kaṉaintu | abs. AN 135.7 |
| kaṉaii | abs. KT 400.2v AN 128.3 |
| | |
| kāy | DEDR 1458: v. 4./11.* to grow hot |
| kāyntu | abs. NA 163.10 AN 55.1 |
| kāyiṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. KT 9.3v |
| | |
| kiḷar | DEDR 1583: v. 4./11.* to emerge, to shine |
| kiḷarnta | pey. p.a. KT 374.2v AN 45.16 52.2 |
| kiḷarntaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 366.1 AN 255.1 |
| kiḷarntāṅku | comp. abs. AN 201.9 |
| kiḷarntu | abs. NA 251.10 |
| kiḷarppa | inf. AN 282.5 |
| | |
| kiḷai | DEDR 2018: v. 4.*/11. to multiply, to crowd |
| kiḷaiiya | pey. p.a. NA 337.2 AN 41.15 158.4 |
| kiḷaikkum | pey. AN 34.13* |
| kiḷaiya | inf. AN 385.11 |
| | |
| kūr | DEDR 1899: v. 4./5.* to be in abundance |
| kūrnta | pey. p.a. NA 230.8 273.2 |
| kūrnticiṉ | p.a. 1.sg. KT 216.4 |
| kūrntu | abs. KT 234.1 319.1 NA 252.8 AN 45.13 107.14 135.4 208.8 329.1 371.6 373.13 388.11 398.22 |
| kūrnteṉa | caus. abs. NA 29.3 AN 147.5 |
| kūrntōr | part.n. p.a. 3.h. AN 363.12 |
| kūriya | pey. p.a. NA 247.8v AN 121.3v |
| kūriṟṟu | part.n. p.a. n.sg.!!? NA 130.10v |
| | |
| kol | DEDR 2132: v. 3./5.* to kill; to fell; to boil |
| kolīi | abs. NA 59.1 |
| | |
| koḷ | DEDR 2151: v. 2./5.* to take |
| koḷīi | abs. NA 350.9v AN 88.5* 212.14 234.4 |

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| cāy | DEDR 2456: v. 4./5.* intr. to bend |
| cāynta | pey. p.a. AN 373.4 |
| cāyntaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. NA 49.4v |
| cāyntu | abs. NA 163.10v |
| cāyiṉai | p.a. 2.sg. AN 6.14 |
| | |
| cāy | DEDR 2453: v. 4./5.* to be emaciated |
| cāyiṉa | p.a. n.pl. KT 239.1 AN 227.1 |
| cāyiṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. KT 9.3 |
| cāyiṉaṉ | p.a. m.sg. KT 74.5 |
| cāyiṉai | p.a. 2.sg. NA 11.2 |
| | |
| cuṭar | DEDR 2654: v. 4. & 5. (TL) to give light |
| cuṭarntu | abs. AN 68.12 |
| cuṭari | abs. AN 158.12v |
| | |
| cel | DEDR 2781: v. 3./5.* to go |
| celīi | abs. KT 117.3v 158.2v 189.5v NA 54.1 151.9 |
| | |
| ceṟi | DEDR 1980: v. 4./5.* to be close, tight, to be restrained |
| ceṟinta | pey. p.a. NA 112.9 148.7 158.5 AN 15.7 15.12 96.11 349.1° |
| ceṟintaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 196.1 |
| ceṟintaṉa | p.a. n.pl. KT 61.6 NA 385.3 |
| ceṟintu | abs. NA 68.2 AN 44.3 98.7 302.13 |
| ceṟintōr | part.n. p.a. 3.h. AN 205.2 |
| ceṟiya | pey. p.a. AN 362.4 |
| | |
| cē | DEDR 1990: v. 11./12.*? to dwell |
| cēttaṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. AN 16.8° |
| cēttiya | pey. p.a. AN 169.11 |
| cēttu | abs. AN 121.13v |
| cēntaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. AN 52.12° |
| cēntaṉar | p.a. 3.h. KT 79.6v |
| cēntaṉir | p.a. 2.pl. AN 200.12v |
| cēntaṉai | p.a. 2.sg. NA 254.12v 276.8 AN 120.13° 350.9v 398.21R |
| cēntu | abs. KT 242.6 |

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| cēppa | inf. AN 103.4v |
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| ñekiḻ | DEDR 2923: v. 4./5.* to become loose, to become emaciated |
| ñekiḻnta | pey. p.a. NA 35.10 309.1v AN 68.12v |
| ñekiḻntataṉṟalai | part.n. p.a. n.sg. loc. KT 377.2 |
| ñekiḻntamai | v.n. p.a. AN 26.17* 98.7° |
| ñekiḻntaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. KT 87.5 |
| ñekiḻtaṉa | p.a. n.pl. KT 239.1v 260.2v |
| ñekiḻntu | abs. AN 26.25v 255.17* 387.1v |
| ñekiḻi | abs. KT 87.5v |
| | |
| ñemir | DEDR 2926: v. 4./5.* to be crushed; to extend |
| ñemirnta | pey. p.a. NA 20.9 141.3 |
| ñemirnteṉa | caus. abs. NA 363.10v |
| ñemirntaṉa | p.a. n.pl. NA 363.10 |
| ñemiri | abs. AN 86.3v |
| ñemiriya | pey. p.a. NA 143.2 AN 187.9* |
| | |
| taru/tā | DEDR 3098: v. 13./5.* to give, to bring |
| tarīi | abs. KT 45.2v 269.5v NA 381.1v AN 3.4v 77.10v 86.10* 138.10 242.10 269.19 |
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| talai | TL (not DEDR): v. 5./11.* (TL: prob. v. 4.) to offer, to bestow, to shower |
| talaii | abs. NA 51.4 53.5 274.1 291.1v 316.9 AN 58.1 128.12 132.9v 158.1 163.1v 194.1* 214.12v 254.15* 259.4v 274.2 278.5 304.4 323.12 374.9 392.1v |
| talaiiya | pey. p.a. KT 35.4 222.7 337.1v NA 17.1 205.10 261.5 268.2 273.7v 346.2 347.5 AN 8.15 38.10v 58.1v 68.15 130.5* 132.9v 158.1v 163.1 194.1° 259.4 337.20 392.1 |
| talaittu | abs. AN 211.12° |
| talaippa | inf. AN 156.10 |
| talaiyiṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. AN 54.3 |
| | |
| timir | DEDR 3234: v. 4. & 5. (TL) to smear; to press |
| timirntu | abs. NA 106.8 |
| timiri | abs. NA 9.6 |

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| tuṇar | DEDR 3308: v. 4./11. to cluster |
| tuṇarntaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 159.4 |
| tuṇara | inf. NA 93.1 |
| | |
| tuṉai | TL (not DEDR): v. 4./5.* to hasten |
| tuṉaii | abs. NA 296.7 |
| | |
| teṟi | DEDR 3438: v. 5.*/11. to leap |
| teṟikkum | pey. AN 96.2 173.14 376.16 |
| teṟitta | pey. p.a. AN 273.1° |
| teṟittu | abs. KT 213.5 |
| teṟippa | inf. NA 81.6 \| 4.4 289.11 351.12 |
| teṟiyiṉaḷ | p.a. f.sg. AN 373.15 |
| | |
| teṟu | DEDR 3440: v. 5.*/6. to scorch |
| teṟīi | abs. AN 393.7 |
| | |
| toṭar | DEDR 3480: v. 4./5.* intr. to be linked; tr. to pursue |
| toṭarntaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 221.3 |
| toṭarntu | abs. NA 220.1 |
| toṭari | abs. KT 257.2 AN 86.4 |
| | |
| tōy | DEDR 3556: v. 4./5.* to touch |
| tōyntaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. AN 9.23 |
| tōyntu | abs. AN 119.19* |
| tōyiṉai | p.a. 2.sg. NA 139.3v |
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| nacai | DEDR 3576: v. 4./5.* to yearn |
| nacaii | abs. KT 65.4 126.1 175.1 254.6 272.4v 285.7 NA 56.6v 83.7 126.4 180.4v 279.2 332.7 AN 9.26 112.4v 137.2 170.5 177.9 191.11 212.8 215.3v 257.19 258.9 396.13 |
| nacaiiya | pey. p.a. KT 175.1v NA 276.2 AN 161.5 247.11 |
| nacainta | pey. p.a. KT 52.2 |
| | |
| naḷ | DEDR 3588: v. 5. & 9. (TL) to befriend |
| naṭṭaṉar | p.a. 3.h. NA 14.3 |
| naṭṭōr | part.n. 3.h. friends NA 286.7 355.6 AN 279.1 |

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| nikar | DEDR 3660: v. 4./11.* & 5. to be similar, to rival |
| nikarppa | inf. NA 171.8v AN 42.11v |
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| nirai | DEDR 3673: v. 4./11. to put in a row |
| niraitta | pey. p.a. KT 388.4v NA 176.5 AN 75.19 97.21 175.14 269.15 278.3 |
| niraittaṉṉa | comp. pey. NA 73.7 AN 21.2 162.12 |
| niraittaṉaiya | pey.p.a. + comp. n.pl. AN 278.3 |
| niraittu | abs. KT 388.4 NA 89.3 |
| niraintaṉṉa | comp. abs. KT 388.4v |
| niraiya | inf. NA 258.6? AN 53.3° |
| niraivaṉa | i.a.? n.pl. AN 291.9 |
| | |
| nil | DEDR 3675: v. 3./1.* to stand |
| niṟṟa | pey. p.a. AN 340.17 |
| | |
| nilai | DEDR 3675: v. 4./11. to be permanent, to be settled |
| nilaii | abs. AN 9.18° 227.12 |
| nilaiiya | pey. p.a. KT 262.8 NA 139.2 327.6 AN 9.18* 42.2* 46.1v 152.22 205.8 238.16 357.13 |
| nilaiiyōr | part.n. p.a. 3.h. KT 262.8v |
| nilaittal | v.n. AN 71.12° |
| nilaippa | inf. NA 338.5 |
| nilaippaṉa | part.n. i.a. n.pl. AN 45.4v |
| nilaiya | inf. AN 42.2° |
| | |
| niṉai | DEDR 3683: v. 4./11. to think |
| | |
| pacai | DEDR 3828: v. 4./11.* to be kind |
| pacaii | abs. KT 87.4 AN 379.21v |
| pacaiiya | pey. p.a. KT 87.4v AN 379.21 |
| | |
| paṭu | DEDR 3852/3853?: v. 6./5.* to happen, to undergo |
| paṭīi | abs. » 256.4 378.1v 395.5v |
| | |
| payir | DEDR 3943: v. 4./5.* to call |
| payirntu | abs. KT 139.4 NA 367.2 AN 85.13 175.5 276.10v |
| payiri | abs. KT 285.5 |

payil DEDR 3943: v. 3./5.* to utter
payiliyatu part.n. p.a. n.sg. KT 2.3
payiṉṟu abs. NA 294.3

pari DEDR 3963: v. 4./11. to run; tr. to spread over
parikkum pey. KT 51.3 320.4 401.4 NA 99.3 332.7 AN 9.9 112.4 215.3 327.10
parittu abs. AN 115.9*
parippa inf. NA 161.6 331.7v AN 15.14v 31.10 236.6 283.15 354.6
parintu abs. AN 249.17v
pariya inf. KT 229.2 AN 4.9 224.11v 330.14v 354.6v

paṟai AN index (not TL): v. 4./11. to fly
paṟaii abs. AN 170.7v
paṟaiiya inf. AN 170.7v
paṟaintu abs. AN 76.11v

pāy DEDR 4087: v. 4./5.* to spring – DEDR 4088: v. 4. to spread
pāynta pey. p.a. AN 99.12v 135.3 169.9 382.9v
pāyntaṉṉa comp. pey. AN 400.13
pāyntu abs. KT 69.4 153.2 195.5 343.2 NA 145.11v 147.9 185.8 330.3 395.6 AN 36.4 38.8v 76.11 104.1 141.27 153.16 227.9 260.2 267.4 317.6 330.2° 340.20 368.12v
pāyntaṉa caus. abs. AN 56.11 388.11
pāyiṉṟu p.a. n.sg. NA 133.3 AN 85.15 172.18v 312.14*

piṟaḷ DEDR 4201: v. 4./5.* to be irregular, to be dislodged; to leap – v.r. AN 330.1 | 207.6
piṟaḷnta pey. p.a. AN 286.5v
piṟaḷi abs. AN 205.18

piḷi DEDR 4183: v. 4./11.* to press out; to shed
piḷikkum pey. AN 88.10*
piḷinta pey. p.a. AN 237.12

puku DEDR 4238: v. 4.*/6. to enter
pukka pey. p.a. NA 320.6 AN 222.11

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| pukkaṉar | p.a. 3.h. NA 67.9 |
| pukkaṉaṉ | p.a. m.sg. KT 269.4 AN 384.13 |
| pukku | abs. NA 42.7 45.2 77.2 AN 280.9 329.13 377.5 |
| pukkeṉa | caus. abs. AN 262.4 399.9 |
| pukuntu | abs. AN 86.18° |
| pukuntōṉ | part.n. p.a. m.sg. AN 56.12° |
| | |
| puṇar | DEDR 4160(a): v. 4./5.* intr. to unite |
| puṇari | abs. KT 287.6 |
| | |
| purai | TL (not DEDR): v. 4./11.* to resemble |
| puraii | abs. AN 152.23 |
| puraiiya | pey. p.a. NA 317.10 |
| puraiya | inf. NA 199.9 AN 152.23v 319.8v 334.5 |
| puraiyum | pey. KT 0.1 131.1 226.1 329.6 NA 8.3 26.3 47.3 205.11 252.11 301.2 390.10 AN 16.2 19.11 33.15 137.15 179.12 271.15 295.19 317.15 319.8 343.1 398.19 |
| | |
| puṉai | DEDR 4340: v. 4./11.* to decorate, to fashion |
| puṉaii | abs. NA 313.4 |
| puṉainta | pey. p.a. KT 53.3 NA 260.8 AN 221.5 269.11 352.16 390.6 391.6 |
| puṉaintu | abs. NA 325.3 AN 136.6 141.12° 219.9 369.7 369.15 |
| | |
| peṟu | DEDR 4422: v. 6./5.* to obtain |
| peṟīi | abs. KT 367.2v NA 111.2 AN 222.12v |
| | |
| matar | DEDR 4687: v. 5.*/11. to flourish |
| matari | abs. NA 340.7 |
| | |
| maruḷ | DEDR 4723: v. 2./5.* to be confused, to resemble |
| maruṇṭa | pey. p.a. AN 74.10° 111.7 |
| maruṇṭaṉaṉ | p.a. 1.sg. AN 384.8v |
| maruṇṭaṉeṉ | p.a. 1.sg. KT 99.3 |
| maruṇṭaṉēṉ | p.a. 1.sg. KT 99.3v |
| maruṇṭu | abs. NA 271.4 AN 56.16v 74.10* 105.8 189.12 222.9 |
| maruḷi | abs. AN 235.16 |

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| māl | DEDR 4822: v. 3./10.* to be confused, to be dim |
| māṟṟu | abs. AN 26.10* |
| māṉṟa | pey. p.a. NA 29.4 239.2 361.6 AN 190.17 |
| māṉṟaṉṟu | p.a. n.sg. NA 381.10 AN 300.16° 340.11v |
| māṉṟiṉṟu | p.a. n.sg.? AN 300.16* 340.11 |
| māṉṟu | abs. KT 289.5 375.6v NA 238.7 AN 201.10* |
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| miku | DEDR 4838: v. 6./4.* to become much |
| mikka | pey. p.a. \| 115.14* |
| mikku | abs. \| 36.7 242.3 |
| mikunta | pey. p.a. NA 273.6v |
| mikuntu | abs. NA 333.5v |
| | |
| mīḷ | DEDR 4883: v. 2./9.* to return |
| mīṭṭu | abs. AN 286.9* |
| mīṇṭa | pey. p.a. NA 116.3v |
| mīṇṭōr | part.n. p.a. 3.h. AN 103.11 |
| | |
| mukiḻ | DEDR: 4893: v. 4./11. to bud |
| mukiḻttaṉa | p.a. n.pl. KT 337.1 |
| mukiḻntu | abs. AN 242.16v |
| mukiḻttu | abs. AN 242.16 |
| mukiḻppa | inf. NA 155.9v |
| | |
| mukai | DEDR: 4893: v. 4./11. to bud |
| mukaikkum | pey. KT 186.3 |
| mukaittaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 240.11 |
| mukainta | pey. p.a. AN 177.18 |
| mukaintaṉṉa | comp. pey. AN 106.2v 240.11v |
| | |
| muṇai | DEDR 5021: v. 4./11. to dislike |
| muṇaii | abs. NA 232.3 260.2 279.1 AN 23.7 182.14 |
| muṇaiiya | pey. p.a. NA 297.7 AN 46.1v 234.10v 254.12v 256.2 |
| | |
| muṉai | DEDR 5021: v. 4./11. to dislike |
| muṉaii | abs. AN 23.7v 40.11 182.14v |
| muṉaiiya | pey. p.a. KT 261.3 AN 46.1 234.10 254.12 256.2v 400.7 |

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| moci | DEDR 5030: v. 4./11.* to swarm |
| mocikkum | pey. AN 257.8 |
| mocintu | abs. AN 181.10 |
| mociya | inf. NA 74.9v AN 400.10 |
| | |
| moy | DEDR 4915: v. 4.*/11. to enclose – DEDR 5030: v. 4./11. to swarm |
| moytta | pey. p.a. KT 56.2 NA 35.3 82.9 \|AN 72.3 |
| moyttaliṉ | v.n. obl. NA 55.5 |
| mōynta | pey. p.a. AN 6.18v |
| | |
| vakai | DEDR 5202: v. 4./11.* to be divided; to arrange |
| vakaii | abs. NA 120.5 |
| | |
| vaṉai | TVG (not TL): v. 4./11. to embrace |
| vaṉaii | abs. AN 86.21* |
| vaṉaittaṟku | v.n. dat. NA 29.8 320.4? |
| vaṉaintu | abs. NA 29.7 AN 58.7 |
| | |
| virai | TL (not DEDR): v. 4.*/11. to emit fragrance |
| viraii | abs. KT 62.2 401.1 AN 118.3 130.7* |
| virainta | pey. p.a. AN 265.16* |
| | |
| veruḷ | DEDR 5489: v. 2. & 5. (TL) to be startled (no distinct form attested) |

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# *Complement Adjectival Clauses in Tamil: A Construction, an Analysis, and a Warning*

Sanford B. Steever

For E. Annamalai and Nageswari,
Friends and Collaborators, in Gratitude

## Introduction

E. Annamalai's doctoral dissertation, submitted in 1969 and published in 1997, inaugurates the modern linguistic study of noun complementation in Tamil. He focuses on a set of constructions in which a subordinate sentence, or sentential abstract, modifies a following head noun. Crucial to the formation of this construction is the verb form called *peyareccam* in traditional Tamil grammar: a nonfinite verb form that anticipates a following noun or pronoun. Here I translate it as the adnominal form. In this class of constructions, the final verb of the complement clause assumes the adnominal form, which then combines with the head noun in the matrix clause. For example, the Tamil relative clause *nēṟṟu va-nt-a paiyaṉ* "boy who came yesterday" in (1) consists of the head noun *paiyaṉ* "boy," preceded by the subordinate relative clause *nēṟṟu va-nt-a* "who came yesterday" in which the verb *va-nt-a* "who/which came" has the past adnominal form.

(1) Tamil

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $_{NP}[_{S}$[nēṟṟu | va-nt-a] | paiyaṉ-ai] | nāṉ | pārttēṉ. | |
| yesterday | come-PST-ADN | boy-ACC | I-NOM | see-PST-1S | |

"I saw the boy who came yesterday."

The presence of the adnominal form, however, is not sufficient to identify that structure as a relative clause. Annamalai distinguishes at least three different constructions using the adnominal: the Relative Clause (RC), the Complement Adjectival Clause (CAC), and the Adverbial Complement Clause (ACC).

Despite Annamalai's clear identification of three distinct constructions, readers of Tamil (and Dravidian) grammars frequently encounter descriptions of RCs that taper off with a set of nonconforming examples at the end of the discussion (e.g., Asher 1985, 36–37; Paramasivam 1983, 201–203). For example, Asher (1985) attempts to shoehorn several such examples into the framework of the RC, including (2) below. In none of the examples he presents, however, can the head noun be said to play a role within the complement clause as an argument or adjunct, at least not without a good dose of casuistry. Much of the confusion lies with the common, but misleading translation of *peyareccam* as "relative participle," a term that prejudices the analysis of those structures in which the form appears.

(2) $_{NP}[_{S}$[rāmaṉ puliye koṉ-ṉ-a] ceyti]
Raman tiger-ACC kill-PST-ADN news
"The news that Raman killed the tiger."

The failure to distinguish among these three has led scholars to misidentify one for another, for example, mislabeling CACs as RCs, and thereby ascribing to them grammatical properties they lack. The nominal complement in (2) has the same outward structure as the RC in (1): a subordinate clause whose main verb is in the past adnominal form *koṉ-ṉ-a* "which killed" and combines with the following head noun *ceyti* "news." However, unlike the in the RC, the head noun in the CAC bears no relation to any argument or adjunct within the complement clause.

A third kind of nominal complement Annamalai identified, called the Adverbial Complement Clause (ACC) here, appears to be a nominal complement whose head noun comes from a small set of nouns describing the time, manner, circumstances, et cetera, under which the action of the matrix clause takes place, as in (3). In the literary version (3a), the ACC has a transparent structure with the adnominal form *va-nt-a* "which came," combining with

the head noun *pōtu* "time" in the matrix clause, just like the RC in (1) and the CAC in (2). The spoken equivalent (3b) obscures this structure somewhat: the temporal marker *-ppa* "when" is now a bound noun fused with the preceding adnominal form.

(3)a [$_{ADV}$[$_{S}$[avaṉ va-nt-a.p] pōtu]] nāṉ
he-NOM come-PST-ADN time I-NOM
vēlai ceytu koṇṭu iruntēṉ.
work do-CF hold-CF be-PST-1S
"When he came, I was/had been working."

b [$_{ADV}$[$_{S}$[avaṉ va-nt-a-]ppa]] nāṉ vēlai
he-NOM come-PST-ADN-time I-NOM work
ceñcu kiṭṭu iruntēṉ.
do-CF hold-CF be-PST-1S
"When he came, I was/had been working."

Annamalai (1997, 46) notes that, unlike RCs, ACCs behave like Complex NPs from which no material may be extracted by grammatical rule. Elsewhere in that book, he offers further reasons why ACCs should not be structurally assimilated to RCs. Analysis of ACCs awaits further treatment.

The majority of Annamalai's thesis takes up the syntactic analysis of the RC and the kinds of conditions to which its formation is subject, such as Island Constraints. Subsequent study of RCs that stand on the platform Annamalai created (e.g., Steever 1981) discusses the Noun-Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy in relation to Tamil RCs, while Ramasamy (1981) has analyzed the use of correlative relative clauses to supplement gaps left by the adnominal strategy.[1] By contrast, the CAC has not received further scholarly engagement. It is thus the subject of this essay. We show that the CAC is well integrated into the grammar of Tamil and has direct cognates in other Dravidian languages.

[1] The Noun-Phrase (NP) Accessibility Hierarchy is a cross-linguistic typological scheme to capture which, among different syntactic roles, a language will relativize a noun; for nominative-accusative languages like Tamil, for example, Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > Genitive > Object of comparative, such that if a language relativizes at one level of the hierarchy, it can relativize at levels above, but not in reverse.

CACs constitute a set of syntactically and semantically distinct structures whose morphology overlaps with that of RCs and ACCs through their common use of the adnominal form. All three make use of the *peyareccam*, a basic nonfinite form of the verb. Modern Tamil has four different adnominal markers, whose main allomorphs are noted in Table 1. Any of these adnominal forms may occur in RCs, CACs, and ACCs. (The negative adnominal appears in ACCs to a limited extent before the head "nouns" *varaikkum* "until" and *mu̲n̲n̲āle* "before" but often alternates with positive forms.) In spoken Tamil, the future adnominal form is absent, giving way to a distinction between a past adnominal and a nonpast adnominal (present in form).

| Past | Present | Future | Negative |
|---|---|---|---|
| *-(t)t-a, -nt-a, -i̲n̲-a, -i̲y-a* | *-(k)ki̲r-a* | *-(k)k-um, -um* | *-āt-a, -(k)kāt-a* |

**Table 1.** Main forms of the Modern Tamil Adnominal.

## Criteria for CAC

Examples below establish the presence and scope of CACs in Modern Tamil as a construction distinct from RCs. Despite their superficial resemblance, we may distinguish RCs and CACs according to the following ten criteria.

First, the head of an RC, but not a CAC, corresponds to an NP argument or adjunct in the complement clause.

Second, the head of an RC, but not a CAC, forges an anaphoric link to an NP within the complement clause.

Third, and following from the second criterion, RCs but not CACs, are governed by such principles as Island Constraints and the NP Accessibility Hierarchy.

Fourth, the head of an RC may be first, second, or third person, common noun, pronoun, or proper name, while the head of a CAC is only ever a third-person nominal.

Fifth, the head of an RC may be a concrete or abstract noun, singular or plural, while the head of a CAC is generally a singular abstract noun, subject to some exceptions.

Sixth, the CAC, but not the RC, constitutes a Complex NP (Ross 1967).

Seventh, an RC based on an adnominal strategy may structurally alternate with an RC based on a correlative strategy (Annamalai 1997, v; Steever forthcoming), but a CAC may not.

Eighth, RCs, but not CACs, may appear in stacked structures.

Ninth, the complement clause of an RC, but not a CAC, falls within the scope of a negative operator in the matrix clause (Annamalai, personal communication).

Tenth, the complement clause of an RC delimits the identity of the head noun while the complement clause of a CAC elaborates the semantic content of the head noun.

Not all criteria are illustrated below. Some may be subsumed under others, particularly under criterion six; full details of some remain to be worked out. For present purposes they may be considered rules of thumb.

## RCs and CACs in Modern Tamil

### *Relative clauses*

A brief review of RCs in Tamil prepares us to examine the contrasting CAC. Here we discuss only restrictive relative clauses based on the adnominal form, and not the several varieties of correlative relative clause (see Steever forthcoming). Consider the brace of examples in (4) from Annamalai (1997, 7). The case of the head noun, shown here as nominative, is ultimately determined by the role it plays within the matrix clause, for example, nominative case for subject, dative case for indirect object.

(4)a ḍākṭar melli-k.ki āspatri-le karaṇḍi.y-āle
doctor.NOM Melli-DAT hospital-LOC spoon-INST
sōru kuḍu-tt-āru.
rice.NOM give-PST-3H
"The doctor gave rice to Melli in the hospital with a spoon."

b $_{NP}[_{S}$[melli-k.ki āspatri-le karaṇḍi.y-āle sōru
Melli-DAT hospital-LOC spoon-INST rice.NOM
kuḍu-tt-a] ḍākṭar].
give-PST-ADN doctor.NOM
"The doctor who gave rice to Melli in the hospital with a spoon."

c $_{NP}[_{S}$[ḍākṭar melli-k.ki āspatri-le
doctor.NOM Melli-DAT hospital-LOC
karaṇḍi.y-āle kuḍu-tt-a] sōru].
spoon-INST give-PST-ADN rice.NOM
"The rice the doctor gave rice to Melli in the hospital with a spoon."

d $_{NP}[_{S}$[ḍākṭar āspatri-le karaṇḍi.y-āle sōru
doctor.NOM hospital-LOC spoon-INST rice.NOM
kuḍu-tt-a] melli].
give-PST-ADN Melli.NOM
"Melli to whom the doctor gave rice with a spoon in the hospital."

e $_{NP}[_{S}$[ḍākṭar melli-k.ki āspatri-le sōru
doctor.NOM Melli-DAT hospital-LOC rice.NOM
kuḍu-tt-a] karaṇḍi]
give-PST-ADN spoon.NOM
"The spoon with which the doctor gave rice to Melli in the hospital."

f $_{NP}[_{S}$[ḍākṭar melli-k.ki karaṇḍi.y-āle sōru
doctor.NOM Melli-DAT spoon-INST rice.NOM
kuḍu-tt-a] āspatri]
give-PST-ADN hospital.NOM
"The hospital in which/where the doctor gave Melli rice with a spoon."

Observe that any of the five NPs in (4a) may undergo Relativization, as the subsequent examples (4b–f) respectively show: subject, direct object, indirect object, instrumental, locative. This is key to understanding the RC: the head noun establishes a direct relation to an argument or adjunct in the complement clause. Given the presence of the adnominal form in both RCs and CACs, some of the individual examples below may present as ambiguous between the two readings.

Also relevant to the discussion is the fact that many tensed verbal nouns (VNs) may be analyzed as adnominal forms combined with a pronominal head, for example, *kuḍu-tt-atu* "the coming, arrival" consists of *kuḍu-tt-a* "which came" and *atu* "that one, it." Annamalai demonstrates that the formation of relative clauses is subject to general restrictions such as Island Constraints.

*Complement adjectival clauses*

The CAC is a Complex NP (Ross 1967): that is, a sentential complement headed by a lexical noun. (Kiparsky and Kiparsky [1968] call corresponding structures in English factive clauses.) Semantically speaking, in a CAC the complement clause elaborates the content of the head noun while in an RC the complement restricts the interpretation of the head noun by reference to the frame or situation described in the complement clause.

(5) $_{NP}[_{S}$[vaṉattiṟkuḷ pēy-kaḷ ulav-um]
forest-LOC demon-P wander-FUT.ADN
katai-kaḷ pala.v] uṇṭu.
story-P many be-PRS-3S.N
"There are many stories of demons wandering in the forest." (Example from Murugan 2010, 31)

In example (5), the complement clause describes the content of the head NP *kataikaḷ pala* "many stories"; the head NP plays no role within the subordinate clause. The head noun is often an abstract noun, usually in the singular to facilitate an abstract reading. But, as example (5) already shows, the head noun may be both plural and quantified.

While Tamil CACs tend to make use of the future adnominal form, they occur with any of the four adnominal forms in the language: past (6), present (7), future (8), and negative (9).

(6)a $_{NP}[_{S}$[nām irukkiṟōm, namakku aṉupāvam
we.NOM be-PRS-1P we-DAT experience.NOM
varikiṟatu eṉ-ṟ-a] irumai] kiṭaiyātu.
come-PRS-3S.N say-PST-ADN duality get-NEG-3S.N
"The duality between 'I am' and 'this experience comes to me' does not exist." (Example from Jeyaraman 2017, 13)

b $_{NP}[_{S}$[oru poṇṇu poẓappa.k keṭu-tt-a] pāvam]
one girl life ruin-PST-ADN sin
eṉakku vēṇṭām
I-DAT want-NEG-3S.N
"I didn't want the sin/burden of having ruined a girl's life."
(Example from Murugan 2010, 67)

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[kaṇṇaṉ tirumpi vantu viṭ-ṭ-a]
Kannan return-CF come-CF leave-PST-ADN
cantōṣam]
happiness
"The happiness that Kannan had indeed returned."

As noted earlier, where literary Tamil has three adnominal forms expressing positive polarity, past, present, and future, spoken Tamil has two: past and nonpast (Asher 1985). The spoken variety thus recapitulates the situation of Old Tamil (see below) but with an interesting formal twist. The *form* of the nonpast is that of the corresponding literary present tense: *-(k)kiṟ-a*. Thus, in a move toward greater morphological transparency, spoken Tamil retains the two adnominal forms that use the allomorph *-a* while discarding the allomorphs *-(k)kum* and *-um*, which also function as the markers of finite future verb forms, for example, *iru-kkum* "it will be." Note that example (7b) contains two CACs with the head noun *kaṉavu* "dream" that are coordinated by the conjunction *=ō… =ō* "or . . . or."

(7)a $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[kuẓantai illai eṉ-kiṟ-a] kuṟai.y-ai.t]
child be.NEG say-PRS-ADN fault-ACC
tavira avaṅkaḷ vāẓvil vēru enta
except they life-LOC other what
kuṟai.y=um illai.
fault=any be.NEG-3S.N
"Except for the lack of children, there was nothing else lacking in their lives." (Example from Murugan 2010, 33)

b āṉāl avaḷukku $_{NP1}$[$_{S}$[cāppiṭu-kiṟ-a] kaṉav]=ō
but she-DAT eat-PRS-ADN dream=or
$_{NP}$[$_{S2}$[eṇṇūril uppunīril kaẓattu
Ennur-LOC salt.water-LOC neck

maṭṭukku niṟ-kiṟ-a] kaṉav=o]
extent-DAT stand-PRS-ADN dream=or
varavat(u) illai.
come-FUT-VN be.NEG-3S.N
"But she never had a dream about eating or a dream about standing neck deep in salt water at Ennur." (Example from Jāṉakirāmaṉ 1966, 87)

c āṉāl maṟṟa cila pērai.p pōla
but other some people-ACC like
$_{NP}$[$_{S}$[kuṭittāl poṇṭāṭṭi.y-ai aṭi-kkiṉṟ-a] kaṭamai
drink-CND wife-ACC beat-PRS-ADN duty
uṇarcci.y] ellām kiṭaiyātu.
feeling all get-NEG-3S.N
"But he had none of the sense of duty to beat his wife when he was drunk, like some other people had." (Example from Pāśkar 2002, 57)

CACs with a future adnominal form are among the most common in Modern Literary Tamil.

(8)a $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[pala nāṭar kuṭumpaṅkaḷōṭu nēril
many Natar family-P-SOC directly
paṛakk-um] vāyppu] kiṭainttatu.
frequent-FUT.ADN chance get-PST-3S.N
"I had the opportunity to become closely acquainted with many Natar families." (Example from Annamalai 2016, ix)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[uḷḷē camaiyal vēlai mummuramāka naṭantu
inside cooking work hubbub.ADV occur-CF

koṇṭ(u) irukk-um] ōcai] kēṭṭatu.
hold-CF be-FUT.ADN sound hear-PST-3S.N
"The sound of the hubbub of meals being prepared inside was heard." (Example from Murugan 2010, 42)

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[kāppi kuṭikk-um] vaṛakkam]=um
coffee drink-FUT.ADN custom=and
appōtu kiṭaiyātu.
then obtain-NEG-3S.N
"At that time they did not have the custom of drinking coffee." (Example from Annamalai 2016, 60)

Although one might seek to interpret (9a) as an RC whose head noun corresponds to a locative-marked NP in the complement clause, that analysis is uncertain.

(9)a $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[nākarikamē piṟa-kkāt-a] toṉmai.k
civilization=EMP be.born-NEG-ADN ancient

kāla eccam]=āka teriyum
time residue=ADV appear-FUT-3S.N
"It [this custom] appears to be the residue of an ancient time when civilization was not yet born." (Example from Jeyaraman 2017, 46)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[āṉālum intiya araciyal nilavarattāl atai
but India politics condition-INST it-ACC
viṭṭu viṭa
abandon-INF

muṭiy-āt-a] cikkal] iruntatu
be.able-NEG-ADN problem be-PST-3S.N
"Even so, because of the Indian political condition, the problem existed that they were unable to abandon it [English]." (Example from Jeyaraman 2017, 117)

In (10) the subject of the complement clause appears in the genitive rather than the expected nominative case. This suggests that for some short and, perhaps, formulaic expressions, it is the nominal head of the CAC, and not the complement verb, that determines case in the complement clause. Though rarely attested in RCs, the alternation *nāṉ/eṉ piṟanta nāḷ* [I-NOM/I-GEN be.born-PST-ADN day] "my birthday" is also possible (Annamalai 1997, 31).

(10)a $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[māṇikkavācatt-iṉ iṟa-nt-a] ceyti]
Manikkavacam-GEN die-PST-ADN news
vantatu.
come-pst-3S.N
"News of Manikkavacam's death arrived." (Example from Pāśkar 2002, 72)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[pālaivāviṉ kēṭk-um] tiraṉ]
Palaiva-GEN hear-FUT.ADN ability
"Palaiva's ability to hear/listen." (Example from Pāśkar 2002, 123)

Common head nouns found in CACs include, but are not limited to, *cātyam* "possibility," *tēvai* "necessity," *uṇmai* "truth," *marman* "mystery," *puturu* "puzzle," *kāṭci* "scene," *kōlam* "appearance," *ceyti* "news," *katai* "story," *viṣayam* "matter," *eṇṇam* "thought," *niṉaippu* "thought," *nampikkai* "belief," *ācai* "desire," *tiṭṭam* "plan," *yōcaṉai*

"idea," and *ñāpakam* "memory." However, the lexical identity of the head noun is not enough to determine whether the construction at hand is a CAC; virtually all of those listed may serve as heads of RCs as well. It thus follows that some nominal complements may appear ambiguous between RC and CAC readings. We need to reference the criteria listed above to make a definitive determination.

**Historical and comparative perspectives**

We may ask whether the CAC is a special formation within Tamil, or whether it occurs elsewhere in the Dravidian family. The presence of CACs in other Dravidian languages would naturally cast light on their structure and use in Tamil.

First, a bit of comparative morphology. Early Dravidian verb morphology (Krishnamurti 2003) reconstructs three adnominal forms: a past, a nonpast, and a negative adnominal form. Some languages like Tamil and Kannada have innovated present tense paradigms, but not necessarily present adnominal forms (Tamil has, Kannada hasn't). Other languages have lost some or all of their adnominal forms so that Modern Parji has but one adnominal verb form. North Dravidian has progressively restricted the scope of the adnominal, replacing it with other forms. Several of these changes stem from historical phonological processes: the adnominal marker is generally represented by a short vowel and stands at the end of a word. Both factors make it susceptible to loss in historical change by such processes as apocope.

Following Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1968), Krishnamurti (2003, 447) identifies what he calls a factive clause in Telugu. It consists of an adnominal form followed by the bound noun *aṭṭu/aṭḷu* "matter, fact, thus," as in (11a). He further identifies a subtype of the factive clause, illustrated in (11b), in which "a limited number of abstract nouns . . . may occur as the head of the *relative clause*" (my emphasis). Inexplicably, he claims not to have found corresponding constructions in other literary languages despite citing the Tamil example (11c) three paragraphs earlier. All three are CACs.

(11)a nāku $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[mī pēru intaku mundu
I-DAT your name now before
win-n-a]-aṭṭu] jñāpakam lēdu.
hear-PST-ADN-fact memory be.NEG-3S.N
"I do not remember having heard your name before."

b wāḍiki $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[uttaram cadiw-ē] ālocana]
he-DAT letter read-FH.ADN thought
taṭṭa lēdu.
strike-INF be.NEG-3S.N
"The thought of reading the letter did not occur to him."

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[mantiri nēṟṟu va-nt-a] ceyti]
minister yesterday come-PST-ADN news
"The news that the minister came yesterday."

Considerations of space prevent the inclusion of data from all cognate languages; what follows is a sampling.

*Old Tamil*

Old Tamil has both RCs and CACs. Besides past, nonpast, and negative adnominal forms, the language also uses the bare verb base (BVB) in a variety of syntactic environments, including RCs and CACs. Example (12a) contains two RCs: the first, *oẓuṅku-φ nīr* "water that flows," uses with the BVB of the complement verb *oẓuṅku* "which flows"; the second, *āral pārkk-um kuruku* "the heron that stalks the Aral fish," uses the nonpast adnominal form of the verb *pārkk-um* "which stalks." Thomas Lehmann (personal communication) points out that (12a) may be ambiguous as to whether the locative phrase *oẓuṅku-φ nīr* "water that flows" modifies the noun *āral* "Aral fish" or *kuruku* "heron." Association with the former requires interpolation of an unexpressed verb, for example, "swimming," "being," to which the locative phrase is associated. We will not pursue the issue further here.

Example (12e) uses the past adnominal form for a CAC while (12b–d) use the BVB in the same manner. Thus, neither form is restricted to just one kind of nominal complement: adnominals occur in RCs (12a) and CACs (12e) while BVBs occur in RCs (12a) and CACs (12b–d).

(12)a tiṉai tāḷ aṉṉa ciṟu pācam kāla
millet stalk like small green leg
$_{NP}$[$_{S}$[oẓuṅku] nīr]
flow.BVB water-LOC

$_{NP}$[$_{S}$[āral pārkk-um] kuruku].
aral.fish seek-NPST-ADN heron
"The heron, with green legs like a millet stalk, hunting an Aral fish in the water that flows." (Example from *Kalittokai* 25.3–5)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[koṅku tēr] vāẕkkai.y] am ciṟai tumpi
pollen search.BVB livelihood pretty wing bee
"Pretty winged bee whose livelihood is searching for pollen." (Example from *Kalittokai* 2.1)

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[tāy kāṇ] viruppiṇ]
his.mother see.BVB yearning
"With a yearning to see his mother" (Example from *Kalittokai* 132.5)

d $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[nīr kuṭi cuvayiṉ]
water drink.BVB taste-EQT
"Like the taste of drinking water." (Example from *Akanāṉūṟu* 54.16)

e $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[tuṟaivaṉ nammoṭu puṇar-nt-a] kēṇmai ]
shore-3SM we-SOC join-PST-ADN intimacy
"The intimacy of the man of the shore joining with me." (Example from *Akanāṉūṟu* 70.4–7)

Wilden's (2018) translation of (12e) renders the noun complement as an RC, "the intimacy that joined the man of the shore with me." Perhaps the custom of treating all noun complements with *peyareccam* as RCs influenced this translation. As is well known, the nominative case-form in Old Tamil may assume different case roles. This allows the RC reading to treat the nominative-marked noun *tuṟaivaṉ* "man of the shore" as accusative case. The CAC reading proposed here assumes that *tuṟaivaṉ* as a nominative-marked noun, is serving in its prototypical function as the subject of the clause. The RC interprets *kēṇmai* "intimacy" as an ontological power that pre-exists the relation of an individual man and woman and is capable of bringing them together, while the CAC interprets that intimacy as emerging from their relation. Such differing interpretations naturally influence how we understand Old Tamil worldviews.

The BVB fell out of use as a free form in the transition to Middle Tamil, bringing about a number of changes in the morphological composition of several constructions. The adnominal form accordingly moved into some constructions vacated by the BVB. A concomitant change was the innovation of a present adnominal forms in late Old Tamil, based on the past prospective tense marker consisting of the auxiliary verb *kil-* "be able" and the past tense marker *-t-* (see Steever 1993). Since it already incorporated a past tense marker, it had a past adnominal form available in its conjugation. The meaning of the syntagm ultimately shifted from past prospective tense ("was about/certain to do") to present tense.

*Malayalam*

Asher and Kumari (1997, 52–75) analyze relative clauses at length, including various constraints on their formation. Following Abraham (1978), they recognize what they call "indirect relatives" in Malayalam. These are, in fact, CACs. A brief review of one text (Marar 1950) turns up CACs with both past adnominal forms (13a–d) and present adnominal form (13e–g).

(13)a atə koṇṭə ī dvandva yuddhattil duryōdhana
that with this opposite.pair war-LOC Duryodhana
jayicc(ə) ēkkam enna
win-CF may-MOD say-PST-ADN
oru gūḍha pratīkṣa balarāmann(ə)
one hidden expectation Balaraman-DAT
uṇṭāyirunn(ə) irikkaṇam.
be-FP-become-CF be-DEB-FP
"Due to that, Balaraman must have been entertaining a hidden expectation that in this war of kin versus kin, Duryodhana might win."

b ī dhārttarāṣṭranmār ñaŋŋaḷe vañciccə
this Dharttarastra we-ACC cheat-CF
śakāriccə kāṭṭilēkk(ə) ayacca dukham
revile-CF forest-ALL send-PST-ADN sorrow
bhīmanṟe hɹdayattil uṇṭu.
Bhima-GEN heart-LOC be-FP
"In Bhima's heart was the sorrow of Dharttarastra cheating and reviling us and banishing us to the forest.'

c tānum oru tapasvi.y āṇɔ enna
self-AND one ascetic COP-FP say-PST-ADN
bhāvattil …
guise-LOC
"In the guise of my being an ascetic . . ."

d yudhiṣṭhiran draupadiye paṇayam veccatu
Yudhisthiran Draupadi-ACC stake place-PST-VN
tān paṇaya.p peṭunnatinɔ munp=ō pinp=ō
self stake-PSV-PST-VN-DAT before=or after=or
enna laghuviṣayam alla.
say-PST-ADN light.matter become.NEG-FP
"It is no light matter whether Yudhisthiram staked Draupadi before or after he staked himself."

e yudhiṣṭhirane svantam jayikkān uḷḷa
Y.-ACC self win-SUP be-ADN
oru pani enikk(ɔ) aṟiyām.
one trick I-DAT know-MOD-FP
"I know a trick for you to beat Yudhisthiran."

f ñān sālvane snēhikkunna katha tellum
I Salva-ACC love-PRS-ADN fact a.little
aṟiyāte.y āṇɔ bhiśmar enne
know-NEG-CF COP Bhisma I-ACC
piṭiccɔ koṇṭɔ pōnnatu.
take-CF hold-CF go-PST-VN
"It was because he didn't know in the least the fact that I love/the fact of my loving Salva that Bhisma took me away."

g avare.y okke konn(ɔ) iṭṭ(ɔ) kiṭṭunna
they-ACC all kill-CF put-CF get-PRS-ADN
sukham entu sukham āyirikkum, paṟayū.
pleasure what pleasure be-FUT tell-IMP
"Tell me what sort of pleasure is the pleasure of killing them all off?'

Even though Malayalam has a future-tense adnominal form, like Modern Tamil, it is rarely used in the spoken language (Asher and Kumari 1997, 54). The past and present adnominal forms both employ the morpheme –a, while the obsolescent future form uses –um, comparable to Modern Tamil. To make explicit future time reference, speakers have recourse to prospective future Auxiliary Compound Verbs.

*Kota and Toda*

Kota and Toda are nonliterary languages in the South Dravidian subgroup, closely related to Tamil. In Kota the inherited adnominal form has undergone phonological reduction to a form that often, but not always, matches the BVB (14a). In most instances, however, the adnominal form has given way to the tensed verbal noun, which historically incorporates both a tensed adnominal form and a pronominal head, as in the Tamil example *kuḍu-tt-atu* "the coming, arrival" noted above. In (14b–c) it joins the complement clause to the head noun to form an RC; in (14d–f) it joins the complement clause to the head noun to form CACs.[2]

(14)a $_{NP}[_{S}[$āv gāt] mog]
cow watch.BVB boy
"The boy watching the cows." (Example from Emeneau 1946, II.12)

b $_{NP}[_{S}[$ī tērkārn ayd-vd] mānt(n)] nambyṯ
this diviner say-PST.VN word-ACC believe-CF
"Believing the word the diviner said." (Ibid.)

c $_{NP}[_{S}[$en ēmāty-vd] oḏ krāmančn]
I-ACC deceive-PST.VN one human
"A human who deceived me." (Ibid.)

d meyṇ ōčīp(d) duktl mānta kēḷ-vd=an
son die-VN sorrow-LOC word hear-VN=EMP
makyeyṯ tatīkō
faint-MED-CF die-PST-3SM
"As soon as he heard it, he fainted and died from the sorrow of his son dying." (Ibid.)

e $_{NP}[_{S}[$mančn oḏ gečmēl devr oḏ
man one.thing do-CND God one.thing
naṛtyō iḏ-d] člōgm]
act-PRS-3SM say-PST.VN proverb
"The proverb that says, 'If man does one thing, God makes another happen.'" (Ibid.)

[2] Note that (14b) may be ambiguous, also allowing a CAC interpretation as "believing what the diviner said," as well as a straightforward RC.

f $_{NP}[_{S}$[pōlpač etyr vārāvōr ay oḍd
lunch carry-CF come-NEG-APL there be-ADN
martil paṇ
tree-LOC fruit

aṇḍr tiḍ-d] vaḷkm].
pluck-CF eat-VN custom-NOM
"It is the custom that those who do not carry lunch, pluck and eat fruit from the trees there." (Ibid.)

Similarly, in Toda the adnominal persists in the song language and formulaic expressions. However, relative clauses such as (15a–b) and CACs such as (15c) are now formed by combining verbal nouns with head nouns. Emeneau (1984, 153) observes that given their respective distributions, it is meaningless to distinguish between verbal nouns and verbal adjectives (our adnominal); the same applies in Kota.

(15)a $_{NP}[_{S}$[pīs fur-s] ïṛṇ]
sun disappear-FUT.ADN place
"(Place) where the sun sets."

b $_{NP}[_{S}$[a pāwṣ θwī̱ṛy-foy] fiły] ēkin.
that water-LOC appear-PST.VN ring get-FUT-1S
"I will get the ring that appears in the river."

c nïnk $_{NP}[_{S}$[pily ïṭ-t] fōxcam]
you-DAT sorcery place-PST.ADN boon
doden.
give-FUT-1S
"I will give you the boon of performing sorcery."

As noted earlier, the *-a* adnominal marker in South Dravidian occupies a phonologically precarious position making it vulnerable to loss. Most short vowels in noninitial syllables in Toda and Kota have undergone apocope, taking the adnominal marker along with them.

*Kannada*

Kannada uses the adnominal form to generate RCs, as amply documented in Sridhar 1990. It also uses the adnominal in CACs.

Reflecting its Dravidian heritage, Kannada has only three adnominal forms: a past, a nonpast, and a negative. Though Kannada subsequently innovated two other finite paradigms, the present and the contingent tense-forms, neither automatically innovated adnominal forms. The nonpast adnominal marker *-uva* often becomes *-ō* in the spoken language (see 16d). Further, the (past) adnominal marker *-a* is subject to loss in spoken Kannada (Sridhar 1990, 49). This process parallels the erosion of the adnominal in Kota and Toda.

CACs with past adnominal forms appear in (16). Observe that in (16a), apart from the CAC . . . *satta vārte* "the news that he died," the sequence *avarige . . . tiḷiyōdu avaśya* "the need to inform them" closely resembles a CAC consisting of a nominalized verb and a predicate nominal, as in the Kota and Toda examples above. While this can also be analyzed as an embedded sentential subject with a predicate nominal, it suggests one pathway for the development of CACs with verbal nouns.

(16)a $_{NP_1}[_{S_1}$avarige $_{NP_2}[_{S_2}[$tamma mitran obba sa-tt-a$]_{S_2}$
they-DAT self-OBL friend one die-PST-ADN
vārte$]_{NP_2}$ tiḷiyōdu$]_{NP_1}$ avaśy(a)]
news inform-NPST-VN need

anta nīvu opputīrī tānē?
say-SMLT you-H agree-PRS-2H EMP
"Don't you agree of the need of informing them
of the news that one of their friends died?"

b prāṇēśācāriyarige $_{NP}[_{S}[$illige śēṣappa ba-nd-a]
P.-DAT here-DAT S. come-PST-ADN
suddi] kēḷi
news hear-CF

ede jaggenditu.
chest ONOM-say-pst-3S.N
"At hearing the news of Sesappa's coming here, Pranescharya's heart skipped a beat." (Example from Anantha-murti 1965, 16)

c $_{NP}[_{S}[$avaḷa sṭūḍiyōvannu kan-ḍ-a]
she-OBL studio-ACC see-PST-ADN

nenap(u)] ide.
memory be-PRS-3S.N
"He had the memory of seeing her studio." (Example from Karanth 1946, 421)

d $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[ondu bāṭal bīru kuḍ-id-a] dhairyadalli]
one bottle beer drink-PST-ADN courage-LOC
ivanu avaḷige
this.man that.woman-DAT

ā muttannu hindirugisidda.
that kiss-ACC return-PST-3SM
"With the courage from drinking a bottle of beer, I kissed her back." (Example from Ramanujan 1978)

Examples of Kannada CACs with the nonpast adnominal form appear in (17).

(17)a ī kāladalli $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[hādarakke śāk māḍ-uv-a]
this time-LOC adultery shock do-NPST-ADN
śakti] kaḍime.y āgide.
power less become-FUT-3S.N
"In these days, the power of adultery to cause a shock has diminished."

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[gaṇḍanu nadi dāṭ-uv-a] dr̥śya] nōḍi
husband river cross-NPST-ADN sight see-CF
"Watching the sight of her husband crossing the river." (Example from Karanth 1946, 16)

c bahuśa $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[cikkappa horage bandare alligē
perhaps uncle outside come-CND here=EMP
avannu
he-ACC

sandhis-uv-a] irate.y] itt=ō en=ō.
meet-NPST-ADN desire be-PST-3S.N=or what=or
"Perhaps she had the desire to meet uncle right there when he came outside." (Example from Shanabhag 2017, 18)

d nanagū $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[kariyar bilḍ māḍ-ō]
I-DAT=and career build make do-NPST.ADN

hummassu] bantu.
zeal come-PST-3S.N
"And I had the zeal to build my career." (Example from Shanabhag 2017, 97)

e $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[tāy āg-uva] hambala]
mother become-NPST-ADN craving
"The craving to become a mother."

In (18) we have two examples of CACs with multiple complement clauses, each with an adnominal form, preceding a single head noun. The method of coordination is simple juxtaposition.

(18)a $_{NP}$[$_{S1}$[kampaniya lekka barey-uv-a]$_{S}$,
company-OBL account write-NPST-ADN
$_{S2}$[haṇa tāḷe hāk-uv-a],
money counting put-NPST-ADN

$_{S3}$[patregaḷige uttara barey-uv-a]
letter-P-DAT answer write-NPST-ADN
kelasa-gaḷ(u)] iruttiddavu.
work-P be-PST.CONT-3P.N
"There were also the tasks of writing up company accounts, counting money, and writing replies to inquiries." (Example from Shanabhag 2017, 24)

b beḷaginda sanje tanaka $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[guḍis-uv-a]
morning-SRC evening until sweep-NPST-ADN
[$_{S}$[hekk-uv-a] śrama] tappitu.
pick.up-NPST-ADN toil avoid-PST-3S.N
"The toil of sweeping and picking up from morning until night was avoided." (Example from Karanth 1946, 307)

Readers will observe that the kind of head nouns that appear in Kannada CACs strongly resembles the kind of head nouns in Tamil above and in Telugu below.

*Telugu*

Relative clauses and their formation in the South-Central Dravidian language Telugu are well documented in Krishnamurti and Gwynn (1985, 343–357). As elsewhere, the majority of CACs ap-

pear to utilize the future-habitual (FH) adnominal form, comparable to the nonpast or future forms in other languages, as in (20). However, despite Krishnamurti and Gwynn's (1985, 355) claim that only the future-habitual form may occur in such constructions, examples with past forms are readily available in (19). (At this point we lack data on whether the absence of CACs with a present adnominal—e.g., *ammu-tun-na* "which is selling" [sell-PRS-ADN]—is accidental or rule-governed.)

(19)a māṭi māṭiki $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[reyilubaḷḷu parigett-in-a]
again again-DAT train pass.by-PST-ADN
cappuḍḍu] winawastundi.
sound be.heard-PST-3S.N
"Again and again, the sound of the trains passing by was heard." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 486)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[āyannē cūs-in-(a)] anuhbūti]
he-H-ACC=EMP see-PST-ADN impression
kaligindi.
arise-PST-3S.N
"I had the impression of having seen him indeed."
(Example from Gwynn 1991, 22)

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[nēnu āyanni cūs-in-a] māṭa] nijam=ē
I-NOM he-ACC see-PST-ADN fact true=EMP
"The fact that I saw him is true!" or "It is true that I saw him!"

d $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[nīku pāṭa wacc(u) an-n-a]
you-DAT singing know-PST-3S.N say-PST-ADN
sangati] andariki ceppēsānu
fact all-DAT tell-throw-PST-1S
"I told everyone that you know how to sing." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 24)

(20)a āwiḍa lekka prakāram ivi $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[ceḍi
she-OBL reckoning according.to these spoil-CF
pōy-ē] lakṣaṇālu].
go-FH.ADN sign-P
"By her way of reckoning, these things were signs of (his) degenerating." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 461)

b $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[idi purōgamanam=ā paścādgamanam=ā
this progress=INT retreat=INT
an-ē] viṣayam] ālocincāli.
say-FH.ADN matter consider-DEB
"We must consider the matter/question of whether this is progress or a retreat." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 326)

c $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[āyana wacc-ē] pramādam] undi.
he.H come-FH.ADN chance be-PRS-3S.N
"There is a chance of his coming." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 365)

d $_{NP}$[$_{S}$[nuwwu cadiw-ē] māṭa] lēkapōte dīpam
you-S study-FN.ADN intention unless light
āpēseyi.
extinguish-IMP.S
"Unless you intend on studying, extinguish the light." (Example from Gwynn 1991, 416)

Telugu has expanded the use of the adnominal form in ACCs to include the structures in (21), which should not be confused with either CACs or RCs. For instance, the syntagm *ceppina eḍala* "if (one) says" in (21a) is as an alternate to the simple conditional form of the verb, viz. *ceb-ite* "if (one) says."

(21)a $_{ADV}$[$_{S}$[āyana ceppina] eḍala] mīru aṭlu cēyāli.
he-H say-PST-ADN manner you that.way do-DEB
"If he says so, you must do accordingly."

b manaṣu-lu $_{ADV}$[$_{S}$[perigina] koddī]
people-P grow.old-PST-ADN proportion
dūram awtāru
distant become-FH-3P
"As people grow up, they become further apart."

c $_{ADV}$[$_{S}$[erangan] aṭṭu] naṭincāḍu
know-NEG-ADN thus behave-PST-3SM
"He pretended as if he didn't know."

*Parji*

The Central Dravidian language Parji (Burrow and Bhattacharya 1953), a nonliterary language, has simplified its set of adnominal

forms so that there is now just one marker with the two allomorphs, *-an ~ -ran*. The addition of the *-n* at the end of the morpheme appears to represent a historical development to bolster the adnominal form and strengthen it against the deletion of forms with scant phonological content. The adnominal appears—sparingly in these texts—in both RCs (22a–b) and CACs (22c–d).

(22)a $_{NP}[_{S}$[tel kudran] kurka] ciyam iya
head cut-ADN gourd give-HRT mother
ended ge.
say-PST-3S.M PRT
"He said, 'Mother, let us give the gourd whose head was cut off.'" (Example from Burrow and Bhattacharya 1953, 77.II.3)

b $_{NP}[_{S}$[bakkel ved-ran] murtal]
cake steam-ADN old.woman
"The old woman who was steaming cakes."
(Example from Burrow and Bhattacharya 1953, 84.IV.9)

c ā paḍic $_{NP}[_{S}$[nāg̃il patiy-an] jovar] eñed
that boy plow hold-ADN age become-PST-3SM
"That boy has reached the age for holding a plow." (Example from Burrow and Bhattacharya 1953, 87.VI.1)

d $_{NP}[_{S}$[uṛuran] būti] nā cājor?
plough-ADN wages what do-PST-2P
"What did you do with his wages from ploughing?"
(Example from Burrow and Bhattacharya 1953, 86.V.3–4)

*Kurux*

Adnominal forms in the North Dravidian languages have retreated. For example, the agentive adnominal form in Kurux allows Relativization only on agents or actors (Kobayashi and Tirkey 2017, 192); other roles on the NP Accessibility Hierarchy undergo Relativization with either infinitives or correlative constructions calqued on Indo-Aryan models. Since the head noun in a CAC lacks any relation to the argument structure within the complement clause, a correlative strategy is not available for CACs. Instead, other forms, primarily the infinitive, now serve to form CACs.

The Kurux example in (23), from Kobayashi and Tirkey (2017, 193), illustrates this strategy; observe that the subject of the complement clause appears in the genitive case.

(23) $_{NP}[_{S}$[ālas gahi eṛpan xēnd-na] katt$^{h}$a]
man GEN house-ACC buy-INF rumor
"the rumor that the man buys a house."

The CAC in (23) thus broadly resembles similar Tamil constructions in (24), which contain CACs built on an infinitival strategy. As the least marked verb form in most of the languages, the infinitive is a likely candidate to substitute for other forms lost or modified in historical change (see Steever 2005 for the markedness of the infinitive in Tamil).

(24)a [$_{NP}[_{S}$[kāviri.p paṭakayil inta vitikam itaṟku
Kaviri basin this ratio this-DAT
kuṟaivāka irukka] vāyppu] illai.
less be-INF chance be.NEG-3S.N
"There is no chance that in the Kaviri river basin the ratio is less than this." (Example from Jeyaraman 2017, 99)

b $_{NP}[_{S}$[āṉi āṭi mātaṅkaḷil āṭkaḷukku niṉṟu
Ani Ati month-P-LOC worker-P-DAT stand-CF
pēca] nēram] irukkātu.
talk-INF time be-FUT.NEG-3S.N
"In the months of Ani and Ati, workers have no time to stand and talk." (Example from Jeyaraman 2017, 84)

The fact that the Tamil CACs in (24) utilize the infinitive rather than the adnominal demonstrates that the morphological identity of the complement clause verb is neither sufficient nor necessary for identifying the construction; we must appeal to the totality of the syntactic criteria adumbrated above.

## Conclusion

We conclude that CACs form part and parcel of Tamil and Dravidian grammar. They appear in both literary and nonliterary languages, and may be reconstructed to Proto-Dravidian with a fair degree of certainty. The evidence shows that we cannot appeal

to the adnominal form of the verb or to the identity of the head noun, individually or jointly, to determine which kind of nominal complement is involved. Only an appeal to both syntax and semantics will suffice. CACs, but not RCs, constitute what Ross (1967) calls Complex NPs. Their status as Complex NPs blocks movement from within the complement clause, negative scope into the complement clause, and the establishment of an anaphoric relation between the head noun and an NP within the complement. Whatever syntactic configuration we chose to represent this distinction must model these differences. With the CAC available in their tool-kit, grammarians will no longer have to tie themselves in knots trying to shoehorn CACs into a model of RCs.

The tendency to confuse CACs with RCs, and the consequent failure to recognize CACs as an independent construction within Tamil and Dravidian grammar stems, I believe, from a poor choice of terminology, namely translating *peyareccam* as "relative participle." This originates in the time of Caldwell and Pope, and has come down to us with little critical evaluation. Obviously, the term *relative participle* primes us to treat as relative clauses any construction in which the form appears, thus forcing CACs (and ACCs) into an analytic blind spot. We cannot automatically transition from *peyareccam*, a morphological concept, to a syntactic or semantic analysis. Broader adoption of the term adnominal form will constitute a first step in rectifying the problems associated with use of the term *relative participle*.

As early as 1969, Annamalai demonstrated that the adnominal form appears in at least three syntactically and semantically distinct constructions: RCs, CACs, and ACCs. Yet the analysis of CACs has lagged behind that of RCs for reasons noted above. In this chapter I have established several criteria for CACs as well as their presence across the Dravidian family. This survey shows that just as there are multiple strategies to form RCs—for example, adnominal, correlative, infinitive—there are multiple strategies to form CACs—for example, adnominal, tensed VNs, infinitive. Beyond refining the syntactic analysis of these different CACs, further research should also consider such questions as whether certain head nouns promote the use of certain tense-forms of the adnominal form in the complement clause. From a historical standpoint, the use of genitive case to represent the

subject within some CACs suggests the sentential status of such complements may have eroded over time and been replaced by a non-sentential modifier. Similarly, in ACCs the passage of time may have changed the uppermost node of the construction from the syntactic category NP to some other category label such as Adverb. Fifty years ago, Annamalai opened a door on the syntactic analysis of Tamil for us; we would do well to accept his invitation, step through, and explore all the insights on display.

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*Abbreviations*

The following abbreviations are used in the interlinear glosses:

| | |
|---|---|
| ACC | accusative case |
| ADV | adverb |
| ADN | adnominal form |
| ALL | allative case (Malayalam) |
| APL | appellative form |
| BVB | bare verb base |
| CF | conjunctive form |
| CONT | continuous |
| COP | copula |
| CND | conditional |
| DAT | dative case |
| DEB | debitive |
| EMP | emphatic |
| EQT | equative case (Old Tamil) |
| FH | future-habitual tense (Telugu) |
| FP | finite predicate |
| FUT | future tense |
| GEN | genitive case |
| H | honorific |
| HRT | hortative |
| IMP | imperative |
| INF | infinitive |

| | |
|---|---|
| INT | interrogative |
| INST | instrumental case |
| LOC | locative case |
| M | masculine gender |
| MED | mediative verb |
| MOD | modal verb (Malayalam) |
| N | neuter gender |
| NEG | negative polarity |
| NOM | nominative case |
| NPST | nonpast tense |
| OBL | oblique |
| ONOM | onomatopoeia |
| P | plural number |
| PRS | present tense |
| PRT | particle |
| PST | past tense |
| PSV | passive voice |
| S | singular number |
| SMLT | simultaneous verb form |
| SOC | sociative case |
| SRC | source case (Kannada) |
| SUP | supine (Malayalam) |
| VN | verbal noun |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |

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# *Content Poverty and Complementizer Omission in Bangla*

Probal Dasgupta

## Introduction

Readers of this volume are likely to be familiar with Professor Annamalai's important 1969 dissertation, *Adjectival Clauses in Tamil*, reprinted in 1997 by the University of Tokyo Press (Annamalai 1997). In contextualizing the reprint, Annamalai's introduction addressed the need to bridge the gap between the setting in which he wrote his dissertation and the contexts in which readers today are going to receive it. In addition to providing a general perspective in order to help the reader to understand the goals of his research, Annamalai itemized certain passages in the text and explained just how he would have handled the issues discussed there if he were writing in the late nineties and using some version of the Principles and Parameters framework of syntactic analysis.

By writing such an introduction, Annamalai set a spectacularly lucid and readable example for those of us revisiting the work we had taken up in our own doctoral inquiry, and therefore facing a similar contextualization challenge. When I prepared my own dissertation (done several decades ago) for publication (Dasgupta 2020), I kept Annamalai's precedent in mind. I chose to place the most essential updates within the text itself, as well as providing explicit labeling to avoid anachronism. For certain key issues, given the extent of change and the nature of the linguistic

phenomenon, it is necessary to do the updating in the form of separate articles. This chapter offers an update of that sort and is inspired both by Professor Annamalai's rigor of linguistic analysis and by his intellectual openness to rethinking issues that have lain at the root of his own fascination with language.

In this chapter, I revisit the relationship between the linguistic phenomenon of omission in relationship to complementization in Bangla, a topic that I took up in my doctoral work. In a framework that postulates deletion as an option circumscribed by recoverability principles, it is normal to assume that a zero-content function word can be freely deleted, as there is nothing to recover. In such an account, with auxiliary hypotheses managing the actual incidence of such "free deletions," the operational content of the notion "zero content" calls for adequate elucidation. In this chapter I choose to speak of "omission" rather than "deletion" for the sake of openness to approaches that do not postulate a deletion operation. While my focus is on Bangla, if similar data are later found in other languages, we may conclude that the diagnosis of content poverty should not focus exclusively on the target element, but must consider its syntactic surroundings as well.

In particular, I consider two clause particles in Bangla syntax, *je* and *bole*,[1] which, like their usual gloss *that* in English, are optionally omitted in certain contexts, as we see in the examples given below, where I minimize confusion by using the gloss QUOT for *bole*, the quotative complementizer. The particle *je* occurs in clause-initial position; *bole* occupies clause-final position:

1. ami jantam **je** dilip aSbe na
   I knew **that** Dilip come.FUT.3NEU not
   "I knew that Dilip wouldn't come."

2. ami jantam dilip aSbe na
   I knew Dilip come.FUT.3NEU not
   "I knew Dilip wouldn't come."

[1] I am using a transcription system in which T D R stand for retroflex sounds, S is palato-alveolar, O and E are low-mid, Y and W are mid glides, y and w are high glides, c j are palato-alveolar affricates, the digraph ng stands for a velar nasal, and other symbols do not call for comment. Abbreviations in the interlinear glosses follow the Leipzig glossing rules.

3. bibek jabe na **bole** Sunechilam
   Bibek go.FUT.3NEU not QUOT hear.PST.PRF.1
   "I had heard that Bibek wouldn't go."

4. bibek jabe na Sunechilam
   Bibek go.FUT.3NEU not hear.PST.PRF.1
   "I had heard Bibek wouldn't go."

Before we elaborate this part of our argument, readers not very familiar with Bangla and languages adjacent to it may want to consult grammars of a few major South Asian languages in order to place these facts in context. Typical Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi (Kachru 2006) only have a clause-initial complementizer similar to the *je* in our example (1). Typical Dravidian languages like Telugu (Krishnamurti and Gwynn 1985) and Malayalam (Jayaseelan 1999) only have a clause-final complementizer resembling the *bole* in our example (3). Like their counterpart in Bangla, Dravidian clause-final complementizers too are related to verbs of saying in their respective languages; hence the term "quotative" complementizers. Less typical Indo-Aryan languages such as Marathi (Wali 2006) are like Bangla in having both clause-initial and "quotative" clause-final complementizers. Subbārāo (2012) provides a magisterial typological survey of these and related matters.

To return to the Bangla data we are examining, at first sight, it seems that (2) and (4) illustrate the optional omission of the complementizers *je* and *bole*, respectively, which are present in (1) and (3). For the moment, I accept this reading of the facts. My exposition, however, shall move step by step toward my final stand, which is that (4) does not reflect the omission of *bole*, but of *je*.

One important difference between the complementizers *je* and *bole* has to do with the way they affect the scope-taking properties of interrogative constituents. To make these properties readily visible, I am italicizing the material within the scope of the interrogative in each of the following example sentences, starting with (5) and (6):

5. tomra Sunecho **je** *ronita kake biye korbe*
   you.PL have.heard **that** Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU
   "You have heard whom Ronita will marry."

6. *ronita kake biye korbe* ***bole*** *tomra Sunecho?*
ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU QUOT you.PL have.heard
"Who have you heard Ronita will marry?"

As (5) and (6) show, an embedded interrogative takes narrow scope when its clause is marked by the default complementizer particle *je*, but takes wide scope when the quotative complementizer *bole* is used. (Readers unaccustomed to the way linguists speak may prefer to be told that the default particle *je* introduces an indirect question, whereas the quotative particle *bole* turns the whole sentence into a direct question that gives pride of place to the content of the subordinate clause, a prioritization that corresponds to the fact that the English gloss for (6) places the question word "who" at the very beginning of the whole sentence.) When the complementizer goes missing, as in (7) and (8), we have to restore it in order to make sense of the readings available for these strings. (Alternatively, in a framework that shuns deletion and reconstruction of all kinds, we must determine its identity and associate this identity with the empty complementizer site.) Notice that (8a) and (8b) are string-identical. The supravocalic acute accent in (8a) and (8b) serves to indicate prosodic prominence:

7. tomra ronita *kake biye korbe Sunecho*
you.PL Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU have.heard
"You have heard whom Ronita will marry."

8. a. *tomra ronita káke biye korbe Sunecho?*
you.PL Ronita whóm marriage do.FUT.3NEU have.heard?
"Whom have you heard Ronita will marry?"
b. tomra *ronita kake biye korbe* Súnecho?
you.PL Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU have.héard?
"Have you heard whom Ronita will marry?"

The scope properties of the interrogative constituent *kake* "whom" in these sentences appear to suggest that in (7) and (8b) the null complementizer is a missing *je* "that," associated with narrow scope for an embedded interrogative, but that in (8a) the null is a missing *bole* "QUOT," associated with wide scope for such an inter-

rogative. In other words, (7) and (8a, b) are equivalent to (9) and (10a, b), respectively:

9. tomra Sunecho **je** *ronita kake biye korbe*
you.PL have.heard **that** Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU
"You have heard whom Ronita will marry."

10. a. *tomra ronita kake biye korbe* ***bole*** *Sunecho?*
you.PL Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU QUOT have.heard?
"Whom have you heard Ronita will marry?"

b. tomra ki Sunecho **je** *ronita kake biye korbe*?
you.PL Q.COMP have.heard **that** Ronita whom marriage do.FUT.3NEU?
"Have you heard whom Ronita will marry?"

When we place overt complementizers in these sentences in order to capture the readings associated with (7) and (8), we are also forced to place the *je*-marked embedded clause to the right of the matrix verb, the only position available for such clauses in Bangla. Furthermore, we find it appropriate (though not absolutely essential) to insert the interrogative complementizer *ki* in (10b), so that intonation alone does not have to bear the burden of marking the status of the sentence as an alternative question.

As we make these adjustments in order to address the discrepancies between (7)–(8) and their overt complementizer equivalents (9)–(10), we note that it is incumbent on us to account for these discrepancies, that is, to make sense of the way the chips fall in (7) and (8).

On our way to such an account, let us note another key difference between the default complementizer *je* and the quotative complementizer *bole*: *je* is a clitic (see Haspelmath 2023 for a lucid introduction to the notion of "clitic," drawing on data from a wide range of languages); *bole* is not. That *je* is an enclitic is easiest to notice when it occurs inside its clause rather than on its left periphery:

11. a. jiten **je** maYake Oghran maSe biye korbe ekOtha dipa boleche
Jiten **that** Maya.ACC Aghran month.LOC marriage do.FUT.3NEU this Dipa has.said

"That Jiten will marry Maya in the month of Agrahayan, Dipa has said."

b. jiten maYake **je** Oghran maSe biye korbe ekOtha dipa boleche
Jiten Maya.ACC **that** Aghran month.LOC marriage do.FUT.3NEU this Dipa has.said
"That Jiten will marry Maya in the month of Agrahayan, Dipa has said."

c. jiten maYake Oghran maSei **je** biye korbe ekOtha dipa boleche
Jiten Maya.ACC Aghran month.LOC.FOC **that** marriage do.FUT.3NEU this Dipa has.said
"That Jiten will marry Maya in the month of Agrahayan, Dipa has said."

d. jiten maYake Oghran maSe biye **je** korbei ekOtha dipa boleche
Jiten Maya.ACC Aghran month.LOC marriage **that** do.FUT.3NEU.FOC this Dipa has.said
"That Jiten will marry Maya in the month of Agrahayan, Dipa has said."

This is not the place for detailed commentary on the fact that (11c, d) sound more natural with the focus particle *i* while (11a, b) are fine without it, or to place the behavior of the Bangla particle *i* on the bigger cross-linguistic map of focus particles.[2] My goals here are more limited. I begin by flagging the fact that the element *je*, when it occurs within an embedded clause, serves two purposes. First, as an enclitic, it marks its host as the topic of the clause. Second, it functions, exactly like its homophone in (1), (5), and (9), as the complementizer that subordinates its clause to the matrix clause.

The vagueness of such terms makes it desirable that I should define "topic" (the contributions to Li 1976 make it clear that the term "topic" meant different things to different linguists 50 years ago; to demonstrate that linguists have not converged on a widely

[2] For a comprehensive study of focus particles, see König 1991; Rooth 1985 is a seminal dissertation that informs many analyses of focus phenomena; Lahiri 1998 studies focus phenomena in one Indian language in some detail.

accepted definition would involve too elaborate a digression for an ordinary reader to digest; readers who are adventurous and would like to find out for themselves will certainly survey the current literature). For the purposes of this chapter, I shall take it that the topic of a clause is a constituent that mentions or alludes to something already referred to in antecedent discourse or something the speaker may presume the hearer is familiar with; in other words, the topic of the clause links the clause to its context, either through earlier discourse or through mutual familiarity with the referent of the topic. Thus, in (12), *kalakaMd* is the topic of *kalakaMd je tomar cOle na*, as it has been mentioned in the sentence immediately preceding it (and separated from it by a semicolon):

12. uni kalakaMd enechen; kalakaMd **je** tomar cOle na SeTa to ar janten na
s/he.HON kalakãd has.brought; kalakãd you.GEN goes not **that** of.course PRT knew not
"S/he has brought you some kalakand;[3] s/he didn't know, of course, that you have no use for it."

For our purposes, I shall, likewise, use the following explicit operational definition of the notion of focus. The focus of a clause is the constituent bearing the highest degree of stress. A constituent that hosts a focus particle clitic such as *i* "indeed" or *o* "also" thereby counts as a focal constituent (but this is not a necessary condition that must be met for a constituent to have this status):

13. kriSnonOgor theke tOpon#i eSeche, robin aSeni[4]
Krishnanagar from Tapan#FOC has.come, Robin has.not.come
"It is Tapan who has come from Krishnanagar, not Robin."

There is one notable surface fact concerning foci and topics in Bangla clause structure. The focus of a clause must follow the topic for the clause to be well formed. In examples (14) and (15),

[3] *Kalakand* is a sweet dish; see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalakand.
[4] My notation uses word-internal # as a boundary separating a clitic from its host.

*kalakaMd* hosts the topic particle *to*, while *tOpon* hosts the focus particle *i*, making it easy to observe the association between the topic-focus order and well-formedness, and why (15) is egregiously ill-formed:

14. kalakaMd to tOpon#i pOchondo kOre
kalakand TOP Tapan#FOC like does
"As for kalakand, Tapan is the one who likes it."

15. *tOpon#i kalakaMd to pOchondo kOre
Tapan#FOC kalakand TOP like does
"*Tapan is the one who, as for kalakand, likes it."

A larger data base would show that this pattern recurs; the generalization is that a topic can take scope over a focus, as in (14), but the reverse, exemplified in the ill-formed string (15), is never acceptable.[5]

The acceptability contrast is just as dramatic when we replace the topic particle *to* with its congener *je*; however, since we are restricting our discussion to occurrences of *je* in embedded clauses,[6] we need a more articulated syntactic structure to illustrate the phenomenon:

16. kalakaMd **je** tOpon#i pOchondo kOre SeTa robin janto na kalakand

[5] In examples like (11c), where the same constituent hosts both a focus particle and a topic particle, the question of one of these taking scope over the other clearly does not arise.

[6] The syntax and semantics literature offers several accounts of *je* occurring in a root sentence. The phenomenon is exemplified in the following example:

*phoTiker ma biSSOMYe anonde obhibhuto hoiya kohilen,*
*"oma, e **je** dada, tumi kObe ele"*
Photik.GEN mother surprise.LOC joy.LOC overwhelmed being said,
"oh.wonderful, this **TOP** big.brother, you when arrived"
"Photik's mother was overwhelmed with surprise and joy, and said, 'Oh, wonderful, this is big brother! When did you arrive?"'

Such an element is a clitic, like all occurrences of the particle *je* in the language. I do not address root sentence occurrences of the element in this chapter. Whether they can be unified with the occurrences I deal with in this chapter is a matter for separate discussion. Bayer and Dasgupta 2016 is one reference worth consulting; the analyses in Dasgupta 2020 consider an even wider range of data.

that Tapan#FOC like does that Robin knew not
"That it is Tapan who likes kalakand is something Robin didn't know."

17. *tOpon#i kalakaMd **je** pOchondo kOre SeTa robin janto na
Tapan#FOC kalakand **that** like does that Robin knew not
"*That it is kalakand that it is Tapan who likes is something Robin didn't know."

If we make (16) switch over to the variant of *je* that was illustrated at the very outset of this chapter, the result is (18). Here, we see the particle sandwiched between matrix clause material and embedded clause material:

18. robin janto na **je** tOpon#i kalakaMd pOchondo kOre
Robin knew not **that** Tapan#FOC kalakand like does
"Robin didn't know that it is Tapan who likes kalakand."

But it remains to be determined just what position *je* occupies in (18). Had it not been an enclitic element, its privileges of occurrence would have included an English-like clause-initial position. But *je* in Bangla does not have this privilege. Compare the well-formed (19) with the ill-formed (20):

19. That Tapan likes kalakand was not widely known.

20. *je tOpon kalakaMd pOchondo kOre eTa Oneker#i jana chilo na
that Tapan kalakand likes this many.GEN.#FOC known was not
"That Tapan likes kalakand was not widely known."

The obvious option of treating *je* as an enclitic hosted by the matrix verb *janto na* "didn't know" is precluded by the fact that not every clause in Bangla contains a verb. Consider (21):

21. eTa to jana kOtha **je** tOpon#i kalakaMd pOchondo kOre
this of.course known fact **that** Tapan#FOC kalakand like does
"It is of course a known fact that it is Tapan who likes kalakand."

An analysis that treats this particle as a clitic hosted now by a noun, now by a verb, now by an adjective will have trouble keeping its story line coherent. I prefer to take the position that *je* is a clitic hosted syntactically by some relevant constituent of the matrix clause (one of the choices available is to call that host the "Predicate Phrase"; other choices include VP, vP, or a projection of one of the asteroids born during the explosion that smashed the classical "Aux"; for readers not clued into the relevant debates, it is enough to assume that we are dealing with something bigger than the verb and smaller than the clause) and hosted morphologically by whatever happens to be the last word of that matrix constituent.

In my doctoral work in the late seventies (now available as Dasgupta 2020), I flagged one more difference between *je* and the English complementizer *that*. In English, as (22) illustrates, it is possible for the conjunction to connect two embedded clauses, and for the complementizer *that* to appear in clause-initial position in the second conjunct (and thus adjacent to *and*). But Bangla prohibits the "and that" sequence; hence the starred status of (23):

22. We thought that they had heard the news and that they would come by the evening train

23. *amra bhebechilam **je** ora khOborTa peYeche ebong **je** ora Sondher Trene aSbe
we had.thought **that** they the.news have.heard and **that** they evening.GEN train.LOC will.come
"We thought that they had heard the news and that they would come by the evening train."

To what factor should our description attribute the ungrammaticality of (23)? I took it that the inability of the complementizer *je* to occur adjacent to the coordinating conjunction *ebong* suggests that they have a categorial feature in common. On this assumption, their inability to occur side by side follows from the general inability of function words of the same category to appear next to each other.

In my dissertation, I described the element *je* seen in (21) and (23) as a hybrid element, a complementizer-conjunction, which contrasts both with the pure conjunction *ebong* and with the pure complementizer *je* in (11), (12), and (16). These assumptions

enabled me to account for the ill-formed status of (20) as well as (23). I have already commented on (23) above. To make sense of the ill-formedness of (20), in the framework of my dissertation, we must first note that the clause-initial position can harbor a pure conjunction like *Othoba* "or," as in (24), or a pure complementizer such as *jodi* "if," as in (25):

24. Othoba tumi nijei pruph dekhe dite paro
or you.NEU.SG yourself proof read.CJ give.INF CAN.PRS.2NEU
"Or you can read the proofs yourself."

25. jodi pon kore thakiS, Se pon tomar rObei rObe
if vow do.CJ COP.PRS.2INT, that vow you.NEU.GEN stand.FUT.
3NEU.FOC stand.FUT.3NEU
"If you have made a vow, you are bound to reach your goal."

In such an account, a clause-initial pure conjunction declares, "I flag a coordinate clause," and a clause-initial pure complementizer declares, "I flag a subordinate clause." On this basis, the description in my doctoral thesis was able to make perfect sense of the acceptability of (24) and (25). However, on those assumptions, if the *je*-bearing clause in (20) places the hybrid element *je* in its initial position, the two properties of *je* pull it in opposite directions. Its complementizer property declares, "I complementize; therefore, the clause *je tOpon kalakaMd pOchondo kOre* counts as subordinate to the matrix clause *eTa Oneker#i jana chilo na*." But the conjunction property of *je* exclaims, "How can I sit in this geometrically inappropriate position and conjoin two clauses of equal status without interfering with the complementizer property trying to subordinate the left-hand clause to the right-hand clause? Why am I being instructed to do something anomalous?" In other words, the hybrid character of the element *je* causes sentence (20) to crash.

The hybrid nature of the complementizer-conjunction *je*, on these assumptions, enables it to save (18), where it sits between the two clauses and is able to say, "I am formally a coordinating conjunction; allow me to hold the two clauses together. But I am categorially a complementizer; allow me to flag the right-hand clause as subordinate to the left-hand clause." And it is precisely

its hybridity that makes it unusable in (20). This is as it should be; we want (20) to come out ill-formed.

When I was writing this account, in the late seventies, I had no way of knowing that around the same time, albeit in a different syntactic domain, the Pisa theory was making similar use of a deliberately hybrid "pronominal anaphor" to make sense of a comparable cluster of data in English and other European languages. Perhaps the limitations of the resources available to syntacticians in that period made it seem natural to use such coding tricks. Be that as it may, I come to bury this old analysis, not to praise it; it serves here as a preamble to a fresh description, which I present here in framework-neutral terms to ensure maximal usability.

**Toward a new analysis**

The key factor in my fresh analysis is the claim that *je* is an enclitic. I shall assume, for concreteness, that the syntax adjoins *je* to some element immediately to its left; but I maintain that an account that has the phonology handling *je*'s clitic status will be just as satisfactory.

I propose that in all its instances *je* is a true complementizer and begins its syntactic career in the initial position of the clause it serves. (Hence, in the interlinear glosses I mark it with its categorial function—as COMP—rather than as "that." For the same reason, when glossing the topicalizing particle *to*, I mark it as TOPZR rather than "as.is.obvious".) Consider first those clauses in which some constituent counts as the topic and hosts an enclitic particle that marks its topic status. If the particle in question is *to*, as in (26), then it does not interact with the *je* that we are focusing on:

26. amar mone hoYechilo **je** rita to SObTai jane, tomaY Ek phaMke bujhiye debe
I.GEN mind.LOC AUX **COMP** Rita TOPZR everything knows, you.DAT a gap.LOC explain.CJ AUX
"I thought that Rita, of course, knows the whole thing, and will explain it to you at some point."

My view is that the topicalizing particle *to* in (26) has no reason to interact with the *je*-particle situated in the Complementizer of

its clause, since *to* shares no pertinent categorial features with *je*. However, when a constituent in such a clause hosts the topicalizing clitic *je*, as in (27), the clause-initial *je* in the Complementizer and the clause-medial *je* cliticized to the topic phrase do interact:

27. nageS ritake **je** SObTai boleche SekOtha tumi andaj korte paroni
Nagesh Rita.DAT **TOPZR** everything has.said that.fact you guess AUX couldn't
"That Nagesh had told Rita the whole story is a fact which you couldn't guess."

My account cleaves to the habits of old-school syntax for expository reasons. I claim that there was a clause-initial complementizer *je* situated to the left of *nageS* and that it has been deleted under identity with *ritake*'s clitic *je*, but that even after this deletion the complementizer site remains syntactically active; it still harbors the grammatical features uniquely identifying the complementizer *je* and thus handles the actual work of connecting the subordinate clause to its matrix clause. That this analysis works for examples (11a–d) goes without saying. What is less immediately clear is how it is to handle the ill-formedness of (20) and (23) and the well-formedness of (18). I repeat the examples below for the reader's convenience:

18. robin janto na **je** tOpon#i kalakaMd pOchondo kOre
Robin knew not **that** Tapan#FOC kalakand like does
"Robin didn't know that it is Tapan who likes kalakand."

20. ***je** tOpon kalakaMd pOchondo kOre eTa Oneker#i jana chilo na
**that** Tapan kalakand likes this many.GEN.#FOC known was not
"That Tapan likes kalakand was not widely known."

23. *amra bhebechilam **je** ora khOborTa peYeche ebong je ora Sondher Trene aSbe
we had.thought **that** they the.news have.heard and that they evening.GEN train.LOC will.come
"We thought that they had heard the news and that they would come by the evening train."

As noted earlier, the element *je* is initially generated at the complementizer site, but cannot just stay there, for it must be encliticized to some host. This encliticization requirement entails the ill-formedness of (20), where no host is available to its left. Let us now consider (18). My account does not leave the *je* in its initial position at the complementizer site, but forces it to adjoin to the matrix clause, which thus plays host to this enclitic (a movement whose details will be negotiated differently in different frameworks). Finally, (23) is excluded because the light word *ebong* "and" is incapable of hosting any enclitic whatsoever. My current assumptions are able to handle the key data without going back to the hybrid complementizer-conjunction analysis I had once resorted to.

Before I finish these preliminary remarks, I must address one issue concerning the quotative element *bole*. This complementizer is not a clitic. Why, then, does it follow the clause it serves instead of preceding it? My answer is that, although most postpositions select a nominal complement, some do not; *kore*, for instance, takes an adjectival complement. In the case we are now dealing with, *bole* is a postposition that selects a clausal complement. Its placement follows from this assumption, without further fanfare.

**Omissibility of *je***

Having reviewed some of the syntactic prerequisites to understand the behavior of particles like *je* and *bole*, we can now return to the principal theme of this chapter: the omissibility of *je*. Consider (28), which contains *je*, and (29), where it goes missing:

28. ami jantam **je** nikhil ekTu beSi baje bOke
I knew **that** Nikhil a.bit too.much nonsense talks
"I knew that Nikhil goes overboard when he talks nonsense."

29. ami jantam nikhil ekTu beSi baje bOke
I knew Nikhil a.bit too.much nonsense talks
"I knew that Nikhil goes overboard when he talks nonsense."

For expository convenience, we are using classical generative syntax as our basic reference framework. In that approach, this type

of operation counts not as deletion under identity (for there is no second copy of *je* present in (28)) but as deletion of a designated element. The implication is that *je* has negligible content, easily retrieved from the syntactic context. Let us press the point: just what makes *je* in (28) eligible for deletion? If its position between the matrix clause and the embedded clause had been the decisive factor, we would have expected to find the occurrences of *je* in (30a) and (31a) to be just as amenable to deletion; but as we see in (30b) and (31b), they are not:

30. a. rita tomar ki khoti koreche **je** tumi or upor EtoTa rege acho?
Rita you.GEN what harm has.done **that** you she.GEN on so angry are?
"What has Rita done to you that you are so angry with her?"
b. *rita tomar ki khoti koreche tumi or upor EtoTa rege acho?
Rita you.GEN what harm has.done you she.GEN on so angry are?
"*What has Rita done to you you are so angry with her?"

31. a. dineS to ar tomar cakor nOY **je** tumi Daklei cole aSbe
Dinesh TOP PRT your servant isn't **that** you if.call come.over will
"Dinesh, of course, is not your servant that you can just summon him."
b. *dineS to ar tomar cakor nOY tumi Daklei cole aSbe
Dinesh TOP PRT your servant isn't you if.call come.over will
"*Dinesh, of course, is not your servant you can just summon him."

The element *je* in these sentences is not a mere servant of the syntax, obedient to nothing but structural compulsions. It carries a concrete meaning, roughly equivalent in English to "because of which." Such a meaning does not count, then, as negligible enough for the "deletion of a designated element" routine to run its steamroller over the sentence.

If this is so, what are we to make of (32a) or (33a)? Do they also harbor a meaningful *je*? If the ill-formedness of (32b) and (33b) is taken to show that they do, then how do we make sense of the fact

that the insertion of a mere comma rescues them, turning them into the well-formed outcomes (32c) and (33c)? (I assure you that the comma gambit is incapable of rescuing (30b) or (31b).) Just what is going on?

32. a. rOnen Eto luci kheYeche **je** haMSphaMS korche
Ranen so.many puris has.eaten **that** woozy is.feeling
"Ranen has had so many puris that he is feeling woozy."
b. *rOnen Eto luci kheYeche haMSphaMS korche
Ranen so.many puris has.eaten woozy is.feeling
"*Ranen has had so many puris he is feeling woozy."
c. rOnen Eto luci kheYeche, haMSphaMS korche
Ranen so.many puris has.eaten, woozy is.feeling
"Ranen has had so many puris, he is feeling woozy."

33. a. ukil Emon kaYda kore cepe dhorlo **je** Sakkhi SOb kOtha phaMS kore dilo
lawyer so hard AUX press did **that** witness every thing divulge do AUX
"The lawyer pressed him so hard that the witness disclosed everything."
b. *ukil Emon kaYda kore cepe dhorlo Sakkhi SOb kOtha phaMS kore dilo
lawyer so hard AUX press did witness every thing divulge do AUX
"*The lawyer pressed him so hard the witness disclosed everything."
c. ukil Emon kaYda kore cepe dhorlo, Sakkhi SOb kOtha phaMS kore dilo
lawyer so hard AUX press did, witness every thing divulge do AUX
"The lawyer pressed him so hard, the witness disclosed everything."

The matter is not a local problem besetting Bangla alone. The English glosses suggest that English exhibits the same overall pattern of acceptability and unacceptability.

Nor is the problem confined to the clause-initial complementizer *je* in Bangla. The clause-final quotative complementizer *bole* also has a contentless variant, apparently capable of being deleted as a designated element, and a meaning-bearing variant, which resists deletion. The

quotative obeys the compulsions of syntax alone in (34a), and thus apparently lends itself to omission in (34b). But the quotative in (35a) carries the meaning "because"; hence its undeletability, seen in the ill-formedness of (35b). Revisiting these occurrences of *bole* later in the discussion will lead us to modify this initial description of (34a–b):

34. a. jiten maYake biye korbe **bole** dipai janiyeche
Jiten Maya.ACC wed will.do QUOT Dipa.FOC has.informed
"It is Dipa who has told us that Jiten will marry Maya."
b. jiten maYake biye korbe dipai janiyeche
Jiten Maya.ACC wed will.do Dipa.FOC has.informed
"It is Dipa who has told us Jiten will marry Maya."

35. a. Etokkhon boSe thakte holo **bole** rupen khub birokto
this.long sitting stay.INF AUX QUOT Rupen very annoyed
"Rupen is really annoyed because he had to wait this long."
b. *Etokkhon boSe thakte holo rupen khub birokto
this.long sitting stay.INF AUX Rupen very annoyed
"Rupen is really annoyed he had to wait this long"
(okay in English).

The state of the art in the modes of linguistic research I am aware of does not make it meaningful to focus on providing and defending one particular analysis of the specific facts at (32a–c) and (33a–c). Solving such a descriptive problem is a local task. The challenge for the global community of linguists is to make sense of the omissibility or non-omissibility of candidates for "designated element" status across languages. Colleagues working on European languages may or may not have come up with a credible account of the non-omissibility of the complementizer *que* in the French sentence shown at (36) vis-à-vis the fact that its English counterpart *that* is omissible in (37). But in the case of the Hindi-Urdu sentence (38) and its Bangla counterpart (39), at least, no generative linguist working on South Asian languages has arrived at a widely accepted story from which it follows that the Bangla element *je* should be omissible while its Hindi counterpart *ki* should not:

36. Je sais *(que) Nikhil reviendra demain
I know *(COMP) Nikhil will.come.back tomorrow
"I know that Nikhil will come back tomorrow."

37. I know (that) Nikhil will come back tomorrow.

38. mujhe pataa hai *(ki) nikhil kal waapas aayegaa
I.DAT awareness is *(COMP) Nikhil tomorrow back will.come
"I know (that) Nikhil will come back tomorrow."

39. ami jani (je) nikhil kal phire aSbe
I know (COMP) Nikhil tomorrow back will.come
"I know (that) Nikhil will come back tomorrow."

At a time when such a major contrast as the omissibility of the default declarative complementizer in English and Bangla versus its resistance to omission in French and Hindi-Urdu remains inadequately understood, the global enterprise of generative syntax can ill afford to prioritize the analysis of (32) and (33). But those of us who are committed to the study of Bangla as a language are obliged to pay full attention to the issues that arise here as well. When we juxtapose the routine-looking variation at (28) and (29) with the intricate patterns at (32) and (33), we appear to find the omissibility of the complementizer *je* depending on whether the element is doing any specifiable work in a particular context.

In this connection, some readers will flag the somewhat different patterns of omissibility observed at (40a–c). One's aesthetic preferences may lead one to say that (40a) is bizarre, and that only a variant such as (40b) or (40c) sounds like real Bangla:

40. a. maYa jane **je** dilip boleche **je** ritar mone hOY **je** gOneS EkTa ujbuk
Maya knows **that** Dilip has.said **that** Rita.GEN mind.LOC AUX **that** Ganesh an idiot
"Maya knows that Dilip has said that Rita thinks that Ganesh is an idiot."

b. maYa jane **je** dilip boleche ritar mone hOY gOneS EkTa ujbuk
Maya knows **that** Dilip has.said Rita.GEN mind.LOC AUX Ganesh an idiot
"Maya knows that Dilip has said Rita thinks Ganesh is an idiot."

c. maYa jane dilip boleche **je** ritar mone hOY gOneS EkTa ujbuk
Maya knows Dilip has.said **that** Rita.GEN mind.LOC AUX Ganesh an idiot
"Maya knows Dilip has said that Rita thinks Ganesh is an idiot."

Is this really a matter of taste, though? A few unpublished papers circulating in the seventies suggested treating (40a) as ungrammatical. That account did not gain acceptance, in part because of sentences like (41), which remains acceptable despite the non-omission of three complementizers:

41. maYa Onek agei bibhinno Sutre khObor peYechilo **je** dilip SOmproti tar
Maya long ago various sources.LOC learn AUX **that** Dilip recently his
ghoniSTho bondhuder janiyeche **je** rita bohudiner tikto obhiggotaY
intimate friends.DAT has.informed **that** Rita long bitter experience.LOC
bujhte pereche **je** gOneSer buddhi ar bibecona bORoi SimabOddho
realized has **that** Ganesh.GEN brains and sense very limited
"Maya has long heard from various sources that Dilip has recently informed his
intimate friends that Rita has realized through long and bitter experience
that Ganesh is neither really bright nor particularly wise."

A description that treats the bizarreness of (40a) vis-à-vis (40b, c) as a matter of grammar cannot easily accommodate the acceptability of (41). Perhaps the relatively long clauses in (41) play a role in making the repeated use of overt complementizers sound less obtrusive than it does in (40a). But such considerations are clearly extragrammatical; whether such facts pertain to stylistics or to psycholinguistics is not for us to decide. We shall cleave to (28) versus (29) as the canonical examples of the omissibility of the default finite clause complementizer *je* in Bangla.

**Omissibility of *bole***

Readers wishing to understand the patterns of the omissibility of finite clause complementizers in Bangla need to look not just at the default complementizer *je*, but also at the non-default quotative complementizer *bole*, to which we now turn. It is clear that (35a) does not allow the definitely meaningful *bole* "because" to be deleted and yield (35b). However, does careful scrutiny allow

us to sustain our initial account of (34b) as derived from (34a) by deleting an occurrence of *bole* that conveys the near-zero meaning "that" and thus allegedly counts as contentless?

The syntactic context of this variant of *bole*, wherever it occurs overtly, sometimes requires an affective predicate selecting a quotative complement clause, as in (42). Or it involves some other polarity-related (or "sensitivity"-related) factor, as in (43), which illustrates the fact that an interrogative constituent in an embedded clause can take wide scope only if the clause uses *bole*. A straightforward factive complement clause, as in (44), must take *je* (or nothing, which counts as the result of omitting *je*), never *bole*.

42. a. dilip romilke cakriTa debe **bole** probir mone kOre
Dilip Romil.DAT the.job will.give QUOT Prabir believe does
"Prabir believes that Dilip will give Romil the job."
b. *dilip romilke cakriTa debe **bole** probir bujhte pereche
Dilip Romil.DAT the.job will.give QUOT Prabir realized has
"Prabir has realized that Dilip will give Romil the job."

43. a. dilip kake cakriTa debe **bole** tumi mone kOro?
Dilip whom the.job will.give QUOT you believe do
"Who do you believe Dilip will give the job to?"
b. *tumi mone kOro **je** dilip kake cakriTa debe?
you believe do **that** Dilip whom the.job will.give
"Who do you believe that Dilip will give the job to?"

44. a. ami dekhlam (**je**) dilip beguni juto pore heMTe bERacche
I saw (**that**) Dilip purple shoe wearing walking around.is
"I saw that Dilip was walking around with purple shoes on."
b. *dilip beguni juto pore heMTe bERacche **bole** ami dekhlam
Dilip purple shoe wearing walking around.is QUOT I saw
"I saw that Dilip was walking around with purple shoes on."

Even if the occurrences of *bole* that don't mean "because" carry the apparently minimal meaning we are glossing as "that," the syntax treats these occurrences as special, in contrast to the readily deletable, truly semantically contentless occurrences of the default complementizer *je*. Even in the case of *je*, recall that only its seriously baggageless tokens proved amenable to omission. The

quotative complementizer *bole*, even in the contexts where it means "that" rather than "because," is never quite baggage-free; I conclude that *bole* as such is never omissible.

I prefer to redescribe (34b), then, as derived not from the initial structure (34a), featuring the quotative complementizer *bole*, but rather from (34c), which is handicapped by the fact that it harbors the default complementizer *je* in clause-initial position, where the absence of any eligible host to its left renders unsatisfiable *je*'s morphological need for encliticization. Such a handicap means that (34c) is not merely allowed, but is compelled, to feed this *je* to the omission dragon, deriving (34b) without any reference to the quotative-laden structure (34a):

34. a. jiten maYake biye korbe **bole** dipai janiyeche
Jiten Maya.ACC wed will.do QUOT Dipa.FOC has.informed
"It is Dipa who has told us that Jiten will marry Maya."
b. jiten maYake biye korbe dipai janiyeche
Jiten Maya.ACC wed will.do Dipa.FOC has.informed
"It is Dipa who has told us Jiten will marry Maya."
c. *__je__ jiten maYake biye korbe dipai janiyeche
that Jiten Maya.ACC wed will.do Dipa.FOC has.informed
"It is Dipa who has told us that Jiten will marry Maya."

Notice that my reasoning in this chapter has made no use of the fact that the quotative complementizer in Bangla, as in other languages harboring it, instantiates a verb of saying. If it turns out that this property makes the quotative complementizer omission-resistant in other languages as well, then my argumentation can dispense with references to theoretical notions like content-richness, content-poverty, and other a priori assessments, but will work in concert with other analyses that rest on independent empirical evidence. If one side effect of such redescription is to cause my modest efforts (i.e., this chapter) to shrink to the dimensions of an enclitic leaning on an empirically endowed host (i.e., the voluminous fresh descriptions reflecting such discoveries) to its left, I promise not to complain.

## Conclusion

Before I sign off, it is appropriate to add that Bangla is in some respects akin to Dravidian languages and thus falls within the sphe-

re of Annamalai's interests. The Bangla complementizer *bole*, on the face of it, echoes the Dravidian style of functioning. In Professor Annamalai's mother tongue, Tamil—as in other Dravidian languages—the complementizer occurs at the end of its clause. (And, like *bole*, the Tamil complementizer *enru* is also etymologically derived from a verb of speaking.) In contrast, the Bangla complementizer *je* (like the Hindi-Urdu complementizer *ki*) occupies the typical Indo-Aryan clause-initial position.

It is hard to believe that a language like Bangla, which harbors two complementizers (one in a Dravidian syntactic style, the other Indo-Aryan), with such dramatically divergent properties, simply lets them coexist. And, indeed, as Professor Annamalai's work on syntax, multilingualism, and language contact in South Asia has shown, things are never so simple. Our current understanding of the phenomena is extremely limited. Once seriously bilingual linguists bring what we know about the complementizers in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages to bear on each other, truly interesting breakthroughs are bound to follow. Conceivably, such an enterprise might take off from Subbārāo's (2012, 204–206) suggestion that clause-final complementizers are undeletable in a whole range of South Asian languages; but those remarks in their current form rest on very little data, and other colleagues have yet to write sequels that pursue the matter in detail. This chapter should be seen as part of the work of clearing the ground for such a breakthrough to become possible.

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# *Aspects of Pragmatics in* Tolkāppiyam: Vaḻuvamaiti *as Logically Deviant but Appropriate to Social Contexts*

K. Rangan

## Introduction

One of the signature aspects of Professor E. Annamalai's career has been how he has gracefully threaded the many strands of language together. In this chapter, I pick up three such woven: modern generativist linguistic theory (as applied to the Tamil language); the relationship of pragmatics to syntax and semantics (in particular, their problematical relationship to generativism, which is to say, the way in which they are peripheralized by it); and the ways in which the Tamil grammatical tradition captures but also refracts the division between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in complex and nuanced ways. My aim is not only to show the social aspects of Tamil structure and meaning, but also to show how this relationship is theorized in the Tamil tradition; in moving across traditions and aspects of language, I hope to convey part of the lasting contribution that Professor Annamalai has made to Tamil linguistics, in all its many facets.

To begin, we might start with the first of these strands. Regarding the knowledge of language, Chomsky (1986, 3) raises three questions:

(i) What constitutes knowledge of language?
(ii) How is knowledge of language acquired?
(iii) How is knowledge of language put to use?

The search for the first question is the main task of a theoretical linguist who attempts to describe the structure of language. It is logically prior because the description of a language is necessary to understand how a language is acquired by a child. With this background, we will be in a position to understand the acquisition of grammar by children. It is believed that a child internalizes the rules of a grammar by the age of five. At that point, children can verbally express their experiences, feelings, and thoughts, though there may be expansion of lexicon and some grammatical rules later in life. The second question seeks its answer in the background materials of the first question: the social and psychological context of acquisition. Psycholinguists concentrate on this second question. The third question attempts to relate the knowledge of language structure with the knowledge of language use (or pragmatics). The knowledge of language use relates the structural description of a language to the social situations in which a language is put to use. Here the main concern is the selection of sentences and words appropriate to social contexts. It requires the knowledge of language description and understanding of social situations. In a key way, language structure and language function are intrinsically related. The research outputs of theoretical linguistics and pragmatics may form an important component of language learning/teaching. In what follows, I want to pursue this theme of the connection of pragmatics and grammar by turning to *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest surviving grammar of the Tamil language, likely composed in the first centuries of the common era. This text deals with questions of grammar, phonology, semantics, poetics, but also the centrality of social context to meaning—what is called, in modern linguistics, pragmatics.

## On the nature of sentences

### *Well-formed and ill-formed sentences*

The generative grammar proposed by Chomsky aims to generate all the grammatical sentences and none of the ungrammatical sentences of a language.[1] Bazel (1964) recognized three kinds of

[1] "The grammar of L will thus be a device that generates all of the grammatical sentences of L and none of the ungrammatical ones." (Chomsky 1957, 13).

sentences: (1) grammatical sentences, (2) non-grammatical sentences, and (3) un-grammatical sentences.

Of the three, non-grammatical sentences are grammatical in the linguist's technical sense but are semantically and pragmatically "odd" (following Radford 1988) for some reason and thus are seen as ill-formed (from some normative standard); such sentences are often used in specific domains/discourses. Non-grammatical sentences differ from grammatical sentences—which conform both to the rules of the grammar and semantic meaning, collateral knowledge, and pragmatic appropriateness—and ungrammatical sentences—which do not conform to the rule of the grammar (or semantic meaning, collateral knowledge, pragmatic appropriateness, etc.)

*Syntax and ungrammatical sentences*

Consider the following two examples of ungrammatical sentences:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | ***tampi** | *nēṟṟu* | *kaṭai-kku* | *varu-v-**āḷ*** |
| | younger brother | yesterday | shop-to | come-FUT-she |
| (2) | ***māṇavarkāḷ** | *nāḷai* | *kallūri-kkup* | *pō-ṉ-**āṉ*** |
| | students | tomorrow | college-to | go-PAST-he |

These sentences violate the following rule given in *Tolkāppiyam*:

*viṉaiyiṟ tōṉṟum pālaṟi kiḷaviyum*
*peyariṟ tōṉṟum pālaṟi kiḷaviyum*
*mayaṅkal kūṭā tammara piṉavē*. (*Tol. Col.* 494.10)[2]

"The gender-number denoting element (*pāl*) in the predicate should not disagree with that in the subject: but they should conform to usage."[3] (The syntactic features of subject noun and the verb should not vary, i.e., should be of the same syntactic features).

It is said that (1) violates the rule of gender agreement, that is, the noun functioning as subject is marked [+male] whereas the suffix occurring with the verb is marked [–male]. The feature marked in the subject noun and in the verb is not compatible.

[2] The numbers of *Tolkāppiyac cūttiram* given in this chapter are from Pacupati (2010).
[3] The English translation of *Tolkāppiyac cūttiram* is from Subrahmanya Sastri (1945).

Similarly, in sentence (2) the subject noun is [+ human, +plural] but the features in the verb is [+human, –plural] and [+male]. The contradictory features occurring in the above sentence produce ungrammatical sentences in that they violate basic rules of the grammar without being pragmatically motivated (by their context).

*Semantics and non-grammatical sentences*

By contrast to the ungrammatical sentences above, let us examine the nature of the following sentences:

(3) *rāmaṉ kalyāṇam-āṉa pirammacāri*
Raman marriage-become bachelor
"Raman is a married bachelor."

(4) *eṉ tāy malaṭi*[4]
my mother barren woman
"My mother is a barren woman."

These sentences and phrases are generated following the proper syntactic rules of Tamil. They are not syntactically ungrammatical. But a native speaker of Tamil, when he comes across these sentences and phrases, feels them to be "odd." They are syntactically normal but semantically deviant or anomalous. Sentences (3) and (4) are "odd" in the sense that the propositions expressed by the constituents of these sentences are in contradiction to the common-sense knowledge or against the beliefs of the hearer. The propositions expressed by these sentences go against the belief system of the native speakers:

(5) *ʔkamalā oru aḻak-āṉa vikāram-āṉa peṇ*
Kamala a beautiful-become ugly-become girl
"Kamala is a beautiful ugly girl."

(6) *ʔkaruppu nilā*
black moon
"black moon"

[4] This example is drawn from the commentary of Teyvaccilaiyār (1984, 18).

(7) *ʔkarutta* *veḷiccam*
dark light
"dark light"

These sentences are also semantically "odd" in the sense that the lexical features shared by the constituents of the sentences are in mutual contradiction. However, we come across sentences like these in some literary discourses or in poetry. The type of discourse in which these sentences appear decide whether users of a language will find these sentences to be normal or deviant. It may be said that in normal speech or in writing, we consider them as semantically "odd" but when a creative writer uses these sentences in proper literary discourses, they are acceptable. We may say that there is some kind of connection between these sentences/phrases and literary genres such as poetry, novels, short stories, and folk literature.

Sentences (3–4) should be distinguished from sentences/phrases (5–7). While sentences (3–4) are hardly acceptable, sentences (5–7), given proper contexts, may be.[5]

[5] The sentence *avaṉ oru kalyāṇam-āṉa piramaccāri* is used when a married man lives alone in some other place without his wife for the purpose of a job or other reasons. The meaning is extended to refer to a person when he lives for a long time in a far off place, leaving his wife. The grammaticalness of sentences is decided by the context and the literal meaning is replaced by non-literal meaning. The notion of context plays a significant role in communication. It is closely related to common knowledge shared by the participants in a conversation. It is a property of a community of people (Clark 2006, 106). Common ground is information that is common to a community of people. It is defined as relevant features of setting in which a form appears or might appear (Matthews 2007, 71). The role of common background has been discussed in terms of communal and personal aspects with reference to language and discourse in detail by Clark (2006, 106–108). There is an attempt to explain the concept of context by Dohn, Hansen, and Klausen (2018) with reference to learning. In order to understand the concept of context a typology of context categories is being attempted. The categories are location, knowledge domain, sequence of occurrences, activity, historical period, social relationship, and horizon of significance.

The commentators of *Tolkāppiyam* give the following example for what it calls *marapu vaḻu*, designating "faults" or deviations from the norm that are motivated by literary usage:

(8) ****avaṉ*** ***mēy****-nt-āṉ*[6]
he graze-PAST-he
"He grazed."

The sentence given above violates the rule of convention, as the noun *avaṉ* in the subject position is marked [+human] whereas the intransitive verb *mēy* occurs with the nouns marked [–human] in the subject position. Compare this with the following sentence, which is both grammatically acceptable and semantically normal (not deviant).

(9) *antap pacu vayal-il mēy-nt-atu*
that cow field-in graze-PAST-it
"That cow grazed in the field."

There is a selection of verb that is compatible with the syntactic features of the noun in the subject position. The violation of selection restriction may probably be equated with *marapu vaḻu* by the traditional grammarians.

**Aim of this study**

The aim of this chapter is to understand the approaches of *Tolkāppiyam* with reference to the concepts such as *vaḻu* and *vaḻuvamaiti* articulated explicitly by the commentators Iḷampūraṇar (2005), Teyvaccilaiyār (1984), and Cēṉāvaraiyar (2007). The concept *vaḻu* includes both ungrammatical and deviant sentences of the Tamil language. Besides the terms *vaḻu* and *vaḻuvamaiti*, there is another term used by Cēṉāvaraiyar (2007, 11): *vaḻuvaṟka*. He makes the distinction of these terms in the following ways: *vaḻuvaṟka* means the use of the words with their denoted meanings without error and *vaḻuvamaiti* is the use of words, which convey the intended meanings. In this chap-

[6] This example is also drawn from the commentary of Teyvaccilaiyār (1984, 16). In modern Tamil, the verb *mēy* is used in the sense of a girl's sexual relationship with many male persons.

ter, I attempt to understand the concepts of *Tolkāppiyam* mentioned above in the light of the commentaries and the conceptual tools of modern linguistics, concentrating mainly on *vaḻuvamaiti* and how *Tolkāppiyam* generalizes from these types of linguistic examples.

## Remarks on *Tolkāppiyam*

As noted above, *Tolkāppiyam* is the first, earliest and complete grammar available in the history of Tamil language. Its date is disputable with reference to Sangam classics. It covers the entire structure of Tamil language though its description might not be elaborate and explicit and its coverage of data includes both *ceyyuḷ* (literary discourses) and the *vaḻakku* of the people of higher social status for the analysis of language description. But the uniqueness of *Tolkāppiyam* is its wide coverage of literary usage, contents, prosody, et cetera.

## Reflections of social hierarchy

In Tamil, there are four forms that refer to an addressee: *nī*, *nīr*, *nīṁkaḷ*, and *tāṁkaḷ*. If the addressee happens to be lower in social status, equal, or intimate, then the term *nī* would be chosen. When the addressee is high in social status, the term *nīr* is selected to address the hearer. The higher-status person is addressed by the term *nīṁkaḷ*. The term *tāṁkaḷ* is used to address a teacher, minister, and other important person occupying a higher social/political/administrative position of power in Tamil society. The choice of the lexical item is conditioned by the social status of the addressee. Any term selected among these four produces a grammatical sentence.

These terms are referentially synonyms (they all denote second-person addressee), but the selection of these items is conditioned by the social status of the addressee in relationship to the addressor. Another example that can be drawn from the usage of old Tamil is a list of three verbs that are synonyms expressing the meaning of "give": *ī*, *tā*, and *koṭu*. *Tolkāppiyam* describes the social contexts in which these verbs are used depending upon the social status of the receiver of an object. The verb *ī* is used when the receiver is lower in status than the speaker.

> *avaṟṟuḷ*
> *ī-yeṉ kiḻavi iḻintōṉ kūṟṟē.* (*Tol. Col.* 928.49)
> "Of them, the root *ī* is used when the recipient is inferior in status to the giver."

Given this, one may say (10).

(10) *aracar kantaṉ-ukku nilam ī-nt-ār*
king Kandan-to land give-PAST-he
"The king gave land to Kandan."

*tāv-eṉ kiḷavi yoppōṉ kūṟṟ-ē.* (*Tol. Col.* 929.50)
"Of them, the root *tā* is used when both the giver and recipient are of the same status."

(11) *rāmaṉ taṉ naṇpaṉ-ukku oru paricu ta-nt-āṉ*
Raman self friend-to one gift give-PAST-he
"Raman gave a gift to his friend."

*koṭv-eṉ kiḷavi yuyarntōṉ kūṟṟ-ē.* (*Tol. Col.* 930.51)
"Of them, the root *koṭu* is used when the recipient is of superior status."

(12) *māṇavaṉ taṉ āciriyar-ukku oru kaṭikāram koṭu-tt-āṉ*
student self teacher-to one watch give-PAST-he
"The student gave a watch to his teacher."

The king is higher in social status, but an ordinary citizen is lower in the social status when compared. That is why the verb *ī* is used in this context. Both Raman and his friend are of equal social status and therefore the verb *tā* is used. The teacher is higher in social status than the student and so the verb *koṭu* is used in this context. The social status of the receiver conditions the choice of these verbs. These generalizations are not applicable to modern Tamil, but to Malayalam, early Kannada, and Muduva, a tribal language of Dravidian family. Even though each of these verbs semantically means "to give," the distribution of the usage of these verbs is conditioned by the social stratification of Tamil society. The selection/choice of a particular word is conditioned by the social situation, that is, the relationship between a speaker and hearer. These examples show how the role of social status of the receiver (non-linguistic) conditions the choice of lexical items.

### *Tolkāppiyam – Collatikāram*

Here, I concentrate on *Collatikāram*. This section of the *Tolkāppiyam* consists of nine chapters: 1) *Kiḷaviyākkam* (Formation of sentences), (2) *Vēṟṟumaiyiyal* (Cases, their meanings and distributions),

(3) *Vēṟṟumai mayaṅkiyal* (Overlapping of cases), (4) *Viḷi marapu* (Vocative case), (5) *Peyariyal* (Noun morphology), (6) *Viṉaiyiyal* (Verb morphology), (7) *Iṭaiyiyal* (Affixes-inflectional and derivational), (8) *Uriyiyal* (Words/roots that are un-declinable), and (9) *Eccaviyal* (Miscellany). The chapter on *Kiḷaviyākkam* deals with both the structure and use of the Tamil language. *Tolkāppiyam* had employed both formal (structural) as well as semantic criteria for its classification. While one can come up with certain similarities between *Tolkāppiyam* and different linguistic models, here I focus on the unique features of *Tolkāppiyam* and the traditional grammars in relationship to modern linguistic theories and use this as a basis to compare them. Modern linguistic theories provide conceptual tools for the analysis of natural languages in general. They are useful to interpret the problems involved in the description of languages per se. The traditional Tamil grammars, by contrast, have to be understood in terms of their own particular concepts, how they employ those concepts, the ways in which these concepts are related to each other as a whole, and how that system itself functions.

**Kinds of *vaḻus* (solecism)**

With this background in mind, let us approach the *Tolkāppiyam* and see how close it comes to the notion of pragmatics, and how it deals with the aspect of contextual meaning while dealing with the description of Tamil language. The study of pragmatics extends its domain beyond sentences to the level of discourse (both written and spoken). There are certain concepts like *vaḻu* and *vaḻuvamaiti* in *Tolkāppiyam* that are closely related to the notion of pragmatics. The term *vaḻu* is defined by the *Tamil Lexicon* (6:3548) as:

> error, mistake, fault, lapse . . . 2 (Gram.) solecism, impropriety in language, deviation from rule, (*tiṇai mutalāyiṉa tattam ilakkaṇa neṟi mayaṅki varuvatākiya kuṟṟam* (overlapping of human vs. non-human, number and gender from theorem/rule of grammar. Nan. 375)).

It describes the term *vaḻuvamaiti*, n. (Gram) as:

> sanctioned deviation from grammatical rules as in tense, person, gender, recognized anomaly; *ilakkaṇa vaḻuvāyiṉum amaika eṉṟa koḷkai* (though they are grammatical mistakes/errors, accept them and use).

Teyvaccilaiyār (*Tol.Col.* 13.496) explains that though they are deviant, they are accepted and used. The *vaḻus* are classified into seven types:(1) *tiṇai* (human vs non-human), (2) *pāl* (gender/division), (3) *iṭam* (person), (4) *kālam* (tense), (5) *marapu* (convention), (6) *ceppu* (answer), and (7) *vinā* (question). Below I provide examples and discussion of each.

**Grammatical errors**

***Tiṇai vaḻu*** (error of human vs. non-human distinction): this is a violation of co-occurrence restriction/agreement rules; for example:

(13) ****antap puli*** *kāṭṭ-il* *oru* *āṭṭ-ait* *ti-ṉṟ-**āṉ***
that tiger forest-in a goat-ACC eat-PRES-he
[IIIP, –hum, –pl] [IIIP, +hum, +mas, –pl]
"The tiger ate a goat in the forest."

(14) ****kamalā*** *vīṭṭ-il* *oru* *katai* *paṭi-tt-aṉ-**a***
Kamala house-in a story read-PAST-INCR-they
[IIIP, +hum, –male, –pl] [IIIP, –hum, –pl]
"Kamala read a story in the house."

***Pāl vaḻu***: this is a violation of number and gender; for example:

(15) ****Kōvalaṉ*** *maturaiy-il* *kolaiyuṇ-ṭ-**āḷ***
Kovalan Madurai-at kill-PAST-she
[IIIP, +hum, +male] [IIIP, +hum, –male]
"Kovalan died in Madurai."

(16) ****naṭikarkaḷ*** *araciyal* *kaṭci* *toṭaṅk-iṉ- **āḷ***
actors political party found-PAST-she
[IIIP, +hum, +pl] [IIIP, +hum, –male, –pl]
"The actors founded political parties."

***Iṭa vaḻu***: this is a violation of person and number. There are three persons in Tamil: *taṉma*i (1st person), *muṉṉilai* (2nd person), and *paṭarkkai* (3rd person). Singular (*orumai*) and plural (*paṉmai*) distinction is made in all the three persons. In the first and second persons, no gender distinction is made, and it is made only in the

third person. The classification of persons and the distinction of gender may be shown as Figure 1:

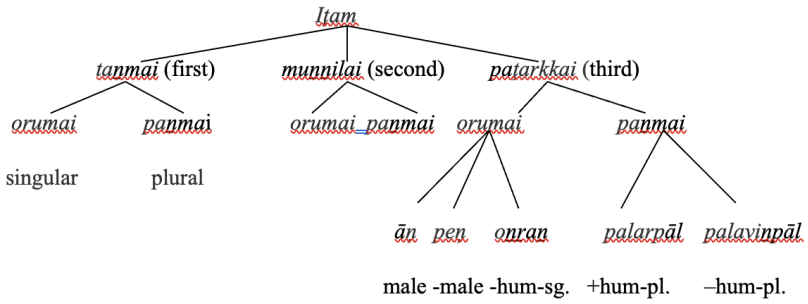


**Figure 1.** Classification of person and gender distinction

For example:

(17) ***nāṉ*** *kaṭaik-kup* *pō-ṇ-**āy***
I shop-to go-PAST-you
[IP, –pl] [IIP, –pl]
"I went to a shop."

(18) ****nīṁkaḷ*** *nāḷai* *kallūrik-ku* *va-nt-**ōm***
you tomorrow college-to come-PAST- we
[IIP, +pl] [IP, +pl]
*"You came to the college tomorrow."

(19) ****avaṉ*** *nēṟṟu* *eṉṉ-aip* *pār-tt- **īrkaḷ***
He yesterday me see-PAST-you
[IIIP, +mas, –pl] [IIP, +pl]
"He saw me yesterday."

In these examples there is a violation of agreement (syntactic) rule and therefore they are considered as un-grammatical. The commentators use the term *vaḻuvaṟka*, which means "don't commit the error." These errors are closely linked with questions of grammaticality.

***Kāla vaḻu***: these are violations that involve tense and temporality. *Tolkāppiyam* mentions that there are three tenses conceptually:

*kālam tāmē mūṉṟ-eṉa moḻipa* (*Tol.Col.* 684.2)
"They say that tenses are three in number."

*iṟappiṉ nikaḻviṉ etirviṉ eṉṟā*
*ammuk kālam-um kuṟippoṭ-um koḷḷ-um*
*meynnilai yuṭaiya tōṉṟa l-āṟē.* (*Tol.Col.* 685.3)
"The three tenses—past, present, and future—are denoted even by *viṉaik kuṟippu*."

*Tolkāppiyam*, however, does not enumerate the forms of tenses despite providing a conceptual enumeration. Some examples of this type of *vālu*:

(20) **ravi* ***nāḷai*** *tuṟai-kku* *va-**nt**-āṉ*
Ravi tomorrow [+fut] department-to come-PAST-he [+past]
*"Ravi came to the department tomorrow."

(21) **mātavi* ***nēṟṟu*** *oru* *puṭavai* *vāṅku-**v**- āḷ*
Madhavi yesterday [+past] a sari buy-FUT-she [+fut]
*"Madhavi will purchase a sari yesterday."

Here, the sentences are marked ungrammatical because the time adverbs and the tense markers in the verbs are not compatible, that is, there is a violation of co-occurrence restrictions between adverb and tense suffixes. So, the sentences are not accepted by native speakers. The role of co-occurrence and selection restrictions is a deciding factor to mark them as ungrammatical sentences. In the earlier cases, the agreement rules between the subject noun phrase and the PNG suffixes of the verbs are violated.

The commentators provide examples with the violation of agreement rules for *tiṇai*, *pāl*, and *iṭa vaḻus*. For the commentators, these sentences violate the grammatical rules (AGR) and therefore they are ungrammatical. The examples given (sentences 1 and 2) under the section "syntax" are ungrammatical because of the violation of the syntactic rule. The semantically anomalous sentences do not involve the violation of formal syntactic rules but the violation of selection restriction. Recall examples (3) and (4), given in the section on semantics:

(3) *rāmaṉ kalyāṇam-āṉa pirammacāri.*
Raman marriage-become bachelor
"Raman is a married bachelor."

(4) *eṉ* *tāy* *malaṭi.*
my mother barren woman
"My mother is a barren woman."

In the example (3), if we replace the word *kalyāṇam-āṉa* by the word *paṇakkāraṉ-āṉa* "rich," the resultant sentence is perfectly acceptable. Similarly, the term *malaṭi* when replaced by the word *aḻaki* "beautiful lady," the sentence thus produced is acceptable.

It appears that the phenomenon of selection restriction plays an important role to produce a normal grammatical sentence. In *kāla vaḻu*, the co-occurrence restriction is violated between a time adverb and the tense suffix with the verb. Here, the violation is grammatical. *Tolkāppiyam* covers both the referential and the contextual meaning.

***Marapu vaḻu***: this is a violation of conventional rules. The term *marapu* ("convention," "tradition") covers a vast variety of phenomena. First is the violation of selection restriction. Example (8) had already been given for the violation of conventional rules. The verb *mēy* "graze" goes with the subject noun *pacu* "cow" but not with the human nouns such as *paiyaṉ* "boy," *āciriyar* "teacher," *talaivar* "leader," et alia. While discussing *marapu vaḻu*, Teyvaccilaiyār (1986, 16) says:

> *tiṇai vaḻūup paṉṉiraṇṭu. pāl vaḻūu eṭṭu. iṭa vaḻūu āṟu. kāla vaḻūu āṟu. marapu vaḻūu varampila.*
> "Human vs. non-human division-based errors are twelve. Gender- and number-based errors are eight. Pronoun-based errors are six. Tense-based errors are six. Conventional based errors are boundless."

The relationship between a word and the meaning it denotes is conventional. At the lexical level, consider two words in Tamil: *iṭaiyaṉ* "shepherd" and *pākaṉ* "mahout." The activity of these people is to protect and feed the sheep and elephant. Though the nouns share common features in terms of certain activity, the word *iṭaiyaṉ* cannot be replaced by the word *pākaṉ*. The use of one word for another falls under *marapu vaḻu*.

Role of (*ciṉai*) "part" and (*mutal*) "whole" in comparative constructions

In comparative constructions, the part of an object is to be compared with the part of another object. *Tolkkāppiyam* writes:

> *cepp-iṉ-um viṉāv-iṉ-um ciṉai-mutaṟ kiḷavik-ku*
> *apporuḷ ākum uṟaḻ-tuṇaip poruḷ-ē.* (*Tol. Col.* 499.16)
> "Both in *ceppu* and *viṉā* only like objects are compared or contrasted, part with part and whole with whole."

For example, consider (22) and (23), taken from Teyvaccilaiyār (1984, 19):

(22) *vala mulaiyō iṭa mulaiyō peritu?*
right breast left breast big
"Which breast is big? right or left?"

(23) *inniṟamō anniṟamō nallatu?*
this-color that-color good
"Which is good, this or that color?"

Here, the part (*ciṉai*) is compared with another part (*ciṉai*) in terms of a quality (size). The above sutra states a generalization when the objects are compared. Comparison of *mutal* with *ciṉai* is considered as violation of a rule. But the following sutra points out the deviation of this generalization:

> *takutiy-um vaḻakk-um taḻīiy-iṉa oḻuk-um*
> *pakutik kiḷavi varai-nilai yilav-ē.* (*Tol. Col.* 500.17)
> "Certain expressions (which do not conform to the previous rule) are not prohibited, if propriety demands or usage sanctions them."

Consider (24), taken from Teyvaccilaiyār (1984, 20):

(24) *innaṅkai. kaṇ nallavō ikkayal nallavō?*
this woman eye good or this fish good
"Which is good the eyes of this woman or fish?

The comparison, here, is between the eyes of a woman with that of fish, that is, the comparison is between *ciṉai* (part) and *mutal*

(whole). These sentences are not ungrammatical, but they are deviant from the conventional rule of comparison (*Tol.Col.* 499).

**Role of culture**

Cēṉāvaraiyar, however, interprets the above sutra to say that there are some words (considered *amaṅkaḻam*, i.e., inauspicious) that are avoided in public and some other words are used in those contexts. For example, *ce-tt-ār* "die-PAST-he" is avoided and in its place, the word *tuñciṉār* "sleep-PAST-he" is used. Such usages are named *takuti vaḻakku* (appropriate usage). When someone takes leave, the actual usage is:

(25) *nāṉ* *pō-kiṟ-ēṉ*
I go-PRES-I
"I go."

The verb *pō* is avoided because it means that I go forever and will not come back. Such a usage is considered inauspicious and therefore one has to use the following sentence:

(26) *nāṉ* *varu-kiṟ-ēṉ*
I come-PRES-I
"I come."

You are not supposed to use the sentence (26), however, when you visit a house where someone died. Instead, you are supposed to leave the place without saying anything. These usages are closely related to the cultural practice of Tamil people. The sentences (25–26), though grammatical, are not acceptable in a given context (e.g., a place where death had occurred). The role of cultural practices and the belief system of the native speakers are significant in the usage of the Tamil language. In short, *Tolkkāppiyam* is focused on how the nature of context conditions the choice of words and sentences. In these cases, the rules of grammar have no role to play, and the oddity or acceptability is purely based on non-linguistic contexts.

**Third-person honorific singular**

*oruvar-aik kūṟum paṉmaik kiḻaviy-um*
*oṉṟaṉ-aik kūṟum paṉmaik kiḻaviy-um*
*vaḻakki ṉ-ākiya vuyar-coṟ kiḻavi*

*ilakkaṇa maruṅk-iṉ collā ṟalla.* (*Tol. Col.* 510.27)
"The use of honorific plural to denote one person or one object is allowed only in speech and not in poetry."

The suffix *-ar* is used to denote the third-person human plural, that is, in the singular, there is masculine and feminine gender distinction but there is no such distinction in the plural. *Tolkkāppiyam* simply refers to the human plural, and it may be either a group of men or women or both (refer to *Tol. Col.* 490). But there is a difference between the language use and the grammatical norm. In ordinary usage, *Tolkkāppiyam* refers to honorific singular: *amaicc-ar* "minister," *āciriy-ar* "teacher," *talaiv-ar* "leader" et alia. For example:

(28) ***amaicc-ar*** *va-nt-**ār***
minister come-PAST-he (hon.)
"The minister came."

(29) ***āciriy-ar*** *pāṭam* *naṭatt-iṉ-**ār***
teacher lesson teach-PAST-he (hon.)
"The teacher taught the lesson."

The persons indicated by the subject nouns are singular in number but occupy a respectable position in society. Similarly, the PNG marker occurring with the verb, though plural in number, refers to honorific singular. It seems that the Tamil language in use had undergone a significant change, and a distinction was introduced between honorific singular and non-honorific singular. Such a distinction is deviant from the norm of traditional grammar but is sanctioned in the usage of speech only. In literary discourses, this rule is not allowed to be violated. However, we come across in Caṅkam texts, the suffix *-ar* being used to refer to honorific singular. Probably, Tamil had undergone a linguistic change historically. But this kind of *vaḻu* was acceptable in language use. Depending on the status of the persons referred to, the plural *-ar* is used as honorific singular.[7] The choice of these sentences is

[7] *Tolkāppiyam* states that the plural marker used to denote human and non-human may be used to refer to honorific singular in speech and not in poetry. However, in Caṅkam poetry there are many instances with the plural marker

conditioned by the social status of the person under reference. Probably, a significant social change might have taken place in Tamil society.[8]

**Language of trade**

> *epporu ḷāyiṉum alla tilleṉiṉ*
> *apporuḷ allāp piṟitu-poruḷ kūṟal.* (*Tol. Col.* 518.35)
> "If one (a merchant) wishes to inform (a purchaser) of the absence of any commodity by using the expression *allatil*, he should associate that expression with a word denoting any commodity (that he has), and not with that denoting the commodity asked for."

Consider the following situation: in a shopping situation, a customer asks a merchant for certain article. The customer says:

(30) *payaṟu uḷavō, vaṇikarē ?*
pulses available, merchant
"Merchant, are pulses available?"

To which, the merchant replies:

(31) *uḷuntallatu illai*
blackgram except not
"Except blackgram, other pulses are not available."

The merchant may point out the pulse and say nothing is available other than this. *Tolkkāppiyam* writes: "*apporuḷ kūṟiṟ cuṭṭik kūṟal*" (*Tol.* 519.36): "If, in the answer given by the merchant, the word denoting the object asked for by the purchaser is used, it should be preceded by a demonstrative root or adjective."

denoting the honorific singular. Probably, it may be considered as a significant linguistic change in the history of Tamil language.

[8] Refer to Civattampi (1982). He was emphasizing the impact of society and its change on the grammar of Tamil language. The honorific and non-honorific distinction is a particular stratification of Tamil society, reflected in Tamil grammar. A grammar not only describes the structure of language but also reflects the changes a society undergoes. So, there is a close relationship between language and society.

The answer, in other words, should come in a formulaic form. The merchant is supposed to answer whether the commodity asked for is available or not and then say about the unavailable things. It is considered inauspicious to answer negatively in the beginning. Here, the belief of the merchant and the customer plays a crucial role. So, a traditional grammar like *Tolkāppiyam* has taken into account such a kind of deviant sentence and classified it as *vaḻuvamaiti*.

*Vaḻuvamaiti* accounts for the social situations and the cultural background of Tamil society. Language learning and teaching, thus, has to include these sentences that are deviant from the point of view of grammatical rules and logic of conversation but accepted as normal sentences. Language learning and teaching is a practical activity and therefore its approach to language is eclectic in the sense that all the aspects of language structure and language use are taken into consideration. As this discussion indicates, a traditional grammar like *Tolkāppiyam* kept its eye open to eclectic approach.

**Conversational implicature and *vaḻuvamaiti***

The concept and the theory of conversational implicature introduced and elaborated by Grice (1975) can be applied to understand the *Tolkāppiyam*. Grice (1975, 45–46) enumerates four maxims with the associated submaxims of the following: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The submaxim Quantity relates to the quantity of information to be provided: (1) make your contribution as informative as is required; (2) do not make your contribution more informative than is required. The submaxim Quality may be described as: (1) try to make your contribution one that is true; (2) do not say what you believe to be false; and (3) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. A single maxim, namely "Be relevant" is placed under this. The maxim Manner is related to *how* what is to be said is said. Let us first consider how *Tolkāppiyam* deals with questions and answers in this context.

**Question and answer**

Let us examine the logical relationship between question and answer. In an ideal situation, one may ask a question to elicit infor-

mation from the hearer. The speaker has no information and so he wants the hearer to provide the information, supposing that the hearer will be in a position to provide the information. A list of three kinds of questions had been given by the commentator (Cēṉāvaraiyar 2007,496): (1) *aṟiyāṉ viṉā* – the speaker does not have the information he is seeking for and wants to elicit information from the hearer; (2) *aiya viṉā* – the speaker has doubt about the information he has but wants to ascertain the truth of the information from the hearer; (3) *aṟiporuḷ viṉā* – the speaker has information, but he tests the hearer whether he knows the answer or not. The first one elicits direct answer whereas in the case of second, the answer is to confirm. In the case of third kind, it may be an interview/examination/classroom situation. Here, we attempt to show the logical relationship between question and answer. We may discern two types of logical relationships: one is the logical relationship of grammatical rules and another conditions of contexts. We may cite 510 of *Tol.Col.* to show the deviation from the grammatical rule.

*Question and answer – indirect answer*

We mentioned earlier that when someone asks a particular question, the answer is in the form of a statement providing the information he asked for. There are certain contexts in which instead of giving a direct answer, the hearer answers it in an indirect way. The logical relationship between question and answer is violated, and therefore it is considered illogical. Suppose someone asks (32):

(32) Q: *uṇṇāyō, cāttā?*
eat-PAST-you-Q, Chatta
"Did you eat, Chatta?"

(33) and (34) represent two possible answers:

(33) A1: *nī uṇ*
"You eat."

(34) A2: *vayiṟu kuttiṟṟu/ kuttum*
stomach pain-PAST/will
"(Someone) has/will have stomach pain."

A1 and A2 appear to be not relevant to the information expected. A1 and A2 are not related to the question. The point that emerges from these data is that at a given situation, there are sets of sentences containing both the grammatical sentences and deviant sentences out of which one could either choose a grammatical sentence or a deviant sentence. The third maxim Relation with its submaxim "Be relevant" is violated/flouted by the hearer who is supposed to follow the maxim (Relation). The implicature is that the hearer conveys the information that he doesn't want to eat. B's stomach pain is conveyed by the utterance *vayiṟu kuttiṟṟu*; though not directly related to the question, in another sense the utterance serves as a cause for refusing to eat. The background assumption of the speaker and hearer is that it is not possible for one to eat when one is suffering from stomach pain. It has been noticed by *Tolkāppiyam* that it is evident from the following:

> *ceppē vaḻīṉ-um varainilai y-iṉṟē*
> *apporuḷ puṇar-nt-a kiḷavi y-āṉa.* (*Tol. Col.* 498.15)
> "It is not objectionable to use an answer in an irregular form, if it somehow suggests the answer."

Not only a statement that is not a direct answer to a given question but sometimes another question is given as an answer. Instead of A1 and A2, one could utter a sentence that is in the form of question. *Tolkāppiyam* writes:

> *viṉāv-um cepp-ē viṉāv-etir var-iṉ-ē.* (*Tol. Col.* 497)
> "Even a question may be taken as *ceppu* (answer), if it answers a question."

For example, consider (35) and (36):

(35) Q: *cāttā, uṇṇāyō?*
Chatta, eat-PAST-you-Q
"Did you eat, Chatta?"

(36) A: *uṇṇēṉō?*
eat-PAST-I-Q
"Didn't I eat?"

The answer is not in the form of a statement providing either negative information or positive information. Rather, the hearer puts another question as an answer. The speaker does not expect a question from the hearer for the question he asked for. It may be interpreted that the maxim 'Be relevant' is flouted and the implicature is that he didn't eat. The required information (expected by the speaker) is not provided by the hearer and instead he asks another question by means of which he conveys the information. The question in the form of answer is, for *Tolkkāppiyam*, a *vaḻu*. Here question functions as answer. In usage, however, it is accepted by the speakers of the Tamil language, and therefore it is considered by the grammarians like Tolkāppiyar as *vaḻu*. Since it is accepted in the use of language, it is included under *vaḻuvamaiti*. In short, *Tolkāppiyam* covers both the structural aspects and functional aspects of the Tamil language.

**Conclusion**

The concept of *vaḻu* in *Tolkāppiyam* is important in the sense that it includes both ungrammatical and deviant or "odd" sentences. The violation of agreement rules in the Tamil language produces *vaḻus* of *tiṇai* (human vs. nonhuman distinction) and *pāl* (gender distinction such as masculine, feminine, neuter, etc.), *iṭam* (pronouns of IP, IIP, and IIIP), and *kālam* (agreement between the adverbs of time and the tense suffixes of verbs). These sentences violate agreement rules and thus are considered ungrammatical. The *vaḻus* of *vinā* (Question), *ceppu* (Answer/Reply), and *marapu*, by contrast, are related not to the question of language structure (and grammaticality) but to the notion of ill-formed/deviant sentences (and thus to pragmatics). The violation of *kāla vaḻu* in certain contexts produces deviant sentences. *Tolkkāppiyam* writes:

> *vārāk kālattum nikaḻuṅ kālattum*
> *ōrāṅku varūum viṉaicoṛ kiḷavi*
> *iṛanta kālattum kuṛippoṭu tōṇṛal*
> *virainta poruḷa eṉmaṉār pulavar.* (*Tol Col.* 726.44)
>
> "Learned man say that a verb used in the past tense instead of in the present and future tenses to denote haste."

Consider one final example:

(37) Q: *innum uṇṭilaiyō? pōtāyō?*
"Didn't you eat yet? Didn't you go?"
A: *uṇṭēn; vantēn*
"(I) ate and came."

The activities of eating and going will happen in the future. But the hearer replies that he ate and he came (both in the past tense) to denote the *speed* of the actions. These, thus, are *vaḻus* but accepted because they convey the meaning of rapidity of actions. *Marapu vaḻu* is concerned with the convention of language of use. It includes both grammatical and deviant sentences.

As this chapter has shown, an in-depth analysis of *Tolkāppiyam* applying theories of generative grammar and pragmatics may reveal new insights in the areas of structure and function of the Tamil language.

*Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| A | Answer |
| ACC | Accusative |
| Cēṉā | Cēṉāvaraiyar |
| Col | *Collatikāram* |
| ed | editor |
| FUT | future |
| Gram | Grammar |
| hon | honorific |
| hum | human |
| INCR | Increment |
| mas | masculine |
| Nan | *Naṉṉūl* |
| n | noun |
| IP | First person |
| IIP | Second person |
| IIIP | Third person |
| pl | plural |
| PRES | present |
| PNG | Person, Number, Gender |
| Q | Question |
| *Tol. Col.* | *Tolkāppiyam Collatikāram* |

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# *The Phenomenon of Lenition and the Evolution of High and Low Varieties of Diglossia in Tamil*

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## Introduction

The Tamil language experienced significant transformation during the medieval era, characterized by strict adherence to prosodic rules, particularly by the poet-saints of the *Tēvāram* and the *Tivvyappirapantam*, who employed various word-splitting techniques primarily to adhere to the meter and prosody. Some of such techniques led to the linguistic process of lenition and subsequently to the grammaticalization processes of reanalysis of words and suffixes in numerous complex ways, enriching the morphological structure of the Tamil language and enhancing its agglutinative nature. During the medieval period, numerous grammaticalization processes occurred leading to the emergence of new grammatical forms and the eventual development of the intricate agglutinative structure as observed in modern Tamil. This includes reanalysis of many verb forms, leading to the formation of many auxiliary verbs including aspectual and modal auxiliary verbs. In my previous work (Renganathan 2010), I have provided detailed discussion of how the aspectual forms such as *koḷ*, *koṇṭiru*, and *iru* and the modal forms such as *-lām*, *muṭiyum*, and *vēṇṭum* came to Tamil because of the grammaticalization processes such as lenition and reanalysis. Significantly, within the realm of phonological processes, the occurrence of lenition stands out as a pivotal factor in driving

numerous substantial alterations in Tamil. Additionally, Tamil's rich grammatical structure gives rise to various language varieties, such as so-called High and Low varieties, which contribute to the reinforcement of diglossia. The concept of "diglossia" originated from the study conducted by Charles Ferguson in 1959 and was later refined by other works by scholars such as Fishman (1980, 2003 [1967]), Britto (1986), and Hudson (2002), among others. As for Tamil, the existence of High (H) and Low (L) varieties can be attributed mainly due to the transition, in the written texts of the historical record, from literary (poetic) language to spoken forms, where most of the poetic forms constitute the H variety and the later development of spoken and colloquial forms the L variety. Written usages of spoken forms of Tamil became widespread through stone inscriptions and palm-leaf manuscripts, where a blend of poetic style and spoken language was documented. In his paper entitled "Diglossia in Dravidian Languages," Annamalai (2016, 661–669) extensively explores the two varieties known in *Tolkāppiyam* (2nd century CE) as *ceyyuḷ* ("that which is composed [in verse]") and *vaḻakku* ("that what is in practice [in life]") and their linguistic distance in constituting the different varieties of the Tamil language. According to him, the former (*ceyyuḷ*) is considered a more refined variety, yet he questions a quick mapping of these two forms onto the language of literature and everyday speech (and thus H and L varieties), suggesting that both may have been varieties of literary language.[1] The terms *ceyyuḷ* and *vaḻakku* cannot be taken to represent H and L varieties, which may be inferred from what he further suggests, that "There is no hard evidence that the varieties in the past were grammatically distant enough for them to be called H and L varieties, or close enough that they be called different styles" (Annamalai 2016, 668). It is important to note that using *ceyyuḷ* forms in situations referred to as *vaḻakku* and vice versa would

[1] Reflecting Annamalai's observations, in contemporary usage these two terms are mapped onto high, literary, and low, spoken varieties of Tamil. Hence, the term *vaḻakku* is today a common word synonymously referring to both "speech form" as well as "usage." These two terms can be unambiguously expressed as *pāmara vaḻakku* "layman usage/speech form" and *ceyyuḷ vaḻakku* as "poetic usage." The former can be attributed to the "colloquial variety" and the latter to the "classical literary" variety.

be considered unsuitable. Among various contextual clues aiming to identify the functions of both H and L varieties, Ferguson, in his original article, identifies one. He notes, "Speakers may sometimes use H in situations where L would be required and vice-versa, and for this reason they may be criticized by their interlocutors; in other words, the use of H in an informal activity and the use of L in formal speech is 'an object of ridicule'" (Ferguson 1959, 329).

In line with this vein of research, this article endeavors to investigate the preconceived ideas surrounding two Tamil varieties: the literary Tamil variety and the colloquial spoken variety and explores the role of phonological rules in producing such varieties in a gradation. It primarily examines the application of the phonological rule of lenition in both literary poetic contexts and contemporary Tamil and discusses how the output from it is variously treated in the environments of H and L varieties.

Lenition for the purposes of this article refers to the elimination of inter-vocalic soft/weak consonants such as *y*, *r*, *v*, *l̲*, and the voiceless fricative *h* in certain phonological contexts (Cf. Renganathan 2021). Although the process of lenition involves solely the process of weakening of hard consonants, what is to be noted in the context of Tamil is that such weakened consonants tend to get deleted particularly in the inter-vocalic context. For example, Bauer (1988) defines lenition as a sound process involving weakening of stop consonants to corresponding weak counterparts such as voiced stops and voiceless fricatives. According to Bauer, it is a diachronic process altering the sound structure of a language: "Lenition is primarily a diachronic process affecting the sound structure of languages. It may also have synchronic reflexes (such as initial consonant mutations in the Celtic languages), but these are called 'lenitions' by an extension of the term from diachrony" (Bauer 1988, 381). What holds particular importance in this phenomenon in Tamil is its widespread impact, catalyzing extensive historical restructuring of the language in various profound manners, mostly involving deletion of inter-vocalic weak consonants. This process has produced mostly L variety forms, though in some cases the altered forms have retained the H status. In certain instances, this transformative process

initiated cascading effects, leading to the erosion of numerous foundational linguistic forms.

To cite an example, during the Caṅkam period, the terms *āy* and *āyar* were extensively employed to signify "woman," with its corresponding nominal form *āytti* representing "womanhood." This usage is documented in numerous Caṅkam Tamil poems. For example:

*āyar emar āṉāl āyttiyēm yām* (*Kalittokai* 18)
"if we were cattle women, we are indeed belonging to womanhood."

However, palatalization of *t* to *c* followed by the lenition of the intervocalic *y* in this word triggered the emergence of the spoken Tamil term *ācci*, which is variously understood for both old woman as well as little girls, consequently leading to the disappearance of the root word *āy* as well as the nominal form *āytti* from usage in contemporary Tamil, resulting a gap in the absence of a H form for the lower stratum word *ācci*. The transitional stage of palatalization, *āycci*, however, is evidenced in medieval poems but not in Caṅkam literature:

*āycci mārkaḷum āyarum añciṭa* (*Tiruppāvai* 537)
"both women and the cowherds were scared."

*maiyār taṭaṅkaṇ karuṅkūntal āycci maṟaiya vaittatayir*
(Nālāyira tivyap pirapantam: *Tirumaṅkai āḻvār* 1352)
"the dark-haired women hid underneath the feet of the Lord."

The emergence of the form *ācci* due to palatalization followed by lenition is commonly observed in contemporary Tamil usage. Thus, it raises many questions as to why this resultant form, resulting from lenition, is absent in medieval literary Tamil, with only the intermediate palatalized form being prevalent. The form *āycciyar* "cattle women" is often used in contemporary Tamil as a remnant from medieval literature of *Tiruppāvai*, where it is used frequently. Also, we only see the base form *āytti* in Caṅkam Tamil and neither of the other two forms are existent. Deletion of intervocalic *y* is a very common phenomenon in Tamil and the other instances of deletion of *y* can be attested in the examples such as

*kāyntatu* > *kāñcitu* "dried-it," *pāyntāṉ* > *pāñcāṉ* "jumped-he," *pāyttāṉ* > *pācciṉāṉ* "drew water-he," *vāykkappaṭṭāḷ* > *vākkappaṭṭāḷ* "got married-she," *mēyntatu* > *mēñcitu* "graced-it," and so on. Interestingly, in all of these examples, except in the case of *vākkappaṭṭāḷ*, the phonological process of palatalization must have taken place prior to deletion of *y*. Otherwise, the occurrence of palatalized consonants in the respective outputs cannot be justified.

Similarly, the lenition of *ḻ* has been observed in Tamil since the Caṅkam period. To cite an example, the word *cōḻanāṭu* "Chola country" undergoes lenition of *ḻ*, with a consequent retroflexion of *n* as in *cōṇāṭu*, influenced by the retroflex feature of *ḻ*. Again, this resultant form is found to occur in Caṅkam literature widely:

*ārkaliyiṉaṉē cōṇāṭṭu aṇṇal* (*Puṟam* 337)
"the master of the ocean from the Chola country."

Such resultant forms occurred alongside the corresponding forms without lenition:

*cōḻa naṉṉāṭṭup paṭiṉē* (*Puṟam* 67)
"belonging to Chola country."

*taṉ cōḻa nāṭṭup porunaṉ* (*Puṟam* 382)
"fierce fighter from Chola country."

Kiparsky (1982) calls this type of phenomenon, where one phonological rule leads to another, a case of *cyclic phonological rule*. What is significant in these contexts is that both the forms of *cōṇāṭu* and *āycciyar* are regarded as belonging to the classical Tamil variety as they are attested both in Caṅkam and medieval Tamil poems respectively, unlike the form *ācci*, which is used only in contemporary Tamil as a token of L form, despite the absence of a corresponding literary variety for *āytti* in modern Tamil.

As discussed elsewhere, the word with *y* deletion that requires special attention is *vāy* "marry to/yield to." Similar to the situation with *āy*, this word is also absent in contemporary Tamil and only the result of lenition is used. Its lenited form with a verbalizer *paṭu* is employed, as seen in *vākkappaṭu* "get married

to." This form is considered to be part of the Low (L) variety and is neither employed in High (H) contexts nor found in any poems of the past.

*vāykkumpeṇ makavellām peṇṇē yaṉṟō?* (*Bāratiyār – tāy māṇpu*)
"aren't the married girls treated as women?"

*vārēṉ neñcam vāykkaniṉ viṉaiyē* (*Akam* 130:15)
"the heart yields to your actions."

It's notable that the past participle form, suffixed with *tt* for the past tense, palatalizes *y* followed by lenition. This can be observed in the example *vāyttavan* > *vāccavan*, meaning "one who was married to." The former is used in H contexts while the latter is characteristic of L usage, like *ācci*.

By examining the significant influence of the phonological rules on the development of both classical Tamil forms (*ceyyuḷ*) and colloquial variants (*vaḻakku*), I will now analyze closely the process of lenition affecting all soft consonants in Tamil and its implications on the emergence of new grammatical forms and words of esteemed and less esteemed language varieties under the circumstances of diglossia in Tamil.

**Lenition of *h* and the formation of grammatical suffixes *ām*, *ātu*, *lām*, and *āṉa***

In instances where the stop consonant *k* is situated between two vowels, it often undergoes deletion owing to its soft consonantal quality akin to a voiceless fricative *h*. Many examples of this phenomenon can be observed from Caṅkam Tamil onward. Despite *k* being inherently a hard consonant, its stop quality diminishes when it occurs intervocalically, a trend that is also noted in other stop consonants. It is common in Tamil for consonants such as *c* to shift to *s*, *ṭ* to *ḍ*, *t* to *d*, and *ṗ* to *b*; yet none of these softened variants tend to undergo deletion between vowels. Examples such as *cākum* > *cām* "will die," *pōkum* > *pōm* "will go," *nōkum* > *nōm* "will hurt," *ākutal* > *ātal* "to become," and so on exemplify the classic cases resulting from *h* lenition:

*tāṉcām tuyaram tarum* (*Tirukkuṟaḷ* 792:2)
"will yield the distress of one's death"

*añcaṇum maṉṉaṇaṉ ṟēpōm aḷavē* (*Tirumantiram* 2164:4)
"be fearful to the limit of the king's leaving."

*Kātalar amaivilar ākutal nōmeṉ neñcē* (*Kuṟuntokai* 5:1)
"when the hero leaves, the mind will hurt."

*maṉattukkaṇ mācilaṉ ātal aṇaittu aṟaṉ* (*Tirukkuṟaḷ* 34:1)
"virtue is without fault in one's mind."

Intriguingly, all of these output forms from lenition are documented in Caṅkam Tamil alongside their corresponding forms without lenition. This prompts a speculation regarding whether these forms in Caṅkam Tamil were distinctly understood as formal and informal varieties (or *ceyyuḷ* and *vaḻakku*, depending on what we take these terms to mean), or if both were regarded as part of the formal classical variety. In modern Tamil, however, there are instances of varieties where this consonant is changing to *v* as can be seen in the examples *cokam* > *covam* "being well," *mahan* > *mavan* "son," *tākam* > *tāvam* "thirsty" and so on, and no occurrences of such forms with *v* can be attested in either Caṅkam or medieval Tamil. In certain other cases, particularly in Caṅkam Tamil, *h* turns into *y* as shown below in the context of *ākiṉ* > *āyiṉ*, but are still considered formal high variety:

*piriyāy āyiṉ naṉṟu maṟ ṟilla* (*Akam* 33:17)
"if you leave, that's good but nothing else."

*nī uṟum poyc cūḻ aṇaṅku ākiṉ maṟṟu iṉi* (*Kalittokai* 88:20)
"if what you hold is false beauty, what else."

*nakai ākiṉṟē tōḻi nerunal* (*Akam* 36:1)
"it becomes laughable in this land, friend."

This leads one to conclude that the phonological rules applied within the contexts of the poems from Caṅkam and medieval Tamil predominantly generate the classical literary variety belonging to H variety, whereas in modern Tamil, they are perceived as colloquial, informal, and low variants. Note that classical literary variety is today predominantly in poetic forms and are considered *ceyyuḷ* as discussed in Annamalai (2016).

The crucial aspect concerning the lenition of *h* is the development of modern Tamil grammatical suffixes such as *-ām*, *-ātu*, *-lām*, and *-āṉa*, which originally were lexical words containing the intervocalic *k*, as illustrated below:

*ākum* > *ām* "will become"
*ākātu* > *ātu* "won't happen"
*varalākum* > *varal ām* > *varalām* "may come"
*ākiṉa* > *āṉa* "happened"

The use of infinitive constructions with the suffix *al* was prevalent from medieval Tamil through the 19th century. Forms such as *varalākum* "would be coming" and *varalākātu* "won't be coming" were evident in modern Tamil writings too. However, the suffix *al* gradually disappeared, leading to the prevalence of suffixes like *-ām*, *-ātu*, and *-lām* due to lenition.

*aḻiyatu* ***eṉalākum*** *āṉmāvai yaṉṟi* (*Tirumantiram* 2325:2)
"nothing other than soul can be strong."

***talaippaṭa lākum*** *tarumamum tāṉē* (*Tirumantiram* 2666:4)
"the righteousness will become prominent."

*piṉṉai aṟiviṉaip peṟṟāl* ***aṟiyalām*** (*Tirumantiram* 2318:2)
"it can be understood when the latter is learned."

*noṭiyi lihtu* ***payiṉṟiṭa lākum*** (*Bāratiyār – teyvap pāṭalkaḷ* 77)
"it can be learned in seconds."

*kālkoṇ ṭaṭittu* ***viḻuntiṭalākum*** (*Bāratiyār – ñāṉap pāṭalkaḷ* 2)
"will become fallen beaten up with stones."

*kāvaṉam eṉṟataip* ***pōṟṟalām*** (*Bāratiyār – Kaṇṇaṉ pāṭṭu* 40:11).
"one may appreciate what was said as dense forest."

These examples from medieval and modern Tamil can be cited for the use of *-al-ākum* concurrently with the lention of *h* as in *-al-ām*. What is significant to note in this context is that the modal suffix *-lām* "may" came into existence in modern Tamil after the reanalysis of the suffix *-al* and *-ām*, as in the case of the suffix *-ātu* from *-al-ākātu*. What can be anticipated in this context is that

the process of lenition led to the emergence of new grammatical suffixes during the medieval period, particularly within poetic contexts, and they continued to persist as a high variety in modern Tamil.[2] It is also important to observe that the use of forms such as *viḻuntiṭalākum* "possible to fall down," *eṉalākum* "possible to be said," and *talaippaṭalākum* "possible to be prominent," without lenition and reanalysis, is today taken as characteristic of the highest tier within the high variety. Conversely, the corresponding forms with lenition and reanalysis, such as *viḻuntiṭa-lām*, *eṉa-lām*, and *talaippaṭa-lām*, can still be classified within the high variety but are understood today as positioned in a lower tier compared to the former. The forms with *-al* and *-ākum/-ākātu* are consistently used in literary writings of contemporary Tamil: for example, in the story *mutalāviṉ* by Jayamohan we find:

> *vāṉuṟaiyum teyvaṅkaḷum maṇṇil vāḻa* ***varalākum*** *eṉa avaṉ piṟavi niṟuviyatu.*
> "his birth confirmed that the celestial gods can come to earth to live here."

As this shows, this medieval construction has been retained in modern Tamil, particularly to represent the H variety of the language.

### Lenition of *ḻ* and the formation of a strata within H variety

Similar to the lenition of *h* resulting in various nuances in the usage of Tamil across different varieties, particularly in the realms of high and low varieties and literary contexts, the lenition of *ḻ* follows a parallel pattern. What is worth to note in the context of the lenition of *ḻ* is that when it occurs in modern spoken Tamil, as in the example of *tāḻvāram* > *tāvāram* "penthouse/lower porch," the form without lenition is considered to belong to high variety whereas the form with lenition is considered to belong to low variety. By contrast, the process of lenition in the poetic realm elevates the linguistic register within the high variety. For instance,

[2] See Renganathan 2010, 66–69 for a discussion on how the use of *-lām* as modal suffix in Tamil became possible after the lenition and reanalysis of the forms *-alākum*, *-alām*, and *-a lām* and how the later grammarians like Arden (1942) defined the suffix *-lām* as a modal suffix.

as previously noted, in the transformation from *cōḻanāṭu* to *cōṇāṭu*, both forms are classified within the high variety of modern Tamil. However, the latter, marked by lenition and retroflexion, is regarded as a highly formal literary variant with a superior status compared to the former. This reinforces our previous assertion that the outcome of lenition within poetic expressions (*ceyyuḷ*) achieves a higher level of prestige compared to the analogous process observed in spoken language (i.e., when the source form is not obviously from earlier, poetic language).

Another instance of the lenition of *ḻ* in the Caṅkam Tamil can be observed in the word *pōḻtu* > *pōtu*, meaning "at (that) time."

*nīrāṭum* ***pōḻtil*** *neṟippaṭṭār eññāṉṟum* (*Ācārakkōvai* 14:1)
"forever gained wisdom while bathing."

*taṇpeyal eḻili tāḻnta* ***pōḻtē*** (*Akam* 175:18)
"when the charming cool rain descended."

*paintātu aṇinta* ***pōtumali*** *ekkar* (*Akam* 26:4)
"when the fine pollen is abundant in yellow flower."

***ippōtum*** *iṉṉum iṉicciṟitu niṉṟālum* (Nālāyira tivyap pirapantam: *Nammāḻvār* 2671)
"now and even if stood more."

In contrast to the situation with *tāḻvāram* > *tāvāram*, the form without lenition is not commonly employed in modern Tamil; instead, the form with lenition is prevalent. However, in highly formal settings, particularly in oratory, some speakers use the form *pōḻtu* to convey a style associated with prestigious high variety.

It is noteworthy to observe the usage of *ippōḻtu* > *ippōtu* "now," *pōḻtu/poḻutu* > *pōtu* "time/when" in the context of the lenition process and their subsequent adoption in both Caṅkam and modern Tamil. This is significant due to the historical prevalence of multiple variants of this word. If the word *poḻutu* is understood to be the base form upon which a number of phonological rules operate, the resultant forms constitute many words, each exhibiting its own stratum of high and low varieties. That is, a gradation of status of resultant forms can be noted: *ippōḻtu* and *pōḻtu* are more formal than *ippōtu and pōtu*, leading to them obtaining different registers

within H variety. The lenition of *l̲* triggers the compensatory lengthening of the vowel *o*, resulting in the word *pōtu*. However, alongside *pōtu*, the form *pōl̲tu* appears to have emerged in parallel to *pol̲utu*, suggesting the concurrent usage of the form of *pōtu* with lenition. In modern spoken Tamil, the form *ippa* is used, typically associated with informal usage, while variations such as *ippōl̲tu* and *ippōtu* represent a spectrum of higher status, with *ippōl̲tu* being the highest and *ippōtu* holding a slightly lower prestige.

**Lenition of intervocalic *v***

Another frequently attested form of lenition is what is called by Schiffman (1993) as intervocalic *-v-* deletion. Discussing this in the context of level two suffixes as stated in the theory of lexical phonology, Schiffman proposes that "[n]ot all surface realizations of [v] are underlyingly glides; some are derived from underlying /p/ by a rule of lenition, independently motivated" (1993, 526). However, the intervocalic *v* is interpreted, what one can predominantly see in modern Tamil is that many instances of intervocalic *v* get dropped (with some exceptions); and more importantly, they only produce forms of the L variety, none of which can be used in the contexts of H, as seen in the examples below:

Infinitive + negative word *illai*:
*vara-v-illai* > *varale* "didn't come"
*pārkka-v-illai* > *pākkale* "didn't see"; also undergoes the lenition of *r*

Compound verbs:
*koṇṭuvā* > *koṇṭā* "bring"
*eṭuttuvā* > *eṭuttā* "bring"
*koṭuttuviṭu* > *koṭuttūṭu* "send s.t. through s.o."

Aspectual auxiliary *viṭu*:
*koṭuttuviṭu* > *koṭuttuṭu* "give away"

Infinitive + modal form *vēṇṭum*:
*koṭukkavēṇṭum* > *koṭukkaṇum* "should give"

Sandhi forms before case suffixes:
*amerikkāvil* > *amerikkāle* "in America"
*ṭōkkiyōvukku* > *ṭōkkiyōkku* "to Tokyo."

It is important to observe in these examples that the result of *v* lenition is not regarded within the H variety of modern Tamil. Instead, only the non-lenited form should be employed in H contexts, whether in writing or speech. Further, this is only a modern Tamil phenomenon and none of the poems of either medieval or Caṅkam Tamil show any evidence of using lenited form of *v*. This could be due to the fact that the occurrence of "infinitive *-a* + negative/modal" forms were historically derived from *al* forms, and thus intervocalic circumstances could not have involved *v* at the ancient time.

**The concept of "Classical Tamil variety" and the grammatically regulated "Sandhi Rules"**

So far, we have observed that the lenition of soft consonants occurs after either palatalization or retroflexion, resulting in a combination of L and H variety forms, such as *ācci*, *vāccavaṉ*, et cetera, and *cōṇāṭu*, *āycciyar*, et cetera. In certain instances (such as *pōḻtu* vs. *pōtu*, *-al-ākum* > *a-lām*, *-al-ākātu* > *a-ātu*), one encounters a layer that influences the determination of the elevated type of H variety in modern Tamil. Despite the instances of lenition, certain phonological rules generate forms that are highly literary and are reserved for specialized contexts in contemporary academic writing and speech. These rules are predominantly governed by traditional Tamil grammars, including *Tolkāppiyam*.

*l* turning into voiceless fricative with corresponding trilled *r̲* – with retroflexion:
*pal* + *tuḷi* > *paHr̲uḷi* "multiple drops"
*pal* + *toṭai* > *paHr̲oṭai* "multiple meters," as in *paHr̲oṭai veṇpā*

*l* turning into trilled *r̲r̲*:
*kal* + *kaṇṭu* > *kar̲kaṇṭu* "rock sugar"
*nal* + *tāḷ* > *nar̲r̲āḷ* "secular foot"
*col* + *toṭar* > *cor̲r̲oṭar* "word phrases"

Numerous other cases, like these, can be cited to demonstrate the fact that in contemporary Tamil there indeed exists a highly sophisticated variety of what one can call a "classical variety of Tamil," which has much higher status than what are commonly called "literary Tamil variety" and "spoken Tamil variety." Araṅkanātaṉ

(2023) studies this phenomenon in detail and emphasizes the need for the identification of three varieties of Tamil, namely "classical variety," "literary variety," and "spoken variety." Araṅkanātaṉ, citing a number of poems from medieval period and Caṅkam Tamil as well as citing *Tolkāppiyar's* sutras such as *Tol. Eḻuttu* 215 and 216, claims that there has been a general consciousness to particularly use in contemporary Tamil what is normally called *cemmoḻi vaḻakku* (i.e., a classical variety), which is different from what is conventionally attributed to *ilakkiya vaḻakku* (i.e., a literary variety; see Araṅkanātaṉ 2023, 47–54). Of particular significance is the ongoing presence of the classical variety within contemporary Tamil, alongside its literary and spoken counterparts to particularly emphasize the elegance of Tamil with demonstrated academic excellence and to preserve the sophisticated literary past. So, when distinguishing between different registers in Tamil's H and L varieties, if we consider the highly sophisticated and educated form of *cemmoḻi vaḻakku* as a distinct type, it will fit into the top tier of the H variety. Meanwhile, the literary form that lacks extensive sandhi formations would be placed in the middle tier.

With this in mind, a close look at the two poems from *Puṟam* 87 and 24 suggests the presence of diglossia in classical Tamil. In these poems, what from today's point of view appears as a formal classical language is used when addressing kings, while what from today's point of view appears as a literary style, with less classical fervor, is employed when addressing the general public:

*kaḷampukal ōmpumiṉ tevvir pōr etirntu*
*emmuḷum uḷaṉoru porunaṉ vaikal*
*eṇ tēr ceyyum taccaṉ*
*tiṅkaḷ valitta kālaṉ ṉōṉē* (*Puṟam* 87)

command to engage in war
there is a fierce warrior among us,
a carpenter is present to craft chariots,
oh, king renowned for your fierce battles!

*nel ariyum irun toḻuvar*
*ceñ ñāyiṟṟu veyil muṉaiyiṉ,*
*teṉ kaṭaltirai micaippā yuntu*
*tiṇ timil vaṉ paratavar* (*Puṟam* 24:1–4)

the farmers tending to the rice fields,
as the red sunrays emerge,
moving towards the sea,
the Paradavas prepare for their fishing.

What stands out in these poems is the variation in word choices, indicating different linguistic varieties. Words like *ōmpumiṉ* "command," *uḷaṉ* "exists," *vaikal* "day," and *kāl* "at the time," as found in *Puṟam* 87, are associated with a more prestigious variety when compared to more commonly used literary variety. Words like *iru* "exist" instead of *uḷaṉ*, *veyil* "shine" instead of *katir*, in *Puṟam* 24, although belonging to literary language, differ from the more refined classical variety as seen in *Puṟam* 87. This suggests a need to differentiate two different varieties *within* the literary variety of the Caṅkam Tamil (the presumed H variety of the time), what Araṅkanātaṉ (2023) denotes, using the contemporary metalinguistic terms *cemmoḻi vaḻakku* "classical variety" and *ilakkiya vaḻakku* "literary variety." This presumes the fact that one can identify two different types of orators in Tamil, one using highly sophisticated and enriched literary forms extensively in his speech and other simply using commonly understood literary forms without choosing, or not knowledgeable of, any form from the so called *cemmoḻi vaḻakku*. Similar strata can be illustrated within the L variety as well. Using a standard spoken Tamil is different from using any stigmatized dialect form with application of extensive phonological rules. To cite an example, *nāyi pōvutu* "dog goes" is considered a standard spoken form, but *nā pōtu* is highly stigmatized form of speech attributed to a specific region—the Mayiladuthurai region of the Tanjore district. Thus, if we were to discuss the concept of "diglossia" in the context of multiple registers, we are forced to identify the presence of a gradation within each variety, namely H and L. The complexity within H variety exists due to extensive use of forms from the poems of the ancient past with rigorous application of phonological rules within words (e.g., *nal* + *tiṇai* > *naṟṟiṇai* "unique land," *pal* + *tuḷi* > paHṟuḷi "multiple drops," etc., where *nal tiṇai* is to be considered as literary and *naṟṟiṇai* is to be attributed to *cemmoḻi*), whereas in L variety this is due to use of multiple dialect forms with application of multiple phonological rules, especially with rigorous deletion of syllables due to lenition

(e.g., *pōkiṟatu* > *pōvutu/pōtu* "it goes," *vantukoṇṭiru* > *vantuṭṭuru/vantuṇuru* "keep coming," etc.). Put simply, both so-called H and L varieties are internally heterogeneous, and with each so-called varieties are various gradations (indeed, are multiple other varieties, that is, styles or registers).

## Concluding remarks

In addition to using numerous glosses in the language to examine the status of diglossia, it is essential to closely scrutinize the language varieties that significantly influence, synchronically and diachronically, the selection of different varieties of the language (viz., so-called "H" and "L" varieties).[3] The sophistication of Tamil speech or writing patterns is influenced by several factors, which must be evaluated across different scenarios as identified by Annamalai (2016) in terms of linguistic and grammatical distances between H and L varieties. Many Tamils, in particularly those who are highly literate, exhibit an awareness of which variety they employ and when, and modulate them to different pragmatic effect. This chapter underscores that there exists a spectrum of linguistic distinctions in how the high (H) variety has been employed, in both Caṅkam, medieval, and modern Tamil, and this principle should also be applicable within the low (L) variety. In this context, paramount importance lies in closely examining how diverse phonological rules have played a crucial role in shaping both high (H) and low (L) varieties and their use; and, more generally, how they have influenced the structure of the Tamil language over time. The status of diglossia in Tamil remains a complex issue, notably due to the blending by speakers of high (H) and low (L) varieties across various register and stylistic strata. This blending of different types of registers, styles, and genres in various speech contexts, which has resulted in what has been called "diglossia," is, as I have shown, highly influenced by the rich literary culture and robust grammatical traditions of the past. Each of these spe-

[3] The term "gloss" here is to be understood as choosing different synonymous words belonging to different registers, which are in close proximity to the term "diglossia." For example, *paṭaiyal* versus *cāppāṭu* "offering/meal," *cātam* versus *cōṟu* "food," and so on represent the candidates for what is attributed here as "glosses."

ech contexts is to be attributed to specific register, either H or L, and each with a gradation from highly sophisticated form of H to a very colloquial form of L variety. Thus, *cemmoḻi vaḻakku*, *ilakkiya vaḻakku*, standard speech, dialectal speech, uneducated and educated speech forms, and so on can be placed within a specific form of H and L varieties respectively. What Annamalai (2016) illustrates within the context of "linguistic and grammatical distances," thus, can be used to explore every register of the Tamil language in the context of defining them within a stratum of H and L varieties. In other words, the notion of "distance" within the linguistic context can be used, as I have illustrated in this chapter, to identify the presence of various gradations *within* and not just between H and L varieties.

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# *Linguistic Ecology of India*

Rama Kant Agnihotri

It is a matter of great privilege for me to offer a modest contribution in honor of Professor E. Annamalai. His work is informed by both scientific rigor and a concern for humanity. His contemporaries and his students have learnt a great deal from him. I have always turned to him with a sense of awe and respect. He is known for his formal work on Tamil and for his critical and humane work in the domains of Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics. His books *Language Movements in India* and *Managing Multilingualism in India: Political and Linguistic Manifestations* remain seminal to our understanding of Multilingualism in India. He has always looked at my work with understanding and affection.

## Introduction

There is no reason to believe that there is something special about the linguistic ecology of India even though many scholars in India and abroad insist on considering India as an object of wonder so far as its linguistic diversity is concerned. There is, for example, the case of the rather small Papua New Guinea. It has over 800 languages, and though it is claimed that the English-based creole, Tok Pisin, is the lingua franca, not everybody speaks it. As in India, so in Papua New Guinea, communication systems do not break down at any specific geographical points and there are, in addition to Tok Pisin, many other local fluid creoles that people use for purposes of trade, travel, and commerce. What we need to

understand is that there are no absolute binaries (Bahl 2019) despite the North-South divide so emphatically asserted today. Human beings across the globe are the same. They are all endowed with the same linguistic faculty, which I have called Multilinguality (Agnihotri 1995, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2020, 2021; also see Annamalai 2008a; Singh 2001, 2010; Bhattacharya 2023, 2024). This faculty, which militates against the concept of "a language," has three dimensions: (a) Universal Grammar (UG) as defined by Chomsky (1965, 1975, 1988); (b) linguistic fluidity (Annamalai 2008b; Bhatt 2008; McCormick and Agnihotri 2009; Agnihotri and McCormick 2010; Montaut 2010), which ensures that languages have no hard and fast boundaries and search for universal and formal linguistic constraints on what is called language-mixing (Kachru 1978; Pfaff 1979; Sankoff and Poplack 1981; Di Sciullo, Muysken, and Singh 1986; Sankoff, Poplack and Vanniarajan 1991) is mis-directed (Kak and Agnihotri 1996; McCormick and Agnihotri 2009; Agnihotri and McCormick 2010; Vashisht and Agnihotri 2015); and finally (c) a deep-seated Human Concern for societal suffering in which language plays a significant role (Agnihotri 2009, 2012, 2020; Lele 2012). The concept of fluidity ensures that, within the limits imposed by UG, given a conversation or even a piece of writing (the *Mani Praval* tradition on the one hand and contemporary digital messaging on the other), it is difficult to say from which source of what are construed as languages an expression may appear. This notion of fluidity needs to be distinguished from, say, morphologically conditioned alternations or sociolinguistically conditioned variation along social and stylistic dimensions; these operate within the concept of "a language."

The concept of Multilinguality also needs to be distinguished from commonly used terms such as *bilingualism* and *multilingualism* and terms such as code-mixing and translanguaging. All these concepts are located in bilingualism or multilingualism conceptualized in terms of L1+ L2 + L3 . . . . etc. where the concept of "a language" is kept intact. Multilinguality as defined above is constitutive of being human; at a social level, it could be further characterized, roughly, in terms of the *dominating* Multilinguality (Volker and Anderson 2015) of the elite and the *dominated* Multilinguality (Saxena and Borin 2006) of the underprivileged. In many societies, for example, a small group of the urban elite

controls seats of social, executive, and judicial power through dominating Multilinguality; in such cases, access to their verbal repertoire is denied to those who belong to the dominated Multilinguality even as they sustain the diversity of their own voices through forms and practices of linguistic fluidity that are enriched by specific sociocultural festivals and by their day-to-day mobility. The elite dismiss their linguistic repertoire as uncouth rural language or as pidgin, creole, dialect, or vernacular. It should be noted that the dominating and dominated Multilinguality are not watertight compartments and often cross paths despite the elite efforts to sustain the difference.

In this chapter, I discuss the linguistic ecology of India as a special case of the manifestation of Multilinguality. I focus on the dimension of fluidity in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. The maps of these two states are available in Appendix I.

## The case of India

Bewildered by the diversity of languages available in India, the Census Office of the Government of India has applied various techniques to arrive at a specific number of languages spoken in India. One should not be surprised that this number has varied enormously from one Census (https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/about/contact, accessed 29 April 2024) to another with such striking differences in their count as 1,652 (Census 1961) and 121 (Census 2021). It should be obvious that different kinds of sociopolitical pressures shape this counting. India, like any other geopolitical space, is a linguistic continuum. It should go to the "credit" of George Grierson who in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903–1923) tried to cut this continuum into rather arbitrary segments in terms of 179 languages and 544 dialects. There is no satisfactory definition of language available that would separate it from a dialect except saying, like Max Weinreich (quoted in Abend 2023, 225), that "language is a dialect with an army and a navy," a quip called the "Weinreich witticism" also. It is the elite members of the dominating Multilinguality who control the army and navy, which subsumes all social and economic powers.

Beginning with Pāṇini, the techniques of segmentation, classification, and categorization have remained the cornerstone

of rigorous analysis of languages. The colonial powers used these techniques to dissect and classify the fluid verbal behavior of India. The process has continued unchecked, influenced by those who happened to be in power. The 1921 Census counted 188 languages. In 1961, as pointed out above, the count was 1,652 languages. Languages of the so-called Hindi belt were counted as separate languages for the first time and to the Hindi enthusiasts, the size of the Hindi belt seemed to shrink, which, politically, was not a good sign. The 1971 Census brought the count down to 109 from 1652 as several languages of the Hindi belt were to be subsumed under Hindi. People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI), guided by Ganesh Devy, mapped the linguistic contours of India in terms of 780 distinct languages. The problems associated with defining *a language*, *a dialect*, *a mother tongue*, et cetera make it impossible to arrive at any accurate number of languages in any geopolitical space, which itself is an artefact of cartography. The decennial count in the Indian Census has varied so strikingly because the definition of mother tongue has kept changing. In the 1881 and 1891 Census, it was the language "ordinarily spoken in the household of each person's parents"; in 1901, "languages ordinarily used by each person"; in 1931, 1941, and 1951, language "first spoken from the cradle"; in 1961, "language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person or mainly spoken in the household." These questions are ill-formulated in the first instance since a child's verbal repertoire is essentially fluid in performance, often consisting of a diversity of what are normally construed as separate languages. The 2021 Census asked about the "mother tongue or language first learned at home" and counted 19,569 mother tongues in India; these were *rationalized* into 121 languages. As Appendix II shows, Hindi subsumes close to 60 languages, including such major languages as Awadhi (65 million speakers) and Bhojpuri (32 million speakers). Speakers of some of the languages subsumed under the rubric of Hindi make claims to be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. There are 156 languages that are spoken by less than 10,000 people; their future is uncertain. As Abbi (2022) points out, the vitality index of some of the Munda languages is rather low, and they are in many ways endangered. Such are the powers of dominating Multilinguality.

We are conditioned by the idea of associating *a language* with an individual and a social group. For a formal linguist, it is always possible to segment a slice from the verbal continuum, undertake its analysis, and formulate potential mental representations for its rules at an abstract level. But this does not help when it is Multilinguality that is constitutive of each individual and each household. If we ask, what languages are generally used by the members at home and outside, it may still give us some idea of the linguistic complexity and fluidity that is characteristic of human social groups.

Linguistic fluidity suggests that "language boundaries" are porous, and phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic material travels across languages within the constraints of Universal Grammar. Such fluidity is nourished by inherent sociolinguistic variability along the dimensions of socioeconomic class and style (Labov 1966, 1970, 1972, 2018; Trudgill 1974; Fasold 1972; Wolfram and Fasold 1974) and by regular immigration and emigration and peripatetic people.

It is because of such geographical and social mobility that communication channels are maintained across social groups and geographical regions, just as it is due to this that large areas such as that of South Asia have emerged not only as epitomes of diversity but also as linguistic and cultural areas (Emeneau 1956; Pandit 1972; Mukherjee 1981; Subbarao, Agnihotri and Mukherjee 1991; Agnihotri 1996; Subbarao 2008; Abbi 2022). There are several linguistic features that unite India as a linguistic area. These include: all languages except Khasi have Subject Object Verb (SOV) syntactic structure; auxiliary follows the main verb; they have postpositions rather than prepositions; postpositions are also used in comparative and superlative constructions; the direct object follows the indirect object; time and place adverbials occur in descending order; wh-question words appear in situ; most languages have both full and partial reduplication of words to indicate distributive and et cetera meanings respectively.

Multilinguality of linguistic ecology ensures that the diversity of human voices survives despite the anxieties of those who are worried about language endangerment and language death (Dorian 1989; Krauss 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Natural disasters and wars in addition to imperial domination of elite

groups can indeed endanger certain manifestations of human verbal repertoire and culture. Yet languages manage to survive through other languages and through their own renewal. Dominating Multilinguality remains focused on the processes of codification and standardization of the few languages they use. Enormous diversity in the dominated Multilinguality, though powerless in social, economic, and political terms, sustains the multiplicity of voices and empowers them to cross all boundaries of so-called language-specific rules and constraints except those subsumed by Universal Grammar. One is therefore not surprised, as argued above, that the whole enterprise of formulating purely linguistic constraints on code-mixing and code-switching has been shown to be misguided as their violation seems to be common in human linguistic behavior. Labov (1971), like most other formal linguists, maintained that the concept of a "system" is central to any theory of language. However, in the same paper, when he examined the data from a Puerto Rican speaker, he said:

> So far, however, no one has been able to show that such rapid alternation is governed by any systematic rules or constraints, and we therefore must describe it as the irregular mixture of two distinct systems. (Labov 1971, 457)

According to Srivastava (1992, 330), "the concept of co-existent subsystems which operate partly in harmony and partly in conflict is not merely a hypothetical linguistic construct, but in fact exists in the verbal behaviour of Indian speech communities." In the case of South Asia, Kachru (2008) says:

> The earlier, and ongoing, linguistic convergence (Sprachbund) between and among typologically distinct languages is also evident in their literatures, folk traditions, and three major linguistic impacts, those of Sanskritization, Persianization, and Englishization. (Kachru 2008, 1–2)

The fluidity in linguistic behavior is generally accompanied by religious and cultural fluidity (Agnihotri 2008, 2020). Consider the case of South Asia. Its linguistic, religious, and cultural pluralism cuts across the whole region. Language families like Indo-Aryan,

Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, and Munda and the varieties of Sign Language cut across South Asia; similarly, religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Sikhism coexist and interact with each other in different parts of South Asia. What is true of South Asia should be true of other geographical regions irrespective of the homogenized linguistic, social, religious, and cultural images created by the dominating Multilinguality. Whenever there is any opportunity, dominating Multilinguality, wittingly or unwittingly, appropriates what legitimately belongs to the languages of the dominated. Languages such as Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Braj among others, which should legitimately be known as progenitors of Hindi, are today called the dialects of Hindi. When prestigious literature was being composed in Braj and Awadhi, what we today call Hindi was nowhere on the horizon. Consider the brilliant translation of Lutgendorf (2024, vii) of parts of Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*. Though later in the text Awadhi is mentioned, in the Introduction, it is claimed that it is "an epic poem composed in Hindi in the late sixteenth century . . . ," flattening the historical and sociolinguistic complexity of the dynamic Multilinguality of the time (indeed, the referent of the term "Hindi" itself has changed over time, and today what we recognize as Awadhi was once called "Hindavi"). Such appropriation of the so-called "minor traditions" by the "major tradition" is common in the case of dominating Multilinguality. Hindi today, as we show in Appendix II, is so constructed by the political powers that the Census Office of India subsumes close to 60 languages under it. If examined critically, the situation in the Global North will not be very different.

In this chapter, the nature of linguistic fluidity is illustrated through the Multilinguality of two regions in India, namely, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. In both these states, Hindi and English would largely constitute the dominating Multilinguality that minimizes the status and power of the languages of dominated Multilinguality. The ways in which the local languages of these states creatively interact with Hindi and English could be the subject of a separate research project. The focus of this chapter is on the nature and structure of fluidity obtaining in the dominated Multilinguality in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan in India. The fact that this diversity and fluidity is embedded in specific cultural and religious traditions and specific waves of

migration and immigration in no way works against the guardrails of Universal Grammar and Human Concern.

To exemplify some of the dynamics discussed above, in what follows I look at small sets of data corresponding to the sentence "I am going to the market" that were collected from the two states. These data clearly show how fluidity among varieties that are said to maintain their distinctiveness leads to largely shared verbal repertoires with no breakdowns in communication or intelligibility. According to Pandit (1972), variability in linguistic behavior only facilitates communication. Pandit (1967, 1969) argued that bilingualism may show models of stratified equilibrium but in addition to that one may witness in such situations the bilingual tongue becoming the mother tongue; such is the dynamics of Multilinguality. It is possible that all these varieties emerged from comparable sources such as Sanskrit and various Prakrits diachronically but this does not in any way militate against the proposal that those sources were themselves loci of Multilinguality and the emergence of modern named varieties is marked by Multilinguality all the way.

**Himachal Pradesh**

Consider the case of Himachal Pradesh (literally, "snow-range region") in the north of India. This difficult terrain consists of several mountain ranges and river systems. Even today, some habitations may not be easily accessible. During the colonial period, it was a part of the large Punjab Province; after independence in 1947, the hill states were consolidated into a Union Territory in 1956, and it got the full-fledged status of statehood in 1971. The state is bordered by Jammu & Kashmir in the north, Punjab in the west, Haryana in the south, and Uttarakhand in the south-east, contiguous geographical areas where this fluidity will continue. What is now called Himachal Pradesh was carved out of this contiguous geographical area. Geographical cuts do not subsume linguistic, religious, and cultural cuts. Like any other region of the globe, it is characterized by Multilinguality and fluidity. According to the Census of India, 2011, there are about 32 languages in Himachal Pradesh, but as in the case of other regions of the country or the world, it is a futile exercise to attempt to count the number of languages used in each

area. Himachal Pradesh is divided into the following districts: Kangra, Shimla, Mandi, Kullu, Chamba, Hamirpur, Solan, Lahaul & Spiti, Sirmaur, Una, Bilaspur, and Kinnaur.

Linguistic, religious, and cultural fluidity, though operational in day-to-day life, is conspicuous in the international-, national-, and state-level fairs regularly held across Himachal Pradesh (https://hpgeneralstudies.com/fairs-festivals-himachal-pradesh/, accessed 19 April 2024). Take the case of the Shivaratri Fair held in Mandi town, known as the Varanasi of the hills with its hundreds of temples. It lasts seven days. Over 80 golden idols of gods and goddesses from across the surrounding hills are brought on their highly decorated palanquins, each one of them accompanied by many people from their villages. They arrive dancing in ecstasy to enchanting music that echoes across the hills, more so as Mandi is a bowl-like town at the bottom of hills. This fair, held in honor of Lord Shiva, celebrates human liberation from darkness and ignorance. People come to participate in the Mandi Shivaratri Fair not only from different parts of Himachal but also from different states of India and abroad. A major consequence of such a gathering is that boundaries of languages, rituals, dance, and music become fluid. Communication channels that are built on the foundations of such linguistic and cultural fluidity persist beyond such events, even as they are renewed every Shivaratri.

Similarly, in the case of Chamba district, Minjar mela is held to celebrate the victory of the Chamba king over the king of the Kangra district. It is held on the second Saturday of the Hindu *Shravan* (July–August) month. In addition to the religious and cultural activities that mark the Minjar fair, the get-together of people from across the State and the country and abroad is known for its trade in silk and maize. The Lavi Fair of Rampur in Shimla district held every year on the 25th of the *Kartik* (November) month celebrates the treaty signed among the kings of Rampur and Tibet and lasts for four days. This is the time when traders from Tibet travel to the warmer regions of Rampur to trade their animals, woolen goods, dry fruits, spices, herbs, et cetera for the foodgrains and salt from Rampur. The Dussehra of Kullu, Renuka Fair of Sirmaur and the Holi Fair of Hamirpur have the status of international fairs where many people from across the country and often abroad get together for cultural and religious celebrations.

The data for some districts of Himachal Pradesh was collected through friends for the sentence "I am going to the market." Consider the following data from the main cities of the districts of Mandi, Kullu, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Sirmaur, Kangra, and Chamba. For each area, there are several variants that further illustrate the kind of fluidity being referred to here. The geographical spread of these cities is within a radius of about 250 kilometers. From Mandi, Chamba is 262 kilometers and Nahan is 223 kilometers; the other cities are relatively close: Bilaspur is 55 kilometers, Hamirpur 82, Kullu 87, and Kangra 142. I provide the Hindi sentence for reference and glosses in English as many readers are likely to be familiar with Hindi and English.

haũ baja:rɔ chali: ra:. (Mandi)
haũ chaulu: baja:ra: be. (Kullu)
haũ baja:rɔ jo chalya:. (Hamirpur)
ã:v chalura: baja:r. (Bilaspur)
hã:v baza:rɔ la:ga: jã:da:. (Sirmaur)
m baja:re chalheya. (Kangra)
mæ̃ chala: baja:r. (Chamba)
mæ̃ baza:r ja: raha: hũ: (Hindi)
I market go (PROG) am
"I am going to the market."

This data from across the hilly towns in Himachal Pradesh spread over several kilometers in different directions illustrates the fluidity and osmosis of linguistic behavior. There is an overwhelming structural and lexical convergence resulting from historical origins and the kind of sociocultural and religious activities that take place without any interruption in addition to the day-to-day travel of individuals and groups across the region and ongoing waves of immigration and emigration. The SOV pattern that except for Khasi is shared by all Indian languages is maintained with the flexibility that OV can often surface as VO, which is largely true of most languages in North India. Consider the similarities and variations in the subject pronoun, which maintains its initial position: *haũ/ hã̃:v/ ã̃:v* and *mæ̃* (which is the same as the Hindi variant). Given the fluid nature of the sound [h] (consider Yorkshire English in which words like "hat" and "at" are pronounced identically as [æt]) and the pressures from the dominating Mul-

tilinguality (the Hindi form for "I" is *mæ̃*), contact and mobility likely resulted in these variations.

The shared lexical item across these hilly towns of Himachal (as also in the towns of Rajasthan) for "market" is *baja:r*. It has origins in Persian *ba:za:r* (*pazar* in Turkish). The Sanskrit words such as *panyavi:thi* seem rather distant. On the other hand, Prakrit *haṭṭa* "market" has reflexes in many North Indian languages, *haṭṭi:* in Panjabi, and *ha:ṭ* is common in many languages for "market." The word *baja:r* is treated differently at different places; it appears as such in Chamba and Kangra and marks direction also. In Kullu and Sirmaur, *-a:* is added as in *baja:ra:*; in Hamirpur and Mandi, the form is *baja:rɔ* for "to the market." In the case of Hamirpur and Kullu, postpositions such as *jo/ be/ de* are also added in addition to the inflection to get forms such as *baja:rɔ jo* (Hamirpur). The shared verbal element is *chal*. At different places, it is marked differently for grammatical features. In the case of Hindi (Agnihotri [2007] 2023, 77), the "burden of tense and aspect is carried by the verbal complex which may consist of the main verbs and some form of auxiliary such as *hona:*, 'to be.'" In Bilaspur, Chamba, and Kangra, in the case of present progressive, tense and aspect are both marked in the main verb. These languages have their individual names such as Mandyali, Kulluvi, Bilaspuri, Kangri, Hamirpuri, Chambyali, et cetera, but that is no barrier to either their sustained fluidity or mutual comprehensibility. In the case of Mandyali, consider the following sentences in terms of changes in Person, Number and Gender (PNG):

**Table 1.** Mandyali sentences (Present tense, PNG)

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|---|---|---|
| Ist (masc) | haũ̯ baja:rɔ chali: ra: | ase baja:rɔ chali: re |
| Ist (fem) | haũ̯ baja:rɔ chali: ri: | ase baja:rɔ chali: ri: |
| IInd (masc) | tu: baja:rɔ chali: ra: | tuse baja:rɔ chali: re |
| IInd (fem) | tu: baja:rɔ chali: ri: | tuse baja:rɔ chali: ri: |
| IInd (hon, masc) | tuse baja:rɔ chali: re | tuse baja:rɔ chali: re |
| IInd (hon, fem) | tuse baja:rɔ chali: ri: | tuse baja:rɔ chali: ri: |
| IIIrd (masc) | se baja:rɔ chali: ra: | syõ̯ baja:rɔ chali: re |
| IIIrd (fem) | se baja:rɔ chali: ri: | syõ̯ baja:rɔ chali: ri: |

The form of the personal pronoun is sensitive to number but not to gender, which gets marked in the progressive aspect marker *ra:/*

*ri:/ re*. The expressions *baja:ɾɔ* "to the market" and *chali:* "to walk, present tense" is common across the board in the above table. In the case of the past tense, the tense marking auxiliary *tha:* is used, in addition to some changes in the main verb. In the future, *-ga:* is added to the main verb. For example, *hau͂ ka:l chalga: baja:ɾɔ* "I will go to the market tomorrow"; one could also say, *hau͂ ka:l jã:ŋa: baja:ɾɔ*. It appears that different levels of language organization such as phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, and semantics do not constitute any barrier to linguistic fluidity noticed here.

**Rajasthan**

Literally, the land of kings, Rajasthan is a large geographical area in northwest India. It is a landlocked state where the linguistic and cultural fluidity spreads across the arbitrarily marked boundaries; it is bordered by Panjab in the north, Gujarat in the southwest, and largely "Hindi" speaking Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in the northeast and Madhya Pradesh to the southeast. The state consisted of small kingdoms owned by the Rajput kings till the British created the political office of Rajputana Agency. Divided into 10 divisions, Rajasthan consists of 50 districts today. As in the case of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan's yearly calendar is also marked by a series of festivals that attract people not only from all parts of Rajasthan but also from across India and abroad. The colorful dance and cattle Desert Festival of Jaisalmer is held during January–February, the Gangaur Festival celebrating the glory of goddess Parvati (wife of the all-powerful Lord Shiva) is celebrated during March–April, the greenery that arrives with the monsoons is celebrated during Teej that falls in the months of August–September, the Rajasthan International Folk Festival is held at the Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur, in October, the five-day-long, world-famous Pushkar cattle festival is held during November and the Bhil Gavari (Mehta 2024) dance-drama goes on for 40 days (https://www.holidify.com/pages/festivals-of-rajasthan-1338.html, accessed 14 April 2024). A festival like Gangaur, in which Shiva, Parvati, and Ganesh are worship,ed, is celebrated with great enthusiasm across Rajasthan, in Mewar, Marwar and Hadot. Attended by over 200,000 people every year, Pushkar livestock and cultural festival in the Ajmer district is also a pilgrimage to

the Pushkar lake for a holy dip. The festival includes all kinds of cultural and sports events such as dance, drama, tug of war between teams of men and women; it also interestingly has the "longest mustache" competition. Measured from Udaipur as the center, Rajsamand, Dungarpur, and Chittor are not very far, being 62, 106, and 110 kilometers from Udaipur respectively. Jalour is 207 kilometers, Jodhpur 245, Nagore 388, and Jaisalmer 500 kilometers from Udaipur. The small set of data from these cities, some of them at substantial distance from Udaipur, once again shows the fluidity and osmosis of linguistic forms. Consider the following sentences from these parts of Rajasthan:

mu: baja:r ja:i: rayu: hũ:. (Udaipur)
mu: baja:r ja:i: ro hũ:. (Dungarpur)
mæ̃ baja:r ja: rayu: hũ:. (Rajsamand)
mæ̃ baja:r ja:ũ hũ:. (Nagaur)
mæ̃ baja:r ja: rayo hũ:. (Jodhpur)
hũ: baja:r ja: rayo hũ:. (Jaisalmer)
mu: baja:r ja: rayu: hũ:. (Chittorgarh)
mu: baja:r ja:u hũ:. (Jalour)

mæ̃ baza:r ja: raha: hũ: (Hindi)
I market go PROG AUX
"I am going to the market."

As in the case of Himachal Pradesh, there are many variants within each region. The first person, masculine, singular pronoun form is at once strikingly similar and marginally different in all the varieties so that the continuity of mutual comprehensibility is not under any threat: *mu:/ mæ̃/ hũ:*. The lexical item "market," *baja:r*, is more extensively shared, as in the case of Himachal Pradesh. The present tense marking auxiliary, which is absent in Himachal, is there in *hũ:* "am" in all the varieties of Rajasthan; it agrees with the subject in person and number. For first person singular feminine, it will remain the same. All varieties use *ja:* as the main verb for "to go." Except for Jalour, where we get only *ja:u* "going," and Nagaur, where we get *ja:ũ*, marking the progressive aspect in the main verb, all the other varieties use some form of *ra* to mark the progressive, along with some changes in the main verb: *ja:i: rayu:/ ja:i: ro/ ja: rayu:/ ja: rayo/ ja: rayu:*. The change in the gender of the pronoun

will call for a change in the main verb also in the case of the first person, i.e., *rayu:/ ri:* variation for the progressive aspect.

1. mu: baja:r ja:i: rayu: hũ:.
2. mu: baja:r ja:i: ri: hũ:.

**Table 2.** Mewari (Udaipur) sentences (Present tense, PNG)

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|---|---|---|
| Ist (masc) | mu: baja:r ja:i: rayu hũ: | ma: baja:r ja:i: raya: hã: |
| Ist (fem) | mu: baja:r ja:i: ri: hũ: | ma baja:r ja:i: raya: hã: |
| IInd (masc) | tha: baja:r ja:i: raya: ho | tha: baja:r ja:i: raya: ho |
| IInd (fem) | thu: baja:r ja:i: ri: hæ | tha: baja:r ja:i: ri: hæ |
| IInd (hon) | thã: baja:r ja:i: raya: ho | thã: baja:r ja:i: raya: ho |
| IInd (non-hon) | thu: baja:r ja:i: riyo hæ | thu: baja:r ja:i: ri: hæ |
| IIIrd (masc) | vo baja:r ja:i: riyo hæ | ve baja:r ja:i: raya: hæ |
| IIIrd (fem) | va: baja:r ja:i: ri: hæ | ve baja:r ja:i: ri: hæ |

The tense marking auxiliary varies between *hũ:/ hã:/ ho/ hɔ*. Notice that *baja:r ja:i:* is common to all sentences. This is so reminiscent of Himachal *baja:r chali:*. Notice that in Mandyali one could have a *chal/ ja:* variation; nuanced difference between their use is again a matter of further research. Aspect marker in Mewari of Udaipur varies between *rayu/ raya:/ riyo/ ri:*; we noticed the variation between *ra:/ ri:/ re* in Mandyali of Himachal. Udaipur is about one thousand kilometers away from Mandi. The diachronic and synchronic relationships are not always easy to establish, but the similarities are obviously striking, not just intra-state but inter-state.

## Conclusion

Linguistic ecology of human social groups is defined by Multilinguality as conceptualized above. Even when there are major natural closures such as the presence of large water bodies like the various seas across our planet, those who hit strange lands for trade or adventure find means of sustaining communication through processes of pidginization and creolization (Le Page 1968; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Todd 1990, 2001), both of which are classic examples of Multilinguality and fluidity in action. Yet these processes are always at work, whatever the communication situation be.

They become less noticeable when the processes of codification and standardization become so powerful that these linguistic processes are pushed under the rug. While this may happen for a while in the dominating Multilinguality, acts of speech in the dominated Multilinguality never cease to pidginize and creolize intensively. As Todd (2001, 524) quoting French (1953, 59) points out, in 1953, the pidgin English of Papua New Guinea was called "crude, and incredibly tortuous." The same language is now called Tok Pisin and "it is the chosen language of debate in Port Moresby's parliament; it is employed for news and entertainment on the media; it is officially recognized in the constitution as one of the country's national languages; it is used in official speeches by visiting dignitaries; and it is spoken as a mother tongue by over 20,000 Papua New Guineans and as lingua franca by an estimated 1.5 million people." Tok Pisin has graduated to be a part of the dominating Multilinguality of Papua New Guinea and along with English and Hiri Motu is its official language. Irrespective of whether it is Haitian, French, Caribbean, Jamaican, or Hawaiian creole, they show features that take place all the time in human communication in routine encounters or specific sociocultural gatherings as described above in the case of Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. A situation like the "blackbirding" of the 19th-century slavery period in which slaves from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds were pushed into the same plantations may not obtain today, but the processes of pidginization and creolization continue as migrations back and forth from rural areas to urban metropolis and cities and from there to foreign lands continue. Abbi (2022) captures this fluidity in her own way: "Enduring contact between the speakers of different language groups results in robust bilingualism and generation of new languages such as Halbi in Chhattisgarh, Sadari in Jharkhand, Chakesang [derived from the conglomeration of Kheza, Chokri, and Sangtam], Tenyidie, or the language of Zeliangrong [a group of three to four tribes] in the Northeast, and varieties of contact Hindi (Abbi 2021) across cosmopolitan cities, Northeast, Andaman, and Nicobar" (Abbi 2022, 123).

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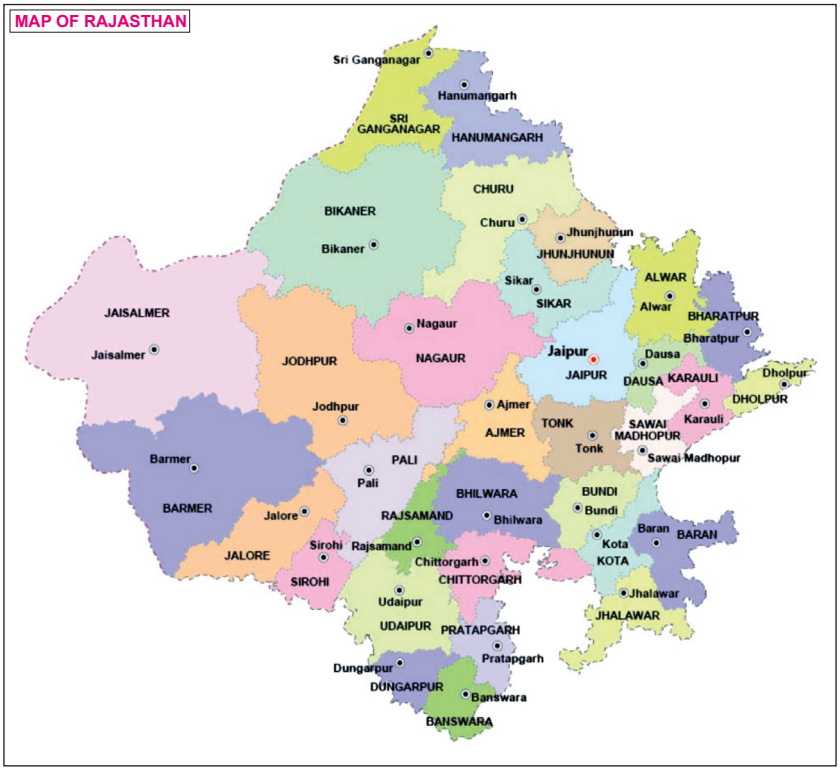
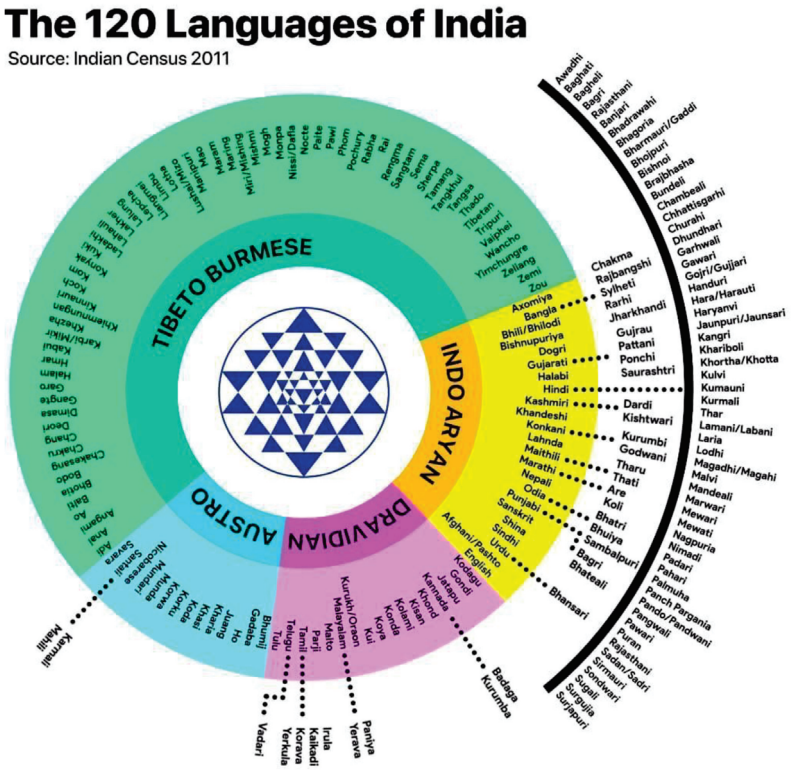
# Appendix I

**Himachal Pradesh**

https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/himachalpradesh/


MAP OF RAJASTHAN
Sri Ganganagar
Hanumangarh
SRI GANGANAGAR
HANUMANGARH
CHURU
BIKANER
Churu
Bikaner
Jhunjhunun
JHUNJHUNUN
Sikar
SIKAR
ALWAR
Alwar
BHARATPUR
Bharatpur
JAISALMER
Jaisalmer
Nagaur
NAGAUR
JODHPUR
Jodhpur
Jaipur
JAIPUR
Dausa
DAUSA
KARAULI
Dholpur
DHOLPUR
Karauli
Ajmer
AJMER
TONK
Tonk
SAWAI MADHOPUR
Sawai Madhopur
Barmer
BARMER
PALI
Pali
BHILWARA
Bhilwara
BUNDI
Bundi
Jalore
JALORE
RAJSAMAND
Rajsamand
Sirohi
SIROHI
Chittorgarh
CHITTORGARH
Kota
KOTA
Baran
BARAN
Udaipur
UDAIPUR
Jhalawar
JHALAWAR
PRATAPGARH
Pratapgarh
Dungarpur
DUNGARPUR
Banswara
BANSWARA

## Appendix II


The 120 Languages of India
Source: Indian Census 2011
TIBETO BURMESE
INDO ARYAN
DRAVIDIAN
AUSTRO
Awadhi
Baghati
Baghelī
Bairi
Rajasthani
Banjari
Bhadrawahi
Bhagoria
Bharmauri/Gaddi
Bhojpuri
Bishnoi
Brajbhasha
Bundeli
Chambeali
Chhattisgarhi
Churahi
Dhundhari
Garhwali
Gawari
Gojri/Gujjari
Handuri
Hara/Harauti
Haryanvi
Jaunpuri/Jaunsari
Kangri
Khariboli
Khortha/Khotta
Kulvi
Kumauni
Kurmali
Thar
Lamani/Labani
Laria
Lodhi
Magadhi/Magahi
Malvi
Mandeali
Marwari
Mewari
Mewati
Nagpuria
Nimadi
Padari
Pahari
Pasmuha
Panch Pargania
Pendlē/Pendwani
Pangwali
Pawari
Puran
Rajasthani
Sadari/Sadri
Sirmauri
Sondwari
Surgujia
Surjapuri
Chakma
Rajbangshi
Sylheti
Rarhi
Jharkhandi
Axomiya
Bangla
Bhili/Bhilodi
Bishnupuriya
Dogri
Gujarati
Halabi
Hindi
Kashmiri
Khandeshi
Konkani
Lahnda
Maithili
Marathi
Nepali
Odia
Punjabi
Sanskrit
Shina
Sindhi
Urdu
Gujrau
Pattani
Ponchi
Saurashtri
Dardi
Kishtwari
Kurumbi
Godwani
Tharu
Thati
Are
Koli
Bhatri
Bhuiya
Sambalpuri
Bagri
Bhateali
Afghani/Pashto
English
Kodagu
Gondi
Jatapu
Kannada
Khond
Kolami
Konda
Kuvi
Kurukh/Oraon
Malayalam
Malto
Parji
Tamil
Telugu
Tulu
Bhumij
Gadaba
Ho
Juang
Kharia
Khasi
Korku
Korwa
Mundari
Mundā
Nicobarese
Santali
Savara
Sora
Vaddari
Irula
Kaikadi
Koraga
Yerkula
Paniya
Yerava
Badaga
Kurumba
Bhansari
Kemeli
Mahili
Adi
Ao
Angami
Bodo
Bhutia
Chakesang
Chang
Deori
Dimasa
Ganga
Garo
Halam
Hmar
Kabui
Karbi/Mikir
Khezha
Khiamniungan
Kinnauri
Koch
Kom
Konyak
Kuki
Ladakhi
Lahauli
Lalung
Lepcha
Liangmai
Limbu
Lotha/Mao
Maring
Meitei
Mishing
Mizo/Lushai
Mogh
Monpa
Nisi/Dafla
Nocte
Paite
Pawi
Phom
Pochury
Rabha
Tai
Rengma
Sangtam
Sema
Sherpa
Tamang
Tangkhul
Tangsa
Thado
Tibetan
Tripuri
Vaiphei
Wancho
Yimchungre
Zeliang
Zemi
Zou

# Part III
## Culture, History, and Social Meaning

# *Why Write about Books that One Has Not Read Completely or Not Read in the Original? The Case of Beschi's 1742/43 Tamil-Latin Dictionary*

Jean-Luc Chevillard

## 1. Dealing with non-English primary sources concerning Tamil

The present article will present some primary evidence gathered through the exploration of two witnesses of a text that is rarely examined nowadays, mainly for two reasons/obstacles: (1) the first one, which has now been overcome, in principle, thanks to the ubiquity of the internet and to the existence of Archive.org, being the very small number of copies available, and (2) the second one being the fact that not many people can read Latin in the modern world, even when it would be useful to them for a better mastery of their field of study.

Before however examining that text, I shall first evoke other texts, on which researchers have worked in the last 60 years, trying to draw a few lessons from the way their efforts have been deployed and received. All these texts belong to a corpus which could be called "Grammatici Tamulici,"[1] and it is desirable that they be made available to modern researchers, in a suitable manner to be partly discussed here, and that the position and historical role of those texts in the development of Tamil studies, as an international

[1] See Chevillard 2017.

field, be clarified. More specifically, one can mention for instance, although there are also other important texts, the following three texts, all in Portuguese:

1. Proença's 1679 *Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significaçam Portugueza* (VTCSP), published as a facsimile by Thani Nayagam in 1966.
2. Henrique Henriques (HH)'s *Arte*, concerning which important publications appeared thanks to Xavier Thani Nayagam (1954), Hans J. Vermeer (1982), and the team consisting of Jeanne Hein and V.S. Rajam (2013), who were respectively the discoverer, the editor, and the translators of that text, and to whom one should add E. Annamalai, who gave the necessary impulsion for the translation to see the light of day, as will be seen in (1).
3. Baltasar da Costa's *Arte Tamulica*, published in 2022 by Cristina Muru.

Elaborating on my terse description of item (2) in this list, which is a 16th-century draft Tamil grammar, I shall clarify that its manuscript was identified in Lisboa by Thani Nayagam in 1954, that a critical edition of the Portuguese-Tamil text was published in 1982 by Hans J. Vermeer, and that an English translation appeared in 2013 in the Harvard Oriental Series. Inside that 2013 publication, the second introduction, dated 2011, by Norvin Hein, which is found on pages iii–vii, contains a reported statement of evaluation, which has been reproduced below in (1). The content of that evaluation, by Professor E. Annamalai, then a visiting professor at Yale, comes after a narration that explains how the unpublished English translation of HH's grammar, which had been a manuscript since 1979, could have remained an unpublished manuscript in the library of Yale Divinity School, because the primary author of the translation, Jeanne Hein, who is also the author of the first introduction, dated 1978–1979, had been struck by Alzheimer disease:

> **(1)** Before turning the volume over, however, I asked Professor Annamalai, then a visiting professor at Yale, if he would kindly examine the volume of Henriques materials. He came, and leafed through the many pages with care, and

> made a quiet report. It was momentous. The publication of the book at the present time would be quite possible. After a quarter of a century, it was clear that Vermeer's book had not fulfilled its purpose. Its failure did not lie in anything that Vermeer did, but in what he did not do. He had not faced the difficult job of translating the grammar. He had presented it in its original and left it to his readers to read it for themselves. What readers had been able to make of it was not much. The original grammar was not a book in which anyone could browse. The only persons who could possibly use the grammar were those remarkable persons, hardly existent in East or West, who could read both old Tamil and old Portuguese. (Norvin Hein, second introduction dated 2011, pp. vi–vii, in HOS-76, 2013)

Thanks to the positive evaluation given by E. Annamalai and reproduced in (1), a new impulsion was given to the stalled project, which was described in the first introduction, dated 1978–1979, by Jeanne Hein. This is why the second introduction, dated 2011, by Norvin Hein, is followed by a third introduction, dated 2012, by V.S. Rajam, whose energy allowed her to complete single-handedly, what had earlier been a joint task. It is of course not my purpose here to examine whether the 2013 English translation of HH's grammar by Hein and Rajam, in combination with the 1982 edition of the same text by Vermeer, has now finally allowed HH's grammar to reach an elusive audience of new readers. Trying to draw lessons from these episodes and from E. Annamalai's evaluation reproduced in (1), my task here will be, from the next section onward, to examine another text, which is a dictionary and not a grammar, and to try to imagine how this text could be made to reach an audience, or rather to reconnect with an audience, because there is no doubt that this text once was read, as shall become clear when we examine the textual evidence and the position of this text and its author in what one can call the graph of scholarship.[2]

[2] See Chevillard (2019) for an earlier attempt at defining a scholarship graph, called UNIVERSUM.

## 2. Two witnesses of Beschi's 1742 (or 1743)[3] Tamil-Latin dictionary

The present section is devoted to a preliminary description of what seems to be two witnesses[4] of the same text, although there are significant differences between them. The first witness is the initial section of a book printed in 1882 in Trichinopoly. That book, donated along with many others by the late François Gros to the University of Toronto,[5] has been digitized, and is now available on archive.org.[6] Its title appears on the fifth page of that PDF as "*Vulgaris Tamulicae Linguae Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*," and I shall refer to it as B-1882. A first rough description of its content is given inside the third large column of Table 1 (below). The second witness, which I shall refer to as B-1778, is a MS copy made in 1778 and preserved in Copenhagen. I have had access to it through a set of 363 digital photographs, with a few gaps and a few duplicates, which were kindly sent to me in April 2014 by Professor P. S. Ramanujam.[7] He had photographed the AsK 1450b Manuscript in the Danish National Archive (Rigsarkivet) while doing research for his 2021 book on Tranquebar.[8] On the basis of those photographs, it appears that the MS is a notebook, containing two subsets of numbered pages. The first group contains 8 pages, numbered by means of roman numerals, up to "VIII." The second group contains 346 pages but makes only a sporadic use of numbering, by means of Arabic numerals. An interesting feature is that all the 34 pages which are multiples of 10 are numbered, although most of the other pages are unnumbered, with a few exceptions, such as the last page, which is numbered "348" but should have been numbered "346." As for the date of the MS, we find at the bottom of the (unnumbered) logical page 337, an

[3] Gregory James (2000, 746–747) gives in his bibliography the date of 1742 for the *Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*, but Julien Vinson (1900, 26) argues that the final redaction of the dictionary can be dated to 1743.

[4] Other witnesses exist, as testified for instance by Gregory James's 1991 and 2000 books on Tamil lexicography but I have not yet had the possibility to examine them myself.

[5] See Chevillard (2024).

[6] https://archive.org/details/dictionariumtamu00pcon.

[7] Technical University of Denmark, emeritus.

[8] See Ramanujam (2021).

indication that the copy was completed on 22 July 1778. This is the page where the main list of entries ends, and we are informed about the total number of entries, said to be ca. 9,000 ("ad novem millia"), inside a group of lines where we read:

**(2a)** FINIS // Primae Partis // In qua ad novem millia Tamulica // Vocabula latine explicantur // Finitum d: 22 Julii // 1778 (Copenhagen, Det danske Rigsarkiv, Archives of the Asiatic Company. no 1450c: Tamil-Latin dictionary, [logical] page 337)

**(2b)** End of the first part, in which *circa* nine thousand Tamil words are explained by means of Latin. Finished copying on 22nd July 1778 (My translation)

This is however not the end of the MS, because a short supplementary list is found after the main list, taking up eight pages until we reach the final page. Table 1, which follows, compares the organizations of B-1778 and B-1882, and the second column will be used here for pointing out globally what is common to both witnesses, namely Component α (Preface), Component β (Charts and abbreviations), Component γ (Dictionary entries), and Component δ (appendix), even though the order may differ, as is seen for α and β. To this can be added that the first column allows finer references to smaller individual components.

| Rows | Content that is common to both witnesses is referred to by means of the Greek letters α, β, γ and δ | | B-1778 (8+346 pages) | B-1882 (906 pages including 252 pages without counterpart inside B-1778) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | Title page |
| 2 | β | | | Alphabetical charts |
| 3 | | | | Abbreviations list |
| 4 | α | Preface | pp. I to VI | pp. 1-16 |
| 5 | β | | Alphabetical charts (p. VII) | |
| 6 | | | Abbreviations list (p. VIII) | |
| 7 | γ | Entries starting with vowels | pp. 1–79 (971 entries) | pp. 1–150 (not yet counted) |
| 8 | | Entries starting with consonants | pp. 80–337 (7,575 entries) | pp. 151–590 (not yet counted) |
| 9 | $\gamma^1$ | | | Errata (1 page) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | $\gamma^2$ | (see section 3) | | Addenda (pp. i–vii) |
| 11 | $\underline{\delta}$ | Appendix: Catalogue of items that are easily confusable by learners | pp. 339 to 346 | pp. i–xviii |
| 12 | | | | Supplementum (pp. 1–247) |
| 13 | | | | Errata, vel omissa (pp. i–v) |

**Table 1.** Comparing the content of B-1778 and B-1882 (state of the art).

As is seen on this chart, the 8+346 pages of B-1778 correspond to only a part of what is found inside B-1882, mostly because of the presence inside B-1882 of a large *Supplementum*, although there are also differences inside the content which is common to both witnesses. We shall examine those differences more in detail in the following sections.

### 3. Comparing extracts from the main list of entries in B-1778 and B-1882, and imagining their common prototype

We have seen inside the previous section, in (2a), that the number of items in the B-1778 main list of entries is said to be *ad novem millia* "approximately nine thousand." I have performed so far a precise count only for the entries of B-1882, obtaining as a result the total count of 8,546, which obtains by adding the 971 entries starting with a vowel and the 7,575 entries starting with a consonant (see Table 1, row 7 and row 8). This count was obtained as a by-product of the preparation of a preliminary table of contents, in which figured for each of the two columns in each page of the γ component of B-1882 the headword of its first entry and the number of entries that it contains, in order to be able to easily verify which Tamil words are found in B-1882. A similar table, indicating first entries, is under preparation for B-1778 but does not yet contain the entries' information count, because it is more complex to deal with a set of photographs of unnumbered handwritten pages than to deal with the scan of a printed book in which pages are

regularly numbered, and also because I have discovered that my set of photographs contains two gaps.[9]

As appears in Table 1, there are several differences between B-1778 and B-1882. Some of those differences are unimportant, such as the position of component β (i.e., alphabetical charts and list of abbreviations), which precedes component α (i.e., the preface) in B-1778 (see rows 2 and 3 in Table 1) but follows it in B-1882 (see rows 5 and 6). Other differences are more significant, such as the one connected with the presence inside B-1882 of the *Addenda*, a component mentioned on row 10 of Table 1. That component, which takes up seven pages, numbered from i to vii, and printed on two columns per page, contains 54 entries in the Tamil alphabetical order. Among those 54 items, the seventh item, which is on the second page of the *Addenda* section, is sufficiently short to serve here as a concise illustration, and will now be reproduced in (3b), immediately preceded by item (3a), which is itself part of the main list of 8,546 entries (see table 1, row 7) of B-1882

**(3a)** ஓலிசை. V. in fine. "see final section." (B-1882, component γ, p. 144)

**(3b)** ஓலிசை. In oris maritimis *munus*, quod pater, fratres aliique proximiores // sponsae consanguinei 4° nuptiarum die dant sponso. "In the maritime shore area, gift (*munus*) which the father, brothers and other close blood relatives of the bride (*sponsa*) give to the bridegroom (*sponsus*) on the fourth day of the marriage" (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. ii).

Since (3a) and (3b) are found in the same book, printed in 1882, where (3a) precedes (3b), it should be clear to the reader that entry (3a) contains a reference to entry (3b). We shall now move to the B-1778 MS and reproduce an item that is part of its main list of entries (component γ).

**(3c)** ஓ லி சை. In oris maritimis munus, quod pater, fratres aliique proximiores // ſponſae consanguinei quarto nuptiarum die dant ſponſo. (B-1778, component γ, (logical) page 75, Copenhagen MS, same translation as for [3b]).

[9] I currently do not have photographs for (logical) pages 48, 49, 116, and 117.

If we now try to imagine what the original shape of Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary was, on the basis of those two witnesses, we can for instance imagine that the original dictionary, possibly compiled in 1742 or 1743, did not contain the entry ஒலிசை, but that a supplementary list was progressively compiled, either by Beschi, or by those who copied his dictionary after his death. On that basis, it may have happened

- that those who made the 1772 copy that is preserved in Copenhagen decided to incorporate the supplementary entries inside the main text, as if they had always been there,
- that the editors of the text that was printed in 1882 had access to an early MS that they were reproducing in a faithful philological manner, limiting themselves to introducing a pointer to the additional entry in the main body in order to facilitate the word search for the readers.

We shall now examine, in (4a), (4b), and (4c), a more complex example, where what was put in the supplementary list was not an additional word but an additional meaning for a word already present, if the genesis scenario just sketched conforms to what happened.

**(4a)** குடங்கை. *Brachium inflexum* veluti ad amplexum: item *pars interior* brachii correspondens cubito. V. in fine. [see (4c) for a translation] (B-1882, component γ, p. 204)

**(4b)** குடங்கை. Item quantum v.g. paleæ, lignorum &c., sub uno brachio auferri potest. Tandem quidam ornatus in curru triumphali, et in eorum architectura. [see (4c) for a translation] (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. iii)

**(4c)** குடங்கை. Brachium inflexum veluti ad amplexus. It. pars interior brachii correspondens cubito. It. Quantum paleae v.g. lignorum etc. ſub uno brachii auferri potest. Tandem quidam ornatus in curru triumphali et in eorum architectura. "arm which is inflected, as if for embracing. ITEM interior part of the arm, which has the length of a cubit. ITEM as much straw or wood as one can carry under one arm. ITEM a certain ornament that is seen in triumph

> chariots and in architecture." [10] (B-1778, component γ, [logical] page 108, Copenhagen MS)

Before moving to the following section, I shall first state that I have verified that all the 54 items that are seen in the seven pages of the *Addenda* do have a counterpart in the **γ** component of B-1882, and that 46 of those counterparts contain an explicit reference, which is similar to the "V. in fine. 'see final section'" seen in (3a) and (4a), although the wording may differ. For the remaining eight, there is no explicit link. This is the case for instance for the word *வியாழம்*, as seen below in (5a), (5b), and (5c).

**(5a)** *வியாழம*, *planeta Jupiter*. Hinc *வியாழக்கிழமை*, *dies Jovis*. [see 5c for a translation] (B-1882, component γ, p. 567)

**(5b)** *வியாழம*: cum autem Jupiter 12 fere annos in suo cursu insumat, *ஒருவியாழ வட்டம்* sunt 12 anni; et sic venit in publicis tabellis. [see (5c) for a translation] (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. vii)

**(5c)** *வியாழம*, Planeta Jupiter. Hinc *வியாழக்கிழமை*, Dies Jovis. Cum autem Jupiter 12 fere annos in ſuo curſu inſumat, *ஒருவியாழ வட்டம்* ſunt 12 anni. Et ſic venit in publicis tabellis. "*வியாழம*, the planet Jupiter. Thence *வியாழக்கிழமை*, Thursday ['day of Jupiter']. Since moreover Jupiter takes roughly twelve years for completing its revolution, [the expression] *ஒருவியாழ வட்டம்* 'one Jupiter circle' is/means 12 years. And it appears in this manner in public charts."[11] (B-1778, component γ, [logical] page 324, Copenhagen MS)

[10] My translation is adapted from the one seen in the corresponding entry found BnF indien 215, which is a French version of Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary. In the online version, the entry is on view 82 (which combines f79v and f80r in the physical MS), and is as follows: *குடங்கை* 1$^{er}$ bras courbé comme pour embrasser. 2$^{e}$ partie intérieure du bras, répondant à une coudée. 3$^{e}$ autant de paille, bois etc. qu'on peut emporter sous le bras. 4$^{e}$ certains ornements d'architecture et/ou d'un char de triomphe.

[11] My translation is adapted from the one seen in the corresponding entry found in BnF indien 215 (see previous footnote). In the online version, the entry is on view 197 (which combines fol. 194v and fol. 195r in the physical MS), and is as follows: "*வியாழம்* Jupiter, planette; *வியாழக்கிழமை* jeudi: *ஒருவியாழ வட்டம்*, espace de douze ans (temps que dure la révolution de Jupiter)."

## 4. Replacing B-1778 and B-1882 in their larger historical context

Although the group of three entries provided at the end of the previous section might appear a little repetitive, one of my criteria for choosing them, besides the fact that they are short and illustrate the absence of cross-reference between (5a) and (5b), was the fact these entries also allow us to see the gradual progress that westerners were making in acquiring local knowledge. This can also be shown by contrasting these three entries with the following two entries, which are taken from the 1679 VTCSP (*Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significaçam Portugueza*), compiled in the 17th century by Antam de Proença.

**(6a)** வி யா ல ம. O planeta Jupiter. "The planet Jupiter" (VTCSP, 436_L_o)

**(6b)** வி யா ள க கி ள மை. Quintafeira. "Thursday" (VTCSP, 436_L_p)

The "progress" that I am referring to can be seen from two points of view:

- One concerns the field of scientific knowledge, in the field of astronomy, because the terminology explained in (5b) and in (5c), namely ஒருவியாழ வட்டம், is not visible in the VTCSP, where that item is not found.
- Another one concerns the dimension of standardization. This is first seen in (6a), where there is an obvious "mistake," in the use of wrong type of l, namely ல (l). This is also seen in (6b), where the regional spelling வியாளக்கிளமை (*viyāḷakkiḷamai*), with two occurrences of ள (ḷ), instead of the orthodox வியாழக்கிழமை (*viyāḻakkiḻamai*), seen in (5a) and (5c), with two occurrences of ழ (ḻ), betrays an insufficient command of what the traditional poets considered important.

Regarding that second point, it will not be out of place to allude here to some remarks made by Beschi in his dictionary, concerning the absence of distinction between the pronunciations of ழ and ள in Madurai. These remarks are found on pp. 586–587 in B-1882 and on logical page 335 inside B-1778. Beschi starts by mentioning one of the names given to ழ, in order to disambiguate it from the letter ள. That name is மகரழகரம் and alludes to the visual

resemblance between the shapes of ழ and ம. The object referred to being thus firmly grounded in the realm of visual perception, Beschi then ventures in an exposition of the severe inconvenience that results from the fact it is not possible in Madurai in his time to pronounce differently அளிக்கிறது *dare, seu custodire* "to give, or to take care of" and அழிக்கிறது *destruere* "to destroy," and he says that there are 600 other examples of the same type (*sexcenta alia hujusmodi*).

## 5. Evoking the *α component* of Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary after encountering a Beschi citation by P. R. Subramanyam

This section will start by visiting a remark found in a 2006 article by P. R. Subramanyam, who is one of the fathers of modern Tamil lexicography, appearing as the chief editor for the dictionary team of the Cre-A dictionary (1992), in which E. Annamalai was the chairman.

**(7)** . . . we find formalization of *centamiḻ* (standard Tamil) and *koṭuntamiḻ* (colloquial or spoken Tamil) in the writings of Fr. Beschi who brought out grammars for both. Emboldened by his writings on Tamil grammar, Beschi had definitive ideas in compiling dictionaries. He was not in favor of mixing up the two systems, a conviction that led him to take exception to the mix-up:

> **"I have never been able to approve of a dictionary in which all the words of both dialects are mixed up together"** ([Beschi] as quoted by James 2000, 118)

> The criticism of Fr. Beschi was largely ignored by the missionaries of Tamil-English dictionaries who continued to draw words from both the sources . . . (Subramanian 2006, emphasis added by me [jlc])

The Beschi citation that is embedded in the P.R. Subramanian quotation is reproduced from Gregory James (2000), where we find the following larger citation:

**(8)** Between these two dialects there is a much difference as . . . between Latin and Portuguese. Although there are many

> words common to both Latin and Portuguese, no one would think of compiling a dictionary in which the words of both languages are combined. **I have never been able to approve of a dictionary in which all the words of both dialects are mixed up together**. Having already written a Dictionary and a Synonymy of the elevated dialect alone, which I explain via the ordinary, just as someone might use Portuguese to explain Latin words, the present work deals only with the ordinary dialect, and contains only those terms which are in use by everyone . . . in speech or in writing.[144] (Beschi, translated by James 2000, 118, emphasis added by me [jlc])

The text in which the sentence marked in bold in (7) and (8) is found is Beschi's preface to his *Dictionnaire Tamoul-Français*, of which there are copies both in the British Library and in the Paris BnF (Bibliothèque nationale de France). The immediate context for the Beschi quotation by Gregory James is the appraisal of the intellectual relationship between Beschi and his immediate predecessor, a French Jesuit, called "de Bourzès,"[12] who was also his superior in the hierarchy of the Jesuits. Gregory James writes that:

**(9)** Beschi's main criticism of his superior was that the latter's process of compilation was apparently undiscriminating so that the product was inappropriate for its intended users. Beschi was perturbed over de Bourzes' juxtaposition of H and L Tamil in one compilation, and he gave his rationale for separating the two in his dictionaries, using the not quite parallel analogy of Latin and Portuguese, in the preface to his *Dictionaire Tamoul-Français.* (James 2000, 117–118)

As should be clear to the reader, the statement that is at the center of our current attention is translated into English from French. The endnote reference of 144 at the end of (8) takes us to

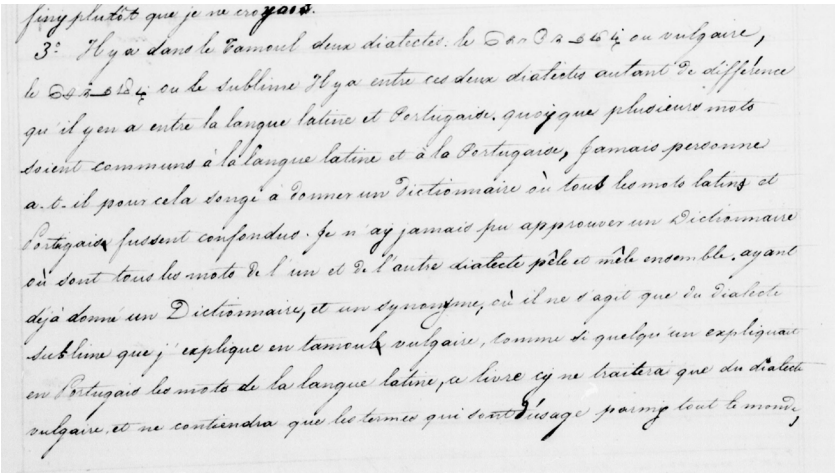
[12] As remarked in James (2000, 137n127), there is some variation in the spelling, frequently seen as Bourzes without diacritic, or as Bourges. I am following the spelling seen in Gros (1980). A detailed account of his career is in Vinson (1899).

another page inside James (2000) where we find the original citation which I shall now partly reproduce:

**(10**a) Endnote 144. Original: "[…] Je n'ai jamais pû approuver un Dictionnaire, ou sont tous les mots de l'un et de l'autre Dialecte pele mele ensemble, aÿant deja donné un Dictionaire, et un Sÿnonime, ou il ne s'agit que du dialecte sublime, que j'explique en Tamoul vulgaire, comme si quelqu'un expliquoit en portugais les mots de la langue Latine, ce livre ne traitera que du Dialecte vulgaire et ne contiendra que les termes, qui sont d'usage parmi tout le monde, soit qu'ils parlent, soit qu'ils Ecrivent." (MS Or. 1308, BL, London, f. 2) (Beschi, cited by James 2000, 139)

A modern native speaker of French will notice the particular spelling. James strives of course to be faithful to the spelling seen in the British Library (BL) manuscript. When examining the same passage in the BnF copy of that text, we see a slightly different spelling, as appears in (10b), below:

**(10b)** (Figure 1) BnF, indien 215, view 5[13]

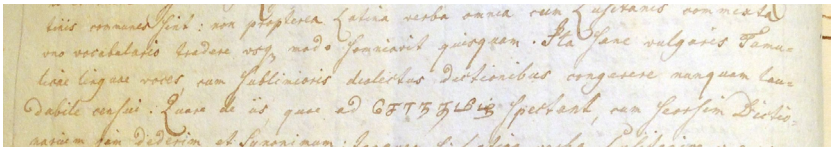


[13] https://gallica.bnf.fr/iiif/ark:/12148/btv1b100915980/f5/full/full/0/native.jpg.

After this long digression, we must now return to the general topic of this article, which has been centered on the text that I refer to as Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary (*Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*) and that has been so far introduced though a comparison between two witnesses, namely B-1778 (Copenhagen) and B-1882 (Toronto, Gros donation). The statement by Beschi, which we have seen in English translation in (7) and in the French "original" in (10a) and (10b), was most probably originally made in Latin. This seems to be Julien Vinson's opinion.[14] This is also what my intuition tells me, on the basis of a number of punctual comparisons that I have made between entries inside BnF indien 215,[15] on the one hand, and entries inside B-1778 and B-1882 on the other hand. This would mean that the preface to the 1744 Tamil-French dictionary is a French translation of the preface to the 1742 (or 1743) Tamil-Latin dictionary. If this is the case, the real (Latin) original for the French "original" that is translated into English in (7) and in (8), is the following Latin sentence, which is found identically inside the α components of B-1778 and B-1882, if we make use of the notations defined inside Table 1.

**(11a)** Ita ſane vulgaris Tamulicae linguae voces cum ſublimioris dialectus dictionibus congerere nunquam laudabile cenſui. (B-1778, Ad Lectorem, p. 2) (B-1882, Ad Lectorem)

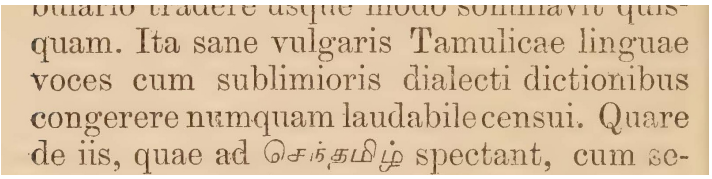
**(11b)** (Figure 2) Extract from B-1778 (α component, p. 2, extract)



[14] See also Julien Vinson's remark concerning Beschi's "dictionnaires tamoul-français et français-tamoul" in RLPC_33, p. 31, where he writes: "Il est probable que ces ouvrages n'ont pas été proprement faits par Beschi lui-même, mais composés peut-être à Pondichéry, d'après son dictionnaire tamoul-latin et son dictionnaire portugais-latin-tamoul."

[15] *Dictionnaire tamoul-français, pour explique le tamoul vulgaire, composé par le R.P. Constãt Joseph Beschi, l'an 1744.*

**(11c)** (Figure 3) Extract from B-1882 (α component, p. 4, extract)


quam. Ita sane vulgaris Tamulicae linguae
voces cum sublimioris dialecti dictionibus
congerere numquam laudabile censui. Quare
de iis, quae ad செந்தமிழ் spectant, cum se-

## 6. Which variety of Tamil does Beschi's dictionary deal with?

It was my original intention to explain here briefly, on the basis of a few well-chosen examples taken from B-1778 and B-1882, that Beschi does not strictly adhere to the principle that he has enunciated in (11a) and for which P. R. Subramanyam lauds him in (7). Nevertheless, Beschi had the explicitly stated good intention of maintaining the separation between what he calls two dialects, while making clear by his analogy with the difference between Latin and Portuguese, that he rather somehow would prefer to call the two dialects distinct languages.

Space limitation however does not permit me to prove here what I have just said concerning the incomplete success that Beschi obtains in his attempt to limit his dictionary to what he calls "Vulgaris Tamulica Lingua," the main reason being of course that he is fascinated by செந்தமிழ், as is clear at every page.[16] The only efficient way, in any case, for really proving something concerning a book that one has not read completely (respectively not read in the original) is to read it completely (respectively to master the language in which it is written) and to turn it into a database, to be made available to future generations. If one makes that effort—and I shall try—one will hopefully see the future appearance of "those remarkable persons, hardly existent in East or West" that Professor E. Annamalai was evoking in the quiet but momentous evaluation mentioned in (1).

[16] More information on Beschi's deep immersion in the world of செந்தமிழ் "Poetical Tamil" can be found in Ebeling and Trento (2018), as well as in Trento and Chevillard (2025, forthcoming).

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# *Vanishing Life Aspects among the Paniya in the Nilgiris*

Cristina Muru

## Introduction

In what follows, I discuss the sociolinguistic situation of the Paniya, one of the indigenous communities in the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu. In particular, I highlight the vanishing aspects in the life of the Paniya. The paper is organized in three sections. The first section provides a glimpse of the current language situation in India. The second section briefly introduces the indigenous people of India along with the specific area where they can be found, with a focus on the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve. Finally, the third section focuses on data collected among the Paniya of Tamil Nadu during two short field surveys I carried out some time ago.

I selected this topic for this commemorative volume for different reasons. First, during his long career, Professor Annamalai has always voiced concern for minority languages and for linguistic diversity, as well as for minority rights[1] (Annamalai 1979, 1990, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2003b, 2006, 2012). He was also one of the first scholars to speak about language documentation in India (Annamalai

[1] Another important thinker and cultural activist for the Adivasi rights is Ganesh Narayandas Devy, known for the *People's Linguistic Survey of India* (see *infra*) and for the Adivasi Academy. For further information on his activity visit his website: https://gndevy.in. Accessed February 10, 2025.

2003a, 2004). Second, the issue of indigenous (or so-called tribal) languages of India was one the first scientific topics I ever discussed with Professor Annamalai when, thanks to our common and dear friend Cre-A: Ramakrishnan, I first came into contact with him.[2] Third, the data presented here have sat on my computer for far too long and they deserve to be published. Indeed, the Paniya who allowed me to observe and interview them, spent time with me, and shared pieces of their identity and culture with me deserve to be heard publicly, at least within the scientific community.

**The status of languages in India: A brief account**

India is the world's largest federal republic. Today, it is organized into 28 states and 8 territories. It covers an area of 4,400,000 km² with a population of 1,380,004,000 (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2024; cf. Census of India 2011, which reports 1,210,854,977). It is a multilingual country with languages that belong to language families such as Indo-European (140 languages), Dravidian (84), Austro-Asiatic (32), Sino-Tibetan (148), and Kra-Dai (5). In addition, it has fourteen Andamanese languages, two isolates, one pidgin language, four creoles, two sign languages, and one "mixed" language (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2024). Indeed, as Annamalai (2001, 35) wrote, "Indian multilingualism is huge in size with over 1,600 mother tongues reducible to about 200 languages for a population of about 940 million people and with the population of many of the linguistic minorities larger than many European countries." According to Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2024), India currently counts 424 languages, of which 44 are defined as institutional, 248 as stable, 132 as endangered, and 11 as extinct (cf. Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2019, who provide different numbers). According to Annamalai (2006, 613), this multilingualism can be considered pyramid-like because "there are more languages used in the private domains than in the public domains. There are more languages used in the lower levels in public domains than in higher domains."[3]

[2] I prefer to use the term *indigenous* to *tribe*, as used in the Constitution. For a discussion on "tribe," see Abbi 1996; Annamalai 1996; Singh 1994, 1996.

[3] As Annamalai (2006, 631) states, this pyramid-like structure is functional. It is stratified according to the history of the languages, including their demographic strength and political power. This leads to language conflicts ranging from claiming recognition

However, with approximately 200 languages, Indian multilingualism is not exclusively demographic. Rather, it is functional, given that dozens of languages are used in public domains such as public administration, education, and the judiciary.[4]

Despite this multilingualism, the language policy that prevailed after Indian independence was a Western idea of monolingualism (evident in Article 351 of the Indian Constitution). Hindi was chosen as the official language of the Union Government, and was to replace English, the co-official language in any domain, within 15 years. However, at that time, the states and territories, which had been further subdivided into districts, also adopted a proper regional official language in addition to the two official languages of the Union (Hindi and English). Annamalai (2010) describes in great detail the circumstances that led to the current linguistic situation after independence, including a particular focus on the Dravidian and Tamil situations (see Annamalai 2011, 2012, 2014). What emerges from his reflections also relates to the disparity among Indian languages due to their (un)recognized status as well as the difficulties that exist in counting languages. Regarding the first issue, the recognition status and distribution of languages in India is regulated by Articles 343–351 of the Indian Constitution, which entered into force in 1950. Based on these articles, languages in India may be divided into two main classes: scheduled languages and non-scheduled languages, of which the latter are not officially recognized. The scheduled languages include the 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution[5] and the Tribal Scheduled Languages[6] are defined in the Fifth Schedule

for the public function and legal status of a language, to claiming territory to bring the speakers of a language under a political jurisdiction (see also Annamalai 1979).

[4] The multilingualism also includes English, which has moved from being the symbol of colonial power and exploitation to the symbol of economic and technological power for the advancement of India and its citizens—the language of social redemption. This change has created discrepancies between the language policy of the government and the language preference of individuals. Indeed, there is a growing market demand for schools in the private sector to teach subjects in English or for English to be taught in public schools. See also Annamalai 1990, 1993, 1999.

[5] These languages have a literary tradition. Due to the state division that follows linguistic boundaries, almost automatically, these languages correspond to the official regional languages.

[6] These are the mother tongues of communities identified as tribal by the Constitution itself. The term "Scheduled Tribes" is defined in Article 366,

of the Constitution under Article 244 (paragraph 1).[7] However, the languages listed in the Constitution account only for the 96.2% of the total population; the remaining do not have any governmental status. Furthermore, the languages in the categories listed in the Constitution are not mutually exclusive and can intersect. Hence, for example: a scheduled language may not be an official language of a state—for example, Sanskrit, Nepali, Maithili, and Santali; an official language may not be a scheduled language but may be a tribal language (i.e., Mizo and Khasi); two tribal languages (Bodo and Santali) and a mother tongue included under Hindi (Maithili) are also scheduled languages.

Regarding the criteria for counting languages, the Census of India differentiates between languages and mother tongues by adopting extra-linguistic criteria.[8] It counts 270 languages (123 can be traced back to one of the 22 scheduled languages, and 147 are included among the non-scheduled languages) and includes all languages with fewer than 10,000 speakers under the label "total of other languages," which corresponds to 0.15% of the total population (1,875,542 speakers representing approximately 1,716 languages). This way of counting languages has resulted in different counts over time in each Census (e.g., in 1961 there were 193 languages, while in 1981 there were 109 languages).[9] Finally, the

paragraph 25 of the Constitution. "The criteria followed for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribes are: indications of primitive traits; distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness." (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2023, 50–51).

[7] Since it came into force, the Indian Constitution has been amended several times. To date, there are 100 amendments, with the latest passed in 2015. Some of these amendments have supplemented the list of scheduled languages, recognizing the status of some languages such as Sindhi, Manipuri, Nepali, Bodo, Dogri, Santali, and Maithili.

[8] Annamalai (2006) clearly explains the issues behind the counting of languages in India. Mother tongue refers to the language reported by the speaker at the time of data collection to the question of mother tongue. Furthermore, the Census of India only lists the language and the number of speakers for varieties with more than 10,000 speakers. For this reason, the inventory organized according to linguistic criteria rationalizes that the 1,369 mother tongues can be grouped into 270 languages. For a detailed description of the Census of India criteria of rationalization, see Annamalai 2001, 2006.

[9] Even compared with the counts of linguists, the counting differs. For example, the 1991 Census of India listed 17 Dravidian languages, whereas linguists recognized 23 (Krishnamurti 2003).

*People's Linguistic Survey of India* (PLSI) created by Ganesh N. Devy, along with the Adivasi Academy, does not differentiate between language and mother tongue. It counts languages based on the declaration of speakers belonging to different ethnic communities (not individuals!), and thus reports different numbers.

This discussion suggests two things. On the one hand, language is not the only criterion for ethnic identification and ethnically diverse communities have the same mother tongue. On the other hand, there has been a language shift from the mother tongue of the minority community to the language of the majority community. For example, 58% of speakers in tribal communities have a non-tribal mother tongue.[10] Therefore, the majority–minority dichotomy of languages, which describes the situation in Europe, is not suitable for India. Indeed, languages such as English can be powerful, even though they are the minority, or they can be powerless even though they are the majority, like Kashmiri compared with Urdu in Kashmir. There are also majority and powerful languages like Hindi, and minority and powerless languages such as the tribal ones, both scheduled and non-scheduled. The scheduled languages are spoken by 104,500,000 people, and only constitute 8.6% of the country's total population (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2023, 36). The non-scheduled languages, represented by the indigenous people, are not officially recognized.

## Indigenous people of India: Placement and recognition

The largest concentration of indigenous people is in seven states of Northeast India, the so-called "central tribal belt" that stretches from Rajasthan to West Bengal. Another major area of indigenous people is found in South India, in the so-called Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR). "One important characteristic of the tribal communities in India is their heterogeneity. . . . There are 613 tribal communities. . . . They have 304 tribal mother tongues which are re-

[10] Although representative pictures of the language shift of an entire tribal community are not available, individual changes suggest the possible existence of a community-wide trend, and the abandonment of minority languages in favor of majority languages is increasing, particularly for indigenous communities that have been integrated into the global market controlled by majority communities. See Byer 2005; Ishtiaq 1989, 1999; Ramamoorthy 2009.

duced to 101 distinct identifiable languages, which belongs to four language families" (Annamalai 2001, 57; cf. Srivastava 2015, 22).

The indigenous people who speak the tribal languages are usually referred to as *Adivasis*, especially in Central India. This term originated from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists and has gained immense popularity in the last few decades to identify scheduled tribes. This ethnonym underlies the fact that it is not possible to trace the history of the indigenous people because they are considered to be the first inhabitants of India and occupied a larger area in the past than they do today. Minority Rights Group International (2008, henceforth MRGI) states that "the term Adivasi is derived from the Hindi word 'adi' which means of earliest times or from the beginning and 'vasi' meaning inhabitant or resident, and it was coined in the 1930s, largely a consequence of a political movement to forge a sense of identity among the various indigenous peoples of India." The Adivasi situation is described as follows (see also Singh 1996, 53–58; von Furer-Haimendorf 1982):

> They are at the lowest point of almost every socio-economic indicator. The majority of the population regards them as primitive, and government programmes aim at integrating them with the majority society, rather than allowing them to maintain their distinctive way of life.
> Adivasis continue to face prejudice and often violence from mainstream Indian society. One of the major reasons for the economic and social problems of the [A]divasi population has been their gradual displacement from land. Adivasis have been denied land ownership rights over the last century and their displacement from their land has made them reach a stage where they are fighting to retain their economic and social identity. (MRGI 2008)

The Adivasi activist, Roy David (personal communication) says that the local life of Adivasis has been well adapted to sustain forest areas, which have been taken from their sustainable use. First, these areas have started to degrade after becoming governed as "forest" in the modern literal sense. In fact, this concept authorized by modern law, science, and governance displaces the local indigenous life and its ways of sustaining the wilderness. Specifically, 30,000,000 indigenous inhabitants have been displaced and 40% of the natural primary forest has been destroyed in India as the

tribal areas have been governed as "forest" under modern rule. In 2006, the Forest Rights Act was enacted to recognize the shrinkage imposed by the government and the rights of Adivasis. In 2023, however, the government passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, with which it "violates the forest rights of the Scheduled Tribes and the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the Gram Sabhas under Section 4(e) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) and Section 4 of the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)" (Mamo 2024, 200; see also Saravanan 2007).

**The Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR) and the Paniya**

The NBR and its forest is a representative area of the Western Ghats (India), a "chain of ancient mountain ranges [that] runs parallel to the West coast in Indian peninsula" (Thomas et al. 2009, 81). It includes the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu and covers approximately 5,670 square kilometers (Ranjit Daniels and Vijayan 1996). Divided between a core zone of 1,340 square kilometers and a buffer zone of 4,330 square kilometers, it is a huge corridor whose topographic and climatic differences have created many ecological conditions and varied ecosystems. Moreover, it represents 25% of India's total biodiversity. UNESCO recognized the NBR in 1986 and acknowledged the role of local populations in the conservation of biodiversity within reserves, stressing that it is necessary to integrate a dialogue between cultural and biological diversity, especially evaluating the role of traditional knowledge in ecosystem management. The NBR hosts a massive number of species endemic to the Western Gaths (Puyravaud and Davidar 2013, 469; see also Prabhakar 1994), many of which have yet to be discovered and described (Ranjit Daniels and Vijayan 1996). This environmental diversity is accompanied by human diversity as the NBR is the home of 2 million people divided into more than 30 communities (Scheduled and Non-Scheduled tribes). The lifestyle of these communities differs completely from that of the "city people," and some of them still inhabit the forests with which they maintain a special relationship. According to the last Census of India (2011), on the western side of this biodiversity hotspot, 4.1%

of the Scheduled Tribes can be found in Karnataka, while Tamil Nadu includes 794,697 people (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2023).

According to the Census of India (2001 – Kerala and Tamil Nadu), the Paniya of Kerala were included under the Scheduled Tribes, while the Paniya of Tamil Nadu were not, even though there were more than 2,000 Paniyan families (according to the Centre for Tribal and Rural Development [CTRD] Trust count in 2013, personal communication) with approximately 7,193 speakers living in Tamil Nadu. They are concentrated mainly in the Gudalur and Pandalur taluks (see Figure 1) of the Nilgiris district. Only the 2011 Census of India included them, counting 9,824 Paniya. This discrepancy is due to what I stated above: since the 1971 census, mother tongues with fewer than 10,000 speakers have not been reported, and mother tongues have progressively been grouped under other languages. Therefore, the Paniya in Tamil Nadu had always been counted as part of the majority language before the 2011 Census.

Regarding their distribution, the Paniya are listed as being in Kerala (where the largest group is located), Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. The political borders of these states cross whole communities. Indeed, the Paniya are distributed among the Wayanad, Kannur, Kozhikode, and Malappuram districts of North Kerala (Luiz 1962; Nair 2008; Prakasam 1961; and Sarma 1992); in the Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu; and in Kodagu of Karnataka where they are known also as Yerava (Gopalakrishnan 2011; Subramoniam 1997, 611–614).

**The Paniya: A brief introduction**

When I became interested in the Paniya, the most consistent bibliographical references about them and their language were quite outdated (Kapp 1987; Kulirani 1988; Lawrence 1979; Menon 1996; Somasekharan Nair 1977, 1985; Parthasarathy 1992). At present, the most recent documentation on the Paniya are from Pathmini (2011) and Parthasarathy (2003, 2007), while Periyalwar (1988) carried out a sociolinguistic study of the Nilgiris. Most of the available literature on the Paniya has focused on societal, educational, and medicinal plant use by the group (Aiyappan 1992; Latha and Narayanan 2012; Mohanlal 2001; Ratheesh Narayanan et al. 2011; Varghese 2010). Recently, there have been some updates on the Paniya

language and social customs (Anandakumar and Ramakrishnan 2020; Arul 2018; Nair et al. 2023; Shajan 2017; Syam et al. 2018).[11]

Furthermore, when I was looking for information about the Paniya, I noticed that their description was frequently stereotyped according to what Thurston (1975 [1897]) had written: "... Paniyans are *dark-skinned* and *short, with curly hair* and *broad nose. Body hair is sparse, but baldness of the head is rare. They have muscular bodies and can sustain hard physical labour*" (emphasis added). This way of presenting the Paniya also appears in later studies like a recurring refrain (see, e.g., Francis 2022 [1908]; Fuchs 1974; Somasekharan Nair 1977; Aiyappan 1992; Menon 1996; Parthasarathy 2003; Channa 2004; Mohanty 2004). Finally, the few descriptions of the Paniya are framed within an anthropological evolutionist perspective, as shown in the following examples:

> There is good evidence to prove that South India was populated by human groups in very early times, already in the early Paleolithic period. It is possible that various jungle tribes of south India living there at the present are descendants of the Paleolithic man . . . Some anthropologists suspect Negrito blood in some tribes . . . They have dolichocephalic heads . . . They have flat noses with flaring nostrils, thick mucous lips, and dark curly or wavy hair . . . All of them have lost their original language and now speak local (Dravidian) dialects, though often with an unusual accent . . . No uniform family pattern can be discovered among the *primitive tribes* of southern India, most of the tribes have been strongly influenced by their neighbors who are *more advanced.* (Fuchs 1974, 242–247; emphasis added)

> The Paniyans are of special interest to social scientists as a community . . . my guess . . . is that it goes back to the early centuries of the Christian era when the early iron age farmers of the neighboring regions of Wayanad . . . The Paniyan came from Ippimala, a moun-

[11] In his doctoral dissertation, Arul (2018) describes the Paniya and their language (defined as endangered) with an ethnolinguistic approach. Syam et al. (2018) describe the Paniya language as "bridge material in bilingual style for primary students. The languages are Malayalam and Paniya tribal language." It is written with the purpose to "reduce (sic!) the children to reduce the mother tongue inhibition. This book will help the students to get ideas in tribal friendly manner". A few other works on Paniya are listed at the UNESCO page on Paniya available at https://www.unesco.org/en/countries/in. Accessed February 10, 2025.

> tain near the Banasura peak. Words Ippi and Ippimala was quoted by Thurston (1975 [1897]) and Gopalan Nair (1911) however according to the Census of India report (1964) these words are quite unknown to Paniyans. The other tribals call the Paniyans as 'Koottanmars' meaning a tribe brought from elsewhere. (Aiyappan 1992, 3–6)

These observations increased my curiosity toward the Paniya who, according to Aiyappan (1992, 8–9) were first mentioned in an account of the East India Company's wars in Wayanad against the Raja of Kottayam. The Paniya, whose name means "worker," were employed by the British as guides, because they knew the land very well. Consequently, they were used as slaves in the plantations that the British settled after having conquered their terrains, and they were also slaves for Chettias (Muslims).[12] It was only in 1975 when they were freed from the Bonded Labor System, which was abolished by a central enactment. Even though the Act of Prevention of Land Alienation and Restoration of Alienated Lands became law in 1975, it has not been implemented and the Paniya are still largely landless. Indeed, they are mainly employed by the many tea or coffee plantations that surround them. Because of their social condition, they are subject to massive discrimination by the majority Malayalis and Tamils, as well as other indigenous groups. In particular, the "Paniya community living in the Gudalur and Pandalur areas of Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu is recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group and they are one of the poorest and most deprived communities in state" (Shajan 2017, 81–82; see also Arul 2018, 46–47).

The Paniya language belongs to the Southern group of the Dravidian family. It is spoken in the Nilgiris Hills (southern Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and southern Karnataka). As documented in *Ethnologue*, the Paniya language exhibits several alternative glottonyms, including Nil, Pania, Paniyan, and Paniyah. This language is unrelated to the Paniya Yerava spoken in Kodagu, Karnataka.

The languages surrounding the Paniya community, such as Kuṟumba, Toda, Kota, and Iruḷa, among others, were recognized as

[12] According to Madhava Menon (1996, 303), "when a Paniya brother and sister came near a Wayanadan Chetty (Goundan) he caught them in a net and enslaved them. The landlords advised them to live as 'brother and sister above the waist, and as husband and wife below it.'"

proper linguistic systems independent of the majority languages only after some systematic work. Specifically, Emeneau (1989, 133; 1996) notes that "Toda, Kota, Badaga, speak three mutually unintelligible languages, all Dravidian to be sure, but still very different" and "for other, peripheral communities the matter has not yet been sufficiently researched . . . preliminary reports have claimed separate language status for Irula and the various Kuṟumba languages" (see also Zvelebil 1970; Zvelebil, Vacek, and Dvorak 2001). Previously, they had been considered, as the Paniya language currently is (cf. Aiyappan 1992; Somasekharan Nair 1977), dialects of a majority language.[13] They have since received a "language status" and have also been included in the map of the Endangered Languages Project as threatened languages. However, their "language status" is not definite because they are classified differently by Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig (2024): only Iruḷa is described as "endangered," while the remaining languages, including Paniya, are considered to be "stable."[14] The UNESCO World Atlas of Languages, available at https://en.wal.unesco.org/countries/india/languages/paniya, classifies Paniya as endangered/unsafe.

**Two field surveys among the Paniya**

I had the chance to carry out two field surveys among the Paniya in 2012 and 2013. I aimed to gather enough data to apply for a language documentation grant. However, I never pursued this research, and the data I present below is still in its nascent stage.

I visited 10 Paniyan villages (see Figure 1) that I selected based on three criteria: their distance from towns (proximity vs. distance), their position with reference to the forest (inside vs. bordering), and the type of the village (traditional vs. modern). I wanted to see if these peculiarities were manifested in the maintenance, change, or loss of language practices and cultural values, as well as in speakers' attitudes toward their language and culture.

[13] For example, Adams (1989, 322) quotes Diffloth (1968), who places the Paniya dialect in the Tamil/Malayalam language group. Thurston (1975, 57–70) states that "the Paniyans language is a debased Malayalam patois spoken in a curious nasal sing-song, difficult to imitate, but most of the Paniyans employed on estates can also converse in Kanarese."

[14] The 16th edition of *Ethnologue* edited by Paul Lewis (2009) considered Paniya to be "developing."

I interviewed thirty people, including twelve older men and women (aged 70–90 years), six teenagers (aged 15–19 years), and five children (aged 6–8 years) and their parents (7 people, aged 30–45 years). During my first visit in 2012, I carried out semi-guided (sociolinguistic) interviews and (ethnolinguistic) observations (e.g., regarding new-born ceremonies, disease treatment preparation) as part of a sociolinguistic survey, collecting data on the attitudes and ideologies (attitude shift) behind the Paniya language, the relationship between language and identity, what speakers declared about their linguistic repertoire, and how speakers declared they use the Paniya language or the other major languages varieties. During my second visit in 2013, I also added data through linguistic tasks, mainly "equivalent translations" starting from the Swadesh list. I audio-recorded (and sometimes video-recorded) the interviews, and took pictures of spaces, houses, tools, and people. I had privileged access to Paniyan villages thanks to the Centre for Tribal and Rural Development (CTRD) Trust (an NGO) located in Ellamannala, where some Paniya live nearby. Due to space limits, I cannot discuss my entire experience. Instead, I focus on a few experiences that best illustrate the Paniya language situation.

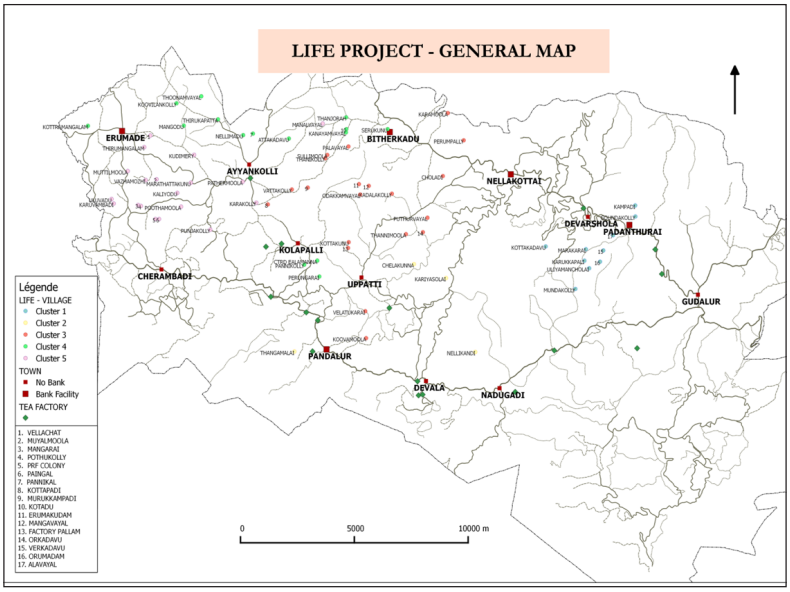


**Figure 1.** Paniya villages in Tamil Nadu, by courtesy of CTRD Trust

**Erumakullam and Sullimola**

The first Paniya people I interviewed were from Erumakullam. As soon as my collaborator (see below) and I left the car, we started to walk among wonderful vegetation that was immersed in silence. After descending some mud stairs, we were in the middle of a Paniyan village. When I entered, most of the men and women were working in the tea field; only a few children who were not attending school along with some elderly women were sitting in the village. On the left side of the entrance there was a little temple made of three stones, immediately indicating to us that this village does not worship the Hindu pantheon. Although I went there with Prakash, a CTRD employee who was well known to the Paniya, the old women were suspicious of me, and they did not want to say anything. By contrast, the children were fascinated by my presence and eager to speak with me.

My initial experience made me realize how important it would be to include children and teenagers in my survey, because they could provide me with useful information about their language habits. Indeed, the children's statements—"I do not go to school, because people mistreat us, I do not like to go"; "I prefer to speak in Tamil/Malayalam with my parents, but my grandma speaks Paniya Basha"; "I know some Paniya Basha, but it is not useful"; and "I want to get a good job; I do not want to work in the field like my parents"—provide information on the children's usage of the Paniya language, their attitude toward it, the domains in which they use it effectively, and their expectations.

Second, I could observe that there was a certain intelligibility between what Prakash spoke (Malayalam) and what they were speaking, even though CTRD employees like Prakash, and later Soraja and Vijay, would have defined it as a kind of "corrupted Malayalam." Later, during this field survey, I visited some other village and collected similar statements among adults who declared that they consider the Paniya language to be useless for their economic and social improvement. In particular, the parents were not interested in transmitting it to their children.

When I returned for my second field survey the following year, through the traditional task of "equivalent translation,"

I collected some linguistic data in an attempt to determine the linguistic features of the Paniya language in Tamil Nadu because, according to Madhava Menon (1996, 310), "the Paniya found in Wayanad district in Kerala, in Gudalur taluk of Tamil Nadu and in the Kodagu taluk in Karnataka (where they are known as Yerava) all speak the same language which is only considerably marked by regional variations." Furthermore, Lawrence (1979) and Somasekharan Nair (1977) also consider it to be a dialect.

Starting from the Swadesh list, I collected basic vocabulary, namely personal and possessive pronouns, because this is considered one of the principal aspects in which the Paniya language differs from other Dravidian languages. I also collected data on kinship terms, customs, and rituals related to marriage and other practices (births, burials), diet, and illness cures. In fact, among all the indigenous groups of India, the Paniya are considered to have the highest use of plants as medicinal applications (cf. Rajan, Sethuraman, and Baburaj 1997).

Of the villages I visited during my second field survey, I gained particularly useful insights from Sullimola. It is a very hidden village within the forest. Although there are some fields around it, the village is well protected by plants and flowers. The only noise I heard was birdsongs, and there was a chance to encounter an elephant. We met the head of the village, his wife, his son, and his son's wife, along with another 30–35 woman and the woman's 16-year-old daughter. First, we visited the head of the village, and we sat under the portico of his mud house.[15] While Prakash was introducing me using Malayalam, explaining my research, I was intrigued by the simplicity and the beauty of the houses. They had a smoothly rounded shape and were fresh inside, although some of them looked very black on one side of the wall. We were in a "traditional" village.

[15] I had read that the head of the village is the *Koymè* and his "assistant," the *Chemny*, is a priest. Here, the person I refer to as the "head" of Sullimola was not the *Koymè* of the community (who lived two villages away); however, he was the person in charge of calling the *Chemny* or *Koymé* when they had an assembly, or when some ritual had to be performed (e.g., a birth or a burial).

There were two relevant things during this interview. First, Prakash—bilingual in Tamil and Malayalam—confessed to me that, differently from what had happened in the other villages, he could not understand the aged Paniya speakers when they told traditional stories using what they called Paniya Basha. Hence, it seemed that we were at a distant point of the linguistic continuum observed in the other villages we visited, which were closer to a main town, or that speakers did not accommodate their speech to us. It seemed that we were dealing with another variety of language, neither ("broken") Tamil nor ("corrupted") Malayalam.

These two short experiences led me to my two main arguments: first, contrary to what Lewis (2009) stated previously, the Paniya language in Tamil Nadu is "threatened" rather than "developing," as the number of speakers was decreasing drastically (see also Rose Mary 2013a). Second, if Paniya Basha were to be systematically analyzed and studied, it might reveal linguistic features that differentiated it from the major languages. However, my surveys were too short, and I did not collect enough data for generalization. It was for this reason that in the following two years, I tried to apply for funding but without succeeding because Paniya was not considered as a threatened or endangered language. Therefore, my experience among the Paniya ended in 2013, and I have not had the chance to collect new data.

## Wild food and plants among the Paniya

Regarding plants connected with the diet and relative to the other socio-cultural groups in the same area, the Paniya have always been considered to have the highest rate of wild food and plant consumption. In fact, the Paniya used to collect many wild food species (152 species), especially leafy vegetables, for consumption, medicinal use, and ritual purposes (Table 1; Ratheesh Narayanan, Kumar, and Balakrishnan 2003; Ratheesh Narayanan et al. 2011; Rajan, Sethuraman, and Baburaj 1997).

| **Plant** | **Purpose** |
|---|---|
| Yuong shoots of kayal (*Bambusa arundicacea*) | To cure rheumatism |
| Shells of aama (tortoise) | To cure hemorrhoids and burns |

| | |
|---|---|
| Karimokoovalam (*Monochoria vaginalis*, an angiosperm) leaves | Used by diabetics |
| Thazhuthama (*Boerhavia diffusa*) | For chest pain |
| Pith of njettipana (*Arenga wightii*) | To cure venereal diseases (threatened by habitat loss) |
| *Annona squamosa* | Used as a vermifuge for children |
| *Oxalis corniculata* | Used as febrifuge |
| *Side cordifolia* leaf paste | Applied on snakebites and as an antidote to get rid of poison |

**Table 1.** Wild plants and food among the Paniya and their uses.

Daily meals in the Paniyan household include wild leaves from trees (57 herbs), including ponnamkanni (*Alternanthera sessilis*), thalu (*Colocasia esculenta*), and different species of cheera (*Amaranthus spinosus*); 25 species of mushrooms; 48 species of wild fruits and nuts, including jackfruits and mango (*Artocarpus hirsute* and *Mangifera indica*), roots, and tubers (*Dioscorea hamiltonii*, *Dioscorea oppositifolia*, *Dioscorea pentaphylla*, and *Asparagus racemosus*); 36 species of fish (kallupatti, koyma, konjai, kannappae, parel, muzhu, and kommai); crabs; snails; 15 animals hunted in the forest by men, including small animals and birds (kokkul [cattle egret], pravu [blue rock pigeon], and kattukozhi [jungle fowl]); and 5 types of honey. Wild foods and plants are important not only for the diet, but also because they are related to cultural issues such as gender limitations and distinctions. For example, only adult women and girls make decisions about, collect, and process leafy vegetables and mushrooms, while only adult men and children make decisions about tubers and roots, honey, fish, and small animals. Both men and women participate in the collection of fish, crabs, snails, honey, and small animals and make decisions about fruits and nuts while their processing is carried out only by women. Only processing of honey is a collective activity (Ratheesh Narayanan et al. 2011, 106).

Women have mainly been responsible for wild foods and plants and transmit their knowledge and practices to their children. However, there has been a marked decline in both knowledge and consumption of wild foods and plants among

the Paniya. For example, children show less of an ability to identify edible yams and the traditional way of catching fish and crabs. They no longer participate in the activities because they are occupied with school and due to the changing values around wild food and plant consumption, which is increasingly stigmatized as a symbol of poverty and "tribalness." Thus, mothers no longer pass their knowledge to their children, and their children do not want to know about it (Cruz García 2006; Vivek et al. 2012).

Although mothers still give such foodstuffs to their children, they declare that they do not eat them. The problem of erosion of cultural values and dietary traditions around wild food and plants is mainly due to social stigma, as it has been reported for many other parts of the world. According to Cruz García (2006), there are criteria for transmission of knowledge from mothers to their children in terms of the perceptions of others, social attitudes, and social stigma toward wild food and plant collection and consumption. Both mothers and their children can develop feelings of shame with respect to them, and these practices become stigmatized. For example, mothers and children explain that they dislike other people seeing them collect wild foods and plants for reasons of "shame" and "status."

Finally, government restrictions (see discussion above) and environmental changes mean that some of the wild foods and plants traditionally collected by the Paniya are threatened. Moreover, many are no longer freely available due to landscape conversion, habitat destruction, invasion of alien species, restrictions from the forest department, and forest fires. Wild foods and plants and the traditional knowledge related to them are being lost.

**Paniya Basha: Some linguistic features**

My brief survey did not yield significant insights into the linguistic characteristics of the Paniya language. As already stated, I focused on collecting personal pronouns (Table 2) and kinship terms (Table 3). Considering the few scientific descriptions available at that time, I compared my limited data with those already available (Lawrence 1979, 207–212; Menon 1996, 310; Rose Mary 2013a, b).

| **Paniya Pronouns** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paniya of Kerala, from Menon (1996, 310) | | Paniya of Tamil Nadu, from Lawrence (1979, 207–212) | | Paniya of Tamil Nadu, from my field survey | |
| **I sing** | ṉāṇu/ṉānu | **I sing** | ṉānu | **I sing** | nānu |
| **obl** | enu/ē | **obl** | ē | **obl** | ēnnà |
| **II sing** | ṉī / ṉāya | **II sing** | ṉī / ṉiyyu | **II sing** | niyyu |
| **obl** | ṉinu | **obl** | ṉin | **obl** | nin |
| **III sing fem** | ivāḷu (prox) avāḷu (dist) | **III sing fem** | iboḷu/boḷḷu (prox) aboḷu (dist) | **III sing fem** | ivāḷu (prox) avāḷu (dist) |
| **III non-fem** | iven | **III non-fem** | min/iben (prox) | **III non-fem** | ivèn (prox) |
| **obl** | ivena | | aben/ayin | | avèn (dist) |
| **obl** | avena | | (dist) | | |
| **III sing Hon** | itu / atu | **III sing Hon** | itu / atu | | |
| **I plu** | nāṅka (excl) / nāmu (incl) | **I plu** | nāṅka (excl) / nāmu (incl) | **I plu** | nāṅka (excl) / nāmu (incl) |
| **obl** | eṅka/eṅkaḷu/ nāmu | **obl** | eṅka/nām | **obl** | eṅkaḷà |
| **II plu** | niṇka | **II plu** | niṇga | **II plu** | niṇka |
| **obl** | nīṅka / ṉiṅkaḷu | **obl** | nīṅga | **obl** | nīṅka |
| **III plu fem** | ivelu / ivera averu / avera | **III plu fem** | bēra/ibera (prox)[17] | **III plu fem/** | iberà/ ivankè (prox) |
| | | **III plu fem/** | abera (dist) | **non-fem** | aberà/ |
| **obl** | iveru / ivera[16] | **non-fem** | | | ivanè (dist) |
| **obl** | averu / avera | | | | |

**Table 2.** Pronouns in the Paniya language (I = first person, II = second person, III = third person, sing = singular, plu = plural, obl = oblique, fem = feminine, non-fem = non-feminine, Hon = honorific, excl = exclusive, incl = inclusive)

[16] Applied both to people and things.
[17] Also used as honorific singular.

Although Menon (1996, 310) argues that pronouns are the main area in which Paniya differs from Malayalam and Tamil, Table 3 shows a resemblance between Paniya, and at least Malayalam and Tamil pronouns.

| TAMIL | MALAYALAM | KANNADA | PANIYA |
|---|---|---|---|
| **First Person**<br>*Singular*:<br>nāṉ<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nāṅkaḷ (inclusive),<br>nām (exclusive) | **First Person:**<br>*Singular*:<br>ñān<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nammaḷ (inclusive),<br>ñaṅṅaḷ (exclusive) | **First Person:**<br>*Singular*:<br>nānu<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nāvu | **First Person:**<br>*Singular:*<br>nānu<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nāṅka<br>nāmu |
| **Second Person:**<br>*Singular*:<br>nī (informal),<br>niṅkaḷ (formal/<br>respectful)<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nīṅkaḷ | **Second Person:**<br>*Singular*:<br>nī (informal),<br>niṅṅaḷ (formal/<br>respectful), tāṅkaḷ<br>/ aṅṅŭ (very<br>respectful)<br><br>*Plural*:<br>niṅṅaḷ | **Second Person:**<br>*Singular*:<br>nīnu<br>(informal),<br>nīvu (formal/<br>respectful)<br><br>*Plural*:<br>nīvu | **Second Person:**<br>*Singular:*<br>niyyu<br><br>*Plural:*<br>niṅka |
| **Third Person:**<br>*Masculine Singular:*<br>avaṉ, ivaṉ<br><br>*Feminine Singular:*<br>avaḷ, ivaḷ<br><br>*Neuter Singular:*<br>atu, itu<br><br>*Plural:*<br>avarkaḷ (people),<br>avai (things) | **Third Person:**<br>*Masculine Singular:*<br>avan, ivan, iddēhaṃ<br>(prox, respectful),<br>addēhaṃ (distal,<br>respectful)<br><br>*Feminine Singular:*<br>avaḷ, ivaḷ (prox)<br><br>*Neuter Singular:*<br>atŭ, itŭ<br><br>*Plural*:<br>avar, ivar (people),<br>ava, iva (things) | **Third Person:**<br>*Masculine*<br>*Singular:* avanu,<br>ivanu<br><br>*Feminine*<br>*Singular:* avaḷu,<br>ivaḷu<br><br>*Neuter Singular:*<br>adu, idu<br><br>*Plural*:<br>avaru (people),<br>avu (things) | **Third Person:**<br>*Masculine Singular:*<br>avèn<br>ivèn<br><br>*Feminine Singular:*<br>avāḷu<br>ivāḷu<br><br>*Plural:*<br>iberà/ivanè<br>(prox)<br>aberà/avangè<br>(dist) |

**Table 3.** Pronouns in the majority languages Malayalam, Tamil, and Kannada compared with Paniya

My finding supports what other scholars have also observed: Paniya would seem to be a dialect of the majority languages. However, there are two points to consider. First, it must be stressed that the pronouns mainly came from interviews carried out in modern structured villages near the town. Second, the prolonged contact with majority languages must be considered (cf. Emeneau 1996). Therefore, I must reiterate what my Sullimola experience taught me and, despite what the table above shows, I must conclude that further research is necessary to understand the real linguistic situation.

The same conclusion can also be advanced for the kinship terms (Table 4). Collected through "linguistic tasks," they are decontextualized data. Therefore, even though to a certain extent kinship terms do not particularly differ from the traditional ones originally used among Paniya and recorded by Rose Mary (1977, as quoted in Rose Mary 2013a)—thus opposite to what was observed in Rose Mary 2010 (as quoted in Rose Mary 2013a)—we cannot be sure how much and if they are really used when speakers communicate.

| **RELATION** | **Rose Mary 1977** | **Rose Mary 2010** | **Data from my field survey** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Father** | Tante | appa | appè |
| **Father's father** | caacceppen | valiyappa | caaccappèn |
| **Father's mother** | caacci/caaccemma | caaccamma | chacchammè |
| **Mother** | amme | amma | amma/ammè |
| **Mother's father** | caaccaappen | caaccan | caaccappèn |
| **Mother's mother** | caacci/caaccemme | caaccamma | caacci |
| **Elder sister** | acci | ceecci | ceecci, acci |
| **Elder brother** | - | eeTTan | ayyèn |
| **Husband** | uuraaLe eeTTa, | uuraaLan | mamè, uraaLan |
| **Wife** | uuraaTTi | uuraaTTi | uuraaTTi |
| **Wife's elder sister** | accikkuTicci | acci | acci |
| **Husband's elder sister** | Mayttini | acci | acci |
| **Son** | maken | makan | makka |
| **Daughter** | makaaLu | makaL | mūttāti |
| **Son's wife** | munnaayikkaaretti | makaLai | |

**Table 4.** Paniya kinship terms (data from Rose Mary 2010 reported in Rose Mary 2013a; see also Rose Mary 2013b)

## Concluding remarks

Malayalam and Tamil are the geographically dominant languages surrounding Paniya Basha in the Tamil Nadu Nilgiris. Considering the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS; Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2024) and the nine major factors identified by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) to evaluate language vitality, Paniya can be ranked at level 6 of the EGIDS. For the UNESCO scale, it is:

- "unsafe" (level 4) for *Intergenerational Language Transmission* (Factor 1),
- "Highly limited domain" (level 1) for *Shifts in Domains of Language Use* (Factor 4),
- "inactive" (level 0) for *Response to New Domains and Media* (Factor 5).

Moreover, regarding the *Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy* (Factor 6), it is still unclear if it should be considered level 1 (some material is being written) or 0 (no orthography is available to the community), because few attempts have been made to produce material in Paniya with practical orthography or to support Paniya education (Koul 2005; Mohanlal 2001; Subash et al. 2020).

The Factor 7, *Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use* is difficult to define, while a partial evaluation of Factor 8, *Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language* is presented below. Finally, Factor 9, *Type and Quality of Documentation* can be still considered at level 1 (inadequate amount and quality of documentation, as already discussed above). Furthermore, in the evaluation of the status of Paniya, one must keep in mind Annamalai's statement that:

> language endangerment is not just a numerical matter, but an ethical and political matter also pertaining to human choice and dignity. It is also a matter of survival of the earth, whose endangerment may be curbed by the multiple knowledge system and value system codified in the multiplicity of languages, most of which are small and bypassed by technological revolutions . . . language endangerment is . . . about the relationship between languages . . . when the functional relationship is heavily loaded in favour of one language over another or of some languages over many, the

> structure of multilingualism becomes less sustainable, not only on ethical and political grounds but also on the grounds of economy. (Annamalai 2014, 12–13)

Keeping these concepts in mind, and considering the situation of Paniya speakers, one might sustain that even though the number of speakers is not extremely reduced, the Paniya language is still endangered due to the negative attitudes Paniya speakers have against their culture and language (both being reasons for language shift and cultural loss). After interviewing 30 first-, second-, third-, and fourth-generations Paniyas, I have come to the conclusion that Paniya Basha is threatened. Indeed, according to the second-generation speakers, the language is no longer passed from one generation to another because parents feel it is useless and may lead to discrimination, and they want better for their children. The youngest speakers have shifted their lifestyle and language toward the majority languages and do not show an interest in their traditional activities (e.g., traditional tools for collecting food and animals). This is compounded by the fact that, according to first-generation Paniyas, many changes had occurred to their diets, habits, and customs (and thus their health) because of the changes to which the surrounding environment has undergone due to pollution, exploitation, plantations, deforestation, and government restrictions to the access to the forest. Furthermore, the attitudes of the second- and third-generation Paniyas toward the Paniya language were negative. Although the younger people declared they do not want to renounce their Paniya identity, they simultaneously experienced the need to shift toward the majority languages to improve their social status and to enter the job market more easily; therefore, they were not interested in learning the Paniya language. The language shift is mainly due to the vulnerable social position of the Paniya and the poor recognition of their particular lifestyle. As Annamalai (1979, viii) states, "language movements are expressions of changing socio-economic and cultural conditions. They are manifested through the issues of language because it is a very transparent cultural symbol."

Consequently, it is not surprising that the use of Paniya Basha is limited to a few domains, mainly domestic ones, and the younger generations perceive its use as a source of discrimination.

This decreasing intergenerational transmission of the language and culture is also due to "unidirectional social bilingualism" (Annamalai 2001, 56) toward the dominant Tamil and Malayalam and to the transformation of culture-specific life aspects. In general, "maintenance of multilingualism depends on distribution not only of power between languages but also values . . . . Three sets of values arise out of the functions of the language, which are economic, political and cultural" (Annamalai 2003b, 123). The Paniya language does not have any economic or political value, and the surrounding economic and social changes have played an important role in the erosion of cultural knowledge, also threatening cultural values. Modern state education has also had a very significant effect on the use of the language and a strong impact on the lifestyle of the Paniya. In fact, the younger generations are taught one of the majority languages in schools (Tamil or Malayalam, along with some English) and they face many problems at home (Susamma 2011, 18). The school is the first place where young Paniyas have to conceal their identity. For example, when third-generation Paniyas started to receive education, they were forced to not wear their traditional clothes (*mundu*) and ornaments (*cūtu*). The fourth-generation Paniyas are not interested at all in following these customs, which are perceived as a source of discrimination. Finally, there has been a great loss regarding the traditional practices related to herbal medicine, the use of traditional tools in hunting and fishing (e.g., bows and arrows and fishing rods), and even hunting and fishing as activities. Traditional knowledge is no longer being passed from one generation to the next because there is no longer any reason to learn specific life traditions. Consequently, the knowledge of Nilgiris biodiversity is being seriously threatened. The current gradual disappearance of fundamental life aspects goes hand in hand with a loss of related linguistic elements, including specific expressions and speech patterns (Annamalai 1993, 16–18; Mandelbaum 1941, 1989). Similarly, kinship terms are shrinking among the younger generations, who more frequently adopt Malayalam terms.

Despite these changes, Paniya is not yet included in the scheme for the protection and preservation of endangered languages available at https://www.sppel.org/languagelist.aspx. Hopefully, this short survey, along with the most recent publications on the status of the Paniya, will encourage scholars

to seriously consider what Professor Annamalai has always promoted during his prolific career: a language documentation and revitalization project among the Paniya in order to promote their linguistic rights.

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# *Doubled Meaning*

Swarnavel Eswaran and Constantine V. Nakassis

## Introduction

In the context of the Tamil cinema, and particularly its comedy dialogues, Tamil speakers often speak of *uḷḷarttam*, or the "meaning" (*arttam*) "inside" (*uḷ*), and more specifically, of "double meaning dialogues" or *iraṭṭai arttam* ("double" or "twinned meaning").[1] These phrases denote the situation of one stretch of speech that has two distinct meanings at play at one and the same time. To characterize something as "double meaning," then, is not to comment on homonymy or ambiguity per se but rather of how speakers exploit the multiplicity of interpretations to some end by putting such multiple meanings in relation with each other.

A double, after all, is not the same as two-ness; a double is a copy, a twin, a citational iteration that differs but only because it first makes a claim of (non)identity to what it copies (Nakassis 2013). More than one but less than two, a double meaning dialogue is not simply an utterance that has two interpretations but one that involves a citational, parasitical relationship *between* two distinct denotational texts that, despite (or because of) their distinctness, reflect, refract, and mutually frame each other. "Double meaning,"

[1] Cre-A dictionary, under its 4th entry for *iraṭṭai* writes: "(வெவ்வேறு மாதிரியான) இரு நிலை அல்லது வகை; dual; double. திரைப்படத்தில் இரட்டை வேடம்/இரட்டை அர்த்தம் தொனிக்கும் வசனம்."

then, is somewhat of a misnomer, for in doubling its meaning it is also one; it is the *relationship* between distinct interpretations that gives such speech its pragmatic force.

But if there are twins, they are not equal. Consider again the Tamil term, *uḷḷarttam*, which suggests a topology of meaning, one of depths and surfaces, and points to, by marking it out explicitly, the fact that one of the meanings—the one "inside" or deep down, in the heart of the sign—is more important. (The surface meaning—presumably that of the unmarked form, *arttam*, the "meaning" per se—is left unremarked.) This suggests obfuscation, avoidance, a kind of secrecy from the surface that, at one and the same time, constitutes the interpreter as a forensic listener, a discerner of things submerged and hidden. It also suggests, thus, a second listener, a double, a rube of sorts who does/can not see below, who does not get the second meaning underneath it all; or perhaps, a demure subject who feigns ignorance, of not getting it. The term, in short, ideologically sketches out a participation framework (Goffman 1981) of (non)understanding with which various social identities and social relations are pragmatically enactable.

This discussion recalls another doubling: Bakhtin's (1982) "double voicing." Bakhtin's concern was with the European novel and the way in which narrating and narrated voices come into a virtual dialogue; in particular, where one voice *accents* and thus inhabits the other (Vološinov 1986 [1929]). Bakhtin's larger point was that *all* speech is/stages a contact zone between voices. But whereas Bakhtin focused on the intention of the other in my words (and vice versa), double meaning dialogues enact a different kind of dialogue: not between speaking subjectivities (or their virtual avatars, "voices") vis-à-vis the "word" (Bakhtin's term for any stretch of discourse) but *within* the "word," wherein one "meaning" seems to comment on, or masquerade via and thus dance with, the other.

Or, at least, this is what the ideology of "double meaning" seems to propose in framing such acts as somehow "indirect," "obscured," or "buried." (As we'll see, this ideology itself glosses over the fact that the double meaning is often not obscure at all to viewers, even if not-understanding—and understanding—are pragmatic acts enacted by some viewers, and modelled by the texts in which such double meanings occur.)

Of course, there is nothing peculiar about double meaning acts; puns and word play are ubiquitous phenomena (and a universal possibility of language), though the social value of such phenomena is not universal. "Puns" in the American context, for example, are often figured as a low form of humor; by contrast, Ferro-Luzzi's (1992) survey of Tamil humor indicates the high value and frequency of puns, word play, and other double meanings in both "folk" and "urban" forms of (written) Tamil humor. Which is to say, "word play," while fine as an etic analytic category, risks being so broad as to lose utility in guiding any kind of specific study. There are too many ways to (and purposes in) "play" with language. A second problem is that it isn't clear if "language" is a sufficient enough basis for a study of the problem of double meaning; this is all the more so in multimodal media such as film, where visual signs play a significant part (as they do of course in face-to-face interaction, needless to say).

To explore some of these issues, in this chapter we focus on those moments in the Tamil cinema where for one and the same context (or at least, some aspect of it) two texts are projected from some stretch of signs; that is, where there are multiple mappings of text to context that put the same context (or state of affairs) under a different description. Here, the issue is about the dialogicality and tensions that happen *between* interpretations in one and the same communicative message. While the range of such acts is wide, we focus on two prototypical domains wherein such effects are rife: the sexual and the political. Both, as we'll see, are occasioned by some felt inability or undesirability to speak "plainly" or "directly," or where no "direct" mode of expression is available.[2] Yet, such a functionalist account (e.g., that would argue

[2] The terms are in scare quotes since it isn't quite clear what it means to speak directly: do we mean semantically or pragmatically? As Ervin-Tripp (1976) long ago pointed out, the most "direct" way, pragmatically, to say/do something may turn out to be "indirect" semantically. A better distinction might be *explicit* versus *implicit* (denotation), if itself necessarily understood in reference to whatever the local language ideologies in question are (often referentialist and privileging of explicit denotation as "direct," "plain," on-record, etc.). Moreover, given that viewers of Tamil films may transparently parse such double meaning dialogues or scenes *as* "vulgar" or "sexual" (and not as indirect per se; indeed, they may be the expectable, conventional form of such dialogues in contexts where there

that doubled meaning is necessary *because* talk about sexuality or politics is taboo), while not without basis, is somewhat reductive, for it obscures the fact that the multiplicity of texts *is a principle on the amplification of the pragmatics of the act.* That is, there are good reasons for circumspection besides taboo. Further, what makes something taboo or vulgar or to-be-avoided isn't reducible to the content of a speech act or image, but involves questions of who enunciates, to whom they enunciate, within whose earshot they enunciate, and so on. Finally, we are interested to ask: what are the peculiarities of cinema as a narrative medium and a technological apparatus vis-à-vis such doubling and what does this say about doubled meaning more generally?

We ask these questions inspired by over a decade of dialogue at the University of Chicago with Professor Annamalai, whose invitation to reflect on the problem and complexity of meaning, in all its multiplicities and shades, in Tamil and otherwise, semantically and pragmatically, forms the basis of this chapter.

**Romance, sexuality, and double meaning**

We start with the generic textual form and pragmatics of "double meaning" in the Tamil cinema, which we find in both comedic sequences and song sequences. Such uses of language are highly conventionalized and are primarily characterized, as noted above, by their putatively taboo content (women's sexuality) and by a certain pragmatics: they are considered to be "vulgar." (The term *vulgar* here and throughout is in scare quotes to indicate that it appears not as an analytic characterization but a judgment available to Tamil audiences.) In comedy, "double meaning dialogues" have a particular emic status as a cultural category of what, in English, might be called "dirty jokes." One term for such jokes in Tamil is *kiṭṭipuḷḷu*, a reference to the game gilli, where the *kiṭṭi*(*ppuḷ*) (the wood piece players hit with a cudgel) is readable as a phallus. Similarly, song lyrics may at times have the status of a certain kind of vulgarity linked to their interpretation as denoting erogenous zones, sexual acts, sexual desire, and the like. These shade from love and romance to eroticism.

may not be other ways of expressing such topics), in the rest of the chapter we avoid the language of (in)directness.

*Double meaning in song sequences*

Consider an example from the lyricist Kannadasan, who explored the erotic possibilities of double meaning in one of the most popular songs of the 1960s, "*Paḷiṅkināl Oru Māḷikai*" (*Vallavan Oruvan*, 1966, dir. R. Sundaram; music: Veda). The song opens with the following lyrics:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Paḷiṅkināl oru māḷikai* | A palace, made of marble |
| *Paruvattāl maṇi maṇṭapam* | A memorial of youth |
| *Uyarattil oru gōpuram* | with a tower at the top |
| *Unnai aḻaikutu vā* | is inviting/calling you! |

**Figure 1**. L. Vijayalalitha/L. R. Eswari sings "*. . . aḻaikutu vā*" in the first (left) and last (right) verse.

This verse projects two denotational texts: on the one hand, it denotes a memorial building and its architectural features; on the other hand, it is a description of a woman's body, imagined from a low angle, which is (sexually) "calling" her addressee. Here, the twinned meaning is motivated by a number of features: first, that there is no such building in the universe of discourse (we see no shots of a building nor is it part of the diegesis); second, it is animated in the visual track by Vijayalalitha, known for her roles as a voluptuous vamp, and sung in the sound-track by L. R. Eswari, similarly known for her husky renditions of sensual songs (Weidman 2021). Further, in the diegesis, it is sung *by* the heroine *to* the hero, Shankar (played by Jaishankar). The early part of the first verse works through tight close-ups of Vijayalalitha's face, tracking

outwards to a bust-shot when she sings "*gōpuram*" (tower) and describes its height; in the last verse, by contrast, the camera cuts to a full-length shot of her body while her dance gestures emphasize the height of her body. (Neither shot is a low-shot.) Similarly, while "*aḻaikkutu vā*" in the first verse invites the hero(-spectator) (to a sexual encounter) through such visual display, with the camera playfully pulling away from him, by the last verse (which closes the song-sequence), the imperative "*aḻaikkutu vā*" co-occurs with Vijayalalitha dancing toward the hero and culminates with their tight embrace, her invitation being taken up with his second-pair part of tactile acceptance.

In this sequence, metaphor does the work of suggesting a sensual encounter; but if the linguistic text is "on-record" as non-sensual (and, we might add, at least to our 21st-century ear, non-vulgar), the total effect of sensuality and romance (bordering on vulgarity for some in its time) is created by the juxtaposition of a number of different para-texts: some visual (the editing strategies; the mis-en-scène of tight dress on the dancing/singing body); some performed (the dance movements—which emphasize the face and body of the dancer—and the music, with its Western jazz marimba style; note how both the dance and the music are recognizably "cinematic," that is, non-"traditional" in style); some diegetic (Vijayalalitha's character is trying to distract Shankar while some henchmen come to attack him); and some non-diegetic (the offscreen personages of Vijayalalitha and of L. R. Eswari).

When romance in the cinema shades into vulgarity, it has often had its roots in *karakāṭṭam*, which unlike other folk art-forms like *villupāṭṭu* or *kaṇiyān kūttu*, does not borrow its narratives from epics, myths, and classical folklore. As a folk form, *karakāṭṭam* features narratives about feuds in the family as well as anecdotes revolving around the buffoon (often depicted as the son-in-law of the house) and bawdy songs. The latter two are often occasions for "vulgar" double meanings. For example, when the buffoon asks the new woman he meets, "Where are you from?" she may respond, "from Medupallam" ("elevation-pit"), rhyming with the neighboring language of Malayalam. (*Mēṭu* and *paḷḷam* standing for the crotch of a woman; and Malayalam for women/actresses from Kerala, who are stereotyped as more sexually open; cf. Nakassis 2015.) *Karakāṭṭam* song lyrics may be more explicit. For example, the heroine might sing

"*Kuttuṟēn kuttuṟēn kuttāme pōyiṭṭiyē*" (You said you'd punch [*kuttu*], but left without punching), to which the hero would respond, "*Kāṭṭuṟēn kāṭṭuṟēn nnu kāṭṭāme pōyiṭṭiyē*" (You promised you'd show [something] but left without showing anything).

Lyrics like these have been recycled in films such as the wildly popular 1989 film, *Karagattakkaran* (dir. Gangai Amaran, music: Ilaiyaraja). In the film, "punching" (*kuttu*) is an allusion to the seal/stamp that encloses a letter in an envelope and "showing" with (not) opening the envelope; this meaning is motivated on the screen through gestures of the heroine to a letter in hand. Its doubled meaning, however, is the act of undressing (showing her body) and sexual intercourse (punching); this is motivated by the film text itself as well as by also the intertext to theatrical *karakāṭṭam* performances. The double text of the exchange, thus, is about the hero and heroine trying to preempt each other, each challenging the other as being not courageous enough when it comes to sex. In a film like *Karagattakkaran*, such gestures and linguistic meanings clothe the desire to make love and thus render *karakāṭṭam*, as an art of the subversive "folk," allowable/performable in public spaces (be they theater halls or temple premises). In this way, such double meanings act as a kind of anti-language (Halliday 1976) for a subaltern society that codes its meanings in the public space of respectability (Seizer 1997).

During the 1980s and 1990s, it was not unusual for audiocassettes of the *karakāṭṭam* singer Narambu Natarajan and ("obscene") entertainers like Narambadi Narayanan to be played in the male-centric tea stalls of villages like that of Eswaran's. In such cases, the entire cassette, whose lyrics imitated the query/response model of *karakāṭṭam*, revolved around the double entendre of the *aṭipampu*—the hand pump (*-pampu*) used to pump (*aṭi-*) water from the well. Through such cassettes, double meaning dialogues like these spread beyond the confines of the theater hall into public spaces that attracted both men and women (the latter of whom would come to tea stalls, often until midnight, particularly during the harvest, for boiling milk). *Aṭi* has the multiple meanings of "hit" (as a stand-alone verb) as well "below" or "at the bottom" (as a noun). As a verbalizer, it connotes haptic contact and inappropriate action (Schiffman 1999, 110), as with verb phrases such as *sight aṭi*, "to ogle" (lit. "beat sight"), *taṇṇī aṭi* "to

drink alcohol" (lit. "beat water"), and *kai aṭi* "to masturbate" (lit. "beat hand"). Lyricists have played with the idea of *aṭikkarumbu* (the bottom of the sugarcane), which is supposed to be juicy and sweet, in lines like, "*aṭikkarumbai kaṭiccu tiṅga āsai vantāccu*" ("the desire to bite and devour the sugarcane stalk came [to me]") sung by the heroine and her friends in the song "*Kalyāṇa Mēḷa Sattam*" from the film *Thambikku Entha Ooru* (dir Rajasekar, 1984; lyrics: Panchu Arunachalam, music: Ilayairaja, singer: S. Janaki).

Compare the romantic imagery of the heroine-as-*gopuram*-calling-the-hero with the more "vulgar" comparisons of sugarcane-stalk-as-phallus and fellatio. Notice that the former's "double meaning" involves an ellipsis and avoidance, for "calling" itself stands in a relation of denotational vagueness vis-à-vis the sex act just as does its visual realization in the film, the hug (itself a metonymic substitution for copulation); by contrast, the veil in the comparison of biting and devouring sugarcane is relatively diaphanous, as well as narrower in its referential target (of male genitalia and fellatio).

*Double meaning in comedy sequences*

While song sequences typically mobilize double meanings to romantic and erotic ends, in the diegesis double meanings are more often used for (erotic) humor. Consider the 1981 film, *Lorry Driver Rajakkannu* (dir. A. C. Tirulokchandar). When early in the film, Kannamma (played by Sripriya), who runs an idli shop, asks the working-class lorry driver, Rajakkannu (played by Sivaji Ganesan) what "item" he wants (to eat) (*enna item vēṇum?*), Rajakkannu chides her and asks her to first list the foods she has. (Here, "item" doubles for a food item and an attractive female.) After she quickly rattles off the foods, he gestures her to come closer, looks away as his hand taps the table, and then looks up and at her as she leans in. He says in a somewhat sotto voce, "*vaṭai* (.) *nallā irukkummā?*" He exaggerates the word-initial voiced labiodental fricative in *vaṭai* and contracts and nasalizes the final diphthong in a phonetic style (presumably) appropriate to his working-class status, but also arguably his lascivious intent. This intent is registered by Sripriya's offended uptake, "*Eeh?!*" alongside a non-diegetic comic sound effect, as well as Sivaji's sidekick's embarrassed reaction (he brings his head down to the table, pops back up and begins scratching

the back of his head). The sidekick quickly shifts the conversation and inquires after prices. Shortly afterwards, Sivaji looks at Sripriya and says, "*Reṇṭu iṭliyum oru vaṭai koṇṭā reṇṭu pērukkum*" ("Bring both of us two idlis and one vadai").

**Figure 2**. Sivaji asks for two idlis (left) and one vadai (right) in *Lorry Drive Rajakkannu*.

Here, the food items have the twinned meaning not only of food (which Sivaji is ordering) but also of Sripriya's body parts (the round and soft idli for breasts; the doughnut topology of the vadai for vagina). Sivaji marks this by conspicuously looking up at Sripirya's face and chest area when he says "*iṭli*" (figure 2 – left) and then down at her crotch when he says "*vaṭai*" (right). Notably, with this latter line there is no response from the sidekick, no sound effect, and Sripriya simply looks confused and puzzled as she walks off to get their food. That is, Sripriya models a certain ignorance, opening a position for viewers themselves to enact/feign non-understanding. This is importantly gendered: Sripriya's uptake performs a form of feminine modesty in the mode of a certain kind of (tactful) ignorance/perplexion, in effect *doubling* the dialogue that, for at least some (perhaps most) viewers, would be transparently seen as crudely sexual.[3] Indeed, reviewers of the film at the time noted

[3] There is, thus, a gendering of the epistemic rights to "get" the joke that is enacted by Sripriya's character as a sort of signal, or model for, the viewer. The doubled meaning is not only in the doubled denotational text (i.e., that Sivaji's dialogue could be about sexuality or food) but in the distribution of uptake within the scene itself, between Sivaji and his sidekick (and the enunciative

the vulgarity of this dialogue and criticized the thespian, Sivaji Ganesan, for mouthing such words. Again, notice the importance of the offscreen status of the actor (as a "class" actor) informing the double meaning; in this case, working *against* its playful, humorous pragmatics and, arguably, *amplifying* its vulgarity.

Sivaji's delivery in *Lorry Driver Rajakannu* (1981) citationally echoes a similar scene in the 1972 film *Neethi* (dir. C. V. Rajendran), which provides an intertext that frames his utterance in the later film. In *Neethi*, Sivaji (also playing a lorry driver) acts alongside Jayalaitha, who plays a shop owner. In a particular scene, Sivaji also looks her body up and down when she asks a similar question, "*enna vēṇum?*" ("What do you want?") These two films outline the time period when more and more explicit references to sexual anatomy began in Tamil cinema (in contrast to the relatively less explicit times of Kannadasan that we saw above) and when they became conventionalized as part of both film comedy and a wider public vocabulary for sexuality. Indeed, films/comedians in the 1980s and 1990s took up this food-based coding of female anatomy just as such tropes became ubiquitous among adolescent boys in tea shops and on college campuses (as attested in Nakassis's ethnography in the late 2000s). This is an instance of the reverse journey of double meaning; rather than from folklore to cinema, as we saw in *Karakattakkaran*, here double meaning moves from the screen back to the "folk."

As the above discussion indicates, vulgarity is partly a function of *who* says what *and* in what intertextual series of cinematic texts, on and off the screen. To take another example, consider the popular duo, Goundamani and Senthil's extended comedy track in *Neram Nalla Neram* (dir. N. Sambandam, 1984), which also takes place in a tea shop where idli and vadai are sold. In this track, the character played by the actress Deepa works as a cook in Senthil's shop, where she grinds flour for idli and vadai. Instead of focusing on the food or tea, which often keeps burning their tongues, the customers—like the camera, which consistently frames her to expose her cleavage, midrift, and ankles—simply come to ogle her working. Here, what

gestures of the soundtrack), on the one hand, and Sripriya, on the other. This itself models the distribution and meaningfulness of getting the joke, of who, in the context of theatrical exhibition, has to act like they don't quite get it.

is important for our discussion is how the "double meaning" of the various scenes that make up this comedy track (where talk about vadai, and everything else, becomes talk about something sexual) is anchored by the *actress*, Deepa's presence. This creates a deep multilayeredness to the comedy track: on the one hand, the diegetic character of the laboring woman is erased, reducing her to a so-called pleasure doll (which we can read as an allegory for the fate of non-diegetic actresses like Deepa, on which more below); and on the other hand, this very doubling of onscreen and offscreen enables a Mulveyean (1975) scene of scopic pleasure (or *sight aṭikkiṟatu*, to use the Tamil phrase) where both Goundamani, and by extension, the audience, can ogle a woman (the actress), seated on the floor as she grinds away.[4] (Though in this sequence, the joke is ultimately on Goundamani, who gets the *māvu* [idli batter, a slang term for semen] on his face and is humiliated.)

This doubling, as noted above, is linked to Deepa's onscreen and offscreen paratexts. Unni Mary in real life, a Christian from Kerala, Deepa's onscreen para-text was as a vamp or the third woman, an extension of the supposedly lustful Anglo-Indian who entices men. Echoing this was offscreen gossip about her as a licentious starlet. Even popular, mainstream magazines like *Kumudam* and *Ananda Vikatan* had their gossip columns revolve around Deepa. She occupied the in-between space of Malayalam and Tamil, both because of her background and because she acted in both industries. This made it convenient to target her and take advantage of the misogyny-driven stereotype of the morally loose Malayali actress. And not coincidentally, the first (unverified) rumor of an actress in a pornographic film was also about Deepa with the arrival of the VHS tapes.

Such sequences interpellate a(n imagined to be) mostly male audience. But we would be remiss to suppose that double meaning comedy dialogues only work in this way. An actress like Kovai Sarala,

[4] This scenario itself has a resonance specific to the feudal romance characteristic of Indian cinemas, where the comfortably seated landlord (here, the spectator; but also, Goundamani, who refers to himself in the film as the feudal landlord of the village) exploits his female laborers. It is also an instance of double entendre framed visually—grinding (*āttaṟatu*) and kneading (*pisaiyaṟatu*) having long been used as sexual innuendos in Tamil—and aurally.

for example, navigated vulgarity through her spontaneous retorts and provided space for women to enjoy such scenes beyond their misogynistic confines, even in films where she was sandwiched between the typically "vulgar" duo Goundamani and Senthil. Consider again *Karakattakkaran*. Kovai Sarala plays a dancer in a *karakāṭṭam* troupe that also includes Senthil (as the nadhaswaram player) and Goundamani (as the tavil player). Senthil and Kovai Sarala have a romance, which they have hidden from Goundamani, who would oppose it for disturbing the troupe dynamic. In a scene that takes places after the above context has been established, Senthil and Kovai Saral are sitting at the feet of the haystack, alone. Senthil says:

*Enna, anta tavilkkārar romba tuḷḷuṟān*!
What the hell, that tavil guy is so arrogant.

*Anta tavil illāme āṭamuṭiyātā?*
Can't you dance without that tavil (drumbeat)?

With a loud, modal-pitch (and pitch range), and nasalized phonetic style, Kovai Sarala replies:

*Aṭā nīṅka oṇṇu! Oru tagara(pēṭṭi) taṭṭinā kūṭa nān āṭuvēn!*
Oh, you're crazy! I could dance even if (someone) tapped (a rhythm) on tin box!

*Anta tavil ennattukku?*
Who needs that tavil?

Kovai Sarala then leans over and puts her arms around Senthil's arms and speaks in quieter voice, with a slower delivery, markedly raised-pitch, wider pitch range, and with a relative absence of nasalization (i.e., in a sing-song childish/romantic voice). She says:

*Uṅka nātacuvaram tān vē:::ṇum.*
I only need/want your nadhaswaram.

Senthil responds with an affirmative backchannel and puts his arms around her shoulders. He goes on to dismiss Goundamani, which Kovai Sarala takes up with a series of insults toward Goundamani, who eventually shows up and breaks up the lovers' rendezvous.

While in the previous examples the masculine actor alternately makes fun of the characters of prominent actresses like Vijayalalitha and Sripriya or subjects them to an objectifying gaze (as with secondary stars like Deepa), in this example Kovai Sarala inverts things. Here, the reference to nadhaswaram—at one level, an instrument, itself a metonym for its player (Senthil); at its doubled level, a reference to the phallus, also a metonym for its possessor (Senthil)—is a sign of affection, intimacy, and love. It bears no trace of the misogyny that characterizes what is otherwise readable in the typical double meaning dialogue as a castration anxiety (cf. the male-authority-driven order of vadai, which hides a male anxiety in the presence of a sexualized women or which triggers a sadistic punishment of her). Notice how Senthil responds with an affectionate hug, with no trace of eroticism or shock (and non-diegetically, there is no comedy sound-effect). If Sripriya's confused uptake above split the dialogue to produce its doubledness (by recognizing its vulgarity by feigning non-understanding of it), here Senthil's response validates Kovai Sarala's transformation of the vulgar into the romantic. We can further note that in her castigation of Goundamani, she stands up for Senthil, who is the typical target of Goundamani's aggression, and thus substitutes for his compromised masculinity, not in the mode of castration but of fierce domestic affection.

At the same time, as a double meaning dialogue, Kovai Sarala's dialogue is nevertheless an expression of her sexuality and desire. Here, one wonders if for female audiences at the time the nadhaswaram also signified an aspiration for marriage as, in the context of the narrative, it does for her character (and perhaps also the actress, who never married). Finally, we should again emphasize that this female agency—a kind of structural inversion of patriarchal cruelty and objectification—is not simply a feature of the filmic text but reaches beyond it; after films like *Karakattakkaran*, it became a feature of Kovai Sarala's own parallel star text. Consider, for instance, her many roles with the comedian Vadivelu, where she hounds him and even physically beats him to pulp.

In short, through the doubling of meaning vulgarity is itself doubled and transformed, and a certain kind of upper-caste patriarchal regime of comedy is inverted, if only temporarily and partially, into a subaltern, folk order of agency, intimacy, and legitimate (female) desire.

**Double meaning and the participant framework of cinema (i.e., watching with family)**

Above, we suggested that the vulgarity of double meaning dialogues has something to do with the way in which such dialogues talk about that which should not or cannot be talked about explicitly: women's bodies, sex acts, sexual desire. This is also a folk ideology about what makes such jokes vulgar and thus has to be taken account of; yet such a discourse erases much of the phenomenon it rationalizes by focusing on the referential *content* of such speech/depiction as a justification for its pragmatic effects (and metapragmatic typification). That is, such an ideology—while not untrue per se—problematically narrows our analytic gaze.

Beyond a focus on the content of such representations, the vulgarity of double meaning dialogues is also a problem of *who else is around*, that is, of what Erving Goffman (1981) called the participation framework: in the case of double meaning dialogues, that one is constituted as part of an audience among co-present, overhearing others. And this, in turn, is a question of *who* those others are (and oneself is) sociologically speaking, which is to say, what kinds of social identities and relations are consequentially in play in the vicinity of "vulgarity"?

In Nakassis's ethnographic fieldnotes, double meaning dialogues pop up in various places. Talking with an assistant film director, S——, one day outside a tea stall, Nakassis queried him about the moral reputation of actresses. The assistant director opined that heroines are like dolls, they are there to be "sighted." To be crass, he said, in Tamil Nadu for most (unmarried) men, there are no relationships with women that are not as a sister or a mother. The fieldnotes continue to describe S—— observing a division between "our women" and all other women; the others are barely even human as far as most guys are concerned, he said; that is, one can look at them however one wants. From this sexist set of statements, the conversation found its way to this assistant director's mother's own reception practices; paraphrased from the fieldnotes: "when his mother was young, she went to see a Sivaji Ganesan film. She was so sad when Sivaji's character died at the end, so she went back to see the film again, hoping that the second time he wouldn't die at the end." The fieldnotes continue

with Nakassis and S—— shifting topics to the status of kissing and glamour in film. What is problematic about them, the assistant director opined, has nothing to do with the acts per se; it is, he says, *that you can't watch such scenes with your family*. It's embarrassing, he says, and to many inappropriate and *hence* vulgar. That is, the vulgarity is an effect of the participation framework, the co-presence of family.[5] This is why, he then noted, double meaning dialogues in film are okay but not kissing scenes. It is because you *can* watch the former with your family under the cover of the dialogue's non-sexual meaning. The double meaning, as a kind of public secret, is a way to manage the fact that there are multiple audiences in the room, all of whom may understand both meanings but are too uncomfortable to openly experience sexual representations together. (Here, again, recall Sripriya's perplexion at Sivaji's crass innuendo discussed above as an internal filmic model of this pragmatic fact of the cinematic reception of double meanings.)

[5] This is not to say that families do not end up sitting through such scenes together, either in the theater or at home. In many cases in our experience, however, the station might be changed or the television shut off—by or at the behest of senior members of the family—when objectionable content comes on. (This censorship might itself be anticipated by the film text; e.g, Nakassis's pirated VCD version of the youth hit film *7/G Rainbow Colony* edited out a particular sequence that featured explicit depictions and discussions of premarital sexuality. Such VCD versions are often made for at-home consumption by families.) But even where the film is allowed to continue playing, we can detect this blockage, as when certain members of the family move out of the room or avert their gazes (Nakassis 2023, 66–110). Eswaran reports, for example, such a situation from the household of his uncle's daughter. Some 25 years back, when his nieces were approximately 13 and 15, Swarnavel noticed that when watching a film on the television during a typical family social, if there were any vulgar dialogues, jokes, or erotic songs, the girls would turn their eyes down to the ground and their father affect a stern gaze. But the volume was not altered or muted, nor the image turned off or otherwise blocked. In this distribution of the sensible, the visual is marked as the site of taboo (and explicitness) while sound continues on as fine to be experienced. Such practices presume that one is supposed to imagine the morally right thing through sound, whereas the visual forecloses the ability to avoid or feign experiencing the sexual or vulgar, constituting a doubleness of the double meaning that allows the film to continue while some (the young women) attenuate their presence to the screen and to others in the room, who continue to watch. Here, again, kinship relationality and particular kinship roles (of father and daughter) are enacted through a mode of cinematic reception in relationship to the double meaning.

Note the associative chain of topics in this assistant director's rationalization (itself guided by Nakassis's own research interests) and how it lends a kind of conceptual coherence to the conversation: meandering from scopically consuming heroines on the screen to the blockage of sexuality *by* consanguineal (cross-sexual) kinship relations, to the figuration of older generations of kin as cinematic rubes (believing the film would change the next time around), and then back to the problem of kinship and watching and hearing sexuality. Here, we interpret the interregnum of the mother's credulous spectatorship (otherwise, a non sequitur) as an implicit comment that such prudishness—in watching sex with family members—while completely natural and self-evident, is somehow illiberal, unmodern, and anachronistic. And this sets up the assistant director's point that in the place of the explicit appears the veiled—the double meaning dialogue which is "okay" when around (overly credulous and prudish older) kin.

Or is it? In 2010, Nakassis was chatting online with an unmarried, female friend, V——, who had recently finished her post-graduate degree. After proferring that she just saw *Aayirathil Oruvan* (2010, dir. Selvaraghavan), Nakassis asked her how the film was. She replied as follows (original in the left-hand column; English translation in the right-hand column):

| | |
|---|---|
| 12:45 AM **V——**: 1000il oruvan one time paarkalam avalo thaan.. | **V——**: You can watch *Aayirathil Oruvan* one time, that's enough. |
| II half Scenes romba vulgara irundadu.. | The scenes in the 2nd half were really vulgar. |
| **me**: eppadi | **CVN**: how's so? |
| sex rithiyaa? | In terms of sex? |
| ille, violence-aa? | Or, violence? |
| 12:46 AM **V——**: Familyoda paarka mudiyaaada padam.. | **V——**: It's a film that one can't watch with family. |
| Violence ila... | It's not the violence. |
| Sex, double meaning dialogues.. | (It's the) sex, double meaning dialogues. |
| **me**: double meanings? | **CVN**: double meanings? |
| 12:47 AM aaah | Aaah |
| so, nee yaarooda paarthe? | So, who'd you watch with? |
| **V——**: Nan en friendsoda paarthen.. | **V——**: I saw it with my friends. |

At issue here is not simply the question of, for V——, transparently vulgar content, nor even the question of who is watching with you

(though it is both, too). It is also that a certain kind of cinema is itself defined in terms of these questions. A refrain Nakassis heard over and over again from college students in his ethnographic research was that a "neat" or "decent" film—tellingly called a *kuṭumpa paṭam* ("family film")—is one that you can watch with your family; such a film, stereotypically at least, has no double meaning dialogues, no "item numbers" or "rape scenes," and has lots of family "sentiment," moral messages, and the like. By contrast, cinema that is *for* youth was defined as cinema that you cannot watch with family (but with friends); and why? Self-evidently for these youth, because of the presence of item numbers, sexy scenes, and "double meaning dialogues," all of which *make* for a type of cinema by circumscribing the pragmatics of the participation framework for encountering it.

**Youthfulness of double meaning dialogues**

As we have been arguing, double meaning dialogues do their work through a doubling of their possible interpretations (their denotational texts) *and*, correlatively, through the multiplication of the kinds of uptake of them. The claim, then, is that the doubleness of the interpretability of such denotational texts implicates multiple interactional texts of uptake, including, importantly, acts of not-getting it, not-seeing (or hearing) it, or of only attending to one of the double meanings (the "literal," on-record one). This fact is itself folded into the textuality of double meaning dialogues, as we saw with Sripriya's character in *Lorry Drive Rajakkannu*. Such double meaning dialogues model a singularity of ("literal") meaning for some spectator *who does not get the joke* (for a spectator who does) or feigns not getting it (for a spectator who need not disavow understanding). This is itself part of its effect.

Consider an example provided by Dr. N. Govindarajan (personal communication, 23 March 2022), from *Polladhavan* (2007, dir. Vetrimaran). In the scene in question, the hero Dhanush is narrating, over a flashback, his getting up the courage on the bus to talk to a "figure" (beautiful young woman) with whom he has fallen in love. He walks over, only to look down at her feet. In the visual-track, the camera cuts to her high-heel shoes and then back to Dhanush telling the story to his friends. He says,

narrating his intimidation and loss of courage: "*Avḷō periya* heels! Ten steps back-*u*" ("Her heels were so big! I took ten steps back"). The comedian Santhanam retorts to Dhanush: "*Kai uṭu maccā(n). Kuṭuttu veccevan ṭā nī!* Hee:::ls-*ē avvaḷavu perisunnā* . . . " ("Shake my hand, bro. You're so lucky! If her heels are that big . . . ").

With this last line, Santhanam raises his eyebrows from a furrowed position at the onset of the low-pitched "heels" to a maximal height with the high-pitch-stressed and elongated *-ē* as his head rocks back in forth and his mouth opens into a smile. He repeats this rising intonation contour/facial expression again when moving from the (low-pitch/relaxed-eyebrows) first syllable of "*perisu*" (big) to the (high-pitch/raised-eyebrows) "*-(nn)ā*" (if), though with relatively lesser height (in both pitch and eyebrows). The overall effect is an iconic resonance of head movement, eyebrow raising, mouth opening, pitch-raising, stress, and vowel lengthening to effectuate a teasingly licentiousness. Santhanam never finishes the line, though, because he gets a smack from Dhanush's character. Here, Dhanush's punishment both works as a form of censorship diegeticized *within* the film *and* as a confirming uptake of its vulgar implication (already metacommunicated through the performed speech style), though only at the cost of causing the comic utterance to remain unfinished.

Because the joke turns on the spectator supplying the second clause of the hypothetical (if her heels are that big . . .) its "vulgarity" is also, ultimately, a function of the spectator's own uptake. This, of course, is the point with all double meaning dialogues; but what this particular example points to is how the spectator's own habits of interpretation and imagination are at issue within the joke itself. And this is itself construable along generational and gender lines. Dr. Govindarajan offers an account:

> If you're an 80s kid (born between 1980 to 1990 and nearing 40s) you'll certainly have some problem in getting the meaning immediately. So, you're a *manikuṇi* ("ignorant person"). If you're a 90s kid (born between 1990 to 2000 and still longing for marriage) the response is like '*Dēy! Dēy! Nī enna solla varēnnu teriyum*' ("Hey! Hey! I know what you're trying to say") with *asaṭṭu sirippu* ("a smirk"). For the 2k kids (born between 2000 to 2010 and who have enjoyed and continue to enjoy all the gifts of capitalism and technological advances), it has no inner meaning, and the meaning is explicit.

Not only do such double meaning dialogues work, then, to sketch out zones of appropriate consumption by imagining a kind of kinship chronotope of reception (watching with friends vs. watching with family), they are also taken up as ascribing a certain set of qualities of personhood to their viewers (older vs. younger). Here, (enacting) understanding (of) the joke is an index of spectators' own identities, generationally and by gender. Not simply reflecting the (male) youth identity of a spectator (the one who gets the joke; who can appreciate vulgarity as humor; who has their sexual urges satisfied in the cinema), such humor presupposes the entailment of male youthfulness (of the spectator, of the space of interaction) in the uptake of the joke itself.

**Doubling doubled meaning beyond the cinema hall**

This last point brings us to a critical issue about the how cinema as a narrative medium works vis-à-vis double meaning dialogues. The doubleness of the double meaning dialogue is not only a function of the dialogue between its doubled meanings; it is also the way in which, as an enunciated narrated text, it can be de- and re-contextualized beyond the screen.

During Nakassis's fieldwork, it was not uncommon for filmic texts to be citationally reanimated by young men to "tease" or flirt with young women. One female friend, for example, reported the nuisance of college boys sitting nearby their "top" (area on campus where they hung out) and singing film songs with "double meanings"; here, note the participation framework of the college student singing a song for his proximal peers—as ratified bystanders—to young women—as unratified addressees who are non-proximal but within hearing range. Similarly, upon an excursion to the Eco Park in Madurai with a group of hostel mates, Nakassis et alia passed by a group of young women sitting under a tree (Nakassis 2016, 174). One of the boys, P. J., broke into song, singing with a sideways glance to the girls: "*Maccānai pāttīṅkaḷā malai vāḻai tōppukkuḷḷē?*" ("In the mountain banana grove, did you see *maccān*?"). *Maccān* refers, in female-to-male usage, to a marriageable cross-cousin, here a euphemism for lover or future husband (Nakassis 2014). Reanimating a lyric

from the classic film *Annakili* (1976, dir. Devaraj–Mohan), here P. J. took the filmic sequence, a romantic song in a mountain banana grove, and projected it onto our own arboreal mise-en-scène, in effect flirting with the young women by using the alignment of filmic hero with heroine as his opening gambit to initiate a "line," or romantic relationship, while casting himself as a "college hero." His friends laughed as we strolled on, and the young women giggled in embarrassment. Again, the romantic double meaning—drawing on presupposed cultural knowledge about kin term relationality, the arboreal (onscreen/offscreen) chronotope of romance, and of the cited film in question—is itself doubled in its citation. In both cases, the twinned meanings of the cinematic sequence are projected *onto* the interactional framework that is enacted by the fact of singing the song, recruiting bystanding men as an audience for an act of flirtation with the young women (forced into the role of the desirous heroine). The doubleness of the film song affords the doubleness of its reanimation.

**Political allegory, the doubleness of the hero-star**

In this penultimate section, we pivot to the use of narrative Tamil cinema by the Dravidian Movement to enact allegorical political commentary. While not emically considered double meaning dialogues, such allegorical commentaries do draw on a number of similar semiotic relations: both double meaning while keeping both texts (or meanings) in play at once. Further, both stand in tension with a certain liberal understanding of representation (in both the political and semiotic sense) because both are emblematic of the "massness" of Tamil cinema. And finally, both draw on cinema's narrative and technological capacity to entangle onscreen and offscreen such that what is narratively depicted is interactionally enacted. In short, while political allegorical uses of film should not be conflated with double meaning dialogues (they differ in key ways), the comparison is useful to highlight what is of interest to the process of doubling in the Tamil cinema independent of the question of "(vulgar) content" per se.

As various authors have shown (Sivathambi 1981; Pandian 1991; Eswaran 2021), the Dravidian Movement, and the the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party in particular, heavily used cinema in the mid-20th-century to mobilize the masses and, eventually, dominate state politics. While the early films penned by C. N. Annadurai, Mu. Karunanidhi, and other Dravidianist writers in the 1950s and 1960s, however, worked—through their use of well-placed monologues, song lyrics, symbolism (of the red and black, the rising sun), and narrative arcs (that echoed offscreen political realities)—to propagate the DMK party vision and image (eventually becoming known through the genre label, the "DMK film"), through the 1960s the DMK film increasingly revolved around the stardom of the most charismatic of the DMK's matinee idols, M. G. Ramachandran (or MGR). From the 1950s onward, MGR's persona was carefully constructed by a team of writers, directors, and producers who borrowed the swashbuckler action-hero stereotype from Hollywood (especially from the films of Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.). Such filmmakers effectively intercalated this swashbuckling hero into a variety of local textual forms (Prasad 2014), such as the melodrama of indigenous folklore or the mythos of an Oedipal son who balances excessive attachment for his mother with the taming of the shrew while freeing the downtrodden. If, before, the doubled meaning of the DMK film's political allegory implied the need for the DMK to rise to power to reverse the evils of the Indian National Congress's rule (and casteist-Brahminical-Aryan-Northern-Hindi domination of an otherwise egalitarian-non-Brahmin-Dravidian-Southern-Tamil community), with the MGR film, the doubled meaning was MGR himself, that is, his transtextual and offscreen paratext as the hero of the masses who had come to save them.

The emergence of the MGR film from the DMK film led to numerous tensions within the DMK party through the 1960s. By the early 1970s, MGR's persona fully subsumed the narrative of his films even as he was being increasingly marginalized within the DMK. Such offscreen drama found its way into MGR's films. This is exemplified in MGR's *Nam Naadu* ("Our country," dir. Jambulingam), released in November 1969. The film's narrative capitalized on the growing resentment of the masses over

corruption within the DMK government, especially following C. N. Annadurai's demise in 1969 and Karunanidhi assuming party leadership. In the film, MGR plays an honest clerk in the mayor's office who is forced to contest the elections due to rampant corruption. MGR utilized the film to critique his own party, the DMK, and its allegory—the need for MGR to contest elections—anticipated and became a reality in 1972 when MGR left/was ejected from the DMK and formed his own party, Annadurai DMK (ADMK), eventually contesting (and winning) elections.

A central element to the film's allegorical critique is its use of the "philosophical (or propaganda) song" (*tattuva pāṭṭu*), a staple of MGR's films. Consider the song-sequence "*Nalla Perai*," which comes about 46 minutes into the film. The song-sequence emerges out of a narrative scene of MGR's character chastising and advising his niece and nephew to listen their parents: "Don't you know that those who appreciate their parents receive praise from others?" he asks. He then affectionately hugs the children (figure 3 – left), who frame him on either side, his gaze turning to the camera as the camera tracks-in to a tighter, centered composition of him (figure 3 – right) as he breaks into song: "*Nalla pērai vāṅka vēṇṭum piḷḷaikaḷē, nam nāṭu ennum tōṭṭattilē, nāḷai malarum mullaikaḷē*" ("Kids, you have to get a good name, in the garden that is our country, tomorrow thorns will blossom [into flowers]").

**Figure 3**. MGR singing to the children, his diegetic audience. Note his deictic, frontal gaze at the camera as it tracks-in, as well as his presentative open-palmed gesture (right) as he sings, framed by gods and the great political leaders of the past (in the top-left of this frame we see Bharatiyar; and later, Gandhi and, most prominently, Tiruvalluvar and C.N. Annadurai [see figure 4]).

While, narratively, the song offers advice to his children on how to live properly, receive a good name, and uplift the country, the song also stands in as an ethico-political statement issued by MGR to the non-diegetic audience (his "children," the people of "our country"). Later in the song, MGR sings and the children repeat back, matching his melody and accompanying gestures (i.e., they have internalized his lesson and style and citationally double it):

| | |
|---|---|
| MGR: | *Viḻi pōla enni nam moḻi kākka vēṇṭum* |
| Children: | *Viḻi pōla enni nam moḻi kākka vēṇṭum* |
| | Like the eyes we must protect our language |
| | |
| MGR: | *Tavarāna pērkku nēr vaḻikkāṭṭa vēṇṭum* |
| Children: | *Tavarāna pērkku nēr vaḻikkāṭṭa vēṇṭum* |
| | We must show the right path to the misguided ones |
| | |
| MGR: | *Jana nāyagattil nām ellōrum mannar* |
| Children: | *Jana nāyagattil nām ellōrum mannar* |
| | In democracy we are all kings |
| | |
| | <tilt-up to shot of MGR pointing to Annadurai portrait> |
| MGR: | *Tennāṭṭu Gandhi annālil sonnār* |
| | <pan-right to shot of Annadurai portrait> |
| Children & MGR: | *Tennāṭṭu Gandhi annālil sonnār* |
| | The southern Gandhi said so on that day. |

In the last couplet, the camera tilts down to a low-angle (figure 4 – top-left) and then upward, following MGR's pointing index finger as it points "up" to Annadurai's image (figure 4 – top-right; cf. Nakassis 2017, 204, 231). The image cuts back to the children (middle-left), who put their hands together in worshiping supplication as they and MGR sing together; as they sing, the camera then pans right, past MGR to Annadurai's illuminated image (middle-right). Pausing on Annadurai, who substitutes for MGR and his pointing gesture, the song continues, cutting back to a long-shot of the family and MGR, who is at its center of the shot, standing where Annadurai just was onscreen.

**Figure 4.** Annadurai, citationally invoked by his children (MGR and his children)

These lines, while fitting in with the film's narrative world, more importantly point beyond the film, not only to Annadurai but, via Annadurai, to the offscreen tensions between MGR and Karunanidhi. Lyrically, the text alludes to the Dravidian ideology by invoking the Tamil language (which we must protect), here voiced by MGR—as the onscreen animator (and principal) of the song—to critique "the misguided ones" (Karunanidhi et al.); similarly, it alludes to the democratic principle of equality (that the misguided ones have betrayed), as taught by the great Annadurai to us. This figures MGR as also a "child" (i.e., the real heir) of Annadurai (and the Tamil nation), even as we are, in turn, his children.

After MGR founded the ADMK in 1972, his party's candidate, Maayathevar, won the 1973 by-election in Dindigul. *Nam Naadu* was re-released to capitalize on the euphoria. In the 1973 version, stock shots of MGR and Maayathevar celebrating the electoral victory were inserted into the film when MGR's character celebrates his own success in the film's mayoral elections. In addition, the black and red colors of the DMK flag depicted within the film at the mayor's office were changed to the tricolored—black, white, and red—of the ADMK flag.

In sum, note how the rupturing within the narrative of the national (Gandhi) through the regional (Annadurai as "southern Gandhi" of "our country") opens a space within the text—and its exhibition space—for the later juxtaposition and super-imposition of both mayoral (diegetic, onscreen) and district (nondiegetic, offscreen) electoral successes, equating one with the other in anticipation, arguably, of MGR's eventual offscreen ascent to the chief ministership of the state (Eswaran 2012, 81–82; also Prasad 2014; cf. Nakassis 2016, 2023). The semiotics of scaling, enabled through the doubling of the text, is dizzying. And through this doubling, causality is bent all the way around, with the 1969 *Nam Naadu* anticipating and (arguably) leading to a 1973 victory, which is itself registered within an updated version of the film to celebrate what it led to. In both the original and the updated film, what is narratively depicted is politically enacted (proleptically and then in celebration), and the text and its lyrics, dialogues, colors, mis-en-scène, and even photographic indexicalities are all doubled, twinned, twice. Here, it is not that the offscreen world is represented by the onscreen text, but that the onscreen text doubles itself so as to hold in play two interpretations and two references which it then smears into one. As with our previous examples of double meaning dialogues, swatches of filmic discourse draw on the possibilities of ambiguating semiosis *and* of the cinema's capacity to enact what it represents through the twinned bodies of the character/actor. That MGR's political charisma is immanent in his characters operates exactly parallel to Deepa's sexual charisma in that both serve to make possible a range of double meanings that such films exploit, on and off the screen.

## Conclusion

Our point in the above discussion is not that political allegory and sexual innuendo are the same. Their social values are different and their uptakes distinct. Moreover, in double meaning dialogues a kind of ambiguity or incongruity between the twinned meanings is *modeled* by the text and its uptakes (hence their metaphoric quality, even if no one necessarily understands such dialogues *as* ambiguous or incongruous) while in political allegories (such as in the MGR film) the doubled meanings are *collapsed* into each other (with, for the spectator-fan, a near-total congruence; hence their allegorical quality).

In both cases, however, we find similar semiotic processes and relations. Indeed, we see with clear contours how the cinema, as narrative form and indexical technology, already pre-doubles its discourse, a discourse that in its doubling pre-figures its citational uptake beyond itself, which is to say, its further doubling, whether this is MGR songs at election rallies (or election rally footage in MGR films) or double meaning dialogues or lyrics used by youth to woo or tease each other.

Such processes of doubled meaning, however, are not unique to the cinema. The pragmatics of discourse are always anticipating this kind of uptake and recontextualization; yet these examples brightly highlight this aspect of the pragmatics of discourse *as* the pregnant potential of meaning to being doubled, not simply repeated or copied but put into a dialogue of twins: doubled meaning.

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# *The Scandal of the Devadasi in Nineteenth-Century Tamil Theater and Early Tamil Cinema: Caitapuram Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar's drama* Tampacari vilacam

Sascha Ebeling

While the movie *Kalidas*[1] from 1931 is generally acknowledged as the first Tamil sound film, or "talkie" in contemporary parlance, it was not until the mid-1930s that the Tamil sound film really got underway.[2] Our study of early Tamil cinema today is complicated by the fact that the majority of the early Tamil talkies has been lost. Cinema historians thus depend on ancillary sources, such as movie reviews, film stills, posters and advertisements, et cetera. In the absence of the actual films, studies of the content of early Tamil cinema remain rare. Among the important social issues during the time of the emergence of Tamil sound film was a revival

[1] For the sake of legibility diacritics have been omitted and personal names appear largely in their common anglicized form. English film titles appear as spelled at the time. All translations from Tamil are mine unless indicated otherwise.

[2] For an introduction to the history of Tamil cinema, see Baskaran (1996). The relationship between Tamil theater, early Tamil cinema and nationalism is discussed in Baskaran's classic study *The Message Bearers*, first published in 1981 and now available in a revised second edition (Baskaran 2008). The early Tamil sound films are also discussed in Narayanan (2008).

of anti-*devadasi*[3] debates in South India. Over the course of the previous century, the devadasi or courtesan had become an infamous figure in South Indian society and a target of social reform debates linking courtesans to prostitution, venereal disease, and other questions of social order and morality. During the 1930s, the debates on "reforming" devadasis were pursued with renewed vigor as is betokened, for instance, by a famous literary document on devadasis and social reform, the novel *Tacikal mocavalai allatu matiperra mainar* (The devadasis' web of deceit or the minor who wisened up) published in 1936 by the "reformed" devadasi and member of the Self-Respect Movement Muvalur Ramamirttammal (1883–1962).[4] One of the earliest Tamil talkies, and a film that was proudly announced as the first Tamil "social" (i.e., a movie with a contemporary theme), was director Mani Lal Tandon's *Tampaccari* (Engl. title: *Dumbachary or Ideal Wife*)[5] released in February 1935 (see figure 1), a movie that emerged at the intersection of these anti-devadasi debates and early Tamil sound film. *Dumbachary* portrayed a young fob who squanders his money on women of ill repute and is ruined by a devadasi named Madanasundari. Unfortunately, the movie *Dumbachary* is all but forgotten today. Not only is the actual film lost, like the majority of the early Tamil talkies, but even the standard sources of film history do not have much to say.[6] What we do know is that *Dumbachary* was director M. L. Tandon's[7] second movie, produced at the Pioneer Film Studios in Calcutta and financed by the film company Chellam talkies, recently

[3] For a brilliant social and cultural history of devadasis in South India see Soneji (2012).

[4] The novel is discussed in the larger context of devadasi history in Soneji (2012: 139–142), and also in Anandhi (1991). It is available in an English translation by Kalpana and Vasanth Kannabiran (2003), whose detailed introduction can be consulted on the question of the anti-devadasi debates I am referring to here. For a biography of Ramamirttammal, see Jivacuntari (2007).

[5] The word *(i)tampacari*, also spelled *tampaccari*, can be translated as "dandy" or "coxcomb."

[6] See, however, the information provided in Guy (1997, 82), and Guy (2013).

[7] Tandon was born in Bombay and studied film at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles before returning to India. He worked with M. R. Krishnamurthy and the "Bai sisters" already for his first movie *Pama vijayam* (*Bhama Vijayam* 1934), a "mythological" film telling the puranic story of Krishna's wife Satyabhama.

founded by a group of Coimbatore Chettiars. *Dumbachary* featured famous stage actors and actresses, such as M. R. Krishnamurthy (brother of the musician Maharajapuram Vidvan Viswanatha Aiyar) as the male lead, the "Bai sisters" or "Palayamkottai Sisters," P. S. Rathnabai and P. S. Saraswathibai, with Saraswathibai playing the devadasi Madanasundari, as well as the quick-change artist C. S. Shamanna Iyer, notorious on the theater stage as the "Charlie Chaplin of South India." We also know that *Dumbachary* came back for second runs in Madras in July[8] and September of 1935, and that it showed in theaters in Singapore[9] in September 1936. Other than that, the archives remain silent, at least for the time being.

**Figure 1.** Advertisement for *Dumbachary*, 1935.

[8] See the advertisement in the Tamil film magazine *Cinima ulakam* (28 July 1935, back cover).

[9] See the advertisement in the Singapore newspaper *The Straits Times* (7 September 1936, p. 5) for shows of *Dumbachari* at the Marlborough Theatre on Beach Road at 6:15 pm and 9:15 pm.

But what became clear in my search for this lost moment of Tamil film history was that the movie *Dumbachary* had a rather long prehistory, reaching back almost a century into the 1850s. For his movie, Mani Tandon adapted a very popular theater play that as far as we can tell was first performed in the 1850s, a play titled *Tampacari vilacam* (The dalliances of a dandy) written by a man named Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar. The play is not only an important milestone in the history of modern Tamil drama, but, as we shall see, it also presents a striking case of cross-cultural negotiation and understanding across the colonizer/colonized divide at the height of British colonial power in South India. Finally, it also constitutes a significant moment in the long history of what one might call "devadasi discourse": a set of highly fraught debates centered not only on the question of the devadasi in Tamil society but including issues such as caste and gender hierarchies, prostitution, social reform, and the question of the afterlife of traditional forms of art and performance after the epistemic onslaught of colonial modernity. To date, the last word on the study of devadasi discourse has been Davesh Soneji's masterful study *Unfinished Gestures*, where he argues that "[r]epresentations of *devadāsī*-courtesans in vernacular literatures of South India . . . enable us to trace, with some degree of precision, their persistently ambiguous social and moral status" (2012, 84). The aim of the present essay is a small contribution to this larger project of examining the literary representations of devadasi-courtesans. Through a reading of Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar's play *Tampacari vilacam*, the extant predecessor of the lost Tamil talkie, I will attempt to uncover what I would call the trope of the "scandal of the devadasi," referring both to the devadasi as scandal and the scandal of referring to the devadasi. This essay will thus also shed some light on the content of the lost talkie *Dumbachary* by reconstructing its prehistory.

## Caitapuram Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar (1806–1871), the maverick author

Who was Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar, *Tampacari vilacam*'s author? While his theater plays were the talk of the town in Madras for several decades, from the 1850s through the 1890s, today Caitapuram Ka-

civicuvanata Mutaliyar (1806–1871)[10] hardly appears in the annals of Tamil literary history. But he did leave a few traces in the colonial archive. The success of his plays earned him an entry in Edward Balfour's *Cyclopædia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia*, where we read that Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar was

> a Tamil author of the middle of the 19th century, who distinguished himself as a playwright, and whose death was a great blow both to the Brahmo cause and the theatre. His plays are exceedingly popular, and are in no sense copies of the Sanskrit productions. That which is esteemed the finest is called the Tahsildar Natakam . . . a satirical comedy, intended to rebuke and expose a tahsildar [revenue officer] who obtains the favour of and promotion from the collector [his superior officer] by aping European customs,—who wears boots, drinks beer and brandy-pegs, rides horses, swears loudly, professes the utmost contempt for native prejudices, but is withal a confirmed scoundrel. He takes bribes, oppresses the poor, persecutes his enemies, sets up a haram, gathers money by every means fair and foul, and then scatters it in coarse pleasures and brutal riot. Such is the man that Kasi Viswanada Mudelliar undertook to flagellate, and seldom has the lash been laid on more smartly. Of course in the end the villain hero comes to most irremediable grief, to the confounding of his imitators and the outrageous joy of the people. The play, wherever performed, gains all the aid of local feeling. Its hero is always identified with Tahsildar this, Deputy-Collector that, or Police-Inspector the other. Hence unfailing crowds always rush to its performance. The play styled Dumbachari Vilasam, or the Story of a Spendthrift, in Madras is almost as popular as the Tahsildar Natakam. The hero is truly identified with a person who rushed by native society a few years since with all the glory and sputter of a rocket, but who afterwards lived in well-deserved obscurity, (1885, 1026)

I quote Balfour's entry in full not only because of its charming style, but also since what we read there about the *Taciltar natakam* (Play [about a] Tahsildar, c. 1850s[11]), about its biting satire and

[10] Pe. Cu. Mani (1992, 254) mentions Friday, 14 October 1871 as the day of his death. I have not been able to corroborate that date (except for finding that the day was actually a Saturday).

[11] In the author's preface to the 1868 edition of the *Taciltar natakam*, Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar notes that a first edition of the play was published in

its popularity, could also be said about the *Tampacari vilacam*, which, as Balfour mentions, is supposed to have been based on a true story. Balfour also alludes to the fact that Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar was a member of the Brahmo Samaj, the Hindu reform movement founded in 1828 in Calcutta by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833). It is thus that Mudaliar appears in an essay on the development of the Brahmo Samaj in the *Theistic Annual for 1878*:

> Mr. Casi Visvanatha Mudelier . . . was "the author of innumerable Tamil books," and is said to have "reformed the Tamil language to a great extent, and given a new life to native drama." His plays seem to have been chiefly devoted to the exposure of prevailing vices, tyrannies, or superstitions. One of his pieces, "Dumbachary Velasam," "has been acted over and over again throughout Southern India." He also wrote on female education, widow-marriage, &c.: he was editor and proprietor of the *Brahmo Dipika*, a local journal, and he maintained the town Somaj. He died in October 1871, aged 66, widely beloved and respected. (These details concerning him are gleaned from the obituary account[12] given in the *Indian Mirror*.) (P. C. M. 1878, 49)

A third and final nugget from the archives—an excerpt from a historical sketch of the Brahmo Samaj published in *The Modern Review* by the feminist freethinker Sophia Dobson Collet (1822–1894)—elaborates on the *Piramma tipikai*, the Tamil Brahmo Samaj reformist magazine that Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar edited,[13] and the editor's "Brahmoism":

> Cási Visvanátha Mudeliar, a retired judge, "of noble parentage," who conducted the services at one of the Brahmo prayer-rooms,

1858 (Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar 1868, iii). If we consider the general publication practices of the time, it is likely that the play had been performed for a number of years before it was first printed.

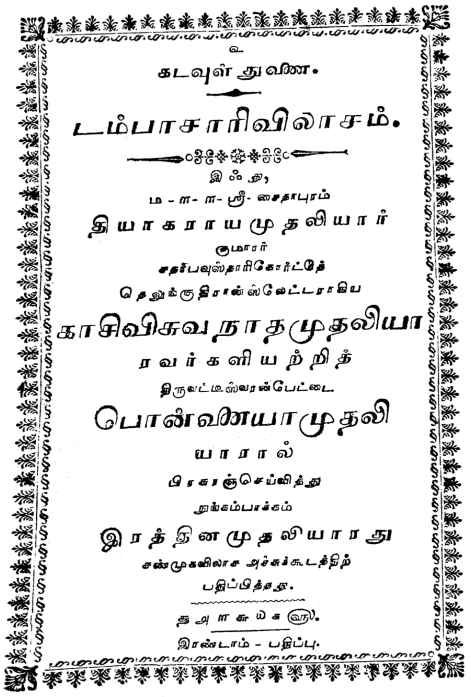
[12] Unfortunately, I have not been able to find this obituary.

[13] A. Ma. Samy (2000, 88–87) notes in his history of Tamil journals and magazines that the monthly *Piramma tipikai* was published from Madras, the first issue appearing on 26 December 1870 and ceasing with the death of Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar. He also notes that Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar had earlier edited a magazine titled *Cattiya tipam* (The light of truth) jointly with one Ramasamy Raju. Pe. Cu. Mani's (1992) study on the Brahmo Samaj in the Tamil country has a chapter on Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar's contributions as a *samajist* (but the chapter unfortunately contains several wrong dates and other inaccuracies).

> and was the author of many Tamil books and of several popular plays which exposed the superstitions and vices prevalent in Southern India. He owned a little vernacular journal called the *Brahmo Dipiká*, which he edited himself, and which appears to have been the organ of his views. What those views were it is not easy to discover from the enigmatical hints in the newspapers of the time (except that he appears to have been against the Brahmo Marriage Bill), nor is it worth while [*sic*] to revive the ashes of the dead controversies which for a time caused some dissensions in the Madras Somaj. Suffice to say [*sic*] that after having been regarded by his admirers as "the leader of the Madras Brahmos," Cási Visvanátha's Brahmoism came to an end, and he became a Pantheist, apparently not long before his death, which occurred in October, 1871. (Collet 1884, 151)

Playwright, magazine editor, social reformer, Brahmoist, pantheist, . . . —one is further intrigued by this maverick figure when one takes a closer look at the "innumerable books" he authored: among the extant titles I was able to trace there are four plays, a *Pirammacamaj natakam* (Drama about the Brahmo Samaj), which, like his other plays, was praised in congratulatory prefatory verses by famous contemporary literati such as Punti Arankanata Mutaliyar, Puracai Astavatanam Capapati Mutaliyar, Vittuvan Kancipuram Iramacami Nayakar, and Tiricirapuram Kovintapillai; a play titled *Kulikku maratikkum kuttaticcikal natippu* (a drama satirizing hired mourning women and dancers), as well as the *Taciltar natakam* and the *Tampacari vilacam*; the occasional poems *Etinparkku pirapu kummippattu* (a poem in the *kummippattu* form on the occasion of the visit of Lord Edinburgh to Madras) and *Apparcamip patikam* (poems on Saint Appar); a treatise on the four Vedas (*Nankuvetarakaciyam*); a treatise on Tamil metrics for children in question and answer form (*Yappilakkana vinavitai*); a pamphlet on widow remarriage (*Punar vivaha tipikai*); a volume on taluk (district) law; a few books on medical matters, such as a medical dictionary (*Vaittiyakarati*), and a booklet on the treatment of gonorrhoea, *Mekavellaikku melana parikaram* (with the English title "Ready remedies for gonorrhoea, in Tamil, by S. Causee Visvanatha Mudaliar," Madras, 1870); and a cookbook (*paka cattiram*). As his day jobs the prolific polymath held various positions in the colonial government, which we can partially reconstruct from the

information given in the preface to one of his books. He started out in 1832 as a Tamil and Telugu translator at various local and district courts, and some time before or in 1868 he retired from his position as munsiff (Indian judge) of the court in Udumalaikottai in Coimbatore district. As we shall see, his experience of working for over 30 years as a government official inspired his activities as a playwright.


கடவுள் துணை.

டம்பாசாரிவிலாசம்.

இஃது,

ம-ரா-ரா-ஸ்ரீ-வைதாபுரம்

தியாகராயமுதலியார்

குமாரர்

சதர்பவுஸ்தாரிகோர்ட்டே

தெலுக்குதிராண்ஸ்லேட்டராகிய

காசிவிசுவநாதமுதலியா

ரவர்களியற்றித்

திருவட்மஸ்வரன்பேட்டை

பொன்னையாமுதலி

யாரால்

பிரசுரஞ்செய்விக்கு

மங்கம்பாக்கம்

இரத்தினமுதலியாரது

சண்முகவிலாச அச்சுக்கூடத்திற்

பதிப்பிக்கப்பட்டது.

ஈ அ ரா சு ஏ கூறு.

இரண்டாம் - பதிப்பு.

**Figure 2.** The title page of the second edition of the *Tampacari vilacam* (1861).

## Obscenity, social reform, and colonial modernity: The controversy over *Tampacari vilacam*

All of Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar's plays were social satires, but it is his *Tampacari vilacam* that turned out to be the most controversial. It remained popular with audiences for decades, but it certainly did not please everyone. The controversy around *Tampacari vila-*

*cam* presents a very remarkable case of conflicting ideas of obscenity, social reform, and colonial modernity, where Tamil literary traditions may be seen at war with the delicate quasi-Victorian sensibilities newly adopted by the Tamil educated elite.

In October of 1872 the Registrar of Books, employed by the colonial government in Madras to keep track of all books published in the Presidency, wrote his regular report to the Government. While these reports where usually rather unremarkable, this time he felt duty-bound to report on what he considered a public scandal that had been going on for a while. It is worth quoting from his report at some length. The Registrar considered all the books in his report "harmless"—except for one case that incensed him:

> The exception I refer to is a Tamil drama or a satirical farce which is disfigured with much of indelicate and obscene language and matter, and which is well known in Madras by the name "Dumbachari Vilasam." The professed intention of its author is to show the ruinous consequences of extravaganza and profligacy, deceit us by tracing, in detail, the history of one *Dumbachari*, a wealthy native youth who abandons himself into . . . licentiousness in company with a courtesan, *Madanasundari*, who is the heroine of the play. Parts of the history are so thoroughly indecent, and others more or less indelicate that the young person who reads them or sees them produced on the stage is more likely to be corrupted than improved. The annexed extracts will give some idea of the obscenity referred to, and some of the samples of the indecent paragraphs and expressions that are scattered over a large part of the book. Such passages are very gross even when read and their effect must be very much worse when produced upon the stage, every part being literally represented by men and women; and the performance assumes the appearance of a most indecent level. . . . It is the opinion of the better class of natives that the youth learn more of vice than any moral lesson or wholesome warning from this play, such as the author imagined, and that the Government would be doing a service to the public if they called upon the proprietor of the copyright of the book to expunge all obscene passages and sentences, and ordered the police to suppress the representation of those scenes on the stage which [afford] the most flagrant public violations of decency. Some four theatres have been [engaged in the] representation of this play, and they are most numerously attended, I am told, on the evenings, on

> which the obscene parts are represented, special hand-bills being issued on such evenings by the managers of the theatres, and the attendance is scanty when the good advice and moral of the play are said to be talked out at the end. A respectable native parent has put into my hands the accompanying placard and complained bitterly of the treacherous way in which his young nephew has been decoyed by the native manager or actors of one of the theatres, to play the part of the gay hero of the farce, reciting his portions in English as well as in Tamil to attract East Indians and Europeans to the theatre to occupy first-class seats; and I hear that other wily youths are being similarly led astray. . . . Owing to the pernicious influence on the morals of the young, these theatrical representations of the indecent parts of the farce are so loudly complained of as public scandal, that I have deemed it my duty thus to bring the subject to the notice of Government.[14]

The complaints in this report of the Registrar of Books were several, some more subtle than others. When he speaks of "indelicate and obscene language and matter" he is referring to both language use and the plot, the hero Tampacari's profligacy and his dalliances with the devadasi Matanacuntari. He also refers to the mix of Tamil and English in the play's dialogues, which to some more conservative souls exemplified the pernicious influence of colonial modernity. But the "public scandal" that, in the words of the Registrar, the citizens of Madras so loudly complained of consisted in the alleged indecency of both form and content, of language and of seeing a young man of means fall prey to the evil machinations, the infamous "web of deceit," of the devadasi. The devadasi was a scandal, and it was scandalous to talk about her and have her talk on a public stage.

The report filed by the Registrar of Books did not go unread, and as the administrative machinery of the colonial government was duly set in motion, the case landed on the desk of Thomas George Clarke, Esq., the senior-magistrate of the Town Police Court of

[14] This and the following quotations as well as all details about the case are from G.O. 306, Government of Madras, Proceedings, Educational Dept., 1 November 1872, and Government of Madras, Proceedings, Educational Dept., 21 June 1873, available today in the British Library, London, and the Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai.

Madras, a seasoned officer one year away from his retirement after 45 years of service. In his handling of the case, Clarke proved to be a man of singular circumspection and cultural sensitivity. Clarke invited witnesses from among the educated Tamil elite, such as Veerasamy Moodalliar, a Tamil pandit and school master, or the Tamil teacher Muthusamy Moodally, and all of them pointed out that classical Tamil texts such as the *Tirukkural*, the *Nitineri vilakkam*, the *Naitatam* or Kamban's *Ramayanam*, which were commonly used as textbooks in schools and colleges, all contained "objectionable portions" and "obscene passages." Veerasamy Moodalliar testified that "there are certain passages in [the Ramayanam] which are really very obscene, much more in some respects than those contained in the *Dumbachari Vilasam*" and that he knew the *Ramayanam* to be a textbook of the Madras University. For further investigation, Clarke then questioned people who had been members of the audience during actual performances of the play, mostly on 18 and 25 January of 1873. He spoke to a railway clerk, to merchants, and a clerk in a vakeel's (lawyer's) office. Everyone seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the performances and claimed that they had not heard any indecent language on stage. "Many respectable females attended the play. No one felt annoyed and no one left the place," one witness observed, and another said that he "was present till 3.30 or 4 in the morning and he had no occasion whatever to feel annoyed at what was said. The words used were calculated to create pleasure and that he was always amused and never annoyed." Thus, the Registrar's condemnation of the play on the grounds of obscenity seems to have been only one side of the coin. In his written judgment, Clarke drew the following conclusions:

> Now, to my forming an opinion as to whether the Dumbachari Vilasam is an obscene work or not, I must endeavour to ascertain which is the opinion of the community before whom it was published, and see whether such offends their sense of decency and modesty, I can only say, so far as I can ascertain from the evidence before me, this work does not offend their modesty. In fact that works which teem with passages of similar works as textbooks have indirectly shown that in their opinion also the publication of the Dumbachari Vilasam is not an offence. . . . with regard to this work, the tendency of the witnesses for the defense is entirely on the op-

> posite side. As to this fact, I have already accounted, . . . the work teems with the most filthy, disgusting and unnatural descriptions that it is impossible to imagine, but this, I must say, is *our* estimation of the work, not that of the big bulk of the Hindus. Here an important question arises whether by bringing the strong arm of the law to bear on such cases when we have not the power to suppress such works [it is] possible to elevate the Hindu mind to our standard of morality? Were we to dwell for a moment on the moral tendency of some of the low English works which are published and circulated about the purlieus of London, we should have much cause to lament the depravity of human nature, notwithstanding England's boast of civilisation. Perhaps it might be deemed to work of supererogation on my part to refer to points, which in the estimation of some, do not bear upon the issue before me, but I am satisfied that it does in a great measure go to prove many extenuating circumstances which I have a right to consider on behalf of the defendant.

Clarke further observed that "there was no office under the [Madras] Government in the position of a censor analogous to that of Lord Chamberlain," and he dismissed the case with costs. Clarke's ruling left some British officials in Madras open-mouthed, enough to provoke a satirical comment in the *Madras Athenaeum and Daily News.*[15]

[15] Robert Charles Caldwell (d. 1878), editor of the *Athenaeum* and infamous satirist (as well as the eldest son of Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814–1891), bishop of Tirunelveli and pioneering Dravidologist), published the following song on "the Dumbacharry case":

> Hymn to Tee Gee
> (to the tune of the Old Hundreth)
>
> All people that in India be
> Sing to the praise of Great Tee Gee,
> Thy judgments, passing reason's range,
> Are very, very, very strange.
>
> Lo! Pale Madrasees gasp with awe
> Each time that thou lay'st down the law,
> And in thy sight, stern Magistrate,
> No mortal dares expectorate!
>
> Thou speak'st – no sound the stillness breaks,
> Thou snuffest – and the whole world quakes.

The case of the *Tampacari vilacam* and its alleged obscenity is remarkable for a number of reasons.[16] It demonstrates not only how attempts at a colonial surveillance of book publishing

> Even grim peelers blanch to see
> The visage of the Great Tee Gee.
>
> Oh wondrous sight! On Wednesday last
> What terrors round thy brow were cast,
> As thou, with grim, unbending face,
> Adjudged the Dumbacharry case.
>
> Asked Pilate "What is truth?" but thou
> Askest a graver question now,
> Inspiring, with thy blandest mien,
> "What is the meaning of obscene?"
>
> Throughout the case, thy judgment's sense
> Was all on side of the defence,
> Till, at the close, thou turned'st clean round,
> And judgment for the plaintiff found!
>
> Still flourish, in thy green old age,
> Immortal youth! Boy-hearted sage!
> And never may Madrassees be
> Reft of thy snuff-box or of thee!
>
> O Great Tee Gee! Dear old Tee Gee,
> Still easy, breezy, frisky, free,
> Let's shout hip – hip – with three times three –
> For glorious and divine Tee Gee. (Caldwell 1893, 210–211)

For a brief biography of Robert C. Caldwell, see Ní Fhlathúin (2011, 229–230).

[16] Although it probably would not have affected Thomas Clarke's view that obscenity may reside in the eye of the beholder, it should at least be noted in passing that there is doubt as to whether the obscene portions ever actually were part of the original play as Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar had written it. The playwright Pammal Campanta Mutaliyar explains in his essay on Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar that after the author's death (in 1871) some actors began to perform the play with added obscene dialogues and scenes that Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar had not written and that the police interfered thereupon (1962, 75f.). While this is nothing that Campanta Mutaliyar could have observed himself (since he was born only in 1873), he explains that he based his essay on stories told by his father, who knew Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar personally, and the actor Tayumanaswami Mudaliyar who had worked with Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar.

failed, but also how tastes and sensibilities clashed during that multifaceted process scholars have called "colonial modernity," how the project of producing a "modern" literature attentive to problems in contemporary society could fall in-between a *querelle des anciens et des modernes*. It also shows the unusual perspicacity (or shall we call it pragmatism?) with which a colonial police officer decided to acknowledge the complexity of moral and aesthetic judgment, putting to work a much more nuanced argumentation than the great politicians and social reformers of his time, such as the Scottish Protestant missionary John Murdoch (1819–1904) or, perhaps most famously, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), who condemned the "native" literature as overall silly, morally debased, superstitious, and ultimately worthless.[17] "Here an important question arises," Clarke wrote in his judgment, "whether [. . . it is] possible to elevate the Hindu mind to our standard of morality?" But as his next sentence makes clear the question that really arises in his mind is a different one—the question of what constitutes double standards or hypocrisy or on what evidence to base moral judgment: "Were we to dwell for a moment on the moral tendency of some of the low English works . . . , we should have much cause to lament the depravity of human nature." For Clarke the scandal lies not in the play or in the public visibility of a devadasi speaking on stage, but rather in the precariousness of moral judgment, or in refusing to acknowledge that one's own moral standards might differ from those of others.

When one of Clarke's witnesses who saw the play testified that "[t]he words used were calculated to create pleasure" and that he did not find anything offensive, he points us to a fact that the Registrar of Books could have taken more seriously. He called the play a "satirical farce," that is, a specific kind of text that requires a particular kind of reading, but was apparently too offended to actually read the play as such. Or, even if he did read the play as a farce, he must have thought that it went too far. And perhaps the scandal consisted of more than just "much of indelicate and obscene language and matter"? This point is best made by looking more closely at the *Tampacari vilacam*.

[17] Details about the colonial critique of the "vernacular" Tamil language and literature can be found in Ebeling (2010).

## Comedy and social critique in the *Tampacari vilacam*

The *Tampacari vilacam* is a typical example of the genre of *icai natakam* or "musical play," a traditional form of Tamil theater in which songs and poems in various meters (usually a wide range, including *viruttam*, *vancippa*, *kanni*, *nonticcintu*, and *anantakkalippu*) are interspersed with prose passages (*vacanam*) that explicate the meaning of the metrical passages. The *Tampacari vilacam* is one of the earliest *icai natakams* with a contemporary social rather than a religious/mythological theme. Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar explains his purpose of writing the play as a piece of warning for the younger generation already in the very first lines, the traditional invocation to Lord Ganesha in which he asks for the "blessing and assistance (*tunai*) at the feet of the Elephant-Faced [god] / for singing in Tamil the *Tampacari vilacam*, / that it may bring about the good effect that the sons of the rich and famous men of this country will not lose their money to prostitutes (*vecaiyar*) whose curls are black as the rainclouds" (1).[18] The lasting popularity of the play is not only betokened by the statements already quoted above, but also by the fact that the book saw several editions. Besides the 1861 edition, which the typically ornate title page (see Figure 2) marks as the second edition, I have found an edition of 1885 that has 23 pages of prefatory praise poems (*carrukkavi*) not found in the 1861 edition, and an edition of 1907 (see Bibliography).[19] The 1907 edition is special in that it features a number of charming woodblock illustrations that were, as the title page states, especially cut for this book. Such woodblock illustrations were commonly included in religious books of the time, such as editions of the *Periyapuranam* (a famous poem on the life of Shaivite saints), but they were rather rare in non-religious books. Figure 3 shows one of these illustrations in which we find Tampacari seated on a throne-like armchair speaking to the Taykkilavi, the madam or procuress for whom the devadasis work, while one

[18] All references to the text of the *Tampacari vilacam* are to the page numbers in the 1861 edition (Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar 1861).

[19] Barnett and Pope's catalogue of the Tamil books in the British library (1909, col. 135) also lists a fourth "revised and expurgated" edition of 1879 that I have not seen.

of her associates, the brahmin Kumpakona Aiyar, is standing by. It is interesting that Tampacari is depicted here and in Figure 4, where he is shown with Matanacuntari and one of her friends, less as a wealthy trader than as a nobleman or zamindar, seated on a throne and featuring royal turban and sword.

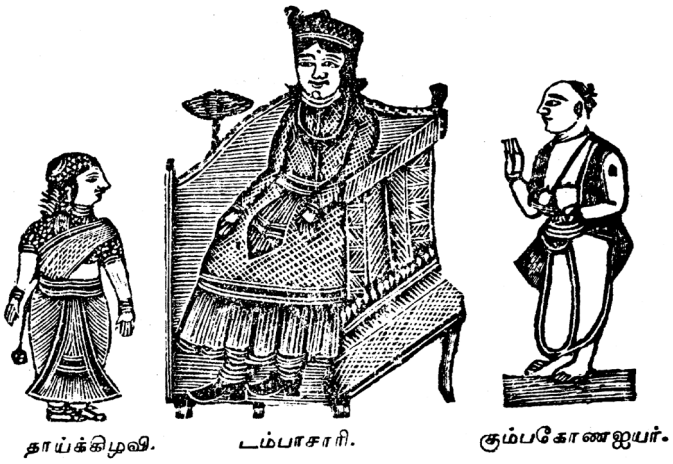



**Figure 3.** Illustration from the 1907 edition of *Tampacari vilacam* (Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar 1907, 161).

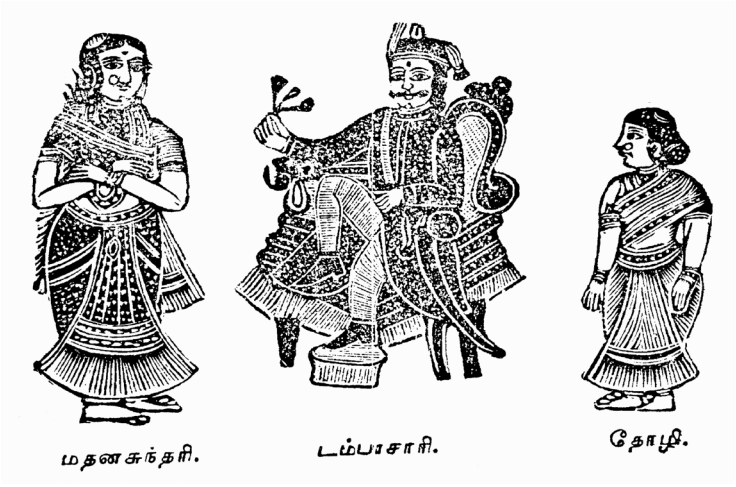



**Figure 4.** Tampacari with the courtesan Matanacuntari (left) and her friend (Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar 1907, 164).

The main plot of the play is quickly told: Tampacari is the son of a rich man who leaves his wife Kunapusani and his children for the devadasi Matanacuntari, who dumps him as soon as he runs out of money. He returns dejected and ruined to his wife, who accepts him back, and when he confesses his misdeeds to Lord Shiva in Tiruvorriyur, Shiva appears to him (and the audience) as Saint Appar and tells him where his father has secretly hidden his inheritance. These newfound riches in hand, Tampacari pays off all his debts and begins a new life with his wife and children. As Balfour notes in his encyclopaedia article quoted above, urban legend identifies Tampacari with a real person, the son of one Murukappa Mutaliyar from Cintadripet in Madras, and the famous playwright and impresario Pammal Campanta Mutaliyar (1873–1964) writes in his reminiscences that a particular house was known in his days as "Tampacari house" (1998, 61). But one is tempted to doubt the authenticity of this legend, since, as we shall see below, the plot of *Tampacari vilacam* also follows the narrative trope of a premodern Tamil literary genre.

Much in the play is evidently intended to produce a comical effect. The names of Tampacari's friends are good examples: Kutiketan (debauchee/drunkard), Ayirappulukan (he who tells a thousand lies), or Mulumocakkaran (the consummate crook). Tampacari's uncle is called Paramalopan (the worst scrooge), and even the names of the two women in the play, Tampacari's wife Kunapusani (she who is adorned by her good character/qualities) and the courtesan Matanacuntari (the sexy beauty), are hardly ambiguous. When Tampacari first appears on stage he is introduced to everyone as a member of the Tamil aristocracy by a string of humorously exalted titles: "Irajamaniya-Irajapujitamaharajarajasri-melum [and again] maharajarajasri-melum melum [and again and again] maharajarajasri Tampacariyar" (8), which ridicules the long and repetitive titles the South Indian princes and zamindars (wealthy landowners) had taken on during the 19th century. While these titles and other flowery epithets were routinely used in the courtly poetry that the aristocracy sponsored poets to produce for them at their courts, in the context of this play they were intended to produce a comical effect, enhanced, no doubt, by the snide addition

of "again and again."[20] Another formal feature that contributes to making the play a satire is the use of language. The characters speak variously Tamil, Telugu, and English. This on the one hand reflects the multilingual situation of colonial Madras, but it also overrides the traditional decorum of exclusively using an elevated register of Tamil for literary purposes. When a court peon arrives with a warrant, someone sings in a mix of Tamil and English: "Court Sergeant *vantan* warrant-*utane* / Court Sergeant *vantan* / neat coat *matti* / meat-*kalai tinru* / what too late now?" (i.e., "The court sergeant has come with a warrant. The court sergeant has come; he wears a neat coat and eats meat. What, too late now?," 182f.).

At the level of content, too, the satire is obvious everywhere. A comic effect is achieved through portraying most of the characters as not only evil and misguided but also as too stupid to be able to change. Even when Tampacari confronts the conniving Matanacuntari at the very end of the play, he sounds rather pathetic: "It is true that I fell in love with you! It is true! Really true! But when you said that you were in love with me that was an utter lie! A lie! A devious lie! . . . From now on I will not be deceived" (235). But there is also a political dimension between much buffoonery. When one of Tampacari's friends, known as "discount master" claims that he was offered a high government position, Tampacari's servant teases him, criticizing how officials abuse their power: "If the master is made a member of the Municipal Council, we will have epidemics like cholera. Petitions for the construction of gutters will be of no use. He will only vote for higher taxes to curry the favor of the English officials. We won't send our own men to the Municipal Council only to become puppets of the English rulers and to have lamp posts in front of their own houses and the houses of their friends" (32ff.). Similar critiques of corruption and nepotism in the government administration are voiced throughout the play. Thus, the scandal that this play points out is not merely that of the devadasi, but of a society that is thoroughly corrupt at several levels and that may easily tempt young rich men to go astray.

[20] The poet Bharati would later use the same technique in his prose satire *Cinna Cankaran katai* (1913). See Ebeling (2010, chapter 3) for a discussion of this text and for a detailed portrait of the zamindars' literary world.

To further elaborate on the text's radical social critique, it may be useful to contrast the *Tampacari vilacam* with an earlier Tamil literary genre where we find an almost identical plot. In his report, the Registrar of Books had noted that: "As a literary work, [the *Tampacari vilacam*] does not rise above mediocrity, the main part of the work and the language are borrowed from an old Tamil poem entitled the Viralividuthúthu, the Tamil Sacuntala, and other dramatic works." While the reference to the Tamil version of Kalidasa's famous Sanskrit play *Sakuntala* and to "other dramatic works" may be no more than an angry throwaway remark intended to dismiss the text at hand, the reference to the "Viralividuthúthu" is more than that. The *virali-vitututu* (lit., "[poem in which] a *virali* dancer is sent as a messenger") is not merely "an old poem," but in fact an entire poetic genre characterized, among other features, by a basic plot that will sound quite familiar to a reader of the *Tampacari vilacam*: A young brahmin man trained as a scholar and poet leaves his wife and family to live with a devadasi-courtesan whose dancing skills have clouded his senses. Once all the man's money is spent, the devadasi severs all ties with him. Destitute and financially ruined, the brahmin poet wanders around and manages to garner employment as a court poet for a local king who pays him so well for his poetry that soon the plan of returning to his wife seems an attractive possibility. Fearing that she might not accept him back, the brahmin first sends a dancing girl (*virali*) as a messenger on his behalf to appease his wife, and all ends well. This genre seems to become popular from about the end of the sixteenth century onward, with probably no more than twenty individual *viralivitututu* poems traceable today.[21] As a typical example of late premodern court poetry, the *viralivitututu* blends royal panegyrics with overt eroticism (including in some cases florid descriptions of the sexual act), which goes far beyond what we find in the *Tampacari vilacam*. What is interesting for our

[21] For a discussion of a *viralivitututu* poem that is roughly contemporaneous with the *Tampacari vilacam*, the *Cetupati viralivitututu* composed probably between 1845 and 1862 by Tuvatrim Tacavatanam Caravanap Perumal Kavirayar (d. 1886 or 1888) at the Ramnad court, see Ebeling (2010, 144–157). For a study of the *viralivitututu* genre in the context of colonial debates about obscenity and pornography and the emerging Tamil print culture of the time, see Gunasekaran (2022).

present purposes is a seemingly minor difference in this general stereotyped story of a man being ruined by a devadasi. While in the *viralivitututu* poems the protagonist is a brahmin poet-cum-scholar, Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar's play portrays the son of a rich man who belongs to the upper castes but is not a brahmin. Thus, while Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar might have adapted an earlier plot, his play does not critique the debauchery of brahmins and their relationship with royal patrons but instead transposes the critique from caste to social class in portraying a wealthy urban high-caste man (as well as many of his friends and associates) as corrupt, naïve, and morally degenerate. In other words, in the *Tampacari vilacam* we see a turn from an anti-brahmin critique in which the aristocracy and wealthy landowners assume the role of wealthy benevolent patrons to a critique of precisely the latter.

This turn becomes even more apparent if we consider a later play that was closely modelled on the *Tampacari vilacam* and thus presents yet another variation on the theme of the impressionable young man falling prey to the wicked devadasi: *Piratapacantira vilacam* (The drama of Pratapachandra) written in 1877 by P. V. Ramaswamy Raju (1852–1897) follows its predecessor in many details, but here the protagonist, Pratapachandra, is the son of a rich zamindar Lakshmivilasar (and the story is set during Lord Mayo's time as Governor General, i.e., between 1869 and 1872).[22] Thus, both the *Tampacari vilacam* and the *Piratapacantira vilacam* present a critique of the degenerate and profligate upper classes, be they zamindars or other wealthy and influential men. (At any rate, the distinction seems to have been blurred already for the illustrator of the 1907 edition of the *Tampacari vilacam* who, as we have seen, portrayed Tampacari in the style of a nobleman). The scandal of the devadasi in these plays, then, is less her behavior, but rather the fact that she is used by the playwrights to point to the corruption of the upper classes. The devadasi's moral corruption

[22] *Piratapacantira vilacam* also appears to have been the first modern Tamil play in prose and the first play to adopt the division into acts and scenes known in Western drama. The first edition of 1877 was published anonymously with the title page stating: "This play was written by a Pandit with a B.A. degree from Madras University" (see Iramacami Iraju 1877). A second edition that did credit the author by name appeared only in 1915 (Iramacami Iraju 1915).

pales in comparison to the corrupt men portrayed. And here again a small point may be important. Both the *Tampacari vilacam* and the *Piratapacantira vilacam* portray *the sons* of the elite who are shown to be more corrupt, and more corruptible, than their fathers. Thus, the warning message of both plays is directed toward the younger generation that performs modernity in all the wrong ways. Both Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar and Ramaswamy Raju were among the social elite of Indians employed in the colonial administration, and their professional experience appears to have sparked their social critique. While in his *Taciltar natakam* Kasiviswanatha Mudaliar criticized corruption and nepotism among the British colonial administrators, he extended his critique in *Tampacari vilacam* to the Indian elite.

## Concluding remarks

We have no record of how successfully plays like *Tampacari vilacam* and *Piratapacantira vilacam* prevented the offspring of the social elites in colonial South India from going astray, much less of how this social critique was refashioned in Mani Lal Tandon's 1935 film.[23] But what we can say is that in the case of plays such as the *Tampacari vilacam* the scandal of the devadasi consisted in different problems for different people. While for some her appearance on a public stage raised issues of obscenity and public order, for others her social power symbolized a wider set of evils in contemporary society that writers and playwrights had to address. What was one person's outrage on account of moral depravity was another person's call for social reform. The above discussion hopefully demonstrates that the figure of the devadasi has been deployed over time as a highly mobile cultural trope, so that the ensuing discourse around her is not focused merely on her socially transgressive sexuality. In other words, what Davesh Soneji has referred to as the devadasis' "persistently ambiguous social and moral status" (2012, 84) can be shown to have resulted from

[23] Sundar Kaali (2013) reads the 1937 talkie *Cintamani or Bilvamangal* (dir. Y. V. Rao) for the depiction of the repression of the devadasi and thus offers fascinating material for the larger project of connecting the history of devadasi discourse with the history of early Tamil cinema.

shifting configurations of ideas and values regarding not only sexuality and obscenity, but also caste, class, and gender hierarchies that became subjects of debate in the wake of the larger social transformations during the period known as colonial modernity.

*Note*

This essay is dedicated to Professor emeritus Elayaperumal Annamalai, my former colleague in the Tamil program at the University of Chicago, with deepest gratitude for his friendship over so many years. His boundless enthusiasm for all things Tamil, his readiness to help his students and colleagues, his profound erudition and the open-mindedness with which he approaches not just scholarly questions but life itself have been a gift and privilege for students of Tamil around the world and for all of us who know him. We could not wish for a finer illustration of Tiruvalluvar's notion that *நவில்தொறும் நூல்நயம் போலும் பயில்தொறும் / பண்புடை யாளர் தொடர்பு*.

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# *Tamil Literature and Historical Imagination in Sinhala Translation*

Justin W. Henry

## 1. The multilingual legacy of the Kingdom of Kandy

The reign of the last king of Sri Lanka, Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha, came to an official end on March 10, 1815, when a treaty ceding authority of the Kingdom of Kandy to the British Crown was ratified by the nine chieftains of the island's holdout sovereign realm. While the city of Kandy—home to the Daḷadā Māḷigāva, the "Temple of Tooth," believed to house a sacred relic of the Buddha Śākyamuni—is often commemorated in Sri Lanka today as "the last Sinhala Buddhist kingdom," the signatures of the "Adigars" and "Dissāvas" inked upon the Kandyan Convention themselves tell a more complicated story. Gesturing to the cultural and linguistic complexity of upcountry Sri Lanka of the time, seven of the eleven signatures on the document are in Tamil or mixed Sinhala-Tamil script. This vivid reminder of the highly syncretic milieu of early 19th century Kandy is reinforced by the religious architecture of Kandy city, which alongside the Daḷadā Māḷigāva was home to prominent shrines to Vishnu, Murugan (known locally in Sri Lanka as Kataragama), and Pattini (a goddess omnipresent on the premises of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples, originating from the character of Kaṉṉaki in the *Cilappatikāram*). Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha, deposed by the Kandyan Convention and sent into exile in Vellore, was himself the descendent of a royal family that had for generations forged mari-

tal alliances with the Nāyakkars of Madurai as well as other South Indian Tamil nobility. Indeed, all of the "Nāyaka" kings of Kandy from the 17th century down to Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha were fluent in Tamil and Telugu in addition to Sinhala (Obeyesekere 2017, 30–31). Testifying to the legacy of this South Indian connection, Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha's tragic fate as the disinherited sovereign of Lanka is commemorated in an early 19th century Sri Lankan Tamil poem, the *Kaṇṭirācaṉ Oppāri* ("The lamentation of the king of Kandy"), with his story enduring as a subject of literary and dramatic interest in Thanjavur, where stage adaptations of the "Kaṇṭi Nāṭakam" were performed until the 1960s (Thanjavur after Vellore having been the king and his family's final place of exile in India) (Nāṭaṉ 2012, 39; *Kaṇṭirācaṉ Oppāri* 2017).

As necessitated by the sprawling apparatus of colonial administration, following the conquest of the Kingdom of Kandy the British undertook large-scale surveys of upcountry Sri Lanka, voyaging into sparsely populated regions never before visited by Europeans. Arriving in the misty slopes of Nuwara Eliya—which in succeeding decades would become a center for coffee and tea production, as well as a retreat destination for colonial officers to convalesce in a climate resembling that of the British Isles—surveyors received from their guides strange and fantastic accounts of the local landscape related to putative events of the island's hoary past. In his 1833 memoir recalling an early expedition to this region, Major Jonathan Forbes describes Nuwara Eliya as "famous in the Ramayana and the most ancient Hindu legends by the appellation of Asoka Aramiya," having been informed that the hills running from Mt. Hakgala southwest to Adam's Peak were identified by locals as "the "leasure-grounds of Ravana" (Forbes 1840, 128–132). Writing in 1849, Charles Pridham summarized contemporary local legends relating to Nuwara Eliya and its vicinity:

> In Upper Ouva, adjoining the rocks of Hakgalla, are the Nandanodiyana (pleasure grounds) and Asoka Aramaya (Asoka groves) of Rawana, which are Sanctified to Hindoo pilgrims, by the events of the Ramayan and the traditions of Rama and Seeta, which are still preserved by the Brahmins of Kataragama. This district included within the steep ranges of mountains in ancient legends, called the walls of Rawana's garden, which extended from Samanala [Sri

> Pada] to Hakgalla, and from Pedrotalla-galla to Gallegamma Kandé [Galle]. At the northern end of Hakgalla mountain is the Seeta Talawa (plain of Seeta), where the goddess is said have been concealed with Trisida, the niece of Rawana, who was her sole companion. Hanuman, eluding the vigilance of the guards, contrived to penetrate their bower, and having delivered to Seeta the ring of Rama, with assurances that her release would be effected, he proceeded to set fire to the neighbouring forests. It was this conflagration which cleared Neuwara-ellia and other plains in this region of genii [*sic*], according the Hindoo and Cingalese legends, and rendered them barren of useful productions. (Pridham 1849, 23–24)

While Pridham himself had no way of knowing it, this emplacement of key events from "the story of Rama and Sita" (as the epic is known locally) concurs with a broader Sinhala oral and literary tradition pertaining to the *Rāmāyaṇa* attested from the early Kandyan period. Most significantly, Pridham's précis follows the legendary topography of Uva Province outlined in the *Rāvaṇa Katāva*, a perhaps-17th-century poem representing the most complete "Sinhala *Rāmāyaṇa*" of which there is a record prior to the British period. The *Rāvaṇa Katāva* is unique in a number of respects—it is first of all a "story of Ravana" rather than a "Ram Katha" as we so often find in India, as well as a version of the epic in which Ravana is not killed in battle with Rama, but instead survives to live out his days with his few remaining forces in barren hills of Nuwara Eliya, among the ruins of his once splendid citadel. Regarding inspiration for the poem, the anonymous author offers this remark in his introduction:

> Regarding the close of the great era [in which transpired]
> the war involving prosperous Ravana—
> Since we now know very little of what the Tamil teachers [knew],
> Unable to give a full account of the story,
> I will narrate an abridged version in Sinhala verse (Henry 2023, 209 [v.3]).

Similar credit to "Tamil teachers of long ago" (*poraṇa demala äduru*) appears in the introductory verses of two other roughly contemporary Sinhala poems: the *Mahāpadaraṅga Jātakaya* (a late 17th-century rendering of the *Mahābhārata* into an apocryphal "Jātaka story," in

which Yudhisthira's character is identified as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva, "the Buddha Śākyamuni to-be"), as well as the *Vētālan Katāva*, a Sinhala adaptation of the *Vetāla-pañcaviṃśatika* ("The twenty-five stories of the goblin," a popular tale in Sanskrit and Indian vernaculars, including Tamil) (Godakumbura 1946, 840–841; Godakumbura 1955, 178–182; *Vētālan Katāva* 1872, v.39).

What was the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which the "Tamil teachers" knew according to the author of the *Rāvaṇa Katāva*? The author does not specify, leaving the reader with an initial guess that this "full account of the story" would most likely be Kampaṉ's 12th-century rendering, an undisputed literary classic still popular in South India and Sri Lanka. Confirmation of this hypothesis in the narrative that follows in the *Rāvaṇa Katāva* is not forthcoming, however, with elements of the story suggesting that the source or sources of Tamil influence on this Sinhala-speaking author belonged to a more demotic class.

In the *Rāvaṇa Katāva*, after Hanuman travels to Lanka to deliver Rama's ring to Sita in captivity, he is captured by Ravana's guards and taken to a subterranean portion of Ravana's Lankpura (here simply called "Pātāle," "the underworld"), where Ravana orders that Hanuman be offered as a sacrifice to goddess Kali. Hanuman suggests that the temple guards bring as many offerings for the goddess as they can, in order to make it the most magnificent *pūjā* possible. Hanuman buries himself within the pile of food when he is finally locked in the sanctum, able to escape after Kali knocks a tile loose from the roof as she gorges herself. Subplots involving "subterranean Lanka," while not featured in the Vālmīki or Kampaṉ *Rāmāyaṇa*, are well attested in other Indian vernacular versions, which introduce another brother of Ravana as the ruler of Pātāla Laṅkā (Lutgendorf 2004). In a popular Tamil version of this *Rāmāyaṇa* supplement, this brother is known as Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ ("Peacock Ravana"), whose "Pātāḷa Ilaṅkai" is presented as a cavernous underground realm, accessible through the stalk of an enormous lotus protruding from somewhere deep out in the southern ocean. In the *Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ Katai*, a circa 17th-century Tamil prose rendering of the story, Hanuman hastens to Pātāḷa Ilaṅkai in order to rescue Rama and Lakshmana, who have been abducted by Peacock Ravana and are (in this version) being offered up to Bhadra Kālī (Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ's "family deity"). Hanuman is assisted through a fortuitous encounter with his long-lost son (Maccavallapaṉ, a custodian

of Kālī's temple) and Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ's younger sister (Tūrataṇṭikai, a secret devotee of Rama), finally slaying Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ by crushing five giant beetles, which he learned contained the errant Rakshasa's life-force (Zvelebil 1987, 173–219).

With its nebulous labyrinth of caves and underground tunnels and already identified in oral tradition and Sinhala "boundary poems" as "the pleasure grounds of Ravana," the central highlands of Sri Lanka seem to have been easily adapted by the author of the *Rāvaṇa Katāva* as inspiration for an abbreviated version of "Hanuman's adventures underground." Rather than having been inspired by Kampaṉ's *Irāmāvatāram*, therefore, this author appears to have collated a number of oral legends circulating in Sinhala and Tamil to compose the *Rāvaṇa Katāva*, reminding us of the multiplicity of bilingual social environments of the Kandyan period. It is also evidence of what E. Annamalai calls "mass bilingualism," or bilingualism (in this case Sinhala-Tamil) on the part of non-elite strata of society (Annamalai 1989, 226). Examples of "elite bilingualism" in Sri Lanka are well attested in the historical record, the opening vignette of this essay on Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha and the Nāyakar kings of Kandy being one of many examples. Lexical borrowing from Tamil into Sinhala is also well attested in the linguistic record (Coperahewa 2007), with the fact that such borrowing took place in the context of "mass bilingualism" being obvious from the type of vocabulary exchanged (words for manual tools, agricultural items, common foodstuffs, and kinship terms, among others). Linguistic contact producing borrowing of this kind was no doubt a regular affair for centuries as a result of commerce, intermarriage, and all-around social necessity on the part of Sinhala and Tamil speakers. The *Rāvaṇa Katāva*, and other Tamil-influenced Sinhala folk stories like it, go further to offer a colorful snapshot of the story-telling world of upcountry Sri Lankan Sinhala and Tamil speakers of the Kandyan era, as they together made the "the story of Rāvaṇa" uniquely their own, localized to the geography of the island that they shared.

## 2. Reimagining Lankan history through a Tamil lens

Perpetual contact with South India and the presence of Tamil and Malayalam speakers on the island of Sri Lanka has over the course

of many centuries resulted in significant impacts on Sinhala language, religion, and ritual culture. The *Mahāvaṃsa*—the all-important chronicle of the kings of the island preserved and updated by Buddhist monks since perhaps the fifth century—acknowledges the importance of social exchange with South India from the time of the arrival of the first Sinhala speakers on the island with its account of Prince Vijaya (the first Sinhala king) importing brides for himself and for members of his Sinhala retinue from the Pāṇḍyan king of Mathurā (Madurai). In the chronicle's account of this prototypical act of Indo-Lankan diplomacy, the king of Mathurā not only obliges Vijaya and his party with their request for marriageable women of noble stature but goes further to supply the fledgling Lankan colony with "craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds" (Geiger 1950 [1912], 7.46–73).

This account of the origins of Sinhala civilization and political life, while of course idealized, reflects a real history of marital alliance between the Buddhist-patron kings of Lanka and South Indian aristocrats, and of the settled operation of South Indian mercantile and mercenary guilds in the territory of their island neighbor. The 14th and 15th centuries represented a high-water mark for Tamil and Malayalam influence on Sri Lanka's southwest, as a sizable number of immigrants made their way to Sri Lanka from South India after the Pāṇḍyan kingdom was overrun by the Khilji Dynasty in the first quarter of the 14th century. The poetry, architecture, and inscriptions of the Gampola Kingdom (1341–1406) and the Kotte court of Parākramabāhu VI (r. ca. 1410–1467) are particularly notable for their embrace of continental Indian fashions and incorporation of Hindu deities and literary imagery (Friedrich 2020).

Modes of conceptualizing the history of island of Sri Lanka itself appear to have been influenced by Tamil literary models during this period. The first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* contains an account of a substantial flood that serves as the basis for later Sinhala commentary suturing Hindu epic and Puranic elements into the island's history. The story concerns a second-century-BCE king, Tissa of Kelaniya, who cruelly put to death an agent of his younger brother (the former was disguised as a Bhikkhu in order to surreptitiously deliver a love letter to the queen). Witnessing this, the enraged gods of the sea caused the ocean to overflow the land, after which King Tissa, in a desperate attempt to propitiate

them, dispatched his daughter, Dēvī, alone in a golden vessel into the sea (Geiger 1950 [1912], 22.13–22). Later Sinhala accounts explain that the flood resulting from King Tissa's misdeed eroded a substantial portion of Sri Lanka, associating this reduction in the island's landmass with a similar event (not detailed in the *Mahāvaṃsa*) located in deep antiquity. The *Rājāvaliya*, a popular Kandyan-period reference work on the island's Buddhist history, reports that the gods, incensed with Ravana's deficit in kingly Dharma, enacted a flood which submerged "Ravana's fortress, twenty-five palaces, and 400,000 streets." (In this version of events, Ravana's Lankapura lay somewhere northwest of the present shores of the island, between Mannar and Thoothukudi [Suraweera 2000: 21, 25–26].)

The *Rājāvaliya* goes on to explain that even great loss occurred during King Tissa's time, with "eleven-twelfths of Sri Lanka submerged by the sea" during that tsunami event (Suraweera 2000, 26). The *Vanni Rājāvaliya*, a variant version of the text, presents an image of the tutelary deity of the Kelaniya River dragging a massive portion of Sri Lanka's southwest coast down with him as he sank into the sea:

> Because of the unrighteousness of King Tissa of Kelaniya, a lakh of villages at Kelaniya, 900 seaports, 470 fishing towns, 12 pearl diving towns and 16 other towns belonging to Lanka were swallowed by the sea. Of the harbors, only Mannāra and Kaḍupiṭi Mādampē remained. (*Vanni Rājāvaliya* 2005, 37)

The *Lakvidiya*, a short Kandyan period Sinhala work on the origins of occupational caste and the administrative divisions of the island, has it that during King Tissa's time, Sri Lanka was 700 *yojana*s in circumference, after which:

> During the days of Kālaṇitissa, because the king caused the death of an innocent monk by putting him in a cauldron of boiling oil, the grief-stricken gods angrily submerged the king's territory with the waves of the ocean in order to destroy the world using their divine power. At that time, nine islands surrounding Lanka, twenty-nine districts, 35,504 villages together with great seaports, tanks, fields, gem mines, numerous living beings (legless, two-legged, four-legged, many-legged), structures such as reliquaries, shrine rooms, and

> monastic residences were all washed into the sea. Kelaniya, which was formerly seven hundred *gāvutas* away from the sea, now is at a distance of only one. (adapted from Abeyawardana 1999, 172, 208)

The notion of an antediluvian Lanka much larger than its current size echoes a recurring theme in South Indian Tamil literature. Nakkīrar's commentary on the *Iṟaiyaṇār Akapporuḷ* contains the widely known account of the "three Caṅkams" established by ancient Pāṇḍyan kings. The literary academies at Madurai, Kapāṭapuram, and "Upper Madurai," stood for 4400, 3700, and 1850 years, respectively, between the intervals of which each was lost by flooding from the sea. In his commentary on the *Cilappatikāram*, Aṭiyārkkunallār implies that the ancient Tamil country occupied significantly more landmass than its present contour, explaining that 49 districts of the Pāṇḍyan country from the Paṉṟuḷi River to the Kumari were swallowed up during the course of these floods of the three Caṅkams. Flood motifs are also attested in nearly every Tamil *tala-purāṇam*, which give accounts of the respective temples with which they are associated surviving the most recent *pralaya*—the world-flood immediately preceding the most recent "age of Manu" (Shulman 1978).

The image of a retributive deluge presented in the *Mahāvaṃsa* seems therefore to have been extrapolated upon in Kandyan-period Sinhala historical texts in order to offer a vision of the ancient history of Sri Lanka resonant with the theme of an erosion of territorial boundaries *in illo tempore* that had been by then well established in Tamil literary imagination. During roughly the same period, genealogies of the Buddhist-patron kings of the island likewise underwent transformations bringing them closer in line with Tamil royal models. For centuries, Sri Lankan Pali chronicle tradition grounded the dynasty of the kings of Lanka in descent from Mahāsammata as the first sovereign of the present world-creation according to canonical Pali sources (Walters 2000). As such, Mahāsammata functioned in the early Sri Lankan tradition like a Buddhist analogue of Manu of the Hindu Puranas. From the Gampola period onward, however, royal genealogies comfortably traced the Buddhist-patron kings of southern Sri Lanka to King Manu himself.

So far as I have discovered, the first explicit dynastic collocation of a Lankan regent with Manu appears in a copper-plate land grant (*sannas patra*) from the 26th year of the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu V

(1386 CE). In accordance with what had been standard inscriptional discourse for several centuries by that point, the king is titled "the Wheel-Turner, Siri Saṅga Bō Śrī Bhuvaneka Bāhu, learned master of all literary arts, chief of the nine gems, Lord of the Tri Sinhala." The author of the document (one "Sanhas Tiruvarahan Perumāḷ") expounds the epithet in a unique way, however, declaring that Bhuvanekabāhu was furthermore "descended from the pure race (*pavitra gōtra*) of Sumitra, born of the solar race that came from the age of Mahāsammata, himself known as the illustrious Vaivasvata Manu" (Bell 1904 [1892], 93–94). This locution—identifying Mahāsammata with Vaivasvata Manu and linking the donor king to his dynasty—appeared commonly on grant documents and inscriptions for kings of Gampola and Kotte throughout the two centuries following (Bell 1904 [1892], 94–97).

An even more complete integration of Lankan Buddhist monarchy into the standard framework of Puranic dynastic succession appears in the literature associated with Parākramabāhu VI (r. ca. 1410–1467). The *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya*, a chronicle of the kings of Kotte from Alakeśvara III to circa 1557 (the reign of Rājasiṃha I), identifies Parākramabāhu VI as a literal descendent of Manu (in the manner of the earlier *praśastis* of Bhuvanekabāhu V and VI): a king "following in the lineage of Mahāsammata who is numbered [after] Śrī Vaivasvata Manu" (*Alakeśvara Yuddhaya* 1965, 21). The *Sälalihini Sandeśaya* (ca. 1450), a poem written possibly by the king's son-in-law, Nallūrutanayā, eulogizes the king as follows:

> Seated in his lion-throne like Viṣṇu himself
> adorned with the full sixty-four ornaments, and the crown,
> his Majesty hails from the unbroken lineage of Manu;
> Worship his holy feet
> and take your leave of him. (adapted from Jayasuriya 2002, v.20)

The *Pärakumbā Sirita*, a eulogistic poem written for the king by one of Parākramabāhu's adopted sons, Śrī Rāhula, identifies King Ashoka as having descended from Manu as well:

> [King Dharmāsoka] followed in the royal lineage (*rajakulayen pata*) of Vaivasvata Manu, the progeny of Brahmā, and the first to

> be born in this vast world-age (*aturukapa* [*antaḥ kalpa*])—a lineage filled with famous universal monarchs such as Ikṣvāku, Pṛtu, Bhānu, Māndhātṛ, Prasēnajit, Sudarśana, Nahuṣa, Saṅkati, Raghu, Dilīpa, Triśaṅku, Naḷa, Nābhāga, Daśaratha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Kusa and Lava. (*Pärakumbā Sirita* 1970, v.9)

King Parākramabāhu belongs to this lineage too, the poem tells us:

> Long live Parākramabāhu, born in the lineage (*kula bijāta*) of
> Daśaratha and Rāma,
> fearless with his sword on the battlefield like Sahadeva,
> a snow shower to the fully blossomed lotus patch,
> namely, the queens of other kings;
> like a wish-fulfilling tree in his distribution of gold, gems, pearls
> and silk! (v.78)

This list of kings is significant insofar as it replaces the royal succession of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* with the "Raghuvaṃśa"—royal succession beginning with Manu as narrated in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and Sanskrit *Purāṇas*. In the *Pärakumbā Sirita*, the first king of the present world-age (though here defined as an *antaḥ kalpa*, as opposed to a *manvatāra*) is Manu (not Mahāsammata), and other kings who appear in random succession in the early Pali chronicles are clearly ordered according to the temporal narrative of the Sanskrit Hindu epics (e.g., Ikṣvāku, Daśaratha, and Rāma).

Manu did not supplant Mahāsammata as the arché-king of Sinhala Buddhist historical imagination. By the early 16th century, Sinhala royal genealogical *bona fides* no longer made an equivalence between the two personages, and royal claims of descent from Manu were gradually phased out during the Portuguese period (Henry 2017, 76n104). The emphasis on puranic royal dynastic succession during the fourteenth through fifteenth centuries did however muddy the water with respect to the narrative of the early Pali chronicles in popular Buddhist consciousness. Derived from his Sinhala informants at Goa, Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto gives the story of the primordial Buddhist king (we must infer Mahāsammata) with a Hindu Puranic flavor: the king was "the son of the sun and the earth, and that God had sent him to those kingdoms to rule and govern them" (do Couto 1909, 101). From him come the people of the sun from whom Vijaya is descended.

Couto's account fuses the descent of the solar dynasty in the Hindu Puranic tradition with the characters of Mahāsammata and Vijaya.

How significant was the reorientation of royal genealogy toward descent from Manu? From the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* onward, royal pedigree was a fixation for Lankan Buddhist authors, albeit with shifting emphasis over time (e.g., on Mahāsammata, Suddhodana, Okkāka). Was the choice to insert Manu (however prominently) into the Sinhala *mahārāja-vaṃsa* merely an incidental choice, a poetic embellishment in keeping with the late medieval literary zeitgeist?

Given the South Indian precedent for linking living Hindu kings to Manu, I would like to suggest that this is not the case, and that a deeper reworking of the Buddhist historical imagination was at play. Daud Ali detects a qualitative shift in the copper-plate inscriptions of the Pallavas and Cōḻas in relation to the earlier Sanskrit *praśastis* of Gupta kings, with the former relating "not only the deeds of the king issuing it but those of his ancestors, as well." Ali observes that these works, composed in the voice of the king's royal poet:

> are very concerned with articulating a past . . . the bards of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Paramāras, Cālukyas, Cōḻas, and other post-Gupta dynasties, quite explicitly look back to the world histories of the Purāṇas to tell the genealogies of their kings. Each inscription becomes much more than an imperial voice proclaiming its own magnitude; it inscribes the submission of kings to a vision of history. (Ali 2000, 170)

In the Cōḻa case (Ali cites the early 11th-century Tiruvālungāḍu plates of Rājendra), the aim was to position Tamil kings as descendants of Manu Vaivasvata (Ali 2000, 193).

The claim of descent from Manu was but one aspect of the Cōḻa "puranicization" of royal genealogy: Rājarāja and his son Rājendra also claimed to be "infused with a portion of Viṣṇu." Ali explains the political ramifications implicit in this genealogical claim:

> In the succession of kings as told by the *Śivapurāṇa*, Viṣṇu is the main actor in history, incarnating himself in various kings to save the world. But Viṣṇu is also Śiva's chief devotee. If we look at the claims of Cōḻa kings in this light, we can see that they were by no means being inconsistent in their claims to be infused with

> a portion of Viṣṇu and yet to be ardent devotees of the great Parameśvara. This accommodation of Viṣṇu, of course, could allow Vaiṣṇavas to be positioned strategically within the polity as receiving great honor, but in the end being subordinated to the preeminent recipients of the king's generosity, the Śaivas. (Ali 2000, 194–195).

Kings of late medieval southern Sri Lanka, even religiously liberal ones like Parākramabāhu VI, had no incentive to position themselves as subordinate to, or devotees of, Shiva. Sri Lankan Buddhist literature of this period listed major Hindu deities as part of the *deva sāsana*, "the order of the gods," which was subordinate to the *buddha sāsana* (the Buddhist religion, "the dispensation of the Buddha") of which the Buddha himself was the head (Obeyesekere 1984, 51–60). Hindu deities had apotropaic efficacy and could be solicited for boons but were not intended to be foci of devotional attention (from the point of view of Buddhist monastic authors). Vishnu was portrayed as a devotee of the Buddha, as a Bodhisattva himself, and as a guardian deity of the island of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, clearly South Indian models of "puranicization" held some allure for the predominantly Buddhist courts of 14th-15th-century Sri Lanka.

### 3. Horizons for future research

This chapter has gestured to the role of Tamil in informing Sinhala historical and literary imagination since the 14th century, highlighting avenues of exchange at both the elite and the popular, demotic social levels. Beyond the examples illustrated, South Indian templates served as inspiration for Sinhala-speaking authors by way of a variety of literary genres. Sinhala *sandeśa* poems of the Kotte period owe much to continental formats while exhibiting a strong interest in Sinhala-Tamil bilingualism on the part of their authors (Henry 2021); Tamil *viruttam* and *paraṇi* works informed Sinhala "war poetry" (*haṭan kavi*) and erotic verse (Dharmadasa 1995); Kandyan-period Sinhala poets drew inspiration from popular Tamil works such as "the life of king Harishchandra" and the *Cilappatikāram* (de Silva 1917; Obeyesekere 1984); Sinhala "*nāḍagam*" folk plays popular from the 18th century were developed on the basis of Tamil models (Pieris 1974).

With very little of this archive translated and much of it still isolated in manuscript form, much remains to be done in reconstructing the contours and scope of Sinhala-Tamil literary interface of Sri Lanka's late medieval and early modern periods. Work related to these questions in the fields of philology, historiography, and literary studies remains salient to Sinhala-Tamil ethnic relations today, as for example in the recent phenomenon of the rediscovery of Kandyan-period literary works related to the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Sinhala Buddhist nationalists in service of claims of the historicity of Ravana as an original king of Sri Lanka (Henry 2023). Also relevant to 21st-century Sri Lankan politics are miscellaneous esoteric works—Dutch- and British-period Sinhala "prophetic books"—foretelling the arrival of a "redeemer king" from India, which bear obvious signs of influence from Tamil, and which signal a longer history of translation of the "*kāla-jñānam*" literary genre from Telugu, to Tamil and Malayalam, to Sinhala (Malalgoda 1970).

Interested researchers can today make use of a number of online resources continuing to make rare archival materials available to the general public. The curators of British Library's Nevill Collection have begun the process of digitizing their collection; scans of Sinhala and Pali palm leaf manuscripts are being made available by the University of Kelaniya's Palm Leaf Manuscript Study and Research Library and by Paramaththa.org in association with the International Centre for Theravada Buddhism; the Noolaham Foundation has made thousands of Tamil books and manuscripts from private Sri Lankan collections available digitally in recent years. The Noolaham Foundation's initiative in preserving rare Sri Lankan Tamil literary documents has been motivated in part by the tragic destruction of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981, an event that represented a flashpoint Sinhala-Tamil ethnic antagonism and that infamously culminated in a 26-year-long civil war that came to an end only in 2009. The hope is that future research on Sinhala-Tamil literary interface making use of such archives will continue to illustrate the complexity of social interaction between Sinhala and Tamil speakers as it went on for centuries, simultaneously illuminating the anachronistic and in large part constructed nature of modern categorical divisions between these two groups of people.

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# *Early Modern Tamil Prose: A Note on Some Manuscripts of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṉam*

Margherita Trento

The process of translating Śaivism into Tamil was a long and complex one, spearheaded by the devotional hymns of the poet-saints Sambandar, Appar, and Sundarar in the seventh and eighth century.[1] A more systematic adaptation of the texts and doctrines of the Śaiva Siddhānta school began in the 12th century, when the earlier texts of the theological corpus known as the *Meykaṇṭa cāttiram* were composed.[2] The 16th century is yet another key moment in this process, when more or less literal adaptations of several Śaiva scriptures—such as the *Śivadharma*, the *Śivadharmottara*, the *Sarvajñānottara*, or the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*—appeared in the context of institutionalization of the Tamil Caiva Cittāntam.[3]

[1] We still know way too little on the history of Tamil Śaivism, especially the early phases. Even though the hymns of the *Tēvāram* have been translated, and the tradition of the singers of these hymns studied (Peterson 1989), we have no systematic reconstruction of their political and cultural context.

[2] On the constitution of the *Meykaṇṭa cāttiram*, see Prentiss 1999; and the recent dissertation by Dávalos (2023).

[3] These translations have recently begun to receive some attention, especially the *Civatarumōttaram*, in the context of the Śivadharma project led by Florinda De Simini; the first results appeared in De Simini and Kiss 2021. For an overview on the work of two key figures of 16th-century Śaiva teachers, see Ganesan 2009. Throughout the article, I use the expression "Caiva Cittāntam" to indicate the later Tamil development of this Śaiva school.

These translations often claim to have been composed so that the people could access the knowledge hidden in those texts, and they include explicit reflections on the role of literary Tamil (*centamiḻ*) as an appropriate language for religious instruction.[4]

As I have begun to argue elsewhere, literary Tamil was by no means a more accessible code than Sanskrit, but it did imply different forms of training and a different sociology of the elites who mastered it.[5] The 16th-century translations from Sanskrit to Tamil were often produced in the context of the non-Brahminic Śaiva monasteries founded around this time. These were among the most important sites where the Tamil caste of the Vellalas elaborated their claims to religious authority, and literary Tamil became their code of choice.[6] In other words, these translations were sophisticated Tamil poems that implied the existence of a system for teaching and learning Tamil poetry and poetics. The Vellalas and a handful of non-Brahmin high castes and their institutions largely controlled access to this teaching, since many of the important schools and teachers were affiliated with one or another of the Caiva Cittāntam monasteries (*ātīṉam*) founded in the 16th century, especially in the Kaveri delta and in the Tirunelveli-Ambasamudram region. This may be one of the

[4] On explanations for such translations from the Sanskrit to Tamil, see for instance *Kamalālayac ciṟappu, pāyiram*, v. 28: *arumaṟaika ḷorunāṉku mākamaṅka ḷeḻunāṉku maṅka māṟuñ / teriyavara vārāyntu paramāṇa teyvameṇat teḻintu caivar / poruvariya civaṇārūṟp puṟṟiṭaṅkoṇ ṭarulpurinta pukaḻā mellām / uraiceyumā riyattiṇatu poruṭṭamiḻā ṟuraikkac colvām*. "After studying the path explained in the four precious Vedas, the twenty-eight Āgamas and the six Vedāṅgas, and realizing that [Śiva is] the supreme god, the Śaivas asked [me] to explain in Tamil the meaning of the Sanskrit texts that recount all the glorious deeds that the incomparable Śiva graciously brought forth ensconced in the anthill of Tiruvārūr. That's what I am going to narrate."

[5] See Trento 2021.

[6] See *Civatarumōttaram* 10, v. 123: *centamiḻi ṉiṉpamiṟu vāyalatu ceppār / antamili yātiyumi lāṉuraiyai yāyntār / centamiḻi ṉuṅkevuṭa mākavurai ceytār / intayuka kālakali yīṭaṟanal vīṭum*. "Using literary Tamil (*centamiḻ*), [poets of the past] did not teach anything beyond Kāma, which ends [their set]. But those who have explored the teachings of the One who has no end and no beginning obliquely also expound Supreme Liberation in literary Tamil as well, in order to remove the [negative] power of this time of Kali Yuga." This verse likely contains a reference to Tiruvalluvar, the author of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, since his book is divided in three sections based on the three ends of life (*aṟam-poruḷ-iṉpam*) but ignores the fourth aim, namely liberation (*vīṭu* in Tamil, *mokṣa* in Sanskrit).

reasons why these monasteries were later identified as the main seat of Tamil learning (*pulamai*).[7]

Still, the question remains whether more accessible forms of writing and communicating Śaiva knowledge were also available between the 16th and the 18th century in the Tamil south. More specifically, was literary Tamil the only code used in the context of Caiva Cittāntam monasteries? Did these institutions adapt the language of their teaching to different, more or less learned Tamil audiences? This article addresses these questions by reopening the discussion on Tamil prose, its genres, and its uses in the precolonial period. Prose, in its minimal definition of unmetrical writing, has always been an available mode in Tamil, as evidenced by its mention in the early grammar *Tolkāppiyam* and by the legal documents recorded on stone and copper plates from at least the early centuries of the common era.[8] But something changed in the way prose was conceptualized and used as a literary, didactic, and rhetorical tool from the 19th century onward.[9] Various genealogies have been proposed for this change, many of which imply early missionary and colonial influences—I will consider them in a moment.

In this article, I would like to show that similar changes were already at work in the 18th century, if not earlier, in the Vellala monasteries of the Kaveri delta, which were sites of experimentation with this register of the language. In this context, mostly anonymous teachers wrote accessible, didactic, freestanding texts in prose, in a style that was as far removed from spoken Tamil as it was from the metrical language of poetry. After reviewing the debates surrounding the development of prose writing, I consider the prose texts circulating in Tiruvāvaṭuturai by examining the catalogue of manuscripts available in the monastery library. I

[7] See Ebeling 2010, 57–62.

[8] *Tolkāppiyam*, *poruḷatikāram*, *ceyyuḷiyal* 166 defines the varieties of prose as follows: *pāṭṭiṭai vaitta kuṟippi ṉāṉum / pāviṉṟu eḻunta kiḷavi yāṉum / poruḷmarapu illāp poymmoḻi yāṉum / poruḷoṭu puṇarnta nakaimoḻi yāṉumeṉṟu / uraivakai naṭaiyē nāṉkeṉa moḻipa*. "As interspersions between verses, as commentary of prosal type, as fiction disclaiming fact content, as humour with a deep intent—this *urai* of prose is of four types." Manuel and Sundramathy 2010, 504.

[9] As David Shulman put it, "nothing can quite prepare us for the expressive power and stylistic range of nineteenth-century Tamil prose works" (2016, 256); the nature of these changes is at the center of Ebeling 2010.

then turn to a prose text, possibly written in the 16th century, that achieved the status of monastic scripture (*paṇṭāra cāttiram*). My aim is to draw the contours of this largely anonymous and undated corpus, and to interrogate the conditions of composition and early circulation of these prose texts before they were printed in later collections, designed to regroup didactic texts for educational purposes in the context of the 19th-century reforms of Tamil Śaivism.[10] This volume in honor of E. Annamalai seems the right occasion to take up this new avenue of research into the socio-historical implications of language registers, a kind of question I learned to ask from him over many years as his student.

**The debate on prose**

A comprehensive history of Tamil prose is yet to be written. Such history would need to take into account early definitions of prose, and consider texts as diverse as the literary prose of the early commentators, Arwi literature, and modern short novels incorporating dialects and spoken idioms.[11] Within such a long and complex history, scholarship has so far focused on two turning points, namely the emergence of freestanding texts in prose and the birth of the novel. Both innovations have been traditionally analyzed in connection with European influences. In a classical work on the contribution of Christian authors to Tamil literature, Ma. Cī. Vēṅkaṭacāmi states the problem of freestanding texts in prose very clearly:

> Before the European arrived, there were no freestanding prose books in Tamil. The works of grammar, literature, lexicography, astrology, medicine, and all the other disciplines were composed in verse. Besides the commentary ies composed by scholars on such works, there was no independent book in prose. But in ancient times, poets composed works mixing prose and poetry.[12]

[10] On these later transformations, see Raman 2022; on the continuities and ruptures between the early modern and modern/colonial Tamil Śaivism see also Steinschneider (2016, 2017).

[11] On Arwi or Arabic-Tamil, and the difficulty of defining this linguistic register used by Tamil Muslims, see Tschacher 2017.

[12] *airōppiyar varuvataṟku muṉṉē tamiḻmoḻiyil taṉi uraiṉaṭai nūl iruntatillai. ilakkaṇ am, ilakkiyam, nikaṇṭu, cōtiṭam, maruttuvam mutaliyay ellā nūlkaḷukku ceyyuḻilē*

Vēṅkaṭacāmi proceeds then to analyze the influence of several European intellectuals who contributed to the development of prose writing in Tamil, including many missionaries and colonial administrators. A few decades later, Kamil Zvelebil also identified European influences among the key factors in the development of modern Tamil prose, along with the works of the commentators and the diaries of Ananda Ranga Pillai (1709–1761) and his family members.[13] Still, he did not propose an overarching historical explanation of the emergence of this genre and of its position—as an insider or outsider—in the ecology of Tamil literary genres. Sascha Ebeling's recent work on colonial Tamil literature and the birth of the Tamil novel falls within this cadre.[14] Yet the question of the novel and of belletristic prose-writing is not my main concern here. Whether historiographical *karaṇam* texts, Telugu *prabandhas* and early modern narrative poems were an antecedent for it, as Shulman has argued in his recent book on Tamil, remains an open question.[15] Certainly, the Tamil novel as a mature literary form emerged in relationship with the spread of the novel as a colonial and global genre.

As for freestanding prose texts, the first authors Vēṅkaṭacāmi lists are early Catholic missionaries who did not write fiction, but rather theological treatises in Tamil. They did so in a Sanskritized prose that would, to a certain extent, remain current in the 19th century. It is this didactic register and this type of texts—religious and rhetorical rather than literary—that are the focus of my reflection. Among the early missionaries, Roberto Nobili (1577–1656) has been called "the father of Tamil prose" by his biographer S. Rajamanickam.[16] Even without the devotional bias in Rajamanickam's otherwise masterly work, the scholar Ronald E. Asher talks about Nobili's writings as an absolute novelty because

*iyaṟṟappaṭṭu vantaṉa. ivaikaḷukku uraiyāciriyarkaḷ iyaṟṟiya uraikaḷait tavira, taṉippaṭṭa urai naṭai nūl oṉṟēṉum iruntatillai, āṇāl paṇṭaik kālattil urainaṭaiyum ceyyuḷumākak kalantu nūlkaḷ iyaṟṟappaṭṭaṉa* . . . Vēṅkaṭacāmi [1936] 1971, 15.

[13] Zvelebil 1973, 247–276. S. Jeyaseela Stephen has worked on the Tamil diaries of the 18th century; an overview of these works is found in Stephen 2006.

[14] Ebeling 2010.

[15] For his analysis on the many factors contributing to the emergence of Tamil prose, see Shulman 2016, 255–258.

[16] Rajamanickam 1972.

they are the first treatises on religious subjects to be written in Tamil.[17] Later Protestant prose in Tamil has also been studied by Bernard Bate in his genealogy of political oratory in Tamil, especially in relationship to the towering figure of Śaiva reformer Āṟumuka Nāvalar (1822-1879). Several studies have emphasized the exceptional literary and rhetorical qualities of Navalar's prose, and put his militant Śaivism into the context of colonial missionary Christianity in Sri Lanka.[18] He would have taken from this context the tools of prose, and printing. While there is no doubt that the printing press was an import innovation, what if the prose of Āṟumuka Nāvalar had a more complex genealogy than simply missionary prose?

Another approach to the question of prose is through the particular register of the language known as Maṇipravāḷam, which is a distinct blend of Tamil and Sanskrit used primarily by medieval Vaiṣṇava theologians and commentators. Maṇipravāḷam is a form of Tamil, albeit associated with communal and Sanskrit-heavy teaching environments. Several Vaiṣṇava authors wrote freestanding narrative poems in this register, and from the 13th/14th centuries also autonomous prose texts, often hagiographic in nature and certainly preceding Catholic literary experiments in Tamil.[19] Giovanni Ciotti and R. Sathyanarayanan have further analyzed later Vaiṣṇava texts that survive only in manuscript form and are

[17] Asher 1972, 130: "Ces écrits représentent un emploi tout à fait nouveau de la prose tamoule, car ce sont les premières œuvres traitant en tamoul de sujets chrétiens. De plus, tous les traités antérieurs de n'importe quel sujet philosophique ou religieux, qu'il s'agisse de l'hindouisme, du bouddhisme ou du jaïnisme, furent en vers." On the role attributed to Western influences in the development of Tamil prose, see also Pillay 1957, Paramacivāṉantam 1966, Chengalvaraya Pillai 1966.

[18] Young and Jebanesan 1995; Bate 2005. The idea of the development of 19th-century Tamil oratory in relationship with the Protestant sermons was already underlying Bate 2010, and this idea is at the core of his posthumous book (2021).

[19] I use here the term Maṇipravāḷam in a restricted way to indicate the distinct code used by Tamil Vaiṣṇava (and in lesser measure Jain and Śaiva) theologians, but of course the category could be stretched and used in other ways (Kerala has its own tradition of Maṇipravāḷam, for instance). For an introduction to this code, see Anandakichenin 2018; all her works engage with the rich tradition of Śrīvaiṣṇava Maṇipravāḷam. For an in-depth discussion on the long tradition of Vaiṣṇava Maṇipravāḷam, in all its genres including early prose, see Venkatachari 1978.

written in a highly Sanskritized Tamil prose, which they see as one step in the development of contemporary Brahmin Tamil. Their contention is that these texts from the late 18th and 19th centuries witness a moment of transition, "when virtually for the last time the term Maṇipravāḷam was used in some manuscripts to designate the language in which the texts there contained were composed . . . , and when the label "Brahmin Tamil" . . . makes its first appearance."[20]

There is no exact correspondence between Vaiṣṇava Maṇipravāḷam and Śaiva literature of the medieval and early modern periods, but Śaiva theological discourse in Tamil was also characterized by varying degrees of Sanskritization (like Tamil itself), including forms of Śaiva Maṇipravāḷam mostly used for commentarial purposes.[21] At the same time, a corpus of theological texts that can be defined as plain and accessible Tamil prose was composed in the Śaiva context, well before the colonial period. These will be the object of analysis in the next sections of this essay. They are often anonymous texts produced in the context of the (monastic) classroom, and they have rarely been printed, even more rarely studied. It is difficult at this stage to know whether some texts of this corpus predate 17th-century missionary prose, even though in his introduction to the edition of one of Nobili's works S. Rajamanickam argues that Nobili was likely using the language of his Śaiva interlocutors, as testified by the many borrowings from the Caiva Cittāntam theological vocabulary that characterize his works.[22] Still, a Śaiva literature in prose existed at

[20] Ciotti and Sathyanarayanan 2020, 444.

[21] Take for example the short word-by-word commentary (*patavurai*) to the Sanskrit work *Śataratnasaṅgraha* found in the palm-leaf manuscript of the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP), RE15542, and written in the mix of Tamil and Grantha alphabets, which also characterizes Vaiṣṇava Maṇipravāḷam. This manuscript is currently being edited by a group of scholars at IFP and EFEO, in the context of larger editorial project on the *Śataratnasaṅgraha* and its commentaries. While we could not date this specific text so far, and Śaiva Maṇipravāḷam literature is usually later than its Vaiṣṇava counterpart, we can date with relative certainty some of these texts to the 16th/17th centuries. For instance, Saundaranātha (who likely belonged to the 17th century) mentions having composed a work on the worship of Sūrya in Maṇipravāḷam, which strongly suggests that it was in prose (see Mishra 2020, 51).

[22] *Tūṣaṇattikkāram*, xiv–xv. See also the discussion in Trento 2022, 23–27.

least as early as the 18th century and is an important ingredient in the emergence of the prose of 19th-century reformers. In order to draw the broad contours of this precolonial literature, we will now turn to one particularly important repository for Caiva Cittāntam theological texts.

## The Tiruvāvaṭuturai library

The monastery (*ātīṉam*) of Tiruvāvaṭuturai was founded sometimes in the 16th century, and its first head was the Caiva Cittāntam teacher Namaccivāya Mūrttikaḷ. While the lives of the first three heads of the monastery are hard to reconstruct, the institution has an active and traceable activity from the beginning of the 17th century.[23] It received donations from local rulers, managed the rituals of many temples, and hosted several important intellectuals. However, its precolonial history remains relatively unknown compared with the enormous fame the institution gained in the 19th century, when it was home to the great Tamil poet

[23] My ongoing work in the history of this institution is based on a rather large corpus of 17th- and 18th-century copper-plates recording donations to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and to temples connected with this monastery. A recent and well-document history of the *ātīṉam* is Kiruṣṇamūrtti 1999, even though the author follows the traditional model and focuses exclusively on the lives of the heads of Tiruvāvaṭuturai. A key work on Tiruvāvaṭuturai and other Caiva Cittāntam monasteries of the delta of the Kaveri is the unpublished doctoral dissertation by Kathleen Koppedrayer. This dissertation makes extensive use of oral history, interviews, and epigraphical information that the author could glean from the *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*. Koppedrayer notes for instance that according to the traditional accounts, the founder of the monastery Namaccivāya mūrttikaḷ was ordered by his guru to do service at Chidambaram, and that an inscription from Chidambaram mentions someone with the same name active there in 1588 CE (Koppedrayer 1990, 143). Chronologically this seems coherent with Namaccivāya's biography, even though the name is rather common (several instances of people called by this name are found in the volumes of the *South Indian Inscriptions*). Still, some details emerge from a closer look to the text of the inscription (SII 28, 194). First of all, the donation was recorded on stone twice, on the walls of the southern (SII 28, 194) and of the northern (SII, 28, 218) *gopuram*. It is a donation of 20 *taḷikai* by Vaiyyappa Kṛṣṇappa Koṇṭama Nāyakkar to a Namaśśivāya Uṭaiyār, who was responsible for all endowments (*sarvva-kaṭṭaḷai-kuru*), for the sake of donating alms to the ascetics (*paradeśi*). These elements, including the reference to *paradeśi*, a term often used to indicate members of the institution, point to someone who could have been connected to the Tiruvāvaṭuturai ātīṉam.

Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815–1876) and his student U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar (1855–1942). The latter wrote about Tiruvāvaṭuturai in his two masterpieces, the biography of his teacher, and his own autobiography. In these works, Tiruvāvaṭuturai is cast as a place of traditional Tamil learning, *pulamai*, and as the seat of Tamil poetry and Śaiva devotion—the combination of the two playing a crucial role in the process of Tamil identity-making.

As appears from his works, U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar was at the center of a group of aspiring poets who wanted to study Tamil with Piḷḷai and who went on to become important intellectuals of the time.[24] However, besides the training of *pulavars*, many other activities characterized the intellectual life of the monastery. In the 16th and 17th century, for instance, the monastery produced its own corpus of scriptures (*paṇṭāra cāttiram*) to complement the medieval canon of the *Meykaṇṭa cāttiram*. Another central activity was the translation of philosophical and theological works from Sanskrit to Tamil, which characterized the work of the famous intellectual Civañāṉa Muṉivar (1735–1785). Civañāṉa Muṉivar hailed from Tirunelveli but was affiliated to Tiruvāvaṭuturai throughout his life, and his samadhi is still located in the "forest of the ascetics" (*tapōvaṉam*) alongside the samadhis of several heads of the monastery. Indeed, the question of translation of Śaiva Siddhānta theology and ritual texts into Tamil is key for understanding the project of this institution. Alongside this, the monastery gave religious teachings to different types of devotees at different stages of intellectual and spiritual development.

The library of the monastery reflects these varied activities. It contains manuscripts of most of Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's compositions, and the manuscripts of the ancient Caṅkam anthologies, which Cāmināṭaiyar used for his editions. We also find manuscripts of many of the early modern poems that were part of the curriculum when he began studying with Piḷḷai, as we learn from a particularly vivid scene of his autobiography.[25] Side-by-side with manuscripts of these more or less ancient literary texts, grammars, and dictionaries—always in verse albeit often

[24] See Ebeling 2010, 57-62.
[25] See Venkatachalapathy 2015.

accompanied by learned prose commentaries—the library of the monastery also holds an astonishing number of Tamil manuscripts containing freestanding texts in prose. Taking as a reference the catalogue produced by the Institute of Asian Studies in 1993, I counted roughly 62 texts, some of which are preserved in multiple copies. Here is a preliminary list, compiled on the basis of the information included in this catalogue:

| Title | Topic | Author | Date | MSS | Printed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Aḷavai aṭṭavaṇai* | Logic and theology; same as *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* | Ampalāvāṇa Tēcikar | 16th c. | 5 | 1940 |
| *Aṉuṭṭāṉa aṭṭavaṇai* | Daily ritual of Śaiva initiates | Unknown | - | 3 | - |
| *Aṉuṭṭāṉa apava* | Daily ritual of Śaiva initiates | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Aṣṭa karmam* | Black magic | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Ilakkaṇa viḷakkac cūṟavaḷi* | Grammar | Civañāṉa Muṉivar | 17th c. | 1 | |
| *Uyir aṭṭavaṇai* | Logic and theology; same as *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* | Ampalāvāṇa Tēcikar | 16th c. | 1 | 1940 |
| *Karuvaṅka paspam vakāra vēlai* | Alchemy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Kurumoḻi viṇāviṭai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Kētāra pūjaiy aṭṭavaṇai* | Ritual for women | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Civappirakācak kaṭṭalai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Puṉkūr Civappirakācar | 17th c. | 14 | 1984 |
| *Civapūcaikkup pañcakauviya viti* | Ritual offerings | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Civapūcai viḷakkam* | Daily ritual of Śaiva initiates | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Civayōki vākku* | Yoga and initiation | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Cuvāmimalaip purāṇam* | *Purāṇam* of Cuvāmimalai | Cuvāmināṭaṭācar | - | 1 | - |
| *Cūriya pūcai* | Ritual for sun worship | Unknown | - | 1 | - |

| Title | Topic | Author | Date | MSS | Printed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Cōtiṭa cāstiram* | Astrology | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Ñāṉacīvavātak kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Cēṣāttiri Civaṉār | 18th c. ? | 1 | 1899 |
| *Ñāṉapūcai* | Ritual for guru worship | Unknown | - | 1 | |
| *Ñāṉapūcai aṭṭavaṇai* | Ritual for guru worship | Unknown | - | 5 | - |
| *Tacakāriyak kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 4 | - |
| *Tattuva kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 3 | 1913 |
| *Tattuvattokai aṭṭavaṇai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Tamiḻ ariccuvaṭi* | Syllabary | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Tarukka caṅkirakam* | Logic, translation from Sanskrit. | Civañāṉa Muṉivar | 17th c. | 4 | 1983 |
| *Tiripatārtta ilakkaṇam* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Tiruvālavāy kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 2 | 1913 |
| *Tiruvuntiyār tirukkaḷiṟṟuppaṭiyār camaraca cintaṇai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Tukaḷaṟupōtak kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 2 | - |
| *Nikkaḷaic civaniccaiyam* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | | - |
| *Nittiya karuma vitikaḷ* | Daily ritual of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Nittiya kaṇma aṭṭavaṇai - tiyāṉaviti* | Daily ritual of Śaiva initiates | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pacu-pati-pāca tacakāriyam* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pacu-pati-pāca paṉuval* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pañcakōca pirakaraṇam* | Philosophy, translation from Sanskrit | Nākaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ | - | 1 | 1876 |
| *Pañcataca pirakaraṇam* | Advaita philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | 1886 |
| *Pañcākkara taricaṇam* | Mantra explanation | Unknown | - | 1 | - |

| Title | Topic | Author | Date | MSS | Printed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Pañcākkaram paṟṟiya viḷakkam* | Mantra explanation | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pañcāṅkam* | Almanac, astrology | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pañcāṅkam* | Almanac, astrology | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Paṭci cāstiram* | Augury | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pati-pacu-pāca kaṭṭaḷai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 3 | - |
| *Pati-pacu-pāca taricaṇam* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 2 | - |
| *Patiṇeṭṭu avattai* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pālāriṣṭam* | Medicine, childcare | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pirācāta viti* | Caiva Cittāntam philosophy, from Nāṇappirakāca Kamalai's homonymous work | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Piryāyacittat tarppaṇam* | Rituals of expiation | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Puṣpa viti* | Flowers for Śaiva worship | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pūcaiy aṭṭavaṇai* | Manual for Śaiva worship | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pūjai viti* | Manual for Śaiva worship | Unknown | - | 2 | - |
| *Pūta cutti* | Removal of impurities | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Pūppiḷḷaiy aṭṭavaṇai* | Logic and theology | Ampalāvāṇa Tēcikar | 16th c. | 5 | |
| *Pōkar cōtiṭam* | Astrology | Pōkar | - | 1 | - |
| *Pōkāṅka Pūjai* | Rituals for Nani worship | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Makāvākkiya viparaṇam* | Advaita philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | 1884 |
| *Maṭātipati yeṉum coṟṟoṭar viḷakkam* | History of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam* | Unknown | 1929 | 1 | - |
| *Maruttuva vākaṭam* | Medicine | Unknown | - | 1 | - |

| Title | Topic | Author | Date | MSS | Printed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Rāci lakṉa varuṣa vivaram* | Astrology | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Varuṣap piṟappu palaṉ* | Astrology | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Vicāṭa tīṭcitā aṉuṭṭāṉa viti* | Initiation, daily rituals | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Vētānta vicāram* | Vedānta, philosophy | Unknown | - | 1 | - |
| *Vaittiya cāstiram* | Medicine | Unknown | - | 1 | - |

Notwithstanding the great work done by the compilers of the catalogue, the information about the manuscripts on this list is scarce. In order to understand whether manuscripts bearing the same title contain indeed the same texts, one would need to inspect them systematically. Moreover, the colophons are rarely identified and at the current state of our knowledge it is difficult to establish the precise dates for the material artefacts and for the texts they contain. For instance, a short foray into two manuscripts of the *Ñāṉappūcai aṭṭavaṇai* in the library of the *ātīṉam* already reveals a colophon with a (difficult to interpret) date. Still, relying on the few texts attributed to well-known authors, I would formulate the hypothesis that many of the works listed above were composed between the 17th and the early 19th century, some of them possibly earlier. The *ātīṉam* attributes one of them to the third head of the institution, Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, who was likely active at the end of the 16th century. In short, it seems plausible that we have here an early modern body of works.

While there is a certain variation in terms of contents, Caiva Cittāntam theology and ritual instructions for Śaiva devotees appear to be the main topics dealt with in prose. We also find retellings of the first works in the corpus of the *Meykaṇṭa cāttiram*. Many texts in the list belong to two unstudied genres repeatedly identified and defined in the catalogue: *kaṭṭaḷai*, literally "prescription," and *aṭṭavaṇai*, "index." Ciṟṟampanāṭikaḷ's 14th-century *Ciṟṟampalanāṭi kaṭṭaḷai* is the first work of the genre *kaṭṭaḷai*. In the beginning, works in this genre were also in verse, but prose became the favorite medium of expression of later works, particularly those written

after the 18th century.[26] While the genealogy of the *aṭṭavaṇai* is less clear, on the base of the late texts preserved in the Tiruvāvaṭuturai library the two prose genres appear to be very similar in form and purpose. They often expound contents taken from other texts in a condensed and simplified way. In this sense, both *kaṭṭaḷai* and *aṭṭavaṇai* have a lot in common with other types of summaries, namely the prose retellings (*vacaṉam*) of literary texts and *purāṇ ams*. Like *vacaṉam*, many of the *kaṭṭaḷai* and *aṭṭavaṇai* texts are part of a larger ecosystem and derived from famous works with similar titles and contents but written in verse.

Some of these theological summaries are extremely concise, to the point of being lists of elements, close to aide-memoire for students and teachers to use in the classroom, as the Rev. Thomas Hoisington suggested in the introduction to his translation of the *Civappirakāca kaṭṭaḷai* (1854). This leads us to the question of the context in which these texts were written and circulated in the precolonial period. They were likely used in the context of monastic schools that taught the technical terms and main ideas of Caiva Cittāntam to novice students. This may explain why the Tiruvāvaṭuturai monastery library contains so many copies of some of them, especially the *Civappirakāca kaṭṭalai* (14 manuscripts) and the *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* (11 manuscripts, with different titles). We can imagine that several students needed to use a copy at the same time, to prepare for a class or memorize the contexts of the text. A century later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, some collections of *kaṭṭaḷai* texts were printed as a kind of Śaiva "catechism" at a time when the genre was in vogue in the larger context of the encounter between Protestant Christianity and Śaivism.[27]

### ***Kaṭṭaḷai* literature**

Among the prose texts written in the context of the *ātīṉam*, the *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* is attributed to the third pontiff, Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar. This would imply that it was composed toward the end

[26] Thasarathan 1993, part 2, 766.

[27] These "catechetical" texts were used to write the first expositions of Caiva Cittāntam theology into English, perhaps because they were used to introduce the theology to foreigners as well. See for instance Hoisington 1854 and Foulkes 1863.

of the 16th century.[28] When narrating the hagiography of Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, the monastery's history titled "The Illumination of the Guru's lineage" (*Kuruparamparai viḷakkam*) narrates the occasion for its composition:

> Another time, seeing that the pupil called Pūppiḷḷai had attained the ripened state from doing continuous service to Ñāṉatēcikar for a long time, but his learning and understanding were limited, feeling compassion for him, he composed a work in prose (*kattiyarūpam*), gave it the name of *Uyir aṭṭavaṇai*, and [with that] instructed him.[29]

As clearly stated here, Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar decided to compose this work to explain the tenets of Caiva Cittāntam to Pūppiḷḷai, a student of limited understanding but great fervor. It is impossible to know if Pūppiḷḷai was a real disciple of the monastery in the 16th century, or if his character is simply the type of a simple devotee. Nevertheless, this story seems to indicate that Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar's prose text, formally very different from the other works he composed in poetry, was intended to convey the same kind of theological content in a more accessible medium.[30] In other words, this kind of theological prose was developed against a sophisticated *centamiḻ* corpus, implying a pedagogical division of textual labor aimed at different kinds of students. The great number of manuscripts of the *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* also seem to point to the fact that the text may have been used in the classroom, perhaps during the first phases of the religious and philosophical instruction of a student of Caiva Cittāntam in the monastery.

[28] This attribution is further strengthened by a verse in the *Ulakuṭaiya nāyaṉār kaḷineṭilaṭi āciriya viruttam*, another work by Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, where he claims to have explained in easy terms the contents of the Caiva Cittāntam canon. See the introduction to *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai*, i–ii.

[29] *Kuruparamparai viḷakkam*, 50: *piṉpu ōr kālattil, ñāṉatēcikar tamakku neṭuṅkālam paṇipurintu vantataṉāṟ paripakkuvamaṭaintirunta pūppiḷḷaiyeṉpavar kalviyaṟivu ciṟitumāttira muṭaiyarāyiruttalai nōkki, avarmāṭṭuk karuṇaipurintu, kattiyarūpamāka ñāṉa nūl oṉṟiyaṟṟi ataṟku uyiraṭṭavaṇai eṉappeyar tantu avarukku upatēcittaruḷiṉar.*

[30] Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar is considered as the author of ten out of the scriptures of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam*, known as *paṇṭāra cāttiram*. The number of texts in this canon varies, but the ten titles attributed to him are always present: *Tacakāriyam*, *Caṉmārkka cittiyār*, *Civācciramat teḷivu*, *Cittāntap paḵroṭai*, *Cittānta cikāmaṇi*, *Upāyaniṭṭai veṇpā*, *Niṭṭai viḷakkam*, *Upatēca veṇpā*, *Aticayamālai*, and *Namaccivāya mālai*.

Let us now turn to the text itself, which was printed by the press of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam* in the series on their own scriptures (*paṇṭāra cāttiram*). Here is the entirety of the first short chapter on the nature of the soul:

*uyirkaḷai eṇṇit tokai paṇṇappaṭātu. piṟappumillai; iṟappumillai. civaṉaippōla aḻiyāmalirukkum. entakkālamum āṇavamalattuṭaṉē kūṭiyirukkum.*[31] *atu eppaṭippōla? aricikkut taviṭu pōlavum, cempukkuk kaḷimpupōlavum, kaṭal nīrukku uppuppōlavum ippaṭi āyiram uvamaiyuṇṭu.*

One should not distinguish and count souls (*uyir*). They have no birth; they have no death. Like Śiva, they are indestructible. And they are at all times joined with impurity (*āṇavamalam*). How is that? Like rice and bran, copper and rust, ocean water and salt, there are thousands of possible comparisons.

*āṇavamalam uyirai mayakkukiṟa paṭiyiṉālē ataṟkuc cāmiyam: — kuḻantaip paruvam uyirai mayakkukiṟatu pōlavum, payittiya kuṇam uyiraimayakkukiṟatupōlavum, kaḷuṇṭavaṉai mayakkukiṟatu pōlavam ippaṭi āyiram uvamaiyuṇṭu.*

Because impurity confuses (*mayakkutal*) the soul, it is like this: just as childhood confuses the soul, madness confuses the soul, and drinking alcohol is confusing—in this way there are thousands of comparisons.

*uyirai āṇavamalam mayakkukiṟapaṭiyiṉālē uyirukku nalviṉai, tīviṉaikaḷilē ācai varum. atu eppaṭippōla? paci cōṟṟilē ācaiyai uṇṭākkukiṟatu pōlavum, kuruṭu kōlilē ācaiyai uṇṭākkukiṟatu pōlavum, piṇi maruntilē ācaiyai uṇṭākkukiṟatu pōlavum ippaṭi āyiram cāmiyam uṇṭu.*

Because impurity confuses the soul, the desire for good and bad actions arises in the soul. How is this? Just as hunger creates the desire for rice, blindness creates the desire for a stick, sickness creates the desire for medicine, there are thousands of comparisons.

[31] The incipit of the printed edition coincides with the incipit recorded in the catalogue for the work *Uyir aṭṭavaṇai* (1993, part 1, 159 [manuscript n. 183]); the incipits recorded for the manuscripts containing works titled *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai* and *Aḷavai aṭṭavaṇai* are different, even though the text I reproduce here is also known under these names, and the catalogue claims these three texts to be one and the same. As I said above, an in-depth study of these manuscripts is the necessary next step.

*uyirukku āṇavamalam koṭutta ācaiyaic civaṉ aṟintu uyirkkut taṉu, karaṇa, puvaṉa, pōkaṅkaḷai iṭai viṭāmal māṟṟi māṟṟik koṭuttukkoṇṭē iruppar. atu eppaṭippōla? viyātiyiṉālē maruntilē ācaip paṭṭavaṉukkup paṇṭitaṉ aṟintu maruntukoṭukkiṟatu pōla eṉṟaṟika. itu uyirukku anātiyil uḷḷa ceyti.*

Knowing the desire that impurity generates in the soul, Śiva keeps giving to the soul without pause individuality, material means, a place, and pleasures, rectifying this continuously (*māṟṟi māṟṟi*). What is this like? It should be understood in the same way as when a doctor knows a person who is ill and gives them medicine.

*ellā uyirkaḷukkum iccaiyum, aṟivun, toḻilum entakkālamum iṭai viṭāmalirukkum. āṇava malattuṭaṉē māttiram kūṭiyirukkiṟa uyirkaḷukkellām viññāṇakalar eṉṟum; āṇavamalattuṭaṉēyum, kaṉma malattuṭaṉēyum, kūṭiyirukkiṟa uyirkaḷukkellām piraḷayākalar eṉṟum; aṇava malattuṭaṉēyum, kaṉma malattuṭaṉēyum, māyā malattuṭaṉēyum kūṭiyirukkiṟa uyirkaḷukkellām cakalar eṉṟum peyar.*

For all souls, at all times and without interruption there is desire, knowledge, and action. The name of all those souls who are joined only with *āṇavamalam* is "those of the highest class" (*viññāṉakalar*); [the name] of all those souls who are joined with both *āṇavamalam* and *kaṉmamalam* is "those of the intermediate class" (*piraḷayākalar*); [the name] of all souls joined with the three impurities—*āṇavamalam, kaṉmamalam, māyāmalam*—is "those of the lower class" (*cakalar*).

*uyirilakkaṇam muṟṟum.*

Here ends the explanation of the soul.

The chapter is short and relatively simple, written in plain prose and interspersed with some technical Sanskrit terms. This technical language represents the main difficulty for a lay reader, insofar the text offers a concise version of classical Caiva Cittāntam theology with its key words and concepts. Still, we find here, at the beginning of the treatise, the three ontological categories that characterize this school explained in easy terms: Śiva himself as the Lord (*pati*), the individual souls (*uyir*), and the three forms of impurity (*malam*) that bind (*pacam*) the soul and prevent its

union with Śiva. The definitions and workings of these categories are given very succinctly, with simple and short answers often preceded by rhetorical questions that give the text a catechetical and dialogical flavor. On the same vein, the text also contains a great number of comparisons. Each concept is quickly defined, but these examples carry most of the weight of the explanation. They are often well-known standard images, like the mix of water and salt in the ocean to explain the union and Śiva and the soul. Still, these examples belong to the realm of the mundane and the everyday, and evoke images of copper and rust, childhood and alcohol, blindness and hunger in an otherwise very dry text.

The frequent use of terms of comparison characterized roughly contemporary missionary prose as well. For instance, a lesser-known Catholic missionary and writer of the 18th century, Michele Bertoldi aka Ñāṉappirakāca cuvāmi (1662–1740), used in his Tamil adaptation of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (*Ñāṉamuyaṟci*) both standard Indian metaphors and images from Tamil daily life. To explain misperception, he mentioned how "if one tries to understand what an elephant, a temple tower, or a mountain is by looking from afar, the elephant will look like an ant, the temple tower like a straw, and the mountain like an anthill." In the same text, he employed a set of more vivid images to explain how packed with souls the Christian Hell really is, to the point of resembling "a collection of sesame seeds in the oil press, squeezed and crushed by the spinning of the plank; coconut fibers, intertwined without interval; creepers closely entangled, straws of paddy tied very firmly together, thorns pressed and tied to other thorns."[32]

But the *Ñāṉamuyaṟci*, like the texts written by Roberto Nobili a century earlier, were probably not as stylistically innovative as scholars of Tamil prose have argued so far. They seem to be part of a larger movement toward the creation of a theological corpus in relatively simple Tamil, which we can see at work in the *Pūppiḷḷai aṭṭavaṇai*. These short Śaiva theological manuals haven't

[32] *Ñāṉamuyaṟci* xi, 3: *cekkiliṭṭa eḷḷu nerukkup palakai cuṟṟiyāṭukaiyil nacuṅki aṭarumāp pōlēyuṅ, katampai tirikkappaṭā niṟkaiyiṟ curuṅkumāp pōlēyuṅ, koṭiyāṉatu maṟukkaiyiṟ ciṟukumāp pōlēyum, vaikkōlāṉa tiṟukaviṟuka vicikkaiyilē neruṅkumāp pōlēyum, muḷḷukaḷ piṇitta muḷḷukaḷōṭu oṭuṅkumāp pōlēyum . . .*

attracted much attention from scholars; they are virtually absent from Zvelebil's *Lexicon of Tamil Literature,* for instance. However, they should be added to the set of elements that contributed to the emergence of Tamil prose and rhetoric in the 19th century, insofar as they elaborated a standard language that was at once formal and simple, technical and yet full of everyday references. They also suggest that even at this time there was a relatively large audience of Śaiva students and devotees who did not have access to more complex poems, but who were interested in using these simpler texts to better understand their Śaiva identity.

**Conclusions**

I first had the opportunity to explore the Catholic prose works referred to in this essay with Professor Annamalai during my days as a Tamil student at the University of Chicago. Our discussions often revolved around the emergence of modern Tamil prose writing in relationship with these early European interventions, informed by Annamalai's intellectual exchange with the late Bernard Bate, whose posthumous book he co-edited with colleagues in 2021. Bate's thesis—that the emergence of modern Tamil rhetoric and prose was influenced by Protestant preaching—is a challenging yet unconvincing position that I have called into question in this essay. In addition, I have sought to highlight the linguistic and register changes within Tamil that were shaped by the interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit. These played a key role in the intellectual history of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam* in the 17th and 18th centuries. The relationship between these two languages has also been central to my conversations with Annamalai over many years and continues to be a focus of his scholarly work (2024), especially for its generative power in the field of Tamil grammar.

The present state of the archive at the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam*, the existence of a large corpus of Śaiva theological and ritual freestanding prose texts in relatively simple Tamil, and of parallel Christian prose literature, also in the light of the phenomenon of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Maṇipravāḷam, do not seem to support the old-fashioned conclusion that freestanding didactic prose texts meant for a wide public were a missionary or colonial invention. While the precise chronology of this mode of writing religion is

still unclear, its purposes, genres, and registers begin to emerge in the brief overview I proposed in this essay. Accessible Tamil prose texts, often labeled *aṭṭavaṇai* or *kaṭṭaḷai*, proliferated in the educational context of early modern Caiva Cittāntam monasteries like the Tiruvāvaṭuturai *ātīṉam*. They were complementary means of instruction, perhaps propaedeutic to the refined *centamiḻ* poems that explained the tenets of Caiva Cittāntam to more advanced students, as well as to the technical Maṇipravāḷam commentaries to the Sanskrit scriptures of the tradition. All these linguistic registers, developed and used in the context of the non-Brahminic Śaiva institutions of the Kaveri delta, reflected on the one hand the need to create a theological language alternative to Sanskrit, and on the other the urge to reach out to the large community of initiated devotees that characterized Tamil Caiva Cittāntam.

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# *Bricks from a Tamil Pagoda*

Whitney Cox

This might seem an odd contribution to a volume celebrating the work and career of E. Annamalai, just as I may seem like an odd author. Annamalai and I are not Buddhologists, nor are we historians of art, nor specialists of the medieval Bay of Bengal. Annamalai is a linguist, a grammarian, a scholar of the long sweep of Tamil literature, and a commentator on the linguistic politics of modern India. I am a student of literature, mostly in Sanskrit, with an interest in Tamil and especially in the Co̱la period. For all that this may seem an odd fit, the story I will tell in this contribution is an early part of the history of a particular Tamil cosmopolitanism, which is a history for which Annamalai's life and career supply an exemplary modern instance. More to the point, my story is of how one born of the soil of Tamil Nadu came to find a lasting home far away, in Chicago.

As you enter the first room of the Art Institute of Chicago's Alsdorf Galleries, dedicated to that museum's exemplary collection of early South and Southeast Asian art, you are greeted by a striking triptych (figure 1).[1] The central figure here, a larger-than-life monolithic Buddha, greets visitors to the museum's collection flanked by two smaller standing bronze Buddhas. From the point

[1] Refer to Ghose 2022 for a more detailed curatorial and art-historical account for these three images and a comparandum held in another collection.

of view of a viewer entering the gallery, these two flanking images appear to be a matched set: for all that their level of preservation differs, the figures are about the same size and show a very similar iconography. One of them—by far the better preserved—is, like the central figure, from the Tamil country (figure 2), while the other is from the other side of the Bay of Bengal, from Pagan, in what is now upland Myanmar (figure 3).

As they are set in downtown Chicago, these two Buddhist *dvārapālas* are an illustrative metonymy for the Buddhist Mediterranean that was the Bay of Bengal in the several centuries bracketing the beginning of the Common Era's second millennium. I borrow the notion of the "Buddhist Mediterranean" from the historian Tilman Frasch, who periodized its existence over the longue durée of 300–1300, its end-point linked roughly—if perhaps too mechanically—to the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate at the turn of the 14th century.[2] In the gallery's wall texts and in the Art Institute's online catalogue, the provenance of the two South Indian images is given as Nagapattinam, now a flourishing district head town at the mouth of the Kaveri Delta. It is certainly the case that Nagapattinam was the most significant Buddhist site in the Coḻa country, the site of major Buddhist foundations in the period—there were at least two separate Buddhist *vihāras* (Ta. [*pĕrum-*]*paḷḷi*) present there by the late 11th century[3]—and the source of this idea comes from an impeccable source, T. N. Ramachandran's *catalogue raisonné* of the holdings in the Madras Museum (1954). Surveying this collection—many

[2] Frasch 1998, explicitly building on Braudel 1972 and Chaudhuri 1985.

[3] The foundation of the earlier and larger of these institutions, the Cūḷāmaṇivarmavihāra *alias* Rājarājapĕrumpaḷḷi is documented in the Larger Leiden plates, recording a decision taken by Rājarāja I in his 21st regnal year (1006 CE), though the inscription was created and issued during the reign of his son and successor Rājendra I Coḻa. The Smaller Leiden Plates, issued in the 20th year of Kulottuṅga I (ca. 1090–1091), attest to the existence of another foundation, the Rājendrapĕrumpaḷḷi; both are said to be charitable foundations by the ruler of Kaṭāram and Śrīvijaya, Mārottuṅgavijayavarman. Both sets of plates were edited by K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyer in vol. 22 of *Epigraphia Indica,* as nos. 34 [pp. 213–266] and 35 [pp. 267–281]. Pathmanathan 2002a includes a detailed review of their contents, extending and at points correcting Subrahmanya Aiyer's own work of interpretation.

of which, but hardly all, were recovered from Nagapattinam—Ramachandran concluded,

> It is impossible to have so many images at Nāgapaṭṭiṇam [*sic*] without a regular school of arts and crafts. As in Nālandā, these finds presuppose a local school . . . the art of the Nāgapaṭṭiṇam finds may be appropriately termed *Nāgapaṭṭiṇam Art*, though the images range from the early Coḻa to the Vijayanagara types special to South Indian art. (1954, 34)

Since Ramachandran wrote, there has been a stream of new discoveries, many of which are owed to the decades-long work of B. Jambulingam, who has unearthed scores of pieces of Buddhism's material life in premodern Tamil Nadu.[4] This broad range of findspots suggests a context of production far more complex than the one Ramachandran envisaged. Indeed, positing a "regular school of arts and crafts" with Ramachandran risks diminishing the complexly cosmopolitan world of medieval Nagapattinam itself. Following John Guy (Guy 1993–1994; Guy 2001), we should consider Nagapattinam as a single pole of a far-flung maritime world that extended from the southeastern Indian coast to Quanzhou, at the hinge between what we now call the South and East China Seas. Guy and, following him, Risha Lee have emphasized how Nagapattinam's so-called "Chinese Pagoda"—to which we will return—was distantly mirrored by a Hindu temple in Quanzhou, complete with locally manufactured and locally inflected Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava images and a bilingual Tamil-Chinese inscription.[5]

We would do well to consider "Nagapattinam art" to refer to a stylistic tendency rather than to understand the coastal enclave as the sole site for either the production or consumption of the Buddhist art of this time and place. While this Buddhist art is distinctive—with its firm modelling, stylized sharp facial features, and its especially its distinctive flame-wreathed *uṣnīṣa* above the brow of the Buddha—

[4] Documented online at https://ponnibuddha.blogspot.com/. As far as I am aware, none of Jambulingam's work has been collected in libraries outside of Tamilnadu; I am grateful to Madhuvanti Ghose for drawing his work to my attention. See also Dayalan 2002, 562–568, a useful list of images in stone and bronze unearthed up to the time of its publication.

[5] Lee 2009.

this distinctiveness is not restricted to images recovered from Nagapattinam in the Tamil country, and is if anything part of a much wider Buddhist visual language of the medieval Bay of Bengal.[6]

The centerpiece of my discussion is the Art Institute's monolithic Śākyamuni Buddha (figure 4; AIC no. 1964.556). According to the Art Institute's curatorial staff, this beautiful image was likely crafted in the 12th century, placing it firmly within the context of the later phases of the Coḻa imperial kingdom. While the Coḻa state system was overwhelmingly concerned with its inland landed order—principally, with its agrarian revenue and territorial expansion—it certainly looked out across the Bay of Bengal. Famously, this interest extended to what remain the ambiguous military adventures against the Srivijayan thalassocracy in modern-day Malaysia under Rājendra I in the first half of the 11th century.[7]

This was clearly a two-way traffic. Buddhism was the great communicating medium throughout this sprawling maritime world, and as a result it enjoyed a significant role in the cultural matrix of the Coḻas.[8] The imperial rulers of the dynasty, members of their families, and their many underlords are all rightly associated with the spectacular growth of Śaiva temple construction that was among the most salient art-historical and social-historical facts of the period, while the later part of the Coḻa period—that of the presumed date of the stone Buddha's creation—witnessed the emergence of Śrīraṅgam as a center of the burgeoning Śrīvaiṣṇava community.[9] But Buddhism was not just an entrepôt religion

[6] Ramachandran shows some awareness of this when he speaks of the similarity that some images in the corpus had with the "Sarnath and Nālandā types that have influenced largely Javanese and Farther Indian images of the Buddhas" (1954, 35).

[7] First proposed through a philological reconstruction of Southeast Asian toponyms in Rājendra I's long *mĕykkīrtti* by Georges Cœdès (1918, 1968), this has become a mainstay of contemporary public historical knowledge about the Coḻa period, as a quick perusal of Wikipedia will readily attest. A set of seminar proceedings from a decade and a half ago (Kulke, Kesavapany, and Sakhuja 2009) provides a good summary of the current state of our knowledge: see especially Sen's clearsighted discussion of the interstate politics involved (Sen 2009).

[8] For a critical discussion of the notion of Buddhism as a communicating medium or "carrier wave," based on the case of Ratnaśrījñāna's remarkably influential commentary on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, see Bronner and Cox 2023, 286–287.

[9] Orr 1996, locating the crucial period of Śrirangam's transformation to the decades 1080–1130 (during her "period e"; 1996, 112–113).

exclusive to places like Nagapattinam. Thanks to the work of the late Anne Monius, Anglophone scholars are now well aware of the work of one Buddhist intellectual writing in Tamil, Puttamittiraṉār (Skt. Buddhamitra), who is presumed to have received court patronage under Vīrarājendracoḻa (r. 1063–1069/70?). His *Vīracoḻiyam* grammar was especially notable for its efforts to domesticate Tamil to Sanskrit cosmopolitan standards.[10] In his opening invocation or *kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu*, Puttamittiraṉār repurposed the myth of the divine transmission of Tamil to Agastya atop the Potiyil hill, making the Vedic sage the recipient this revelation of Tamil from Avalokitaṉ, that is, the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, rather than from Śiva.[11]

We can locate the monolithic Buddha within an interlacing network of institutions, actors, and processes as well as—most importantly—at the intersection of multiple gazes. A great many Buddhist bronzes were crafted at a much smaller scale than this grand work in stone; paralleling Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ritual practice, these were perhaps used as processional icons, or as images of private devotion. Not a few of these mobile images have entered into the international art market, and now are either on display or in private hands all over the world, as in the case of the Art Institute's standing bronze Buddha, with which we began, but also amply attested by examples elsewhere.[12]

[10] As Monius notes (2001, 117) this is explicitly mentioned in Puttamittiraṉār's work (*pāyiram*, vs. 3 *pañcav atikāram parappai curukki . . . pū mel uraippaṉ vaṭanūl marapum pukaṉṟu kōṇṭe*, "[Puttamittiraṉār] condenses the vast expanse of the five topics [of grammar] . . . and explains these throughout the earth, following the tradition of the northern [i.e. Sanskrit] texts."); recent work by Victor d'Avella (2017, 2021) has done much to document and to deepen the scholarly understanding of this filiation (cf. his slightly different translation of this passage, 2021, 404).

[11] *Vīracoḻiyam pāyiram,* vs. 2: *āyuṅkuṇatt'avalokitaṉ pakkal akattiyaṉ keṭṭu / eyumpuvaṉikku iyampiya taṇṭamiḻ*, "cool Tamil, which was proclaimed to the worthy earth by Akattiyaṉ, who had heard it in the presence of Avalokitaṉ, of rare virtue." On the myth of the revelation of Tamil atop Potiyil, refer to Chevillard 2009. Margherita Trento has drawn my attention to the fact that, from at least the 16th century, it was Murukaṉ and not Śiva who was portrayed as the divine promulgator of Tamil to Agastya (personal communication).

[12] E.g, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 2004.63 (https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/72392), the Norton Simon Museum, no. F.1972.31.2.S (https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1972.31.2.S/), and an example sold at auction at Christie's in 2013 (https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5659496).

Other pieces of material culture, either recently identified, not on public display, or in private hands, can add to our image of Buddhism's amplitude in the medieval South. In a recent article, James Mallinson identified a collection of three magnificent images now under worship in a Nāth sampradāya maṭha outside of Mangalore. Mallinson convincingly identifies these as Śākyamuni Buddha (now worshipped as Vyāsa), Avalokiteśvara (understood as Viṣṇu) and Mañjuvajra (a Tantric form of Mañjuśrī, understood as Brahmā); the last of these bears a dedicatory inscription dated to 1068 CE (Mallinson 2019, 273). The seated Buddha image, with its posture, flaming *uṣṇīṣa*, and distinctly draped *saṃghāṭī*, closely resembles the Nagapattinam style.[13]

Then there is the fascinating case of yet another small standing bronze Buddha, now in private hands in Ireland (figure 5). While not much is known about the provenance of this charming, cherubic image, it is clearly of a piece with the Nagapattinam corpus: one estimate dates it to 15th–16th century, though I do not know on what basis.[14] Its base bears a brief inscription, in Sanskrit and in the Grantha script, *buddhādityasya dharmma*[*ḥ*], which we may perhaps render as "a charitable act of Buddhāditya" (figure 6). Seventy of the images in Ramachandran's catalogue also bear short label inscriptions, all of which seem to comprise the dedications of the images by named donors. However, these differ from the Buddhāditya inscription in their language—all are in Tamil—and in form. Extending Ramachandran's initial interpretations, S. Pathmanathan retranslated and annotated this corpus (2002b: 828–834; cf. 2002a: 595–603). The majority of these labels—49 of 70, thus 70%—take the form of a proper name followed by *-nāyakar*, *-nāyaṉār*, or *-tevar*; the majority of the other inscriptions appears to be proper names.[15] Strikingly given

[13] Mallinson especially notes the *sattvaparyaṅka* posture (2019, 273).

[14] I am grateful to the piece's owner, who first contacted me in April 2021 with a request for an interpretation of its label inscription, for his permission to reproduce it here.

[15] Pathmanathan cautiously supposes that the *-nāyakar* etc. labels could either refer to a donor's title (i.e., that the resulting compound is a *karmadhāraya* type) or as a possessive ("the *nāyakar* [i.e., the Buddha] of *n.*"); I consider the latter to be far more likely.

the Buddhist context, there are no occurrences of *dharma* (or *dhamma*, *aṟam*, etc.) within the entire corpus.

There is, however, a comparandum to the Buddhāditya inscription on the base of another piece held by the Art Institute, not currently on display (see figure 7). The image's Tamil inscription reads *vaṇṇakkanācciyāṇaṉ*[*a*?] ***dh****ammam* (figure 8).[16] The segment *Nācciyāṇaṉ* can be interpreted as "the queen's [/the goddess's] man": while this is possibly a title, I presume it to be a personal name. I propose *vaṇṇakka* to be a slight abridgement for the occupational title *vaṇṇakkaṉ* ("coin-tester"?[17]). So, in close parallel to the Buddhāditya label, we may interpret this as "the *dhammam* (=charitable act) of Vaṇṇakka[ṉ] Nācciyāṇaṉ." I must leave several questions raised by these two closely related data unanswered here: why, for instance, the isolated use of Sanskrit in Buddhāditya's case? Does the use of *dhammam* in Nācciyāṇaṉ's donation presuppose that he was an adherent of Pāli-language Buddhism?

As it happens, a Buddhist poet from Kanchipuram bearing the name Buddhāditya is attested elsewhere, far away from Tamiḻakam. Mpu Prapañca's *Deśavarṇana*, better known today as the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, an old Javanese *kakawin* completed in 1365, detailed and celebrated the contemporary court and realm of the Majapahit king Hayam Wuruk alias Rājasanagara (r. 1334–1389). In its closing verses, the *kakawin* depicts a lavish festival held in the king's honor (93.1):[18]

> *sakveh saṅ paṇḍiteṅ anyadharaṇi maṅikĕt kāstavan śrīnarendra*
> *śrībuddhāditya saṅ bhikṣv agavay i sira *bhogāvali śloka kīrṇa*

[16] Given the label's lack of the *puḷḷi*, it is undecidable whether the name ends in its stem consonant or with the adjectival/genitive ending *-a*; the possessive sense is, at any rate, clear. I have marked in bold the inscription's sole Grantha graph.

[17] The interpretation follows the MTL, s.v. As a title, *vaṇṇakkaṉ* is attested from the time of the poets of the Caṅkam anthologies (e.g., Putukāyattu Vaṇṇakkaṉ Kampūrkiḻāṉ, the author of *Naṟṟiṇai* 294, Vaṭama Vaṇṇakkaṉ Tāmotaraṇār, the author of *Kuṟuntōkai* 85 and *Puṟaṇānūṟu* 172), *inter alia*. Closer to the presumed time of the creation of these images, within the published corpus of Coḻa epigraphy, we find Taṉkūṭṭamuṭaiyāṉ Vaṇṇakkaṉāna Vayaṉ Cuntaraṉ (SII3:141, 984 CE, *Concordance* [=Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Matsui 1978], no. 8812), Vaṇṇakkaṉ Paṇaṅkāṭaṉ (SII 2:294, 1014 CE, no. 6551), Vaṇṇakkaṉ Tevaṉ (ibid., no. 6709), and Vaṇṇakkaṉ Ātittatevaṉ (SII 7:432, 1156 CE, no. 8247), *inter alia*.

[18] Ed. Pigeaud 1960, I:73; I draw on the readings of Kern 1922 as reported in Pigeaud's apparatus. Compare the translation in Robson 1995, 93.

*riṅ jambudvīpa toṅgvānira maṅaran i kāñcīpurī ṣaḍvihāra*
*mvaṅ saṅ viṗrāṅaran śrīmutali *sahṛdayāvvat stuti śloka śuddha*

> **bhogāvali*] Kern; *bhogavvali* Pigeaud; **sahṛdayāvvat*] Kern; *sahṛdayāvat* Pigeaud.

All of the learned men from other lands composed eulogies for the King.
The monk Śrī Buddhāditya made a litany of praise in mixed metres for him:
his home was in Jambudvīpa [=India], in a place called Kāñcīpurī, with its six vihāras.
Also, a brahman called Śrī Mutali, a sophisticated man, presented him with a eulogy in pure verses.[19]

This émigré poet hailed from Tamil country, from a city with centuries-long Buddhist associations, and shared his name with the donor of our image, which is only dated later than the 14th century on what might be stylistic grounds. It is thus possible—though by no means certain—that these refer to the same man. Even the coincidence of the two names may be significant, given the relative rarity of *-āditya* as a name-segment for Buddhist figures. We may point to one Saddharmāditya, the author of a *Dvibhujamahākālastotra* (of uncertain date, but which was translated into Tibetan in the early 16th century) and two figures from the life of the celebrated late Indian Buddhist master Vanaratna (1384–1468): Manuṣasūrya (where *sūrya=āditya*), a southern pandit who was an early teacher of Vanaratna's; and Āditya, a Buddhist layman from Magadha who authored a short praise poem in his honor.[20] At the very least, this coincidence of names vividly captures

[19] Note also, as scholars have done since Kern's *editio princeps*, the likely Tamilian origins of the second figure mentioned here: *mutali* clearly derives from Ta. *mutal* "first, foremost"; following Kern, Pigeaud and Robson understand this as a caste title for a Vellāḷa (Pigeaud 1960, IV:332; Robson 1995, 145, i.e., as *mutaliyār*). This would, however, directly contradict Prapañca's explicit identification as of this man as "*viṗra*," "a brahman" (*pace* Robson, who interprets *viṗra* as "priest"; cf. Zoetmulder 1992 s.v. *wiṗra*). Cf. Mutaliyāṇṭāṇ, the name of one of Rāmānuja's chief (and certainly Brahman) disciples. Finally, in contrast to these earlier interpreters, I understand *sahṛdaya* as a substantive, and not a proper name.

[20] I owe the information in this paragraph to Andrea Acri and Iain Sinclair who generously shared their knowledge and expertise with me in a series of

the circuits of mobility that united these two distant points in the Buddhist Mediterranean, and reminds us that these circuits continued to envivify Buddhism in southern India well into times more recent than its alleged "disappearance" from the subcontinent.

This aligns with valuable recent research about the wider imbrication of maritime connectivity and the cosmopolitan world of Buddhism. While our present-day view of the Buddhist cultures of the Bay of Bengal looks exclusively Theravādin, connecting Sri Lanka with Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia, this was of course a historical development, not something pregiven or predestined. It was only beginning from the latter part of the 11th century that the traffic in monks and ordination lineages began to take shape between Sri Lanka and the mainland kingdoms on the eastern edge of the Bay. And perhaps more surprisingly still, it was Sri Lanka, in Polonnaruwa under King Vijayabāhu I (r. 1058–1114) that was the importer rather than the exporter of a supposedly "pure" tradition of Pāli Buddhism. Anne Blackburn has suggested that these itinerant monastics might have been dispatched from Pagan in the Burmese highlands, and that these connections may have had as much to do with the shifting political fortunes of the Coḻa state and circuits of commodity exchange throughout the Bay as they did with commitments to the maintenance of the *dhamma*.[21] Pagan's Buddhism, however, was not exclusively a phenomenon confined to texts and learning in Pāli, but engaged with Sanskritic Buddhist learning as well as with the wider knowledge and aesthetics of the Sanskrit cosmopolis.[22] Still more recent research has drawn the maritime networks of Mantranaya or esoteric ("Tantric") Buddhism into increasingly sharper view, especially in multiple recent publications by Andrea Acri.[23] South India was central to Buddhist esotericism throughout its history;

email exchanges April 15–21, 2021; Sinclair's work on Saddharmāditya remains forthcoming. On Āditya's *Vanaratnastotra* see Hahn 1996; on Manuṣasūrya see Damron 2021, 51–55. Both Acri and Sinclair encouraged the idea of the identity of these two Buddhādityas.

[21] Blackburn 2015 and now 2024; see also Gornall 2020, 19–35.

[22] The pioneering account in Ray 1936 can now be supplemented by Kirichenko, Lammerts, and Ruiz-Falqués 2023.

[23] Acri 2015, 2016, 2018, and Acri and Wenta 2022; see also Sinclair 2021.

only modern historiography's focus on the triangle described by Bengal, Kashmir, and the Tibetan plateau has tended to produce an amnesia about this.[24]

Another testimony to this complexity beyond the virtuoso circles of Tantric adepts could for centuries be seen in the built environment and material culture of Nagapattinam itself. The coastal town was home to what early colonial accounts termed "the Chinese pagoda," prior to its tearing down at the behest of French Jesuits in search of building materials in 1867 (figure 9). This, along with the first find of Nagapattinam bronzes, was documented by Walter Eliot in an early issue of *Indian Antiquary*.[25] The significance of this structure, and the continued presence of Chinese merchants in Nagapattinam, is attested by a mid-14th-century Chinese xenological account of south India, while Guy has inferred a now-lost porcelain and clay Buddha image reportedly "of exquisite workmanship" to be from Pegu in lowland Burma and dateable to the 15th century.[26]

All of these details on the complexly interbraided world of Buddhist mobility and affiliation along the edges of the Bay of Bengal are fascinating in their own right, and I have here only scratched the surface of what remains an exciting field of current research. For my purposes, this complexity points toward an interpretation of the Art Institute's monolithic Buddha image.

[24] An example of this amnesia can be seen in Elverskog's admittedly general-interest account (2010, 84–85).

[25] Eliot's brief article is a fascinating amalgam of scholarship, gentleman-traveler anecdote, and bureaucratic maneuver: Eliot had argued for the monument's preservation upon first seeing it in 1846 while on "a sanitary trip on the Government steamer *Hugh Lindsay*," only to be foiled by the combination of the philistine disinterest of "Captain Oakes, the District Engineer" and the machinations of the Jesuits, then recently expelled from Pondicherry (1878, 224–225). Bemoaning the antiquarian loss and providing a preliminary edition and discussion of one of the Nagapattinam bronze's labels, Eliot goes on to note that the situation "strikingly illustrates the importance of forming an Archaeological Survey department for the Madras Presidency" (226).

[26] Guy 1993–1994, 292; cf. Pathmanathan 2002a, 577–578; by contrast, Eliot had spoken of this image as "a female devotee, of very rude workmanship" (1878, 227). On the emergence of deltaic Pegu and its increasing ties to trans-Bay commercial networks over the latter part of the fifteenth century, refer to Lieberman 2003, 150–164.

I suggest that we attempt to understand this object as it existed within the intersection of many different potential Buddhist as well as Hindu gazes. Here I depart from Michael Baxandall's celebrated notion of the "period eye," a historicist presupposition that takes as its goal the reconstruction of "a stock of patterns, categories, and methods of inference; training in a range of representation conditions; and experience, drawn from the environment, in what are plausible ways of visualizing what we have incomplete information about" (Baxandall 1972, 32). The gaze we can reconstruct for the Buddhist Mediterranean world of the later medieval period was an irreducibly plural one, and one liable to change over time. As the images identified by Mallinson in the Nāth monastery outside of Mangalore demonstrate, a change to the parameters of viewing can lead to the transformation of an image's identity: the Buddha can come to be thought of as Vyāsa, to say nothing of images such as Avalokiteśvara and Heruka, whose closeness to the iconographies of Viṣṇu or Bhairava could easily accommodate such shifts.

In such a context, polysemy might have been an attractive strategy: in making ambivalent appeals to multiple codes of representation and evaluation, an image could draw the gaze, and so the gaze-bearer into a polyvalent understanding. This seems to be the underlying logic of what was for decades referred to as the "Śiva-Buddhism" of the Southeast Asian islands.[27] However, this is not what we encounter in the Art Institute's monolithic Buddha. Instead, this image is firmly, resolutely monosemic. It confronts the viewer above all else with its ease of interpretability, directly addressing her as Śākyamuni: slightly larger than life-size, fully occupying its volume, candid in its singularity of reference. It presents an instance of the common currency available throughout the Buddhist world, or that of the Indic religious imagination extending inland from Nagapattinam. The image would have been immediately legible as the central organizing

[27] See Acri 2015 for a useful historiographical and interpretative critique of this scholarly fixation: for Acri, the textual and art-historical evidence from classical Java attests to less an ongoing process of syncretism than to deliberate attempts at ambiguity in the context of interreligious competition and self-conscious appropriation.

term in any Buddhist visual language, whether the viewer was a Sinhalese monk, a Chinese trader, a Tāntrika poet lighting out for the islands, or a local Hindu passerby who might have easily recognized the image as a representation of *pakavāṉ Tïru Puttar*, folded his hands, and been on his way.

But such a carefully wrought strategy of legibility is not a permanent state of affairs. The Art Institute Buddha monolith was first noted by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1950, in the tiny village of Pozhakuti in what is today Tiruvarur district, about 45 kilometers to the northwest of Nagapattinam on the road to Kumbhakonam. The resulting reference to the image and its inscription was first noted in the ASI's *Annual Report of Epigraphy* for 1951, where it is recorded under the serial number 1950-51/280, and catalogued as a "Jaina image."[28] The sculpture entered into the global art market at some point in the following years, as it was in the possession of the New York art dealer William H. Wolff by 1964, when it was purchased and donated to the museum.[29] It is impossible to know whether the image was moved there at some point between its presumed 12th-century manufacture and incision of its inscription on its back in the mid-17th century (figure 10). The orthography is practically that of modern Tamil: the fact that it was kept outdoors, either in the open air or perhaps under a temporary pandal, accounts for the worn state of the writing of such a relatively recent inscription. In producing the first published edition of this brief record, I have heavily relied on an unpublished transcript by the late Michael Rabe, confirmed by digital photographs and in-person inspection of the image.[30]

Those hoping—as I confess that I was—that the inscription might relate to the context of the creation or the life of the Buddha image will be disappointed: like the vast majority of South Indian epigraphy, this details a small piece of public business, enlivened here by the workings of a curse. It documents the creation of a water tank in the village, then called Peḷaikuṭi, by one Rājamānya

[28] My thanks to Leslie Orr for bringing this to my attention.

[29] See the provenance details here: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/21023/buddha-shakyamuni-seated-in-meditation-dhyanamudra.

[30] My thanks once more to Madhuvanti Ghose, for supplying me with a copy of Rabe's typescript.

Rāja Śrī Mallārirāyar. Beginning from a point six months after the appearance of this new water feature, people who were likely agricultural workers were forbidden from taking more than their fair share of water from it or from cutting down its surrounding trees, for fear of suffering the extreme but stereotypical sin of killing a cow on the banks of the Ganges.

The most tantalizing detail relates to the question of the inscription's date. The record begins with a dating formula giving the year in the era of the Śaka kings (what it refers to as *cālivākaṉacakāttam*, "the year of the Sātavāhana-Śaka era," ll.1–2), followed by the number given in numerical signs: the signs for 1000 and 500 are both perfectly clear; immediately following the second sign, however, there is a large flake of stone missing. This is followed two lines later by a corresponding year in the so-called Bṛhaspati or Jovian 60-year cycle. That year, rendered in Tamil as *piramāti*, could correspond to two different years in the cycle, *pramāthin* (the 13th cyclic year) or *pramādin* (the 47th). Rabe, in his transcript, reads the numerical date as Śaka 1580, which converts to 1658 CE. This however is neither a *pramāthin* nor a *pramādin* year. Presuming that it is the first of these that is intended by the Tamil *piramāti*, and secure in the reading of 15XX, this would yield either Śaka 1500 or 1560; the only *pramādin* year falling within the range of Śaka 1500–1599 would be 1535 [=1613 CE]. If the date were Śaka 1500, no further signs would have been necessary after that indicating 500, and so the mason would have presumably begun the following short word *itaṉ* at the end of line 2. The simplest solution is thus to understand the year as *pramāthin*, equivalent to Śaka 1560 or 1638 CE. Although the damage to the inscription where the appropriate sign would occur prevents certainty, the corroboration of the Jovian date makes this conjecture relatively secure.

By the second half of the 17th century, the Tamil country was dominated by a very different style of politics and a landed order that had been transformed since Coḻa times.[31] While trade and pilgrims continued to crisscross the Bay, they did so in merchant bottoms whose crews by then overwhelmingly professed Islam. It was in these

[31]The socio-economic nature of some of these transformations are detailed in Karashima, Subbarayalu, and Shanmugam 1980 and Karashima 1992.

circumstances—where it was likely that a Buddhist gaze had not fallen upon the image in decades, if not centuries—that someone saw an opportunity to repurpose what was once presumably a figure of veneration. I can at present say little about the figure who built the tank; Sanjay Subrahmanyam has plausibly suggested that the name could be a Tamil rendering of the Marathi name Malhār Rao, while cautioning that this would be unlikely under my proposed date for the record.[32] The honorific *rājamānya rājaśrī* supports this idea of the donor's Maratha ethnic identity, as it is found as an epistolary formula in Marathi since at least the eighteenth century.[33]

It might seem that the stone Buddha has been reduced to a signboard for a "no trespassing" notice. This might lead us to the conclusion that it has been caught out in the shifting ways of seeing particular to early modern coastal South India, and that it has lost whatever meaning it once possessed. But there is perhaps some remnant of the image's assertive monosemy that endured within this very different world of representation. The inscription documents, after all, an act of charity and benevolence—a cool drink and some shade for passersby—and seeks somewhat bluntly to ensure that its future users do not abuse this public convenience. This possibly resonates with the generic value of compassion or *kāruṇya* that likely remained associated with the figure of the Buddha, here made present with all the calm confidence that the masons of nearly a half a millennium earlier sought to realize.

I confess that this might simply be a figment of my own sentimental imagination. Whatever the circumstances that led to its inscription, we can be grateful that it may have contributed to the image's survival down to the present. The Art Institute's Buddha provides us with an especially beautiful piece of evidence for what had been the intensely cosmopolitan world of the Bay of Bengal in the early centuries of the second millennium CE. But the evidence of how Tamil and Tamilians were connected to this far-flung world of ports and hinterlands, markets and monasteries is far greater than this one object, however exceptional. It is instead just a single

[32] Personal communication, email dated April 17, 2021; Veṅkojī, the first Bhoṃsle ruler of Thanjavur, only came to the throne in 1674.

[33] Molesworth 1985 s.v. *rājamānya* and cf. Deshpande's remark reported by Ciotti, Francis, and Trento (https://tst.hypotheses.org/292).

facet of the much wider and deeper Tamil world of premodernity. For all that Tamiḻakam has been imagined as a bounded space—from Veṅkaṭam to Kumari, between the two seas—since the time of the *Tŏlkāppiyam*'s introductory *pāyiram*, Tamil and its speakers have always been part of the wider world. Tamil's imbrication with and in other languages (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Telugu, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, Portuguese, English . . . ) is one way we can know this; another are the material traces of the language as far away as Egypt, Oman, and New Zealand.[34] All of these traces are tantalizing fragments of a single history. For me, they suggest the many inventions and improvisations that the cosmopolitan Tamilians far from home might have happened upon, just as—quite a few centuries later—Nageswari Annamalai learned how to make the *idli mavu* rise on a frigid Chicago day or how her husband's lifelong thoughts on the ways that one complex multilingual pluralist democracy managed to work (or not) depended on his deep knowledge of another. This small offering is made, with deep gratitude and admiration, in Annamalai's honor and to Nageswari's memory.

## Appendix: Preliminary Edition, AIC no. 1964.556/ARE 1950-51/280

The record contains 16 lines of writing, in a poor state of preservation. It contains multiple abbreviation signs, as interpreted in the transcript by a parenthetical in brackets and small capitals; these interpretations follow Grünendahl 2001. Emendations are also given in brackets and preceded by an asterisk. Vowel length for *e* and *o* is unmarked in the record and so not differentiated in the edition.

[1] svasti śrī [*.] cālivāka
[2] n̲a cakāttam [1000] [500] [*60]

[34] On Tamil's entanglements with other languages, refer to Shulman 2016, *passim*; for the Tamil Brāhmī graffiti unearthed in Quseir-al-Qadim, Egypt and Khor Rori, Oman, see https://www.varnam.org/2007/11/20/tamilians_in_ancient_egypt/ and https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/potsherd-with-tamilbrahmi-script-found-in-oman/article4038866.ece. On the inscribed ship's bell now held in Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, see https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/213397 (all accessed February 20, 2025).

[3] itaṉ melc cellā ni
[4] ṉṟā piramāti [VARUṢAM] āṭi [MĀTAM]
[5] mutal [TETI] rācamānya
[6] rāca śrī mallārirāyar
[7] peḷaikuṭi[*k] kuḷam ve
[8] ṭṭi vicca paṭiyiṉāle
[9] inta koḷattil tai
[10] mātam mutal yātāme
[11] eruvar kūṭai[*t] taṇṇīr
[12] eṟaiccalum cuṟṟi mara
[13] ṅkaḷai veṭṭiṉalum
[14] keṅkai karaiyile kārā
[15] m pacuvaik koṉṟa to
[16] ṣattile pokakkatu [?] varākavum

Well-being, prosperity. Insofar as on the first day of the month of Āṭi when the year Pramāthin was current, in the year 1560 of the Sālivāhana-Śaka era [i.e., 1639 CE], Rājamānya Rāja Śrī Mallārirāyar excavated and established the tank in Peḷaikuṭi, from the month of Tai onward if any plowmen[35] either bale out water by the basketful from this pond, or cut down the surrounding trees, it shall be the case that they shall suffer the fate of the offence of killing a black-tongued cow on the bank of the Ganga.

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[35] Tentatively understanding *eruvar* as a contraction (or mislection) for *ēruḻavar*.

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## Figures

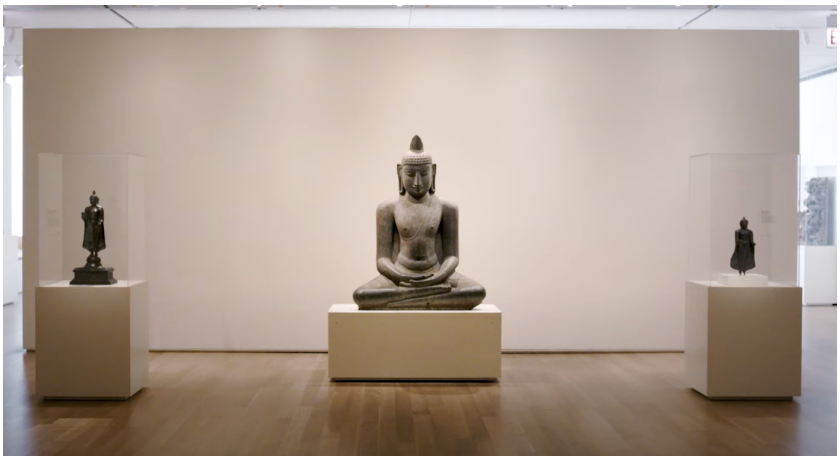

**Figure 1.** The Buddhist triptych, Alsdorf Galleries, Art Institute of Chicago (source: Ghose 2022).

**Figure 2.** Standing Buddha from Tamilnadu. (source: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/36812/standing-buddha-with-left-hand-in-gift-giving-gesture-varadamudra).

**Figure 3.** Standing Buddha from Pagan.
(source: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/149852/standing-buddha).

**Figure 4.** The Art Institute of Chicago's stone Buddha (source: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/21023/buddha-shakyamuni-seated-in-meditation-dhyanamudra).

**Figure 5.** Standing bronze Buddha with Sanskrit donative inscription, Tamilnadu, 15th-16th century[?] (source: Private collection, Ireland).

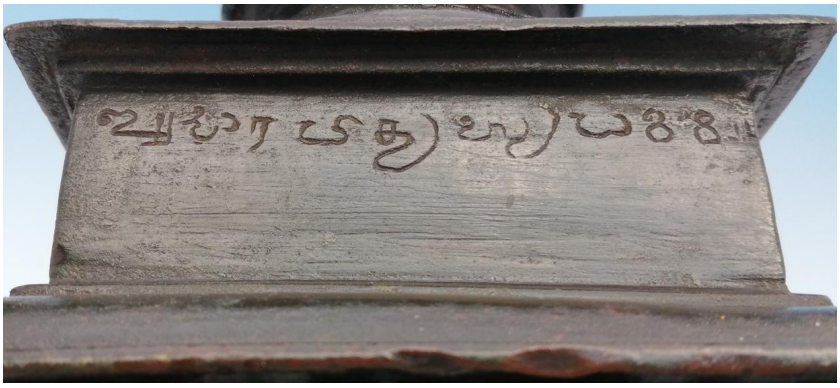

**Figure 6**. Standing bronze Buddha with Sanskrit donative inscription, detail (source: Private collection, Ireland).

**Figure 7.** Standing bronze Buddha with Tamil donative inscription (source: Art Institute of Chicago, reference number 2021.240).

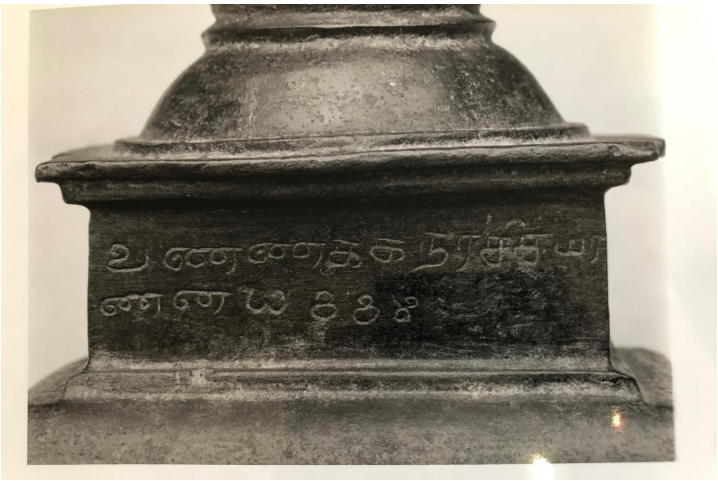

**Figure 8.** Standing bronze Buddha with Tamil donative inscription, detail (source: Art Institute of Chicago, reference number 2021.240).

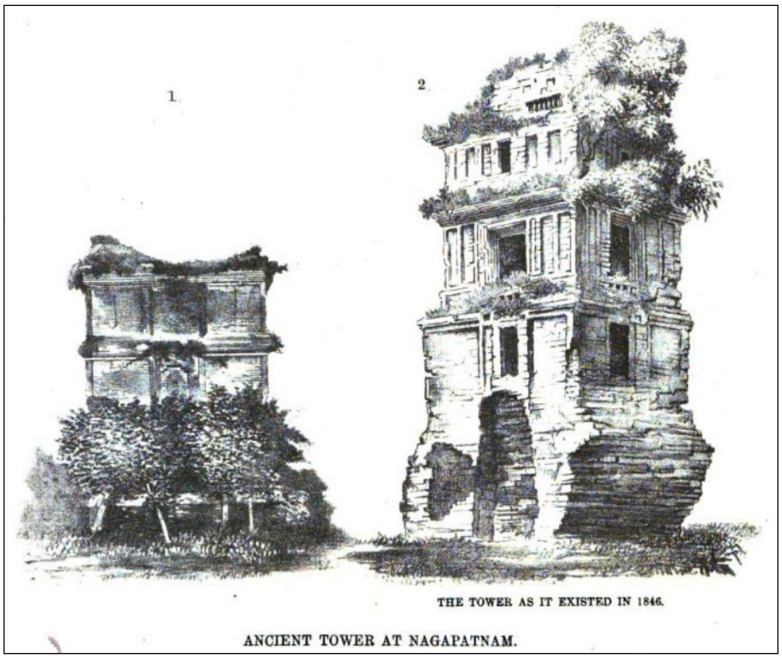


**Figure 9.** Rendering of the Nagapattinam 'Chinese Pagoda,' ca. 1846 (source: Eliot 1878).

**Figure 10.** The Art Institute's stone Buddha, detail (source: The Art Institute of Chicago).

# Part IV
# Afterwords

# *From Chicago to Sri Lanka: How I Tackled Tamil in the Field*

Dennis B. McGilvray

My appreciation of Dr. E. Annamalai has very little to do with Tamil linguistics and everything to do with pedagogy: he was my introductory Tamil teacher at the University of Chicago in 1968–1969 as I was preparing for my anthropology dissertation fieldwork in Sri Lanka. We were both graduate students at the time, but in different degree programs (he in linguistics, I in anthropology), and our classroom encounter was a matter of pure chance. I was in my third year and still worried about finding an ethnographic fieldwork site, having lost time in transferring from Harvard. (Chicago only gave me credit for my statistics course at Harvard.) My advisor, Nur Yalman, had just written an interesting book about Sinhalese caste and kinship, and he assured me that Sri Lanka (then still known as Ceylon) was a lovely and peaceful island, and that a research visa would be easy to get. In particular, he pointed me to chapters 13–15 in his *Under the Bo Tree* (Yalman 1967), all about Tamil-speaking Hindus and Muslims ("Moors") on the east coast of the island who were matrilineal (that is, tracing kinship descent through women)—a cultural trait that has been catnip for anthropologists ever since the days of Lewis Henry Morgan and Bronislaw Malinowski. At that point, all of the other exotic fieldwork possibilities on my list (Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Tibet) were either politically inaccessible or under

U.S. bombardment, so I was easily persuaded to choose Sri Lanka. Besides, it was an island, and India was too big. Obviously, since my subjects would be Sri Lankan Tamils and Moors, I needed to get started learning Tamil.

As a first step, I enrolled in a disastrous summer Tamil course at Berkeley in which the grammatical principles were taught by a non-fluent non-Tamil instructor, and all of the actual pronunciation drills were performed by a Tamil Brahmin teaching assistant (who was an engineering student, I believe). Fortunately, I was able to enroll in Annamalai's introductory class at Chicago in the fall of 1968 and start over from scratch. I had never met Annamalai previously, and everyone in the class was a stranger except for one: Michael Moffatt, a fellow graduate student in cultural anthropology who did contemporaneous fieldwork in Tamil Nadu and went on to write about what was then called "Harijan" caste structure in Pudukkottai and Chengalpattu, as well as to translate the work of Louis Dumont (Moffatt 1979; Dumont 1986). None of us had any idea who Annamalai was, except that he was a linguistics graduate student from Tamil Nadu. I lost track of Annamalai after I left for fieldwork in Sri Lanka, and it was only much later that I learned of his appointment as Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore. My Tamil guru had become famous!

Hoping to summon some memories of Annamalai's introductory Tamil course, in writing this contribution I have pored through my old class notebooks. His approach to teaching Tamil was through sounds rather than spellings, so my early notes show lots of Roman alphabet suffixes with nasalized diacritical markings (lãã, ẽẽ, õ, ũ) that only, much later, were connected up with formal written Tamil orthography. This sort of thing, of course, is precisely what makes Tamil so difficult to learn, but it also shows how Annamalai was determined to teach the language as it was actually spoken, not as it was idealized to commemorate the Sangam age. It was also impressive to see how exhaustively Annamalai treated every possible grammatical construction, most of which at the time seemed quite tangential to my own goal of acquiring a rudimentary grasp of the most essential Tamil phrases. One day he surprised the class by conjugating the verb "to vomit," but I still don't recall what the linguistic point was. When I left for Sri Lanka in the summer of 1969, I took my Annamalai notebooks with me, but I never

looked at them again. I realize now what a stupid mistake this was: they contained clear explanations of many Tamil grammatical constructions that I eventually heard in Sri Lanka but only partially understood and sometimes felt nervous about uttering, things like *-viṭṭu* versus *-kiṭṭu*, which I still have difficulty sorting out. Thank goodness for circumlocutions! However, the classic Tamil dialogs between Raja and Jim going to the Everest Hotel for coffee will remain with me forever. Later, after visiting Chennai, I realized it would have been much better for them to take their coffee at Saravana Bhavan. In Sri Lanka you drink tea; the coffee is terrible.

In some ways, it was good that I had studied with Annamalai at Chicago for only two quarters. My grammatical skills were still rudimentary, and my vocabulary and pronunciation had not yet been totally shaped by Tamil Nadu forms of speech, so it was easy for me to absorb the local dialect in my Sri Lankan fieldwork site. This was the agricultural town of Akkaraipattu about 40 miles south of Batticaloa on the eastern coast of the island that has remained the principle focus of my research for nearly five decades (McGilvray 2008). The local residents were divided between Tamil-speaking Hindus and Tamil-speaking Muslims ("Moors," *cōṉakar*), plus some Catholic and Methodist Christians. There were even a few Burgher (*paraṅkiyar*) families who were bilingual in Tamil and Portuguese. I ended up renting a house that straddled the dividing line between the Tamil and Moorish neighborhoods, and I divided my time equally between both communities. My voluntary language tutors, however, were more often young unmarried Moorish men in my age bracket (27 at the time, and single) who would show up in the late afternoons to coach me in Tamil (figure 1). I was assured at one point that if I could correctly pronounce the Tamil word for "banana" (*vāḻaippaḻam*) with its double use of the fiendish phoneme ழ், the remainder of the language would be a breeze. Because of Annamalai's peerless classroom instruction, I passed the banana test with flying colors, only to discover that Sri Lanka's Tamil speakers don't pronounce it "correctly" themselves. The extremely difficult retroflex letter ழ் (often rendered as zh) is totally assimilated to the slightly less difficult retroflex letter ள் in everyday speech.

The other immediate obstacle to my Tamil fluency was something commonly encountered by foreign fieldworkers: the determination to instill "correct" or "pure" Tamil rather than

the everyday colloquial forms of speech. Older acquaintances in Akkaraipattu were especially anxious that I not acquire a sloppy or corrupted form of the language, but my young male friends quickly grasped that I needed to learn popular colloquial Tamil, *koccaittamiḻ*, and they became my keen linguistic allies. They were also amused when I tried to reproduce the nasalized utterances I had learned in Annamalai's class. For example, the word for a "book," which I had been taught to honk through my sinuses as *pustahã* in Chicago, became a crisp dental *puttakam* in Akkaraipattu. Then there were widely used verbs that I had never been taught in Chicago, such as *pāvi* ("to utilize") rather than *upayōki*, or *viḷaṅku* ("to understand") instead of *puri*. Nowadays, when I travel in Tamil Nadu, I am instantly identified as coming from Sri Lanka when I use these words. Sadly, I have some difficulty following the nasalized dialogs in Tamil films because the more "literal" Batticaloa vocabulary and intonation have become my default setting for comprehension (Zvelebil 1965–1966, 125–131). The Sri Lankan Tamils and Moors, of course, have no such problem. In 1970 my local Tamil and Moorish chums in Akkaraipattu were eager to take me to see my very first Tamil film: *Thillana Mohanambal* (1968) starring Padmini and Sivaji Ganesan.

The one linguistic complication in Akkaraipattu is that Moorish speech utilizes a number of Islamic or Arabic terms that differ from Hindu and Christian Tamil usage. These are mainly terms dealing with life, death, and Islamic religious practices as well as interpersonal greetings and verbal etiquette. Some people have told me that I speak in a slightly Muslim manner, and perhaps it is also because I often conduct fieldwork with a Moorish research colleague. However, this has never seemed to affect my communication with Tamil Hindus. There are also differences, of course, between Muslim dialects in other parts of the island, especially the southern Moorish speech patterns in Galle and Weligama that my friends in Akkaraipattu themselves remarked upon. I am also aware that my "Batticaloa Tamil" speech pattern differs from the Jaffna Tamil dialect—often taken to be the more prestigious classroom standard for Sri Lankan Tamil pedagogy—in noticeable ways (Davis 2020). In any case, I eventually came to converse much more easily and effectively with my Tamil and Moorish friends than with my loyal and dear and illiterate Tamil

cook, Palani Appan, who had been born in Erode, Tamil Nadu, and later left the tea estates to settle and find a wife in Akkaraipattu (figure 2). A Hindu himself, Palani was a dietary pragmatist who had worked cooking—but not consuming—beef at the local Islamic training college.

All of the unforeseen Tamil linguistic barriers and variations I have recounted above are central to the scholarly work of Annamalai himself, although I confess to have scarcely been aware of it in the course of my fieldwork, even if his approach to the language in the classroom, in readying us for fieldwork, was deeply informed by these concerns. Hierarchically differentiated grammatical registers, selective degrees of lexical purity, and a wide range of regional and ethnic dialects—these are all features of modern Tamil that Annamalai has studied and documented, and that I ended up pragmatically dealing with in the field. It is only now that I fully appreciate Annamalai's career-long campaign to trace modern Tamil usage down to its living social substratum (Annamalai 2011) and how this prepared me for my own career-long campaigns in the study of Tamil worlds.

Soon after my arrival in the field, I realized that the dissertation topic for which I had been awarded a NIMH fellowship was utterly infeasible. I had proposed to study the ethnic interface between Tamils and Moors using the "dramaturgical" framework of the sociologist Erving Goffman, whose work emphasized the public, linguistically mediated performance of identity (Goffman 1959). Without a total command of literary and colloquial Tamil, including local Hindu versus Muslim dialectical variants, such a project was impossible, so I soon switched to the classic anthropological fallback topic of caste and kinship. It wasn't a painful choice, because those matrilineal Muslims seemed really intriguing, and there were also fascinating temple and mosque rituals happening that I had not anticipated. Fortunately, I had two years of fieldwork funding, so I spent much of my first year on language. This meant practicing my conversational skills over endless cups of highly sweetened milk-tea at the New Star Hotel and simply allowing unforeseen events to unfold. I carried a pocket notebook in which I would scribble down unfamiliar Tamil words and expressions in full view of bystanders, openly encouraging them to correct my spelling and edit my definitions. Thanks to

Annamalai's class, I had no inhibitions about conjugating new verbs quite loudly in public, an exercise that my young male friends often found embarrassing but hilarious, particularly when the verbs were impolite or obscene. In this way I discovered expressions in Tamil that could only be whispered if uttered at all—at least by young men in the presence of a *veḷḷaikkāran* ("white man"). The word "blood" (*irattam*), for example, seemed to cause everyone to wince.

In the diary that I kept during my first year of fieldwork, I often measured my day-to-day progress in terms of fluency versus failure in learning Tamil. Here are some excerpts:

> February 18, 1970. I am weary. It was another of those days when people grab me by the tongue and won't let go. It's what I need to learn Tamil, I know, but it is often mind-wracking and definitely like brain-washing.
>
> March 25, 1970. It seems that all the old guys who have lots of tradition to tell have lost all of their teeth as well, making them almost impossible for me to understand.
>
> April 13, 1970. For the rest of the evening, [the existence of demons] was the sole subject of discussion. I have never struck such a deep vein of belief before; it was amazing. . . . If my Tamil were only twice as good, it would have been a goldmine.
>
> May 8, 1970. [Addressing Palani Appan, my Tamil cook, while trying to build my vocabulary]: This is a door [*katavu*, pointing to it]. This is a roof [*kūrai*, pointing to it]. So what is that [pointing to the floor]? Palani's answer: "That is a house" [*vīṭu*]. Another attempt: If I want to eat some rice, it means that I am hungry [*pasikkitu*], isn't that so? Well, if I want to drink some water, what does that mean? Palani's answer: "If you drink water beforehand, it means that you won't be able to eat much rice."
>
> August 9, 1970. [After my interview with the Tamil high caste headman, the *Ūrppōṭiyār*] The only trouble is that he speaks incredibly fast Tamil. I could barely follow it because it came so fast. What a helpless feeling to know that what he is saying is prime data and yet not be able to slow him down so that I can jot down the facts. At the same time, I was being bitten on my butt by cane

> bugs in the rattan chair, but I could hardly interrupt him to gain relief. At last we switched chairs. On the way home I stopped at my landlord's shop to chat, and when I mentioned how rapidly the *Ūrppōṭiyār* tends to speak, he exclaimed in agreement: "Sooh! My God! One hundred and FIFE!"
>
> September 12, 1970. While on the subject of petty irritations, I should not omit mention of the problem of how to show my true irritation to other people. I discover that I simply cannot effectively demonstrate anger without a much better grasp of Tamil. I don't know the impolite verb forms well enough, nor the anger idioms, and in any case I usually lose control of morphology and syntax when I get excited. God it is frustrating!
>
> September 13, 1970. [While attending the Mandur Kandaswamy temple festival, sometimes known as Little Kataragama] I turned to sample the impressions of a stranger standing next to me in the crowd in front of the temple of Valli Amman [the male god's divine mistress]. I asked, "The god Murugan has come from the main temple to the temple of Valli Amman. Why has he come? What is his aim?" With absolutely no hesitation the fellow said, "He's copulating." That, of course, is precisely correct, but somehow I had expected a more roundabout answer. Besides, I wasn't quite sure about the verb he used (*puṇarkiṟār*) since it isn't the sort of thing you use every day. So I asked several others, who gave the expected embarrassed snickers confirming the first fellow's courageous reply.

When I started my fieldwork in 1969, people in Akkaraipattu were immediately curious who had taught me the few Tamil words I knew, but the name Annamalai meant nothing to them at the time. Today when I return to Sri Lanka, many have heard of him, just as they know of A. K. Ramanujan for whom I was briefly a teaching assistant in "Indian Civ" for one quarter. Although I negligently lost touch with Annamalai for three decades after leaving Chicago, I managed to surprise him with a quick visit to Mysore in 2002 while I was doing some fieldwork in Tamil Nadu. It was delightful to see him again, although the only thing I recall talking about was the tasty flavor of the Kaveri River water that was supplied by the Mysore municipality. Since then, I have enjoyed the opportunity to re-connect with "Aṇṇā" at the Madison South Asia Conference, and he regularly solves Tamil vocabulary mysteries

for me via email. More importantly, everyone in the field of Sri Lankan studies will benefit from his new set of online teaching modules for learning Sri Lankan Tamil. From Chicago to Sri Lanka, Annamalai's career continues to have an amazing transnational impact we can all admire.

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**Figure 1.** The anthropologist with two of his informal Moorish language tutors, K. M. Najumundeen and Nilam Hamead, 1971.

**Figure 2.** The anthropologist's Tamil cook, Palani Appan, 1970.

# *A Collegial Tribute to Annamalai*

Robert Phillipson

My wife Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and I have been inspired by Indian scholars on language policy issues for half a century. Our first visit to the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore was for a symposium in 1986 on challenging the Eurocentricity of much of the sociology of language and sociolinguistics. During a lengthy stay in India in 1994, when Annamalai was the director of the Institute, our goal was to explore the Indian experience of managing multilingualism, and its relevance for elsewhere, in particular for Europe in its process of forming a multilingual European Union. We were interested in the deep structure of language rights and language policy in India, and interacted intensively with Annamalai during two months that also took us to universities in several other cities in India.

Tove and I consider ourselves honorary Indians because we were the two non-Indians who were invited to contribute to the volume *Being and Becoming Multilingual: Some Narratives*, edited by Rajesh Sachdeva and Rama Kant Agnihotri (2022). Annamalai's chapter in the book is called "A Life of Language Consciousness." It is a vivid, reflective linguistic autobiography that concludes with the sentences: "This evolution of the language consciousness of a multilingual is a gradual, complex and conflicting process, which happens over the whole life. This evolution does not deny equilibrium between the many languages in a multilingual environment and harmony in the consciousness of languages in multilingual speakers." My own

chapter in the book is not formulated as elegantly as Annamalai's, but states that multilingualism throughout my adult life has fluctuated dynamically when living in several of the purportedly monolingual countries of the Western world.

My book *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992) reveals clearly that scholars worldwide had much to learn from India. In the book I cite four references to Annamalai's research, "The Sociolinguistic Scene in India," "A Typology of Language Movements and Their Relation to Language Planning," "English in India: Unplanned Development," and the volume *Language Planning. Proceedings of an Institute*, co-edited with Björn Jernudd and Joan Rubin, and published by the Central Institute in Mysore and the East-West Center in Honolulu. Annamalai's strong output reveals very clearly that he was a pioneer in establishing the scholarly study of language policy, language planning, and the role of English in former colonies, among which it is logical to include India. I also cite several references to the writings of D. P. Pattanayak, the first director of the Central Institute.

Annamalai's publications confirm his commitment to promoting all the languages of India. In chapters that he has contributed to books for which I have been editor, one of his particular strengths is his familiarity with the complexity of the Indian linguistic mosaic and the legal rights of speakers of the languages of India. He has also clarified the role that litigation has played in addressing issues of linguistic justice.

Annamalai's writings on language policy and language rights tend to be extremely dense, and to require extreme concentration on the part of the reader. This explains why, in what follows, I am at pains to extract essential issues and findings from his writings on these topics, which have been important for a worldwide readership to understand how multilingualism fares in India.

In 2000 I edited an anthology on language rights with 50 contributors from a wide variety of disciplines and contexts. Annamalai's chapter is called "Use of Language Rights by Minorities." It is a crisp, lucid analysis of the Articles in the Indian Constitution that proclaim the rights of certain languages, variables that are at play when rights are acknowledged, and the issue of when the state has a duty to provide education in a specific language. Choosing a minority language in education is not invariably done, despite there being a right to it, because

social class interests intervene. The prominence of English at the national level makes it a strong competitor to local languages.

Annamalai writes that "[a]t the level of the states, there are a majority language and many minority languages. These minority languages are of two kinds, viz. endogenous and exogenous." This is an important distinction which is then exemplified. He devotes short paragraphs to four subtopics: development of language; use in the media; access to education; and access to employment. The extent to which minorities make linguistic demands varies considerably, in part because often language is conflated with religion or ethnicity. The wish of some groups to enhance their status may conflict with claiming language rights in education for a minority language. In minority community discourses on language rights, there is little sign of a wish for more information on rights, nor is there a procedure for addressing grievances.

Annamalai provides "[s]ome examples of the implementation of language rights." He refers to the creation of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, and the languages that were mobilized in each case. He also refers to Urdu in districts in three states, and that education is possible in Karnataka in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, and Urdu, five exogenous languages. If an endogenous minority language has high status, its speakers sometimes see no need for education through the medium of that language, whereas they are interested in the development of the language for linguistic, literary, and cultural activities. Annamalai also refers to rights for Maithili speakers being influenced by caste allegiance with Hindi. The size of a minority community is also a key factor influencing language rights demands. This is a Tribal Welfare issue that connects with access to education and employment.

Annamalai sums up this hugely diverse scene: 'Language rights . . . are not perceived and acted upon universally by linguistic minorities, since political, historical, and demographic factors influence success in achieving language rights. These are, however, not immutable, which relates to political consciousness, and the need for a language rights movement to pursue."

It is impressive that Annamalai is able to judiciously summarize so many of the complexities of managing multilingualism, and to explain the realities of language rights being formally granted but not invariably acted on. His immense learning dovetails with a

capacity to produce texts that read as if they have been produced by a Supreme Court judge, smoothly connecting facts to legislative decrees and litigation precedents.

These scholarly strengths are even more visible in Annamalai's chapter in *The Handbook of Linguistic Human Rights* that Tove and I edited for Wiley-Blackwell (2023), the first ever handbook on this topic.

Annamalai's chapter is entitled "Judicial Interpretations of the Law to Safeguard Linguistic Minorities in India." It is a magisterial survey of language rights in constitutional law, the way that courts have interpreted the law in specific cases, and determined its application in states or subregions within a state. He reports on laws passed in the legislatures of states, and executive orders at various levels. There are issues of equity and demographic size. He concludes that "the claim of *a priori* minority status is decided on politically: thus the minority status of a community is part of the political process rather than the legal process. How politics plays out in granting or eliminating minority status for a community is complex. And this status varies." Annamalai exemplifies these phenomena in relation to the rights of several languages in Karnataka, and to Hindi and Maithili, and how census data have changed over time. He also points out that any complaint about noncompliance to the Commissioner for National Linguistic Minorities is limited by the fact that this body has no legal power of implementation.

In a *Handbook* on home language maintenance and how this is influenced by social and affective factors (Schalley and Eisenchlas 2020), Annamalai and Tove wrote a substantial joint chapter on social justice and educational language policy that demonstrates the importance of seeing language rights as linguistic human rights (LHRs).

In addition to numerous case studies of contexts where LHRs are respected, and others where they are violated, the *Handbook* has conceptual chapters that clarify LHRs in international law, in political theory and sociolinguistics, in history (erasure in colonial Africa), in economics and policy, in education, in relation to the impact of "global" English, and a plea for a shift from neoliberal to decolonial rights and reparative linguistic justice.

My chapter for this Festschrift for Annamalai demonstrates that what permeates Annamalai's many scholarly strengths is

his deep involvement in the fate of all languages in India and a concern to promote social and linguistic justice. It has been a pleasure to remain in constant contact with him on a wide range of professional issues.

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# *For a Tamil Teacher*

Margherita Trento

I first met Professor Annamalai when I attended his first-year Tamil course at the University of Chicago in the winter of 2012. My reason for choosing Chicago for my PhD was the Tamil program, which I knew to be excellent—though I knew little more than that. In fact, I didn't fully understand who Annamalai was, both as an intellectual and as a teacher, until much later.

Back to that first class. That year, it was just me and one other student, who was pursuing a PhD in the Linguistics department. I think Annamalai was particularly happy to have a linguistics student, since that was his field. It took us only one or two classes to realize that he was a superb teacher. It was immediately clear that there was no question about Tamil he couldn't answer, and no curiosity about the language he deemed unworthy of a response. We asked him about everything: etymology, grammar, pronunciation, historical developments, contextual usages, and variations—and he always had the right answer. Throughout my studies, I had never encountered anyone so assured in their knowledge of a language as he was, and I haven't since.

I admired him, and I really wanted to learn Tamil, which meant I tried very hard to impress him. But he showed no particular favoritism; he was impartially generous, always ready to help, and mostly unimpressed. Looking back on those first months 13 years later, I imagine that my enthusiasm for Tamil was still a tiny bud: small and fragrant, perhaps, but hardly visible to someone with Annamalai's ocean of love and curiosity for the language.

For the next four years, my time in Chicago revolved around Tamil classes. I took first-year Tamil with him, learned the Jim and Raja conversations almost by heart (I still sometimes listen to the recordings before sleep), spent a summer in Madurai, and came back for the second year, where we watched movies, videos, and read short stories. I began reading texts with him, then repeated first-year Tamil because I thought I should learn it better, kept going to Tamil Nadu over the summers and then for a couple of years for dissertation research, and throughout all of this, I felt mostly lost. Tamil is a difficult goddess, in those early years as much as later on. I might have given up without Annamalai's steadfast support and his example. Far removed from any ideological excess, his intellectual routine showed that Tamil is a good lens through which to view the world, worthy of a lifetime of commitment.

While the first- and second-year classes were usually in the afternoons, when we started reading texts together, we met rather early in the morning. I remember how, during the winters, I would walk to campus slowly, treading carefully because the sidewalks were icy. I would see Annamalai walking down 57th Street, wearing a woolen hat that wasn't fully pulled onto his head, sticking up at a point toward the sky, along with a very wide winter jacket and brown worn-out shoes. He walked briskly, looking straight ahead toward his destination, the classroom. We would meet in his office to read—first in Foster Hall, then later in Ida Noyes, where he moved in 2015, I think.

Those classes taught me how to read Tamil, and how to read more deeply in general. Each sentence was analyzed with both precision and openness, as I witnessed Annamalai using his intimate knowledge of Tamil and its rules to test the boundaries of the language. We read texts that were central to my own interests—Catholic and sometimes Islamic literature, early modern "little poems" (*cir̲r̲ilakkiyam*)—yet quite removed from what he had spent most of his career thinking about, the spoken language on the one hand, and classical poetry and grammar on the other. Yet, he navigated these texts with ease and, I hope, with some sense of fun and excitement—perhaps even feeling that Tamil could still offer him something new after so many years. He continued reading familiar and unfamiliar texts with students at Chicago for several years afterward, switching to Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as when our various academic trajectories made in-person meetings impossible.

The reading sessions continued more or less uninterrupted from 2014 to 2022. They usually lasted three hours straight, without any breaks. Keeping up with Annamalai's pace and intensity was both exhilarating and exhausting, and required long hours of preparation. All of us who participated—Talia Ariav, Justin Henry, Jesse Pruitt, and Kimberly Kolor—spent many late nights and early mornings at our desks to arrive prepared. Once gathered in his office, we would offer our own interpretation of the text, while Annamalai listened intently. He had his own interpretation—mostly right, of course—yet remained open to changing his mind. On the rare occasions when it occurred, it was rewarding to see him carefully consider the alternative reading one of us suggested, slowly appropriate it, and revise his interpretation. After class, he often shared with us written notes with his own reflections on a literary genre, rhetorical figure, or literary trope. We received notes on topics as diverse as the *ammāṇai* and *paḷḷu* genres, the biography of Umāpati Civāccāryiyār, and the metrical rules in the *Tolkāppiyam*.

During those years, Annamalai's family was a steadfast but discreet presence in the life of the Tamil students in Chicago, especially his wife Nageswari, who worked in the library, wrote Tamil non-fiction, and cooked excellent vegetarian meals (even though she was a fish-eater herself, being from Ramanathapuram on the Coromandel Coast). When their daughters Ani and Melli organized their parents' 50th wedding anniversary, they asked for the help of us students. The event took place in Foster 103 (the hall later renamed in honor of Steve Collins), which we decorated for the occasion. Annamalai and Nageswari celebrated surrounded by family, friends, colleagues, and students, and they gifted us with glimpses into their long story by projecting old photos of their life together. I remember one particularly moving image, taken on their wedding day in Tirupparankunram. The photographer was able to capture the very first time their eyes met.

Annamalai has retired from giving regular reading classes at Chicago several years ago, but he still writes to share new insights on Tamil, its history and literature. He keeps a regular correspondence with many of his former students, still always a teacher. After so many years, I certainly still am a student of Tamil, and I often turn to Annamalai for advice. Once, it was about a *Tirukkuṟaḷ* citation in a verse from a 16th-century Śaiva text, the

*Civatarumōttaram*; another time, about donations made to the Thiruvavaduthurai monastery by red and white cloth merchants in a copper-plate inscription from the eighteenth century. He still always has a good answer, and more importantly, he still finds every question interesting and worthy of a serious response. Every now and then, I write to him about where I am in the lifelong task of learning Tamil, and he always responds within hours—with calm, generosity, and encouragement.

As a mirror to his generosity, when we began asking for contributions for this volume, we received enthusiastic responses from colleagues and friends from South Asia, Europe, and North America, across an impressive range of disciplines, who met Annamalai at different moments of his long and diverse intellectual journey. Of course, Annamalai means different things to different people. I have seen him smile with the warmth of a life shared when surrounded by family and close friends, and I have seen him in his role as a language-policy maker when meeting political figures. When I have mentioned his name in India, the reactions have varied—sometimes admiration, sometimes competition, a full range of emotions easily connected to men of authority and influence. And he has indeed been such a figure in the Tamil public and intellectual sphere for many years. But every time I turn to him, I find the smile of a stern but kind, ironic, passionate teacher.

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