

“RARE WORDS” IN CLASSICAL TAMIL LITERATURE:
FROM THE *URIYYAL* TO THE *TIVĀKARAM**

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This article examines the organisation of the *Uriyyal*, which is the 8th chapter inside the 2nd book of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the most ancient Tamil grammatical work preserved. That chapter, because it provides (approximate) synonyms for 120 “unfrequent words”, many of them polysemic, represents the earliest lexicographical attempt in Tamil. Those 120 words all belong to the category of *uricol*, a residual lexical category, examined by the *Tolkāppiyam* once the nouns (*peyarccol*), the verbs (*viṇai*) and the particles (*ṭai*) have been dealt with in earlier chapters. The final section of the article examines the posterity of the *Uriyyal*, which becomes a marginal section in grammatical literature, but finds its full development in the different scholarly landscape which is created with the composition of thesauri such as the *Tivākaram* and its successors.

Key words: Classical Tamil, *Tolkāppiyam*, *Uriyyal*, *Uricol*, lexicography, polysemy, thesaurus, *Tivākaram*.

0. Introduction

One of the challenges faced by Tamil Philology is to give an as precise as possible account of the nature of the language which was used in Classical Tamil literature and

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which is often referred to as *Centamiḷ* (see for instance Chevillard 1996, p. 476 and Wilden 2009). At a time when one is sometimes confronted with public statements which characterise Tamil as a language which has, thanks to a miracle, remained until today both “living and classical”, it is probably more conducive to the advancement of learning to stay away from oxymorons, and to concentrate on the differences between Classical Tamil and Modern Tamil, which are in fact two very different languages and cannot be studied fruitfully by using the same methods. Concerning Classical Tamil, one of the possible tasks is to examine how, over the course of many centuries, daily methodical human effort applied to the preservation and transmission of a literary corpus which was probably rooted in a possibly already diglossic natural language with wide dialectal variation, has created a learned (and partly artificial) language, emulating, by its reliance on rote learning, “eternal Sanskrit” and equipped with such tools as grammars (in an extended sense of that term), like the *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Naṇṇūḷ*, and dictionaries (or rather *thesauri*), like the *Tivākaram* and the *Piṅkalam*.

More precisely, the human effort examined in this article will be the one attested for the first time in the *Uriyiyal*, a chapter of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the most ancient Tamil grammar preserved. That first effort basically consisted in trying to make explicit the meanings (*poruḷ*) of 120 words belonging to the type called *uri-c-col*, and further characterised by the author of that treatise as “unfrequent” (*payilātavarrai*). Those 120 words were explained by making use of 100 other words, considered as “frequent” (*payiṇṇarvai*). Later, probably a few centuries later, we see that effort pursued in the first Tamil thesaurus (or *kośa*), called *Tivākaram*, which deals with ca. 9500 words (see Vaiyāpuri Pillai in *Madras Tamil Lexicon*, Introduction, p. xxx) and will be followed by still more detailed *kōśa*-s such as the *Piṅkalam* (dealing with 14,700 words and mentioned in the *Naṇṇūḷ* [N459m]).

1. A Short Description of the *Uriyiyal*

The *Uriyiyal*, which is the 8th chapter inside the TC [*Collatikāram*, 2nd book of the *Tolkāppiyam*], starts with a *sūtra* which announces first that the topic treated will be the items called *uric col* and then proceeds to characterise those items semantically and morphologically. The designation *uric col* is not easily translatable and the use of the component *uri* “acceptable, appropriate, proper” qualifying *col* “word(s)” might imply, by euphemism or by way of understatement, that those items have a smaller legitimacy¹ for being called *col* than the other items already dealt with in earlier chapters, such as the *peyarc col* “nouns (lit. name-word)” and the *viṇaic col* “verbs (lit.

¹ Similarly, in the chapter on metrics (*Ceyyuliyal*), inside the 3rd book of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the items called *uriyacai* “appropriate *acai*” are more marginal than the items called *iyalacai* “natural *acai*” (see TP314i). The same remark can be made for the restrictive expression *āciriya v-uric cīr* “*cīr* which is appropriate for [the] *āciriya* [meter]” which contrasts (in TP321i) with the (more normal) *iyar cīr*. “natural *cīr*”.

action-word)”. Such a hierarchy had already been made apparent by the succession of two *sūtras* in an earlier chapter of TC, stating that:

- (1) *colleṇap paṭupa peyarē viṇaiyeṇ / rāyiraṇ teṇpa vaṇintici ṇōrē* (TC158c)² “The knowledgeable say that [items] fit to be called ‘words’ (*col*) are those two: ‘name’ (*peyar*) and ‘action’ (*viṇai*)”.
- (2) *iṭaiccor kiḷaviyu muriccor kiḷaviyu / mavarruvaḷi maruṅkir rōṇru meṇpa* (TC159c) “They say that the linguistic items (*kiḷavi*) [called] *iṭaic col* and the linguistic items [called] *uric col* appear (respectively)³ after them and by their side”.

Because the *peyarc col* “nouns”, the *viṇaic col* “verbs” and the *iṭaic col* “particles (lit. interstitial words)”⁴ have already been dealt with in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of the TC, the task of the Tamil grammarian is now to give in this 8th chapter a description of the residual component of Tamil vocabulary. That component is, as will appear to anyone who reads the chapter (see Chevillard 1996, pp. 432–469), rather heterogenous. However, the author of the TC manages somehow to give to the general characterisation of the *uric cols* an appearance of homogeneity, when he explains that:

- (3) *uriccor kiḷavi virikkuṅ kālai // yicaiyiṇuṅ kuṛippuṇum paṇṇinun tōṇrip // peyarinun viṇaiyiṇu meytaṭu māri // yorucor palaporuṭ kurimai tōṇriṇum // palacol loruporuṭ kurimai tōṇriṇum // payilā tavarraip payiṇravai cārttit // tatta maraṇṇir ceṇṇunilai maruṅki // ṇeccol lāyiṇum poruḷvēru kiḷattal.* [TC297c]

“When one gives a detailed exposition of the linguistic items (*kiḷavi*) called *uric-col* ‘appropriate words’ [one can say]: **(A)** that they appear (*tōṇrital*) [for expressing] a sound (*icai*), an idea (*kuṛippu*) or a quality (*paṇṇu*); **(B)** that they can be concretely undistinguishable from either noun or verb; **(C)** that it can happen that one [*uric col*] is appropriate for several values (*poruḷ*) or that several [*uric col*] are appropriate for one [and the same] value; [and finally] **(D)** that, supporting [the explanation of] unfrequent [*uric col*] by resorting to frequent ones, one should distinctly explain the values which pertain to each permanent and stable aspect [of an *uric col*], according to what is specific in each one.”

This *sūtra*, in which we find mentioned in four sections (A, B, C & D) a number of important topics [the semantic “triad” (*icai-kuṛippu-paṇṇu*), the phenomenon

² The “c” in TC158c point to a numbering done according to the arrangement of the TC (= *Tolkāppiyam Collatikāram*) in Cēṇāvaraiyar’s commentary. Other abbreviations used here are TE for the *Eḷuttatikāram* of the *Tolkāppiyam* and N for the *Naṇṇūl*, with “i” pointing to a numbering of the *sūtras* as found in the commentary by Iḷampūraṇar, and “m” to the arrangement of *Naṇṇūl* in Mayilainātar’s commentary.

³ I adopt the distributive interpretation from Ca. Pālacuntaram (1988, p. 183).

⁴ The category is divided into 7 sub-categories by TC250c. See Chevillard (1996, pp. 386–390) for details.

of (quasi-)synonymy, the question of polysemy, etc.], to which we shall come back later, is followed by another one (TC298c) which states that:

- (4) *veḷi-p-paṭu col-l-ē kiḷattal vēṇṭā // veḷi-p-paṭa vārā v-uri-c coṇ mēṇa* (TC298c)
 “There is no need of an explanation for the words which are obvious; since [explanations] concern only the words which are not obvious.”

After this, we find a series of 90 *sūtras*, starting at TC299c and going upto TC388c.⁵ That enumeration concerns, as already said, 120 *uric col*, which will be referred to in this article by use of the labels U1 to U120. And we have to make the hypothesis, based on 4, that none of those items could have been considered as having an “obvious” value at the time when this part of the *Tolkāppiyam* was composed. The exhaustive list, in the Tamil alphabetical order, indicating in each case the citation form seen in the *sūtra*, and the reference number of the *sūtra*, is as follows:

- (5)⁶ U1: *atirvu* (TC316c); U2: *amartal* (TC380c); U3: *ari* (TC356c); U4: *alamaral* (TC310c); U5: *aḷuṅkal* (TC349c, TC350c); U6: *āyṭal* (TC330c); U7: *icaippu* (TC309c); U8: *iyampal* (TC358c); U9: *iyaiṭṭu* (TC308c); U10: *iraṅkal* (TC358c, TC359c); U11: *ilampāṭu* (TC360c); U12: *iṇṇal* (TC302c); U13: *ukappu* (TC305c); U14: *ucā* (TC370c); U15: *uyā* (TC369c); U16: *uru* (TC300c); U17: *urum* (TC365c); U18: *uvappu* (TC305c); U19: *urappu* (TC347c); U20: *uru* (TC299c); U21: *eyyāmai* (TC342c); U22: *eṇṇu* (TC388c); U23: *ē* (TC304c); U24: *ēṇṇam* [VAR: *eṇṇam*] (TC337c); U25: *ai* (TC385c); U26: *oḷukal* (TC317c); U27: *oṅkam* (TC360c); U28: *ōyṭal* (TC330c); U29: *kaṭi* (TC383c, TC384c); U30: *kataḷvu* (TC315c); U31: *kamam* (TC355c); U32: *kampalai* (TC349c); U33: *kaya* (TC320c, TC322c); U34: *karuvi* (TC354c); U35: *kali* (TC349c); U36: *kavarvu* (TC362c); U37: *kavavu* (TC357c); U38: *kaḷivu* (TC314c); U39: *kaḷum* (TC351c); U40: *kaṇṇappu* (TC372c, TC373c); U41: *kuru* (TC301c); U42: *kuḷa* (TC311c); U43: *kūrppu* (TC314c); U44: *keṭavaral* (TC319c); U45: *keḷu* (TC301c); U46: *cāay* (TC330c); U47: *cāyal* (TC325c); U48: *cilattal* (TC358c); U49: *civappu* (TC372c, TC373c); U50: *cīrumai* (TC341c); U51: *cīrtti* (TC312c); U52: *cummai* (TC349c); U53: *cellal* (TC302c); U54: *ceḷumai* (TC352c); U55: *cēr* (TC363c); U56: *ṇemirtal* (TC361c); U57: *taṭa* (TC320c, TC321c); U58: *tava* (TC299c); U59: *tā* (TC344c); U60: *tīrtal* (TC318c); U61: *tīrttal* (TC318c); U62: *tuyavu* (TC368c); U63: *tuvanṇu* (TC332c); U64: *tuvaittal* (TC358c); U65: *tunaiṭṭu* (TC315c); U66: *terumaral* (TC310c); U67: *tevu* (TC345c); U68: *tevvu* (TC346c); U69: *nampu* (TC329c); U70: *naḷi* (TC320c, TC323c); U71: *naṇavu* (TC376c); U72: *naṇi* (TC299c); U73: *naṇṇu* (TC343c); U74: *nām* (TC365c); U75: *niḷattal*

⁵ After this comes a coda of 8 very interesting general *sūtras*, concluding the chapter, which I unfortunately cannot summarise here. See Chevillard (1996, pp. 463–469) for a French translation of the *sūtras* and of Cēṇāvaraiyar’s commentary on them.

⁶ A majority of those lexical items being polysemic, it would not make sense to provide a translation for them. Their various meanings have to be understood from the simple lexemes enumerated in 8.

(TC330c); U76: *nuṇaiṅku* (TC374c); U77: *nuḷaiṅku* (TC374c); U78: *nocivu* (TC374c); U79: *pacappu* (TC307c); U80: *paṭar* (TC340c); U81: *paṇai* (TC339c); U82: *paṇṇai* (TC319c); U83: *paravu* (TC382c); U84: *payappu* (TC306c); U85: *paḷiccu* (TC382c); U86: *paḷutu* (TC324c); U87: *pāyital* (TC361c); U88: *piṇai* (TC338c); U89: *purai* (TC300c); U90: *pulampu* (TC331c); U91: *puṇṇiru* (TC375c); U92: *pē/pēm* (TC365c); U93: *pēṇ* (TC338c); U94: *paiyul* (TC341c); U95: *porpu* (TC335c); U96: *pōkal* (TC317c); U97: *matavu* (TC377c, TC378c); U98: *mallal* (TC303c); U99: *maḷa* (TC311c); U100: *mātar* (TC328c); U101: *mālai* (TC313c); U102: *muraṇcal* (TC333c); U103: *muḷutu* (TC326c); U104: *muṇaiṅku* (TC386c); U105: *mēvu* (TC329c); U106: *yāṇar* (TC379c); U107: *yāṇu* (TC381c); U108: *vampu* (TC327c); U109: *vaya* (TC366c); U110: *vayā* (TC371c); U111: *vaṇṇitu* (TC336c); U112: *vārtal* (TC317c); U113: *vāḷ* (TC367c); U114: *vitirppu* (TC316c); U115: *viyal* (TC364c); U116: *viḷumam* (TC353c); U117: *virappu* (TC347c, TC348c); U118: *vemmai* (TC334c); U119: *veruppu* (TC347c); U120: *vai* (TC387c).

2. Polysemy and Approximate Synonymy

As already said in (4), the strategy recommended by the TC for clarifying the value(s) of an unfrequent *uric col* is to rely on one or several frequent words. For example, item U24, *ērram*, is explained by *sūtra* TC337c in the following way:

- (6) *ērra niṇaiṅku tuṇivu mākuṁ* (TC337c)
Ērram is (i.e. ‘means’) either *niṇaiṅku* ‘remembering’ or *tuṇivu* ‘decision’.

According to the traditional interpretation, this rather cryptic explanation seems to indicate that the word U24 (*ērram*) was considered as being polysemic. The statement made in TC337c appears thus as an illustration of the 4th line of *sūtra* TC297c.⁷ Two words are required for explaining the values of U4 and those two words must have been considered as belonging to ordinary basic vocabulary. Similarly, we could illustrate the 5th line of *sūtra* TC297c⁸ by making use of TC319c, in which U44 (*keṭavaral*) and U82 (*paṇṇai*) are simultaneously explained thanks to the simple word *viḷaiyāṭṭu*.

- (7) *keṭavaral paṇṇai yāyiraṇṇu viḷaiyāṭṭu* (TC319c)
Keṭavaral and *paṇṇai*, those two [are] *viḷaiyāṭṭu* ‘game’.

How this statement must be understood exactly is not completely clear but we seem to have here at least a relationship of **approximate synonymy**. The statement made in TC319c probably meant that in a poetical utterance containing U44 (*keṭavaral*),

⁷ See 3 (first half of C): *orucoṭ palaporuṭ kurimai tōṇṇiṇuṁ* “it can happen that one [*uric col*] is appropriate for several values (*porul*)”.

⁸ See 3 (second half of C): *palacol loruporuṭ kurimai tōṇṇiṇuṁ* “it can happen [...] that several [*uric col*] are appropriate for one [and the same] value”.

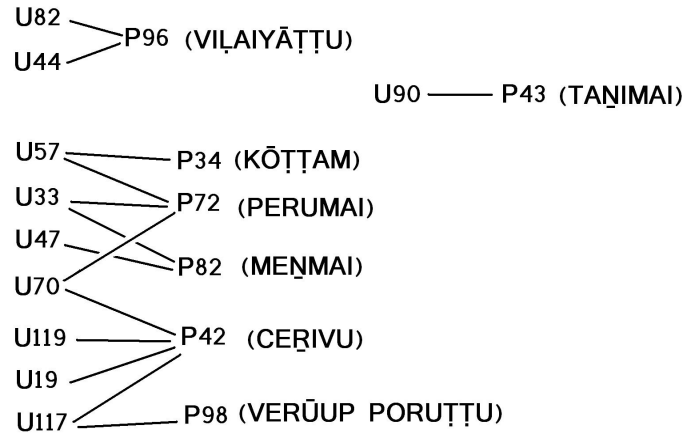
“thinness” (TC374c); P57: *nuṇukkam [uḷḷataṅ --]* “slimming” (TC330c); P58: *neṭumai* “length” (TC317c); P59: *nēрмаi* “regularity” (TC317c); P60: *nōy* “suffering” (TC341c); P61: *pakai* “enmity” (TC346c); P62: *payam-inmai* “uselessness” (TC324c); P63: *payaṅ* “benefit” (TC306c); P64: *parattal* “expanding” (TC361c); P65: *piḷaittal* “missing (a target)” (TC339c); P66: *puṇarcci* “uniting” (TC308c); P67: *putitu paṭal* “appearing-new” (TC379c); P68: *putumai* “being-new” (TC383c); P69: *peṭpu* “cherishing” {C: *purantarutal*} (TC338c); P70: *peritu* “in a great measure” (TC343c); P71: *peruppu* “growth, development” {C: *peruttal*} (TC339c); P72: *perumai* “greatness” (TC320c); P73: *perru* “increase” (TC304c); P74: *polivu* “lustre, splendour” (TC335c); P75: *maṭaṅ* “naïvety” {C: *maṭam*} (TC377c); P76: *mayakkam* “confusion” (TC351c); P77: *miku pukaḷ* “panegyric” {C: *perum pukaḷ*} (TC312c); P78: *mikuti* “high degree” (TC299c, TC378c, TC383c); P79: *mutirvu* “being-ripe” (TC333c); P80: *muṇ-rērru* “engaging-oneself” (TC383c); P81: *muṇivu* “disgust” (TC386c); P82: *meṇmai* “softness” (TC322c, TC325c); P83: *mēval* “desiring” {C: *mēvutal*} (TC380c); P84: *varuttam* “distress” (TC344c); P85: *varaivu* “excluding” (TC383c); P86: *vali* “strength” (TC344c, TC366c, TC377c, TC388c); P87: *vaḷuttu* “lauding” {C: *vaḷuttutal*} (TC382c); P88: *valaṅ* “fertility” {C: *vaḷam*} (TC303c, TC352c); P89: *varumai* “poverty” (TC360c); P90: *vaṇappu* “beauty” (TC378c); P91: *viṭal* “abandoning” {C: *viṭutal*} (TC318c); P92: *viyappu* “astonishment” (TC385c); P93: *viruppu* “desirability” (TC362c); P94: *viraivu* “swiftness” (TC315c, TC383c); P95: *viḷakkam* “brilliance” (TC383c); P96: *vilaiyāṭtu* “game” (TC319c); P97: *vekuḷi* “anger” (TC372c); P98: *verūup poruṭtu* “being frightened” {C: *veruvutal*} (TC348c); P99: *vēṭkaip perukkam* “increase of desire” (TC371c); P100: *vēṅṅal* “ardent desire” {C: *virumputal*} (TC334c).

3. The *Uriyiyal* Seen as a Graph

The preliminary facts concerning the *Uriyiyal* having been given, I shall now try to provide a bird’s eye view of the global information which is provided by it. For that purpose, to the two lists available in 5 and 6, we must add a list of 154 links, each link corresponding to a relationship of approximate synonymy between one U-type item and one P-type item. The structure can be described as a graph having 154 edges and 220 [=120+100] vertices (belonging to two different types) and it is an interesting exercise to try to determine the number of connected components inside that graph. It turns out that the graph contains 69 components, of widely differing sizes:

- 42 components containing 1 U-type element connected with 1 P-type element
- 14 components containing 2 U-type elements both connected with the same P-type element (this corresponds to the case illustrated in 7).
- 3 components containing 1 U-type element connected with two distinct P-type elements (this corresponds to the case illustrated in 6).
- 10 bigger components, the biggest of which contains 15 U-type elements, 18 P-type elements and 31 links.

The graphic representation given below illustrates some of those types



In this graphic representation, the top element corresponds to example 7 (alias TC319c) already discussed, the small component on the right side corresponds to the statement contained in TC331c, while the bigger component at the bottom (which contains 7 U-type elements, 5 P-type elements and 11 links) condenses the information given by seven distinct *sūtras*.¹²

4. Are the Words in the *Uriyiyal* Really Rare?

Before continuing our exploration of the *Uriyiyal* and of what it can teach us concerning the development of the literary culture of Tamil Nadu, it seems appropriate to examine a question of a different type: “Are the 120 lexemes which we have been examining really rare words?” The quotation mark contained in the title of this article was put there with this question in mind. The question is of course meaningful only if it is made more precise. Some reference corpus or some context of observation must first of all be specified. In the case of the *Uriyiyal*, the natural corpus seems to be the *Eṭṭu Tokai* “Eight Anthologies”, which comprises 2553 poems totalling more than 29,000 lines¹³ and the *Pattup Pāṭṭu* “Ten Songs”, which consists of 10 long poems totalling more than 3500 lines.¹⁴ A quick estimate shows that the 32,821 lines contained

¹² TC320c to TC323c, TC325c, TC347c & TC348c.

¹³ The detail is: *Narriṇai* (400 poems totalling 4173 lines); *Kuṟuntokai* (401 poems totalling 2498 lines); *Aiṅkuṟunūru* (500 poems totalling 2160 lines); *Paṭiṟruppattu* (80 poems totalling 1711 lines); *Paripāṭal* (22 poems totalling 1833 lines); *Kalittokai* (150 poems totalling 4297 lines); *Akanāṇūru* (400 poems totalling 7156 lines); *Puṟanāṇūru* (400 poems totalling 5441 lines).

¹⁴ They are: *Tirumurukāṟruppaṭai* (317 lines); *Porunarāṟruppaṭai* (248 lines); *Cirupāṇāṟruppaṭai* (269 lines); *Perumpāṇāṟruppaṭai* (500 lines); *Mullaippāṭṭu* (103 lines); *Maturaikkāñci* (782 lines); *Neṭunalvāṭai* (188 lines); *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu* (261 lines); *Paṭṭiṇappālai* (301 lines); *Malai-paṭukaṭām* (583 lines).

in this ensemble must contain approximately 180,000 word forms.¹⁵ Unfortunately, I am not able at the moment to give even a rough estimate of the number of lexemes which this corresponds to.¹⁶ However, concerning our list of 120 terms and its place in this corpus, a few (incomplete) remarks can be made.

- Some of the words in our list are extremely rare: this is the case for instance with U107 (*yāṇu*)¹⁷ and U102 (*murañcal*).¹⁸
- As an extreme case, the term U44 (*keṭavaral*) is not attested anywhere in the corpus examined here and the commentators to the *Tolkāppiyam* are able to mention only anonymous quotations.
- Some of the words are frequent, but not in the meaning which is described in the *Uriyiyal*. This seems to be the case with U73 (*nanru*). The form is found more than 150 times in the corpus, but rarely in the usage which the *Uriyiyal* is pointing to.
- As Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai, the editor of the *Madras Tamil Lexicon* remarked, in the “History of Tamil Lexicography” which is found in the first volume (pp. xxv–liii): “It is interesting to note that some words whose meanings are now very clear are included in this list of ‘hard words, e.g., TĪRTAL, TĪRTTAL, MUḶUTU, PAḶUTU” (*Madras Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. 1, p. xxv).

We have to admit that trying to decide for each of our 120 terms why it was included in the chapter is not an easy question and that no final global answer will be provided here.

5. Importance of the Semantic Triad “*icai, kurippu, paṇpu*”

After this brief excursion into the realm of lexical statistics, I now come back to an exploration of the original point of view of the TC. Among the 4 facets, labelled A, B, C & D (see section 1, citation 3) which are contained in the characterisation of the items called *uricol*, we have already illustrated C (polysemy and quasi-synonymy)

¹⁵ The estimate is based on an extrapolation made on the basis of some quick statistics computed from a digital version of the popular “sandhi-split” Rajam edition of the *Narriṇai*, in which a few particles have also been separated. Running the Micro-OCP program, a version of the Oxford Concordance Program, we see that the text contains a VOCABULARY of 5842 elements and contains 23,290 WORDS (using the terminology of OCP). There are roughly 5.6 words per line in the *Narriṇai*. Since the great majority of the poems in our two lists use the same meter, no great error will be committed in assuming that they have roughly the same number of words per line.

¹⁶ Lemmatised digital texts do not seem to be available. And if they were, they would have to be used with a lot of caution, given the still unsatisfactory state of the editions of Classical Tamil texts. Moreover, making decisions concerning the lemmatisation of word forms is an extremely difficult task.

¹⁷ The word occurs only once, in *Narriṇai* 50-7, as the predicate of a reported utterance “*yāṇatu paḷalai*”.

¹⁸ The term occurs only two times and both occurrences are found in the *Malaipaṭukaṭām*: “*murañcu*” in line 144 and “*murañciya*” in line 268.

and D (the contrast between the U-type and the P-type of words). Facet B, which concerns their morphology, will be discussed later (see section 7). I am now going to discuss facet A, which concerns the semantic range of the items called *uricol*. That semantic range is said by TC297c (cf. supra, 3) to be characterised by the three terms *icai* “sound”, *kurippu* “idea” and *paṇpu* “quality” and it is to be noted that the same triad is found, although in a slightly different order, in one of the *sūtras* of the TE (i.e. *Eluttatikāram*), which is the first book of the *Tolkāppiyam*, where we have:

- (9) *uyirum puḷḷiyu miṟuti yāḱik // kurippinūm paṇpinu micaiyiṇun tōṇri // nerippaṭa vārāk kuṟaiccor kiḷaviyūm // [...] // aṇṇavai yellā maruviṇ pāṭṭiya // puṇariya ṇilaiyiṭai yuṇarat tōṇrā* (TE482i) “The linguistic expressions which, ending either with a vowel or a consonant, appearing for the expression of an idea, a quality or a sound, are irregular incomplete words [...]”¹⁹ all those, belonging to the division sanctioned by usage, do not appear intelligibly in the sandhi situation”²⁰.

The main difference between the wordings found in 3 and in 9 lies in the fact that the linguistic items concerned are called *uric cor kiḷavi* in 3 but *kuṟaic cor kiḷavi* in 9. The commentator Ḵampūraṇar thinks that the two must be identified, as shown by the copula (*ākiya* “which are”) found in the paraphrase which he provides (*kuṟaic-corkaḷ ākiya uriccorkaḷ*). However, the examples which Ḵampūraṇar provides do not belong to our list of U-type words²¹ for this type of construction. I shall come back to the discussion of 9 in section 7, while discussing problems of morphology.

6. Cēṇāvaraiyar’s Use of the Semantic Triad

Coming back to TC297c and to the *sūtras* that follow it inside the *Uriyiyal*, I shall observe that the TC itself does not make use of the 3 labels *icai*, *kurippu* and *paṇpu* while explaining each of the 120 U-type items, but that Cēṇāvaraiyar, on the other hand, systematically tells us for each of them in which category it is to be placed. There is a great dissymetry between the 3 labels, because *kurippu* appears in 93 paraphrases, whereas *paṇpu* appears 13 times and *icai* only 3 times.²² I shall illustrate the way Cēṇāvaraiyar proceeds by providing a few examples, drawn respectively from the commentaries to TC349c, TC350c and TC352c:

- (10) «kampalai mūtūr» {{{[puṟam:54_1]}}} eṇavum, «oru peruṇ cummaiyoṭu» {{{[ANON]}}} eṇavum, «kali koḷ āya(m) malipu tokupu eṭutta» {{{[akam:11_4]}}}

¹⁹ The *sūtra* deals with 4 specific types of sandhi situations. Since we are interested only in the first one, I skip the three others.

²⁰ This means that no rule will be provided for users of the grammar to understand what to do. The forms have to be known from usage. I discuss the wording of the predicate (*puṇariya ṇilaiyiṭai yuṇarat tōṇrā*) in Chevillard (1996, p. 387).

²¹ They (*viṇviṇaittatu*, *kārkaṟuttatu*, *ollolittatu*) belong the very specific domain of ideophones. See Chevillard (2004, p. 427) for a discussion.

²² The full list is found in Chevillard (2008, pp. 491–492).

eṇavum, «uyavup puṇarntanru iv-v- aḷuṅkal ūr ē» {{[narrīnai:203_11]}} eṇavum, kampaḷai mutal ākiya nāṅkum aravam ākiya **icaip** poruṇmai uṇarttum (Cēṇāvaraiyar, @ TC349c)²³

“In the examples *kampalai mūtūr* ‘The ancient town full of clamours’ (*Puṇam*, 54-1), *oru peruṅ cummaiyoṭu* ‘with a huge acclamation’ (ANON.), *kali koḷ āya(m) malipu tokupu eṭutta* ‘(like the lamps) held by a sonorous group of [women], happily gathered’ (*Akam*, 11-4), *uyavup puṇarntanru iv-v- aḷuṅkal ūr ē* ‘this noisy village is united to my suffering’ (*Narr.* 203-11), the [four words] starting with *kampalai* express the value of a “**sound**” (*icaip*) which is clamour”.

- (11) «paḷaiṅ kaṇōṭṭamu(m) naliya / aḷuṅkiṇaṅ allaṅ ō» {{[akam:66_25/26]}} eṇavum, «kuṇaṅ aḷuṅkak / kuṛram uḷai niṇru kūruṅ ciṇiyavarkaṭku» {{[nāḷai:353]}} eṇavum, aḷuṅkal, aravam ē aṇṇi irakkamuṅ kēṭum ākiya **kurippum** uṇarttum (Cēṇāvaraiyar, @ TC350c)²⁴

“In the examples *paḷaiṅ kaṇōṭṭamu(m) naliya / aḷuṅkiṇaṅ allaṅ ō* (*Akam*, 66-25/26) ‘his ancient benevolence tormenting his [memory], he had regrets, hadn’t he?’, *kuṇaṅ aḷuṅkak / kuṛram uḷai niṇru kūruṅ ciṇiyavarkaṭku* ‘[What is the tongue made of] in the small-[minded] [people] who, while standing next to someone, are capable of neglecting (lit. regretting) the qualities and mentioning [only] the defects’ (*Nāḷai*, 353), [the word] *aḷuṅkal* does not simply express a clamour/wailing (as previously in 10) but also the **ideas** (*kurippu*) of pitying/lamenting (*irakkam*) or of loss/omitting (*kēṭu*).

- (12) «ceḷum pal kuṇṛam» {{[kuṛun:287_7]}} eṇavum, «ceḷun taṭi tiṇṛa cennāy» {{[ANON]}} eṇavum, ceḷumai, vaḷaṇuṅ koḷuppum ākiya **paṇpu** uṇarttum (Cēṇāvaraiyar, @ TC352c)²⁵

“In the examples *ceḷum pal kuṇṛam* (*Kuṛun*, 287-7) ‘many fertile hills’ and *ceḷun taṭi tiṇṛa cennāy* ‘red-dog which has eaten a fat piece of meat’, [the word] *ceḷumai* expresses the **qualities** (*paṇpu*) of ‘fertility’ (*vaḷaṅ*) and of ‘fatness’ (*koḷuppu*).”

These distinctions, and notably the one between *kurippu* and *paṇpu*, have been clarified in advance by an explanation which Cēṇāvaraiyar had provided while commenting on TC297c.

- (13) *kurippu* -- *maṇattār kuṛitt(u) uṇarappaṭuvatu*. *paṇpu* -- *poriyāṅ uṇarappaṭuṅ kuṇam* (Cēṇāvaraiyar, @ TC297c)

“An idea (*kurippu*) is what is aimed at (*kuṛittal*) by the internal sense (*maṇam* [*skt. manas*]). A quality (*paṇpu*) is the attribute (*kuṇam*) [of a substance] which is perceived by the instruments (*pori*) [of the senses].”

²³ TC349c: *kampalai cummai kaliyē aḷuṅkal / eṇṇirivai nāṅk(u) -um aravap poruḷa* “*kampalai*, *cummai*, *kali* & *aḷuṅkal*, those four have ‘noise, clamour’ as value”.

²⁴ TC350c: *avarru uḷ / aḷuṅkal irakkamuṅ kēṭum ākum* “Among them, *aḷuṅkal* is ‘pity’ or ‘loss’”.

²⁵ TC352c: *ceḷumai vaḷaṇuṅ koḷuppum ākum* “*ceḷumai* is ‘fertility’ and ‘fat’”.

7. Citation Form and Inflection of *uric cols*

Although space and time do not allow me to deal at length with this question, a few explanations at least must be given concerning the morphology of those 120 items which the TC labels as *uric cols*. We can see, inside 10, 11 and 12, that the entities U32 (*kampalai*), U52 (*cummai*), U35 (*kali*), U5 (*aḷuṅkal*), U54 (*ceḷumai*) which Cēṇāvaraiyar comments upon [mentioned here in the order of occurrence] are represented in the citations which he provides by linguistic strings (here in boldface) inside the following phrases: **kampalai** mūtūr (10), **cummaiyoṭu** (10), **kali** koḷ āya(m) (10), **aḷuṅkal** ūr (10), **aḷuṅkiṇaṅ** allaṅ ṓ (11), kuṇaṅ **aḷuṅkak** (11), **ceḷum** pal kuṅram (12), **ceḷun** taṭi (12).

It must be remarked that these examples (given by Cēṇāvaraiyar) are probably a perfect illustration for what the TC told us in 3 (section B), namely that the linguistic items called *uric col* can be “concretely indistinguishable from either noun or verb” (*peyarinnum viṇaiyiṇum meṅ taṭumāri*). We see indeed that there is every reason to say that

- *cummai* looks like a noun (because it has taken the *-oṭu* case suffix),
- *aḷuṅkal* looks like a verb when it is found as *aḷuṅkiṇaṅ* (a finite form) or as *aḷuṅka* (one of the types of converb).

However, how to analyse the other cases, where the item appears as the first component in a Noun-phrase? One is tempted to think that this is in fact what is described by 9 (see section 5). If we take for instance “**ceḷum** pal kuṅram” (12) and “**ceḷun** taṭi” (12), the component in bold face is what TE482i calls a *kuṛaiccor kiḷavi* “linguistic item (*kiḷavi*) which is an incomplete word” (cf. supra 9). And TE482i simply tells us that it has to be learnt from usage that the item for which the citation form is *ceḷumai* becomes *ceḷum* (or *ceḷun*) whereas the items *aḷuṅkal* and *kampalai* remain unchanged in *aḷuṅkal ūr* and *kampalai mūtūr*.

Finally, as a conclusion to this section, it must be said that another commentator to the TC, whose name is Teyvaccilaiyār, has put forward the hypothesis that the correct interpretation of *uric col* is *tātu* (i.e. skt *dhātu*) “root” (see Vēṅkaṭācalam 1929/1984, p. 190). As a comment, one might want to say that there must certainly have been many people who regretted that Tamil grammarians never compiled a *dhātupāṭha*. However, the *Uriyiyal*, as it was transmitted to us, could never play the role of a *dhātupāṭha*.

8. Posterity of the *Uriyiyal* in Later Grammars

As appears from statements such as 13, Cēṇāvaraiyar seems to rely for his explanations of language phenomena on an ontology, on a classification of all the things which exist. It is certainly an open question to find out whether in doing that he is faithful to the original *Tolkāppiyam* perspective. I shall not try, however, to discuss

the philosophical systems involved.²⁶ I am concentrating on the actual lists of words (U-type and P-type), trying, however, to preserve a general perspective. While doing that, a concern which arises naturally is to examine what happened after the age of *Tolkāppiyam*. Among the later grammars, the 11th-century *Vīracōḷiyam* does not contain a section devoted to *uric col*, but we find again a section on *uric cols* in the Naṅṅūl, an early 13th-century grammar. That section is, however, quite different in character from the one we had in the *Tolkāppiyam*, as can be seen from its first *sūtra*, which reads:

(14) *palavakaip paṅpum pakarpeya rāki / orukuṇam palakuṇan taluvip peyarviṇai / oruvā ceyyuṭ kuriyaṇa vuricol* (N441m)

“Qualifying words are the names of the various kinds of properties which, signifying one or more attributes (of matter and spirit), are the inseparable adjuncts of Nouns and Verbs, and belong especially to poetry” (Lazarus).

The ontological character of this chapter is rather marked, as can be seen from the following *sūtra*, which reads.

(15) *uyiruyi rillatām poruṭkuṇam paṅpē* (N442m)

“By ‘property’ are meant the qualities of both animate and inanimate objects” (Lazarus).

And as a matter of fact, the following 12 *sūtras* are devoted to enumerating the types of living beings (based on the number of senses) and their principal qualities, as well as the qualities of inanimate bodies. Only after that do we find something which has a slight resemblance to the *Uriyiyal* of the TC, but limited to 3 *sūtras*. And this is concluded by an encouragement to make use of dictionaries (or rather The-sauri/Nikaṇṭu) such as the *Piṅkalam*.

9. Embedding of the *Uriyiyal* inside the *Tivākaram*

In what follows, I shall not, however, examine the *Piṅkalam*, but rather an older specimen of Tamil *kōśa* literature, namely the *Tivākaram*, which is often said to belong to the 8th century A.D. (see James 2000, p. 62). I shall rely for that examination on the 1990–1993 edition, which is what comes closest to a critical edition. This is a work divided in 12 sections, the first 10 being devoted to various categories, such as Gods (chap. 1, with 159 *sūtras*), Human Beings (chap. 2, with 251 *sūtras*), etc.²⁷ while

²⁶ See, however, Chevillard (2008, pp. 444–462) for a sketch of Cēṅṅavaraiyar’s “vision du monde” (world view).

²⁷ The other chapters are: 3. Animals (217 *sūt.*), 4. Plants (217 *sūt.*), 5. Locations (180 *sūt.*), 6. Various Things (114 *sūt.*), 7. Artificial Objects (206 *sūt.*), 8. Qualities (213 *sūt.*), 9. Actions (214 *sūt.*) and 10. Sounds (130 *sūt.*).

the 11th and 12th stand apart, because they deal respectively with polysemic terms²⁸ and with collections.²⁹

The first remark to be made is that almost all of the 120 U-type terms from the *Uriyiyal* are found inside the *Tivākaram*. Among the few which I was not able to find, there is U17 (*urum*), U74 (*nām*), U92 (*pēm*), which all three appear in TC365c,³⁰ U107 (*yāṇu*) and U102 (*murañcal*). There are also cases where an item might be considered to appear under a different form, like for instance U83 (*payappu*) which might be considered to be represented by another equivalent citation form, *payattal* seen in T1639, among the quasi-synonyms of *perutal*.³¹

The second remark is that the chapters of the *Tivākaram* which appear the most often when one searches for one of the 120 U-type terms are, in this order, the 8th chapter devoted to “Qualities” (*paṇpu*), which is concerned at least 123 times, the 11th chapter (“Polysemic Terms”), at least 55 times, the 9th chapter (“Actions”), at least 37 times, the 10th chapter “Sounds”, at least 18 times.³² The fact that this adds up to more than 120 hits simply means that the *Tivākaram* has greatly expanded the seed contained in the *Uriyiyal* and quoted many more possible meanings of those lexemes.

The third remark is that if we examine the 100 P-type terms, in terms of their occurrence inside the *Tivākaram*, we have a similar phenomenon: the 8th chapter is the most often found, but other chapters are also found. This shows that there is a kernel of truth in the statements of the Nannūl quoted earlier (see 14 and 15),³³ but that it does not correspond to the whole truth.³⁴ It also appears that, if we examine the distribution of the items corresponding to the 3 parts of the triad, *icai kurippu paṇpu* (“sound” “idea” “quality”), in which *kurippu* is, as already said, by far the most often used (provided we trust Cēṇāvaraiyar), what we find is the following:

- the very few terms labelled *icai* “sound” are found, as expected, in the 10th chapter (“Sounds”)
- the (not many) terms labelled *paṇpu* “quality” are found, as expected, in the 8th chapter (“Qualities”)

²⁸ Acting as a sort of (potential) index to the preceding chapters, it contains 383 *sūtras*. Whereas in the first ten chapters, each *sūtra* contains a (simple) term and its (more sophisticated) quasi-synonyms, and has thus a semantic unity of content, in this 11th chapter, the emphasis is on the semantic ambiguity of (difficult) forms.

²⁹ Among its 234 *sūtras*, 10 are devoted to pairs, 23 to triads, 25 to groups of four items, etc.

³⁰ However, the 1840 edition of *Tivākaram* had incorporated the *Tolkāppiyam sūtra* as an explicit addition, whereas the 1990–1993 edition that we use has relegated in the apparatus and removed it from the main text (see p. 491, No. 204*, just after T1484).

³¹ This would testify of the progress in the definition of a standard for the citation of lexemes.

³² I have also found connections with other chapters: 2nd chapter (“Human Beings”), 9 times; 5th chapter (“Locations”), 8 times; 7th chapter (“Artificial Object”), 6 times.

³³ This also explains why some have proposed to translate *uric col* by “adjective”, although this seems quite inappropriate from the point of view of the TC and although a study of what “adjectives” are in Tamil yields quite different results (see Chevillard 1992).

³⁴ Lexicographical endeavours cannot be completely characterised by using terms borrowed from philosophical systems.

- the terms labeled *kuṛippu* “idea” are found massively in the 8th chapter but also in significant numbers in the 9th and marginally in other chapters (including the 10th).

This again shows how any scheme which a practice-oriented discipline (such as is Tamil lexicography, as it started with the *Tivākaram*) ends up disregarding some of the categories which it had inherited, because they do not appear to be usable (as seems to be the case with *kuṛippu*, which does not give its name to any chapter in the *Tivākaram*).

The fourth remark is that there is a change of perspective when one goes from the *Uriyiyal* to the *Tivākaram*. The main task is no longer to explain “hard words” but to enumerate in one *sūtra* as many quasi-synonyms as possible for a basic notion. But it often happens that some of the elements in the enumeration are polysemic and are found in several *sūtras*. The global structure thus created can also be described as a graph.³⁵

10. A Few Conclusions

I have here only scratched the surface of a subject, which is important for Tamil philology, as I would now like to emphasise. It may not be realised by every modern day student of Tamil literature that the texts which we have been discussing here, the *Tivākaram* and the *Tolkāppiyam*, as well as many others, were memorised by the students of the past.³⁶ In a short auto-biographical account (*A Life-Time for the Cause of Tamil*, 2009), the late T. V. Gopal Iyer also emphasises that “the Tamil world considered only strong memorising power as the very great strength of Tamil scholars”.

Modern philologists are not very likely nowadays to memorise a thesaurus of 9500 words, divided in 2518 *sūtras*, as is the *Tivākaram*. It should not, however, deter them from studying it, as well as other thesauri, in order to be able to imagine what it is to live with the literature of a classical language as a part of oneself. They can also try to understand and modellise its inner structure, with the help of modern tools such

³⁵ See Chevillard (forthcoming) “Examining verbal forms inside the *Tēvāram*, in the light of the vocabulary found inside the 9th chapter of *Cēntaṅ Tivākaram*”, communication to be presented at the INFITT 2010 Conference (Coimbatore, June 2010).

³⁶ In the preface to a 1968 edition of the *Piṅkalam*, the anonymous editors whose collective signature is “*caivacittānta nūṛpatippuk kaḷakattār*” have written what follows: “There was requirement, agreed upon among the teachers of ancient days, that those who wished to study grammatical and literary works and become proficient in them must first learn by heart the thesauri. That scheme was in circulation until a recent past. [...] Unlike the dictionaries of today, the thesauri of those days did not have to be consulted from time to time. All those who had learnt the thesauri were moving thesauri” (*ilakkaṇa ilakkiya nūlkaḷaik karṛup pulamait tīramaṭaiya virumpuvōr mutarṅkaṇ nikaṇṭu nūlkaḷai aiyaṅtīripaṅak karṛu nalla payīrciyaip perṛirukka vēṅṭum eṅṅum kaṭṭāyat tiṅṅam paṅṅaikkālak kaṅakkāyarkaḷiṭattilē iruntu vantaṭu. it tiṅṅam aṅṅaikkālam varaiyil naṅṅaimuṅṅaiyil iruntuṭu. [...] innāḷ akarāti pōṅṅu annāḷ nikaṅṅiṅṅai avvappōṭu purattīp pārṅka vēṅṅuvattillai. nikaṅṅu-karṅṅār aṅṅaivarum ulavum nikaṅṅarāy vāḷntu vantaṅṅar*).

as those created by Graph theory explorers.³⁷ That in turn might place them in a better position for understanding all the subtle word plays that the gifted scholars of the past were able to insert in their subtle compositions, to the delight of their fellow scholars. This is how a classical culture is transmitted across the ocean of Time.

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³⁷ In *The Stanford GraphBase*, Donald E. Knuth explains (1993, p. 6) how, having built a graph containing the 5757 five-letter words which he was able to find in the English language, he was able to ask his computer to try to find a path connecting two words (with only one letter changed at each step of the path). If the two words were “sword” and “peace”, the computer was able to propose the following path (containing only Biblical words): **sword**, swore, store, stare, stars, stays, slays, plays, plans, plane, place, **peace**.

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