Are Sanskrit Mirrors Blind?
Exploring the Northern Share Inside Ancient Tamil Literature[*]

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(α) "Therefore, you clown, abandon, which is in the vulgar leave, the society, which in the boorish is company, of this female, which in the common is woman; which together is, abandon the society of this female, or clown, thou perishest; or, to thy better understanding, diest; or to wit, I kill thee, make thee away, translate thy life into death ..."

(William Shakespeare, As You Like It, Act 5, Scene 1)

(β) "... many of the most vivid and forceful words in English are French, and even where the French and Latin words are more literary or learned, as indeed they often are, they are no less valuable and important. Language has need for the simple, the polished, and even the recondite word. The richness of English in synonyms is largely due to the happy mingling of Latin, French, and native elements. It has been said that we have a synonym at each level—popular, literary, and learned."

(Baugh & Cable (1978), cited by Hiroyuki Eto (2009))

(γ) "**அம்மா!** இப்போது நான் பாடிய பாட்டைத் தூயதமிழில் இராமலிங்க அடிகள் எவ்வளவு அழகாகப் பாடியிருக்கின்றார்கள்! ஆனால், அப்பாட்டின் இரண்டாம் அடியிலுள்ள **'தேகம்' என்னும் வடசொல்லை** நீக்கி 'யாக்கை' என்னுந் தனித்தமிழ்ச் சொல்லை அவர்கள் அங்கே அமைத்துப் பாடியிருந்தால், இன்னும் எவ்வளவு நன்றாயிருக்கும்? [...]"

(தி. நீலம்பிகை யம்மையார் (1937), preface to *Vaṭacorramil Akaravaricai*[1])

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[1] The content of this epigraph is discussed in the conclusion inside footnotes 55 and 56.

The fact that some varieties of "Sanskrit"[2] are nowadays studied by many through the medium of what one can call "International English" (and through other western languages) tends to make inconspicuous for those students the simple truth that for a long period of time the learning and cultivation of Sanskrit has been a different reality, being, mostly,[3] the (natural) prerogative of some of the native speakers of various Indian languages, including some native speakers of Tamil, who will be our central concern here. Not having native speakers itself, Sanskrit was (and still is) an "embedded[4] language",[5]

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[2] My use of quotation marks around the word "Sanskrit" is a disclaimer indicating (a) that I am not a Sanskritist myself, (b) that my only concrete reliable starting point here is a collection of extracts from specific ancient Tamil texts, (c) that the evidence which I shall examine here is rooted in observations found inside Tamil literature (technical and non-technical) pertaining to a form of familiar linguistic otherness (from the point of view of Tamil speakers), which is referred to by means of terms such as *vaṭacol* "Northern word(s)" or *vaṭamoḻi* "Northern language(s)" and which at some point became one of their prized intellectual possessions, as an embedded language (see footnote 4), during a period which I call "The Age of *maṇṭalam*" (see section 5), and (d) that it is *a priori* impossible to know in advance whether a command of the ideal/standardised language variety which is often the primary target of Western Sanskrit language learners is a sufficient equipment to possess for understanding the Tamil familiar linguistic otherness mentioned in (b), when a mastery of Prakrit (or of Prakrits) is probably even more necessary, but is of course an even taller order.

[3] Of course, Sanskrit also reached other parts of Asia, long before it reached Europe and America.

[4] I borrow the expression "embedded language" from Kay (2008: 39), who uses it for explaining the relationship between XPath and XSLT (or between XPath and XQuery). He gives three criteria: (a) An embedded language does not need to have every conceivable piece of functionality. [...]; (b) An embedded language can depend on a context established by the host language in which it is embedded. [...] (c) An embedded language can be called by its host language, but cannot make calls in the other direction. [...].

[5] The minimum form of Sanskrit embedding is seen for instance in the final segment of *Tēvāram* verse 3-049_(1): "*kātal āki kacintu kaṇṇīr malki ōtuvār tammai naṉṉerikku uyppatu*

initially accessible to its potential users through the medium of those other languages, as is clear for instance when one examines the circumstances under which William Jones decided to learn Sanskrit in 1785.[6] Such circumstances are however not generally present in the forefront of collective consciousness nowadays; Sanskrit, embedded as it is inside International English, might give the impression of being a *svayambhu* ("self-existent") object of study, existing outside time and transparently accessible to anyone who makes the effort of using the impressive scholarly instruments produced in the course of what is sometimes referred to as "200 years of Indology", just like a traveller who nowadays passes by Chidambaram via the Bypass road may not be aware of the fact that it was once necessary to go through several speed-reduced segments (and possibly traffic jams), when the main road passed near the temple.

The present article could be described as a short walk on several segments of an ancient road[7] where we examine some clues available inside ancient Tamil literature, non-technical and technical. The segments are taken from several layers of a relative chronology which will hopefully

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*vētam nāṉkilum mey poruḷ āvatu **nātaṉ nāmam namacivāya**-v-ē*". That verse, which contains a majority of fourteen Tamil items, combined with three nativised Sanskrit items (*vētam, nātaṉ* & *nāmam*), is nevertheless centred on an untranslated Sanskrit mantra, namely *namacivāya*, to which the emphatic Tamil particle "*ē*" has been added, making it into an emphatic final cleft subject.

[6] Garland Canon (2006: 231) explains that William Jones wanted to read some Sanskrit legal texts, but could access them only through a third degree translation in the following manner: a Sanskrit-knowing brahmin had explained in « Bengal dialect » the meaning of the original text to a « Muselman writer » who had translated it into Persian. The Persian text had then been translated into English by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. This unsatisfactory situation decided Jones to undertake the study of Sanskrit from 1785 onwards.

[7] In recent times, a number of colleagues have also walked on that old road, giving me inspiration. I would like to mention here an article by Ciotti (2017) and a book by Anandakichenin (2018).

progressively emerge.[8] The opening perspective chosen is a mid-first millennium Tamil interaction with a language which is referred to as the *vaṭamoḻi* "Northern Language". We shall also examine in other sections expressions such as *vaṭacol* "Northern word", *vaṭaveḻuttu*, etc.

1. A bilingual riddle, characterizing someone's father

The 25th poem of the anthology called *Kalittokai* contains in its opening part (alias *taravu*) a cryptic but unequivocal reference to an episode from the *Mahābhārata*, namely the Lac-house story. That reference begins with:

(1)   *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam **vaṭamoḻip** peyar peṟṟa*
        mukattavaṉ makkaḷuḷ mutiyavaṉ puṇarppiṉāl
        (*Kalittokai* 25, lines 1–2)

Because of the setting-up (*puṇarppiṉāl*) [of a trap] by the eldest (*mutiyavaṉ*) among the children (*makkaḷ-uḷ*) of he-who-has-(the)-**mukam** (*mukattavaṉ*) of having received (*peṟṟa*)[9] the **Northern language** <u>Name</u> (**vaṭamoḻip** <u>peyar</u>) of (a) <u>brilliance</u>-INHERING (<u>*vayakk-UṞU*</u>) **maṇṭilam** [...]

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[9] This is not the only possible translation. A construction involving a relative participle (such as *peṟṟa*) always appears under-specified, until one understands the semantic role played by the entity referred to by the head-noun (that noun is the one immediately following the relative participle). Therefore, an expression of the form A *peṟṟa* B could mean (among other possibilities): (1) "the B who received A"; (2) "the B whom A received"; (3) "the B of having received A". This means that we cannot translate the expression until we know precisely what the word *mukam* means. As we shall see, more than one solution seems to have been considered in the course of history, and therefore several contradictory "historical truths" will have to be examined, by going through the linguistic records. I should add to this that I shall also try to recover the original meaning and that my solution, proposed inside section 11, differs from the one by V.

Inside those two metrical lines, the opening sequence[10]—containing at this stage two untranslated terms (**maṇṭilam** & **mukam**)—is the opaque characterisation, in the form of a bi-lingual riddle, of a character (A) whom we shall soon identify, because his "eldest son" (B) is presented as the agent who was responsible for the setting-up (puṇarppu) of a trap. That trap is explained by the following two lines

(2) 'aivar' eṉṟu* ulaku* ēttum aracarkaḷ akattarāk,
     kai puṉai arakku* illaik kataḻ eri cūḻntāṅku
     (*Kalittokai* 25, lines 3–4)

[...] **in a manner similar to** (cūḻntāṅku) [the case when] a roaring fire (kataḻ eri) **surrounded** (**cūḻntāṅku**) a handmade (kai puṉai) lac-house (arakku* illai), while those kings were inside (aracarkaḷ akattarā), whom the world praises as "The Five" ('aivar' eṉṟu ulaku ēttum) [...]

We have two clues here, for solving the riddle, namely the presence of the kings (C) whom the world praises as being "The Five" (aivar)—first easy clue, in line 3—and the presence of a "roaring fire" (kataḻ eri) devouring a "lac house" (arakk-il)—second easy clue, in line 4. Those two lines end with a particle/suffix of comparison (-āṅku) because the encircling by fire is used as the standard of comparison (upamāna) in a comparison, which lands us suddenly, in lines 5 and 6 (not reproduced here), in a desert[11] where a terrifying mountain fire—which is the object compared (upamēya) of the comparison—is also raging, encircling a male elephant, who will have to rise to the occasion in order to save his family, like his human counterpart in what must have been a well-known story at the time.

Murugan, provided in footnote 17.

[10] The opening sequence contains five metrical feet: four feet in the first line along with the first foot of the second line.

[11] This poem belongs to the *pālai* section of the *Kalittokai* and therefore its (landscape) setting involves the crossing of a desert path.

My primary reason for the choice of the two lines which constitute the bilingual/bicultural riddle seen in (1) is the occurrence in the first line of the expression *vaṭamoḻi* "Northern Language", which serves here as an unambiguous entry point into the topic of this article. The difficulty of the riddle, and the pleasure obtained by solving it, depend of course very much on the familiarity of the audience(s)[12] with some collections of stories. We can probably surmise that when listening to metrical lines 3–4 and obtaining the two easy clues, the audience for whom this poem was originally composed must have started to overcome the initial puzzlement created by lines 1 and 2, and strongly suspected that the allusion was *Mahābhārata*-based. Slightly later, when the poet, leaving the mountain fire (and the elephant) of lines 5–6, returned to the lac-house scene by mentioning in line 7 the "Son of the wind" (*vaḷi makaṉ*), it was probably easy for the audience to understand that the poet was talking about Bhīma, second among "the five" (Pāṇḍava princes), i.e. the characters C mentioned in line 3 of *Kalittokai* 25. Moving mentally backwards, or listening to the poem a second time, it was then possible to conclude that character B was their cousin Duryodhana and that character A was his father, the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who was famously blind. But that of course does not mean that the riddle (see 1, above) has been understood (or really solved) by us—we are only aware of the denotation (i.e. "Bedeutung") of the riddle, but we have not yet understood its sense (i.e. "Sinn")[13]—and this is the task which we shall now try to perform, turning our attention to the two (bold-faced) terms left untranslated in (1), namely *mukam* and *maṇṭilam*.

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[12] I must apologise to the modern audience for partly spoiling a beautiful fragment of ancient Tamil literature by my beginning of an explanation.

[13] In order to avoid English ambiguity, I borrow here this German terminological distinction from the famous 1892 article by Frege, where he explained that *Morgenstern* "Morning Star" and *Abendstern* "Evening Star" possess the same *Bedeutung* (because both refer to the planet Venus), but do not possess the same *Sinn*, because when using them we reach the thing referred to through different semantic paths.

2. Why polysemic *maṇṭilam* was left untranslated in (1)

I must now explain why I have prudently (and unhelpfully) rendered the initial segment in (1), which we now know to be a reference to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, by the cryptic formulation

> **(3)** "he-who-has-(the)-**mukam** of having received the Northern-language Name of (a) brilliance-INHERING ***maṇṭilam***" (*vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamoḻip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ*; *Kalittokai* 25, incipit)

Although I shall later make my own proposal concerning what this formula may have originally meant (see (19a) and (19b) inside section 10), the first thing which should be stated is the fact that there have been, in the course of Tamil scholarly history, several contradictory interpretations given to these five metrical feet and, therefore, several divergent possible (or successive) translations(see for instance (14) in section 7 and (17) in section 8); and some of those divergent interpretations have become part of the stock of formulas available for use inside literature,[14] even though they are possibly unfaithful to the originally intended meaning. One root cause for the divergence is that a word such as *maṇṭilam* can be understood in many different ways when it is part of the poetical language (see 4). This is also true of *mukam*, although less prominently, but I shall leave that part of the discussion for section 6 and section 10. In the case of *maṇṭilam*, the easiest way of demonstrating its "literary polysemy"[15] is to quote here *Piṅkalam* 3919, which is a verse found in the "dictionary section" of a traditional

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[14] See for instance the MTL entry தற்பணானனன் [*tarppaṇāṉaṉaṉ*] discussed in (8) and see also (9) and the related examples.

[15] I use the expression "literary polysemy" in order to refer to a poetical composition environment where ambiguity is valorised.

Thesaurus[16] called *Piṅkalam*, possibly composed in the 10ᵗʰ century, which reads:

(4)   *vaṭṭam-um** *nāṭ-uṅ kutirai-y-um** *maṇṭilam*
       (*Piṅkalam* 3919)

[And] *vaṭṭam* 'circular shape', and *nāṭu* 'country', and *kutirai* 'horse' [are the meanings of the polysemic item] *maṇṭilam*.

The most complete enumeration of divergent explanations for (3) is found inside the 14ᵗʰ-century commentary by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar (see section 6), on which some modern English translations rely.[17] Interestingly, in another commentary by the same Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar on a (782-line) long poem called *Maturaik kāñci*, which may have roughly belonged to the same temporal stratum as the *Kalittokai*, we find an explanatory statement which is a linguistic categorisation of the word *maṇṭilam*, on the occasion of its occurrence in line 190 of the *Maturaik kāñci*. That explanatory statement reads:

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[16] Given the fact that for most English speakers the use of the word "thesaurus" will evoke Roget's thesaurus, it is necessary to specify here that inside a work like the *Piṅkalam*, leaving out a few details:

- 70% of the structure is a thesaurus, i.e. a thematic encyclopedic section, called "dictionary of things" (*poruḷakarāti*) in Beschi's *Caturakarāti*:

- 20% of the structure is a dictionary dealing with polysemic words, called "dictionary of names" (*peyar-akarāti*) in the *Caturakarāti*.

[17] See for instance the translation given by V. Murugan (1999: 81): "Of the monarch whose face resembled that of the one // Called by a name in the northern tongue corresponding to the radiant spheres". This translation is accompanied by two footnotes: fn. 2: "Tirutarāṭṭiraṉ whose eldest son was Turiyōtaṉaṉ" and fn. 3: "Pakaṉ in Sanskrit, blind".

(5) *maṇṭalam maṇṭilam eṉa* **maruviṟṟu**
(Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, commentary on *Maturaik Kāñci*, line 190)[18]

maṇṭalam has been accepted/adopted as *maṇṭilam.*

There are many possible inferences to be drawn from this short statement, which looks like a phonetic remark, but at this preliminary stage, I shall simply state that it appears as a sufficient initial reason for extending also to the item *maṇṭalam* the investigation that we have started concerning *maṇṭilam* and *mukam.* This extension will also appear as natural when we examine (in section 5) the historical succession, across centuries, of the traditional thesauri used for the training of Tamil poets (*Tivākaram, Piṅkalam, ..., Cūṭāmaṇi nikaṇṭu, ...*). One of those thesauri was already briefly quoted in (4) and the examination will continue in section 5. Including *maṇṭalam* in the enquiry is also in line with the point of view expressed by the Tamil scholars who compiled the monumental Madras *Tamil Lexicon* (henceforth MTL) during the first half of the 20th century, because the MTL derives both *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam* from the sanskrit word *maṇḍala* (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), also spelled *maṃḍalaṃ* in the STD-G (see Fig. 3).

3. The *Tolkāppiyam* point of view on Northern words (*vaṭa-col*)

We are now at a stage where it is important, for the clarity of the argumentation, to start introducing the traditional Tamil grammatical terminology. Using that terminology, both *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam* can be said to fall under the label *vaṭacol* "Northern word", although the applicable *sūtra* may not be the same in both cases, because there are two *sūtra*-s governing Northern words inside the *Tolkāppiyam*, which are as follows:

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[18] Line 190 of the *Maturaik kāñci* is on p. 301 in the 1961 UVSL edition (BIB) of the *Pattup pāṭṭu.* The commentary is on p. 358.

(6a)   *vaṭacol+ kiḷavi* (1a) *vaṭa eḻuttu orīi* (1b) //
          eḻuttoṭu puṇarnta col= ākum= ē
          (TC 401 c)

A linguistic item (*kiḷavi*) which is a Northern word (*vaṭacol*) is a word (*col*) in which letters/akṣara-s (*eḻuttu*) combine, specifically-northern letters/akṣara-s (*vaṭa-v-eḻuttu*) being shunned/avoided (*orīi*).[19]

(6b)   *citaintaṉa variṉum* (1a) *iyaintaṉa varaiyār* (1b)
          (TC 402 c)

Even if [those Northern words] occur (*variṉum*) as corrupted-ones (*citaintaṉa*), [grammarians] do not exclude (*varaiyār*) those which are suitable (*iyaintaṉa*).[20]

Having already discussed the phonetic dimension of these *sūtra*s in a previous article,[21] I shall simply mention here that among the points discussed by the commentators of the *Tolkāppiyam* is the determination of the domain of applicability of (6a) and (6b). For instance, Cēṉāvaraiyar seems to consider that *sūtra* TC401c, cited in 6a, applies to the borrowing of Sanskrit words for which the mapping from the Sanskrit phonological system is relatively simple, whereas *sūtra* TC402c, cited in 6b, applies to more complex cases. He refers to the Sanskrit language by means of the term *āriyam*, and seems to think that when a Sanskrit word is used in Tamil, it retains its identity, being the same word, and not simply a word which "is similar" (*ottal*) to the Sanskrit word. Concerning (6b), he adds however an

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[19] «Un terme [qui est] «mot du Nord» (1a) / C'est un mot où des lettres se combinent (2) / De telle façon que soient évitées / les lettres [spécifiques] du Nord (1b)» (Chevillard 1996: 477).

[20] « Même s'il se rencontre des [mots sanskrits] corrompus, (1a) / On n'interdit pas ceux qui conviennent (1b) » (Chevillard 1996: 478).

[21] See Chevillard (2011). This concerns for instance the change *ṇḍ* → *ṇṭ* when going from *maṇḍala* to *maṇṭalam*.

additional interpretation, stating that *sūtra* TC402c is also the justification for the use of Prakrit[22] words in Tamil, the term used for referring to Prakrit being *pākatam*,[23] and he justifies that by the presence of the word *citaintaṉa* "corrupted-ones", making it clear that he considers Prakrit as a corrupted form of Sanskrit.

4. First half of the 20th-century documentation on *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam*

Returning from that general point of view on Sanskrit (and Prakrit) borrowings, to the specific enquiry in which we are engaged, which concerns *maṇṭilam*, *mukam*, and *maṇṭalam*, we can now give a more precise estimate of the size of the semantic landscape which has to be explored (and synthesised) in order to solve the riddle presented in (3). That semantic landscape contains as core components inside the MTL the two entries of which the beginnings are reproduced in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 (see below) and for which the head words are மண்டிலம் [*maṇṭilam*] and மண்டலம் [*maṇṭalam*], respectively.

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[22] See Chevillard (1996: 479).

[23] See MTL (p. 2579) "பாகதம் pākatam , n. < Pkt. pākata < prākṛta. [K. pāgada.]" where *Tēvāram* (858, 2) is quoted: "சங்கத பங்கமாய் பாகதத்தொடிரைத் துரைத்த" [caṅkata paṅkamāp pākatattoṭirait turaitta]. Additionally, concerning the term *caṅkatam*, which appears in the *Tēvāram* quotation, see MTL (p. 1222): "சங்கதம் caṅkatam, n. < saṃskṛta. Sanskrit" (where the same *Tēvāram* quotation appears).

மண்டிலம் maṇṭilam, *n*. < *maṇḍala*. 1.
See மண்டலம்², 1, 2. (பிங்.) செஞ்ஞாயிற்று . . .
பரிப்புச் சூழ்ந்த மண்டிலவும் (புறநா. 30). 2. Cours-
ing in a circle; வட்டமாபோகை. செலவொடு
மண்டிலஞ்சென்று (பு. வெ. 12, வென்றிப். 14). 3.
Horse, as running in a circle; துதிரை. கழிப்பு
லாய் மண்டிலங் கொட்பு (இன்ஞு. 35). (பிங்.) 4.
See மண்டலம்², 12. (நாமதீப். 732.) 5. The earth;
பூமி. கடல்சூழ் மண்டிலம் (குறுந். 300). 6. Sun;
சூரியன். பகல்செய் மண்டிலம் பாரித்தாங்கு (பெரும்
பாண். 442). 7. Moon; சந்திரன். செய்வுறு மண்

Fig. 1. Beginning of entry மண்டிலம் in MTL (p. 3030) listing 13 meanings on 18 lines.

மண்டலம்² maṇṭalam, *n*. < *maṇḍala*. 1.
Circle, sphere, orbit; வட்டம். (பிங்.) சுடர்மண்
டலம் (திருநூற். 80). 2. Disc, as of sun or moon;
வட்ட வடிவம். (திவா.) 3. Ecliptic. See கிராந்தி
வீதி. 4. Region, as of sun, moon or clouds;

Fig. 2. Beginning of entry மண்டலம் in MTL (p. 3028) listing 18 meanings on 37 lines.

To this, I have to add, in order to be more complete, some information on the meanings of the Sanskrit word *maṇḍala*, which appears in both Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. The information is given in Fig. 3 (see below), which reproduces a fragment of the 1930 *Sanskrit-Tamil Dictionary* (STD-G, in Grantha script), where the item is spelt as *Maṃḍalaṃ.* I wish, by choosing this source, published at a time when the MTL was still under compilation, and not yet completely published,[24] to provide a window on what must have been the consensus opinion of the Tamil scholars who were at the same time Sanskrit scholars, a bi-scholarly community of Tamil Nadu which has existed for many centuries.

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[24] The first volume of the MTL was printed in 1924 and the sixth volume was printed in 1936. A supplementary (seventh) volume was completed in 1939.

ஃ௦ உயஞ௦ஃ. நகக. நாடி)ஙு. ஆஹாராம. ஹ்ஃ வ8 ͼஹம. *ஜ்ீ. ஹ்ஃ. ஃ௦ உயஒ௦. வட்டம். ஆஜ்தி)ஃ௦உயஒ யுாயெஐ ஸஉயுா. வ௦உயப், வ௦உ௦வி௦ வ௦. கூட்டம். ஜெவதாவாஹநஉகூ௦. *நஉ)ரவஉஃ.வட்டம்வஉ.ரதல். ஃ௦உயஒிஙு. பாம்பு ஜி. பூஊ. மர) நாய். அத்தி. ராஃஙு. ரூவி.

Fig. 3. Three entries from STD-G (page B-153): *maṃḍayantaḥ, maṃḍalaṃ,* and *maṃḍalin.*

It is of course impossible to critically examine in a short time all the meanings enumerated by the MTL and by the STD-G. The most realistic (or efficient) way to make real progress in retracing the history of the interpretations of the initial riddle in the *Kalittokai* is to take as a starting point the rich/dense commentary which Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar has devoted to explaining it. This is what we shall do in section 6. Before that however, we must sketch the "grandes lignes" of a global chronology and this is what I shall attempt in the coming section.

5. From the age of *maṇṭilam* into the age of *maṇṭalam*: an example of "sanskritisation"

Although we have not yet attempted to provide a real translation of the apparent riddle found in (3), inside section 2, and although I have provided so far general information only on *maṇṭilam* (and the related *maṇṭalam*), but not yet on the item *mukam*, it appears necessary to provide here additional information of an even more general nature, in order to prevent a possible bias which could result from the use of incomplete information. The basic fact is that we are trying to understand, in the 21st century, a passage from an Ancient Tamil text, called *Kalittokai*, which is a collection of 150 poems, possibly composed in the 5th century AD. That text has been transmitted through manuscripts by many generations of scholars, before being printed in book form for the first time in 1887 (see Image A in section 6, extracted from that book). Additionally, inside the manuscripts on which it was transmitted and inside the printed books, the text of the poems is usually

accompanied by a commentary attributed to a 14th-century scholar named Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, from whom we have so far quoted in (5) an opinion, expressed in a different context, concerning the relationship between *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam*. After that, I have provided in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, additional data which allows us to gauge the magnitude of the information which Tamil historical lexicographers had managed to compile concerning *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam*, during the first half of the 20th century. That information is accompanied, in Fig. 3, by some information compiled in Tamil Nadu during the same period concerning the Sanskrit term *maṃḍalaṃ*, from which the items *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam* are said to be derived by the MTL compilers. There is however a risk that we might understand in an anachronistic manner the relationship between those various elements, unless more information is provided on the temporal distribution of those items. The problem is that we might forget the temporal inscription of the atomic pieces of lexical information which have been put together in the process of compiling the MTL. We can see for instance in the captions that the long MTL entry which has *maṇṭalam* as a head enumerates on 37 lines 18 distinct meanings, whereas the shorter MTL entry which has *maṇṭilam* as a head enumerates on 18 lines 13 distinct meanings. What this data accumulation does not tell us is that if we open the set of three volumes called *Index des Mots de la Littérature Tamoule Ancienne* (henceforth IMLTA), compiled in the 1960's in Pondicherry on the basis of the detailed examination of 46 works (all belonging to the ancient period of Tamil literature) and printed in 1967, 1968, and 1968, we obtain a very different distribution, which shows that MTL is not perfectly representative of ancient Tamil literature. What we see in the IMLTA is that:

- The item *maṇṭilam* occurs 53 times inside the corpus on the basis of which the IMLTA was compiled.
- The item *maṇṭalam* occurs only 2 times in the same corpus, and that happens in two compositions, the *Ācārak kōvai* and the *Maṇimēkalai*, which do not belong to the older strata.

- The only text inside which *maṇṭilam* and *maṇṭalam* coexist is the *Maṇimēkalai*, which is frequently dated in the 6th century CE[25] and in which we have 4 occurrences of *maṇṭilam* and 1 of *maṇṭalam*.

If, on the other hand, we were to interrogate a native speaker of Modern Tamil, or, more simply, if we opened a dictionary of Modern Tamil (such as the *Cre-A Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil*), we would find out that there is no entry for *maṇṭilam*, but only one for *maṇṭalam*. To this can be added that:

- The 2003 *Glossary of Tamil Inscription* gives attestations only for *maṇṭalam* (மண்டலம்) and for *maṇḍalam* (printed as மண்ட₃லம்).
- inside the *bhakti* (i.e. devotional) literature, which started to be composed in the 6th century, we do not find *maṇṭilam,* but we find *maṇṭalam*.[26] However, I should add here that MTL distinguishes two entries: மண்டலம்¹ (*maṇṭalam*¹) and *maṇṭalam*², both on p. 3028. The former obtains as a result of the sandhi of the word *maṇ* "earth" and the word *talam* "place".[27]

Finally, concerning the thesauri (alias Nikaṇṭu-s) genealogy, the basic facts are that:

- The 9th-century *Tivākaram* seems to know only *maṇṭilam* and not *maṇṭalam,* although the MTL seems to indicate otherwise (see Fig. 2).
- The 10th-century *Piṅkalam* seems to know only *maṇṭilam* and not *maṇṭalam,* although the MTL seems to indicate otherwise (see Fig. 2).
- The 16th-century *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* ignores *maṇṭilam* and knows only *maṇṭalam*.[28]

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[25] See Schalk et al. 1997.

[26] See for instance *Tēvāram* 7_84_(10) [This is *maṇṭalam*¹ "earth"], *Tēvāram* 7_84_(10) 1_126_(5) (*maṇṭalam*¹ or *maṇṭalam*²) and NATP Kulacēkara 3–4 (*maṇṭalam*¹), for which we have a translation in Anandakichenin (2018: 203–204).

[27] The latter is generally considered as a modified form of Sanskrit *sthala*.

[28] The 16th-century author of the *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* has not mentioned *maṇṭilam* in his polysemic words sections (which is the 11th chapter and is organised on the basis of

- The 18ᵗʰ-century *Caturakarāti* composed by the Italian Jesuit C.J. Beschi has one entry for *maṇṭilam* (said to have 5 meanings) and one for *maṇṭalam* (said to have 3 meanings) inside its *peyar-akarāti* ("dictionary of names")[29] section, which deals with polysemy.

The general conclusion of this contextualisation seems to be that Tamil speakers must have borrowed at an early date the term *maṇṭilam* from an Indo-Aryan language (which we can refer to imprecisely as "Prakrit"), but that, at a certain point in time, when the influx of Sanskrit words in the literary language became very important, the term *maṇṭilam* may have started to be perceived as anomalous and was replaced by *maṇṭalam*.[30] That general linguistic event must have been the background for the remark by Naccināṟkkiṉiyar which has already been reproduced (in section 5) and discussed. From a chronological and descriptive point of view, however, the legitimacy of the standardising statement (5), which declares that *maṇṭilam* is the substitute for an original *maṇṭalam*, is of course problematic (or counterfactual), and can be characterised as part of a wave of Sanskritisation or as anachronistic rewriting of History.

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etukai, a form of second syllable rhyme). He has in fact replaced *maṇṭilam* by *maṇṭalam*, for which he gives (in Cū. Ni. 812, line 2) the following three meanings: 1. *pari* "horse", 2. *ūr* "town", 3. *vaṭṭam* "circular form". The replacement of *maṇṭilam* by *maṇṭalam* can probably be described as an increasing Sanskritisation of Tamil or, symmetrically, as a progressive, normalising, de-Prakritisation (or purging of Prakrit), but the fact that the second of the three meanings offered is not identical with what is seen in (3) for *maṇṭilam* remains to be explained.

[29] See footnote 16.

[30] But see the discussion, earlier in this section, concerning the distinction to be made between *maṇṭalam*¹ and *maṇṭalam*².

6. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary on the *Kalittokai* 25 riddle

After this very long contextualisation of the five metrical feet long riddle which was our starting point in (3), inside section 4, and although I have not yet done for the untranslated *mukam* the equivalent of what I have done for the untranslated *maṇṭilam*, we shall now dive *in medias res*, and try to give a complete view of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's explanations on this passage, which are available here both as an extract from the 1887 *editio princeps* (see image A and image B) and as a chart containing a translation (see chart 1).

வடமொழிப்பெயர் பெற்ற வயக்குறு மண்டிலம் போலும் மு
கத்தவனென்றது, ஆதித்தரிற் புகழென்னும் வடமொழிப்பெயரைப்
பெற்ற விளக்குததலும் ஆதித்தீனப் போலும் முகத்தைதயுடைய
வனென்பது. அவன் தான் குருடாயினமையிற் பிறரைக்காணதவா
றுபோல இவனும் பிறரைக் காணத முகத்தைதயுடையவனென்பவாறு.
திரிதராஷ்டிரனே. இனி, விளக்கமுற்ற கண்ணடியின்பெயரை வட
சொல்லாகிய பெயராற் பெற்ற முகத்தவன் என்றலுமாம். அதி தர்
ப்பணனனென்னும்பெயன். அது பிறரைத் தான் காணதவாறு
போல இவனும் பிறரைக்காணனென்றதாம். இனி, விளக்கமுற்ற
நாடனநின்ற அச்சொல்லினத் திரிதராஷ்டரனென்னும் வடமொழி
ப்பெயராலே தமிழ்ச்சொலிருகத் திரித்த * ததராபனென்னும் பெயர்
பெற்ற பாண்டுக்கு மூத்தவன்றும் உலைப்பு.

Image A. 1887 edition of *Kalittokai* with commentary (extract).

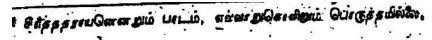† திரிதத்தராயனென்றும் பாடம், எல்லாஅதிகொளிலும் பொருத்தமில்லை.

Image B. 1887 edition of *Kalittokai* with commentary (extract, continuation).[31]

Although it would be (somehow) satisfactory to have a clear solution to the riddle, a simple answer is excluded because our real primary goal is to

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[31] I shall elaborate later (in Section 9) on the editor's remark "poruttamillai" concerning the reading "Cīrttatarāyaṉ". The fact that "rāyaṉ" itself is considered as a Tamil word is interesting.

perform a short walk on the old road, where multiple explanations have co-
existed and which belongs to the golden age of Sanskrit-Tamil bilingualism.
His succession of alternative explanations runs as follows:

#	Commentary segments	Remarks or translations
(7a)	vaṭamoḻippeyar perra vayakkuṟu maṇṭilam pōlum mukattavaṉeṉṟatu,	[[(7a) is a reordered version of the text given in (3), which is also the initial segment of (1)]]
(7b)	[Gloss N° 1] ātittariṟ pakaṉeṉṉum vaṭamoḻippeyaraip perra viḷaṅkutaluṟum ātittaṉaip pōlum mukattaiyuṭaiyavaṉeṉpatu	Explanation for 7a: One-who-has-a-face which-is-like [the face of] the Ātittaṉ_(i.e. Āditya)-in-whom-shining-inheres whose Sanskrit name is "Pakaṉ-among-the-[twelve]-Ātittar (Āditya-s)"
(7c)	**[Gloss N° 1** (continued)**]** avaṉ tāṉ kuruṭāyiṉamaiyiṟ piṟaraikkāṇātavāṟupōla ivaṉum piṟaraik kāṇāta mukattaiyuṭaiyavaṉ eṉravāṟu eṉṟatu tirutarāṣṭiraṉai	Saying that, just like that one, since he is blind, cannot see others, similarly, THIS one, has a face which cannot see others, [the person whom we refer to is] Tirutarāṣṭiraṉ
(7d)	[Gloss N° 2] iṉi, viḷakkamuṟṟa (3) kaṇṇāṭiyiṉ peyarai vaṭacollākiya peyarār perra mukattavaṉ eṉṟalumām	Now, one can also say that [this is about] one who has a face named after the Sanskrit name of a mirror, which is in contact with light.
(7e)	**[Gloss N° 2** (continued)**]** atu tarppaṉāṉaṉa ṉeṉṉumpeyarai	(meaning) the name *tarppaṇāṉaṉaṉ*
(7f)	**[Gloss N° 2** (2nd continuation)**]** atu piṟaraittāṉkāṇātavāṟupōla ivaṉum piṟaraikkāṇāṉeṉṟatām.	Like the fact that that (mirror) does not see others, similarly he also does not see others.

(7g)	[Gloss N° 3] iṉi viḷakkamuṟṟa nāṭeṉaniṉṟa accolliṉait tirutarāṣṭiraṉeṉṉum vaṭamoḻip peyarālē tamiḻccolīrākat tiritta tatarāyaṉeṉṉum peyar peṟṟa, pāṇṭuvukku mūttavaṉ eṉṟum (?) uraippa	Now, some also explain that the proper gloss is: Elder brother of Paṇṭu, whose name with transmuted Tamil final is *tatarāyaṉ* which obtains from the Sanskrit word *tirutarāṣṭiraṉ* which means «country (*nāṭu*)[32] which is "in full light"»

Chart 1. Three interpretations for the riddle (three stories).

7. The polysemy of the word *mukam*

After this dense enumeration by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar of several possible interpretations for the riddle which is our target, more in detail examinations of each of those three cases are certainly required. Before performing them, it will be necessary for me to provide the reader with some information concerning the word *mukam*, that information being of the same type as the information provided earlier concerning *maṇṭilam*, inside section 4. I shall start by giving an extract of the corresponding MTL entry.

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[32] See the third meaning for the polysemic word *maṇṭilam* given in (3), according to the *Piṅkalam*. *Nāṭu* is of course the meaning of the "*rāṣṭra*" component inside the name Dhṛta-rāṣṭra. If the Noun-Phrase *vayakkuṟu maṇṭilam* is supposed to be a calque of the compound Dhṛta-rāṣṭra, it is probably not difficult to convince oneself of the fact that the specifier *vayakkuṟu* approximates the specifier *Dhṛta*, once one has admitted that *maṇṭilam* stands for *rāṣṭra.*

முகம் mukam, *n.* <*mukha.* 1. Face; தலையில் நெற்றிமுதல் மோவாய் வரையுள்ள முன் புறம். முகத்தா னமர்ந்தினிது நோக்கி (குறள், 93). 2. Mouth; வாய். மொழிகின்ற முகத்தான் (கம்பரா. வாலிவ. 74). 3. Entrance, as of a house; வாயில். (சங். அக.) 4. Backwater; கழி. (பிங்.) 5. Place; இடம். (திருக்கோ. 356, உரை.) 6. Head, top; மேலிடம். (w.) 7. Point; நுனி. அயின் முகக்கண (கம்பரா. ஆற்றுப். 14). 8. Commencement; தொடக்கம். (w.) 9. Form, shape; வடிவு. கூன் முகமதி (பிரபுலிங். கைலாச. 3). 10. Look, sight; நோக்கு. புகுமுகம்புரிதல் (தொல். பொ. 261). 11.

Fig. 4. Initial part of entry *முகம்* in MTL (p. 3225) listing 29 meanings on 40 lines.

It may come as a surprise to a modern Tamil reader that the MTL should contain an indication that its compilers consider the word *mukam* as a Sanskrit borrowing (said to be derived from *mukha*). It is certainly the case that there is no unanimity concerning that point among Tamil scholars.[33] Additionally, it is interesting to see that the corresponding entry in STD-G for *mukha* (see Fig. 5, below) has a different first meaning, namely *vāy* ("mouth").

Fig. 5. Two entries from STD-G (page B-160): Mukhaṃ & Mukhara.

However, if we examine the commentary of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar provided inside Chart 1, and divided by me into seven segments, numbered 7a to 7g,

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[33] The 1937 *Vaṭacoṟṟamiḻ Akarāti* does not list *mukam* among the words for which it gives a "Pure Tamil" equivalent.

it is clear that inside the first interpretation (or gloss), which is discussed in segments (7a) to (7c), the word *mukam* is understood as meaning "face" (and not "mouth"). And the same is true for the second interpretation, which is discussed inside segments (7d) to (7f). However, it is to be noted that the third interpretation, discussed in (7g), does not seem to include a discussion of *mukam*, a fact to which I shall return, inside section 10, when I propose my own interpretation of the riddle (see (19a) and (19b)). But before that, we must examine the intellectual posterity of Naccinārkkiniyar's interpretation N°2, as well as the roots of his interpretation, N°1.

8. Naccinārkkiniyar's legacy, as seen in the MTL

My reason for examining Naccinārkkiniyar's first two interpretations in the reverse order is that I consider the second interpretation as the dominant one inside what has been in the 20th century the principal instrument for exploring ancient Tamil literature, namely the MTL. My reason for this statement is the existence inside the MTL, on p. 1760, of an entry which reads as follows:

(8) தர்ப்பணானனன்[34] *tarppaṇānaṉaṉ*, n. < id.[35] + *ānana*. Blind man, as having a mirror-like face; [எதிர் தோன்றினாரைக் காணமாட்டாத கண்ணாடிபோன்ற முகத்தினன்] குருடன். (கலித். 25, உரை.) [MTL, p. 1760.]

The fact that this entry refers to the very poem which we have been discussing here and that the argument which it contains is directly based on

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[34] Interestingly, such a word disobeys the rule TE49i in the Tolkāppiyam (*avaṟṟuḷ // rakāra ḷakāram^ kuṟṟoṟṟu* *ākā*). The "grammatical" form is *taruppaṇam* and not *tarppaṇam*.

[35] The reference for "id." is the Sanskrit word *darpaṇa* "mirror", mentioned in the previous entry of the MTL.

the gloss by Naccinārkkiṉiyar, which is reproduced in (7f), is, I believe, clear. It is also striking that the MTL also contains another entry (see 9, below) which offers a striking parallel with item (8):

(9) முகுரவானனன் *mukura-v-āṉaṉaṉ*, n. < id.[36] + *āṉaṉa*. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as being sightless like the image in a mirror; [கண்ணாடிப் பிரதி பிம்பம்போலப் பிறரைக் காணாத முகமுடையவன்] திருதராட்டிரன். முகுரவானனனும் வேந்து முனி வனும் . . . தழுவினர் (*பாரத. சம்பவ.* 115). [MTL, p. 3232.]

The common properties of the two MTL entry-heads visible in (8) and in (9) is the fact that they both fall under the (exocentric compound) pattern « X-*āṉaṉaṉ* » and that their first component has the same (intended) meaning, as can be seen from the testimony of some thesauri, although an additional interesting fact is that thesauri are not all synchronised (and possess a time signature), as can be seen from comparing (12) and (12bis) with (13a) and (13b). As for the component *āṉaṉam*, which is hiding inside the compound X-*āṉaṉaṉ* "He who has X as an *āṉaṉam*", its meaning for a student of the *Tivākaram* and of the later lexicographical tools would have been the same as the meaning of *mukam*,[37] as is made clear by the following verses, taken from the thematic section of the *Tivākaram* and of the *Piṅkalam*:

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[36] The reference for "id." is the Sanskrit word *mukura* "mirror", mentioned in the previous entry of the MTL. That entry contains the *Villiputtūrār Pāratam* citation reproduced here in (8).

[37] However, it must probably be remarked here, for the benefit of some readers, that the words *mukam* and *āṉaṉam* do not have the same status when it comes to Tamil literature. The first one is attested many times in ancient Tamil literature, as is seen for instance on pp. 1248–1249 in the IMLTA, whereas the second one is not found a single time in the IMLTA, although the students who memorised the *Tivākaram* or the *Piṅkalam* would have been familiar with it.

(10)   *vataṉam, āṉaṉam, vattiram, mukamē.*
         (*Tivākaram* 372 [1990–1993 edition])

[The words] *vataṉam, āṉaṉam* and *vattiram* [mean] 'face' (*mukam*).

(11)   *āṉaṉam vataṉan tuṇṭamvat tiramukam*
         (*Piṅkalam* 1034, [1968 ed.])

[The words] *āṉaṉam, vataṉam, tuṇṭam* and *vattiram* [mean] 'face' (*mukam*).

As can be seen, the student who has memorised the *Piṅkalam* has one more word at his disposal than the student who has memorised the *Tivākaram*. And when we examine the items which mean "mirror" in the X position in (8) and (9), we can see by comparison of the works (and of their editions) that the drive towards a vocabulary increase, by incorporating more Sanskrit words into the list to be memorised, is also present. We have the following thesaurus entries:

(12)   *āṭi, paṭimakkalam, taruppaṇam, kañcaṉam, //*
         ātari caṉam, ivai kaṇṇāṭi yākum
         (*Tivākaram* 1222 [1990–1993 critical edition]).

[The five words] *āṭi, paṭimakkalam, taruppaṇam, kañcaṉam* and *ātaricaṉam* mean 'mirror' (*kaṇṇāṭi*).

(12bis) *āṭipaṭimakkalantaruppaṇa //*
         *ṅkañcana, mātaricana**mukuraṅ** kaṇ //*
         ṉāṭiyākum
         (*Tivākaram*, 7th chapter, verse 96, [1839 *editio princeps*, p. 145]).

[The six words] *āṭi, paṭimakkalam, taruppaṇam, kañcanam, ātaricanam* and **mukuram** mean 'mirror' (*kaṇṇāṭi*).

(13a) *puḷaka m_atta m_āṭi_paṭi ma-k-kala //*
         m_oḷi-vaṭṭaṅ kañcaṉai taruppaṇaṅ kaṇṇāṭi
         (*Piṅkalam*, 1253)

[The seven words] *puḷakam, attam, āṭi, paṭima-k-kalam, oḷi-vaṭṭaṅ, kañcaṉai* and *taruppaṇam* [mean] 'mirror' (*kaṇṇāṭi*).

(13b) *ātaricaṉa m_uruvaṅ kāṭṭi_kaň caṉam_um_ākum*
        (*Piṅkalam*, 1254)

Also [the three words] *ātaricaṉam, uruvaṅ-kāṭṭi* and *kañcaṉam* are [that].

Interestingly, the list in (12) contains a word, namely *āṭi*, which is attested at an earlier date (inside ancient literature)[38] than the head-word (*kaṇṇāṭi*). Both lists also contain a number of later borrowings. Another notable fact is the absence of *mukuram* inside (12), (13a), and (13b), which contrasts with its presence in (12bis). I could have added a citation from the 16th-century *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*, where *mukuram* is present, but it may be enough to remark that the scholar who prepared the *editio princeps* of the *Tivākaram* in 1839 probably inserted the word *mukuram*, because he was surprised by its absence, being familiar with the *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*. In the following century, when a critical edition of the *Tivākaram* was prepared, on the basis of many manuscripts, that interpolation had to be removed.

Another interesting fact is the absence of the word *maṇṭilam*, in all those lists of synonyms, although the word *taruppaṇam*, alias *tarppaṇam*, standing for Sanskrit *darpaṇa* "mirror", was substituted in the second place by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar for *maṇṭilam* in (7e), a first substitution being performed in (7d), by making use of *kaṇṇāṭi*. The reasoning of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar seems to have been the following:

- *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam* ("shining-inhering *maṇṭilam*") means *kaṇṇāṭi* "mirror".
- The northern-language name (*vaṭa-moḻip peyar*) of a mirror is "*taruppaṇam*" (i.e. *darpaṇa*).
- *mukam* means "face".
- X-*mukattavaṉ* means "He who is X-faced".

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[38] See *Kuṟuntokai* 8 (lines 4–5): [...] *kaiyum kālun tūkkat tūkkum* // *āṭip pāvaip pōla* [...].

- Someone who is called "mirror-faced" is blind.
- Therefore:

(14) *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamoḻip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ* means "He who is called 'mirror-faced' in Sanskrit, i.e. *taruppaṉāṉaṉa* (*darpaṇānana*) [and implying blindness]."

(Solution 2, for Naccinārkkiniyar) (*maṇṭilam* = "mirror")[39] (*mukam* = "face")

However, I have asked many Sanskritist colleagues whether they were aware of the fact that the expression *darpaṇānana* (lit. "mirror-faced") means "blind", as stated by the MTL (cf. 8, *supra*) but they were not aware of that, except those (like the late Varada Desigar) who had Tamil as a mother-tongue. The conclusion seems to be that some developments in the usages of Sanskrit[40] are region-specific and may not be accepted in any other regions. I shall conclude this section by providing two quotations from the early 15th-century *Villiputtūrār Pāratam* (c. 1400),[41] which is a well-known Tamil version of the *Mahābhārata*. That text contains an occurrence of the expression *mukuravāṉaṉaṉ* "mirror-faced" which was cited in (9) on the basis of the MTL. That verse, which describes the reception of Kṛṣṇa in the court of Attiṉapuram reads:

(15)   *mukuravāṉaṉaṉum, vēttu muṉivaṉum* maṉañcoṟkāyam //*
          pakirvilā vituraṉum pāntaḻēṟuyartta kōvum //

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[39] According to the MTL (p. 3031), the meaning "mirror" is attested for *maṇṭilam*, being the 10th meaning in the enumeration which has its beginning displayed in Fig. 1. However, the attestation given is *Maṇimēkalai* (Canto 25, line 137, *maiyaṟu maṇṭilam pōlak kāṭṭa*), which is considered to be later than the *Kalittokai*.

[40] Sanskrit, just like any language, cannot be immune to the universal law of language change, except of course for theological reasons.

[41] Zvelebil (1994: 768).

> *nikarilāttuṇaivar tāmum* nīroṭu nīrcērnt[eṉṉ]at //*
> *takaiyilāva[ṉ]piṉōṭun ta[ḻ]uvi[ṉ]ar ke[ḻ]umi[ṉ]ārē.*
> (*Villiputtūrār Pāratam, āti paruvam [campavac carukkam], verse 115*)[42]

The mirror-faced one, the kingly ascetic (i.e. Bhīṣma), Vitura[ṉ] who is without discrepancy (*pakirvu*) between [his] thoughts, words, and deeds (*ma[ṉ]añ cor kāyam*),[43] the King with the raised snake [on his banner] (i.e. Duryodhana), and the companion(s) without equal(s), just like water mixes with water, embracing each other were filled with affection devoid of *takaivu* (blocking).

If we are to believe the commentator (and the internal logic of the text), the first character named in this stanza, by means of the expression *mukuravā[ṉ]a[ṉ]a[ṉ],* is Dhṛtarāṣṭra. This is not an isolated occurrence because another verse inside the same *Villiputtūrār Pāratam* reads:

(16)   *ika[ṉ] miku ka[ṉṉ]a[ṉ]-um e[ṉ]-[ṉ]-i[ḷ]aiyōr-um //*
         cakuṇi-y-um uṇṭu takun-tuṇai neñcil //
         ukavai y-ilāroṭu* u[ṟ]ē[ṉ] iṉi y-e[ṉṟ]-ē //
         muka mukuram purai mutaloṭu co[ṉṉ]ā[ṉ].
         (*Pārata. Vāraṇā. 102*)[44]

He (i.e. Duryodhana), [talking] to his primary cause (i.e. father), whose face is like a mirror, said: "There is (for me), as worthy company, Ka[ṉṉ]a[ṉ] (= Karṇa) who is full of strength, my younger brothers, and Cakuṇi; from now onwards I shall not associate with those [Pāṇṭavar] who do not have joy [at seeing me] in their heart".

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[42] (1970: 147).

[43] I express here my thanks to Suganya Anandakichenin for helping me with the translation of the expression *ma[ṉ]añ cor kāyam pakirvu.*

[44] (1970: 210).

9. The Śaiva roots of of Naccinārkkiṉiyar's first interpretation

We are now returning to the data presented in the segments (7a) to (7c) which are found in Chart 1. If section 7, in which we have explored the posterity of Naccinārkkiṉiyar's remarks, was Vaiṣṇava (because of the continued presence of the *Mahābhārata* story), the current section will evoke a more complex religious landscape. As explained by Aṉantarāmaiyar (1925:137, fn. 2), who edited and annotated the *Kalittokai* (and published it in several volumes between 1925 and 1931), the reference to Pakaṉ, inside segment (7b), which is part of Interpretation N°1, is based on the fact that it is stated in some puranic stories that Vīrapattiraṉ, as instructed by Civaṉ, took away the eyes of Pakaṉ (alias Bhaga), who was one of the Twelve Suns, or Twelve Ātittar (from Sanskrit Āditya)". Those stories are alluded to in the *Tēvāram* and also in the compositions by Māṇikkavācakar.[45] We have reasons, however, to suspect that such stories may not have been appreciated by Vaiṣṇava-s,[46] and this may have been a reason for them to promote a different interpretation, namely Interpretation N°2, even though that interpretation which I have described in (14), can certainly be said to be far-fetched, and even though the meaning "mirror" is a late meaning for the word *maṇṭilam*. In the case of Interpretation N°1, the reasoning evoked by Naccinārkkiṉiyar seems to be as follows:

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[45] See for instance, inside the *Tiruvācakam*, the *Tiruvuntiyār*, where the fate of Pakaṉ (who lost his eyes) is stated in stanza 12: *uṇṇap pukunta pakaṉ oḷittu ōṭāmē, kaṇṇaip parittavāṟu untī paṟa!* It must be noted however that MTL provides us (p. 1995), inside the entry *tuvātacātittar*, with three distinct lists of 12 Āditya-s. Pakaṉ appears inside the third list (based on the *Kūrmapurāṇam*), where he is the 10th Āditya.

[46] See for instance, inside the *Tiruvuntiyār* (already cited in the previous footnote), the treatment given to Tirumāl, which is described in stanza 6: *āvā tirumāl avippākaṅ koṇṭaṉṟu // cāvā tiruntāṉeṉ ṟuntīpaṟa // caturmukaṉ tātaiyeṉ ṟuntīpaṟa.*

- *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam* ("shining-inhering *maṇṭilam*") means "[orb of the] sun".
- Everyone knows that there are Twelve Suns (or Twelve Ātittar [Āditya-s]).
- *mukam* means "face".
- X-*mukattavaṉ* means "He who is X-faced".
- *peyarai-p peṟṟa* (lit. "who has received a name") can mean "who is well-known".
- *vaṭa-moḻi-p peyarai-p peṟṟa* can mean "who is well-known in Sanskrit".
- Among the 12 Ātittar, the one who is well-known with respect to his face is Pakaṉ.
- Pakaṉ is known to be blind.
- Therefore:

(17)   *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamoḻip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ* means "He who has a face like the face which is well-known in Sanskrit [among the twelve] Brightness-inhering Orbs" [and is therefore blind like Pakaṉ]."

(Solution 1, for Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar) (*maṇṭilam* = "orb of the sun")[47]
(*mukam* = "face")

The problem with that interpretation[48] is that it is also far-fetched[49] and presupposes that the author of the *Kalittokai* poem knew that Śaiva puranic story, which is not very likely.

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[47] According to the MTL (p. 3031), the meaning "mirror" is attested for *maṇṭilam*, being the 10th meaning in the enumeration which has its beginning displayed in Fig. 1. However, the attestation given is *Maṇimēkalai* (25,137), which is considered to be later than the *Kalittokai*.

[48] As already explained in footnote 17, this is the explanation which has been chosen by V. Murugan (1999). See there his translation.

[49] As noted by one of the two anonymous reviewers, my use of the word "far-fetched"

10. Possible transmission problems in the wording of Naccinārkkiṉiyar's third reported interpretation

We shall now examine the remaining element of the gloss provided by Naccinārkkiṉiyar, namely (7g), inside chart 1, i.e. Gloss N°3, which comes after the two glosses discussed in sections 8 and 9. That gloss, which is introduced by the word *iṉi* "Now", and which ends with *eṉrum uraippa* "they also explain that" takes us in another direction, but has possibly been transmitted imperfectly, as can be suspected when examining the manuscript variants and as is also clear when reading the editor's remark (*poruttamillai* "This does not fit") in the second image (Image B) taken from the 1887 *editio princeps* (see inside section 6). Even though there may have been a problem of transmission, the general direction in which those explanations go is nevertheless clear because the initial segment in the (7g) gloss is *viḷakkam-urra nāṭu*, which is the result of a substitution of the components performed on *vayakk-uru maṇṭilam*, where:

- *vayakku* becomes *viḷakkam* "light, lamp, ...".
- *uru* becomes *urra.*
- *maṇṭilam* becomes *nāṭu* "country".

This last substitution brings back to our mind the *Piṅkalam* verse which I have already provided in (4), in section 2, and which I shall reproduce here once more, for the sake of convenience.

(18)   *vaṭṭam-um* nāṭ-uṅ kutirai-y-um* maṇṭilam*
        (*Piṅkalam* 3919)

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could be replaced, more generously, by the word "virtuoso". The *Kalittokai* is a notoriously difficult and allusive collection and as explained by T.V. Gopal Iyer (2009), there are many reasons why we should be grateful to learned commentators such as Naccinārkkiṉiyar.

And *vaṭṭam* 'circular shape', <u>and</u> *nāṭu* 'country', <u>and</u> *kutirai* 'horse' [are the meanings of the polysemic item] *maṇṭilam*. [Duplicate of (4)]

I have not provided a similar verse from the *Tivākaram* because its polysemic word section deals with only 381 word, whereas the polysemic word section of the *Piṅkalam* deals with 1091 words, but the polysemy of *maṇṭilam* from the point of view of the *Tivākaram* can nevertheless be ascertained from the fact that inside the *Tivākaram* the word *maṇṭilam* appears:

- in *Tivākaram* 352, inside the list of quasi-synonyms for *pūmi* "earth".
- in *Tivākaram* 419, inside the list of quasi-synonyms for *kutirai* "horse".
- in *Tivākaram* 855, inside the list of quasi-synonyms for *nāṭu* "country".
- in *Tivākaram* 1346, inside the list of quasi-synonyms for *vaṭṭa vaṭivu* "circular shape".
- in *Tivākaram* 1604, inside the list of quasi-synonyms for *cārikai varutal* "circular movement".[50]
- in *Tivākaram* 2338 and 2342, as part of an enumeration of four (mutually exclusive) standing postures for bowmen (*cilaiyōr nālvakai nilai*).

It is therefore clear that when, inside the gloss (7g), Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar makes a start by substituting *nāṭu* "country" for *maṇṭilam*, he stands on firm ground. And the continuation of the explanatory process confirms the direction of his thoughts because he then seems to refer to the constituents of two words, which are:

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[50] In that case, the situation is even more complex, because it is only the modern editors who have decided that the head-word was *cārikai varutal*. In the *Tivākaram* sūtra itself, the head-word seems to be *maṇṭilam*, and this was the point of view of the 1839 *editio princeps*. The *sūtra* reads *mātiyum vāḷiyum cārikaiyum maṇṭilam* in the 1993 critical edition (*sūtra* 1604, p. 539) and reads *mātiyuñ curruñ cārikai taṉṉoṭu // vāḷiyu maṇṭilamā vōṭalākum* in the 1839 edition (p. 201).

- *tirutarāṣṭiraṉ* (with a final component *rāṣṭiraṉ*, based on *rāṣṭiram* (Sanskrit *rāṣṭra*) "country").
- *tatarāyaṉ* (with a final component *rāyaṉ* "king [among other meanings]"[51].

More precisely, inside gloss (7g), Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar seems to indicate that *tirutarāṣṭiraṉ* has been metamorphosed into a word with a Tamil final part (*tamiḻccollīṟākat tiritta*), namely *tatarāyaṉ*.[52] And the 1887 *editio princeps* mentions the variant *cīrtatarāyaṉ* "famous Tatarāyaṉ" inside the footnote reproduced in Image B (section 6), but concludes in a pessimistic manner: *evvāṟu koḷiṉum poruttam illai* "whichever way one takes it, it does not fit". I leave it to the reader to decide whether the gloss (7g) can be considered as a completely transmitted commentary component[53] and shall instead return to the original text of the *Kalittokai*. Let us see whether we can solve the riddle of (3) in a manner which will be less far-fetched than the two solutions already proposed in (14) and in (17). We shall be following the lead given in (7g), but will also reintroduce the word *mukam*, which does not seem to play a role in (7g), possibly because of a textual transmission problem.

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[51] According to several dictionaries, *rāyaṉ* can mean "king" or be an honorific title. As instances/cognates of *rāyaṉ* inside Tamil literature we can cite:
- "*pāvaṭai rāyaṉ*" (a village deity) [See for instance the title (*paramakētaṉa rāṭcataṉ pāvaṭai rāyaṉ caṇṭai nāṭakam*) of the play (*nāṭakam*) cited in the bibliography (Primary sources section)].
- *mārāyam peṟṟa neṭumoḻiyāṉum* (TP65i, [inside *Puṟattiṇaiyiyal*]).

[52] That metamorphosis is obtained through a mixed strategy which seems to be as follows:
- (1st step) replace the segment "Dhṛta" by the segment "தத [tata]", which obtains on the basis of rule (6a) by the normal phonetic simplification.
- (2nd step) substitute *rāyaṉ* for *rāṣṭra*, because they mean almost the same, provided we overlook the Sanskrit exocentric compound structure.

[53] In order for us to ascertain what was the « teneur » of the possible explanation alluded to by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. In (7g) we would have to know whether the name தததராயன் [tatarāyaṉ] was really used at some point of time for referring to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. I have not so far found additional evidence.

11. A possible solution for the riddle (my solution)

I shall now return to the problem of solving the riddle which was our starting point and which is visible in (3). I shall take as my starting point the assumption that the equation {*maṇṭilam = nāṭu* "country"} is the most appropriate choice, but we should be careful that our knowledge of the fact that Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind does not tempt us to believe that *mukam* means "face". My intuition is that the string *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamolip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ* is in fact an attempt at **translating the compound** *Dhṛta-rāṣṭra*, which I understand to mean "He whose kingdom is well-supported (by himself)". I believe it is possible to obtain that meaning in the following manner:

- *maṇṭilam* means *nāṭu* "country, kingdom".
- *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam* means "country which stands in light".
- *peyar peṟṟa* means "who is well-known" (lit. "who has obtained a name").
- *vaṭamolip peyar peṟṟa* means "who is well-known in Sanskrit (literature)".
- *mukam* means "Foremost component, head".
- X-*mukattavaṉ* means "He who is the foremost component with respect to X".
- Therefore, I would suggest that:

(19a) *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamolip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ* means "He who is the foremost component with respect to the fact that his country which stands in light is well-known in Sanskrit (literature)"

or

(19b) *vayakk-uṟu maṇṭilam vaṭamolip peyar peṟṟa mukattavaṉ* means "He who is well-known in Sanskrit (literature) for being the foremost component with respect to the fact that his country stands in light (thanks to himself)" [which makes him into the support of his country].

As a supporting argument for my translation of *mukam*, I wish to point out that we have a related word in Tamil, namely the word *mukkiyam* "importance", which is very current in Modern Tamil and which seems to

be attested at least since the time of the *Tiruvāymoḻi*, as it is used by Nammāḻvar in TVM-5-10-9.[54] If *mukam* is adapted from Sanskrit *mukha*, then *mukam* and *mukkiyam* are cognates because *mukkiyam* is adapted from Sanskrit *mukhya* "important, pre-eminent".

12. A programmatic conclusion

We are reaching the end of the short walk performed on the old road which symbolises for me the fact that the word "Sanskrit", among its many meanings, also stands for a domain which has belonged for a long time to scholars who had Tamil as a mother tongue, and who felt entitled to compose poetry in Sanskrit in as legitimate a manner as Sanskrit scholars from other parts of India, who had Marathi or Bengali as mother tongues, to cite just a few examples. Such an activity was of course not without consequences to their own practice of the literary variety of their own mother tongue. We have seen, for instance inside items (10) to (13b) in Section 7, how countless northern words came to be adopted into the literary variety of Tamil, thanks to memorisation techniques practiced on the basis of the thematic section of Tamil thesauri. We have also seen, for instance in the citation given in (15) and in (16), from the 15th-century *Pāratam*, how such poetical vocabulary increase was put into practice inside actual literature. I have also provided, inside epigraph (γ),[55] at the start of this article, a small window into the mental reaction which such borrowing provoked in the mind of some Tamil scholars,[56] implicitly comparing it, by

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[54] The expression concerned is: *īr-aṭiyāl muṭittu-k koṇṭa mukkiyam-um* (TVM, 5-10_9, line 2).

[55] This epigraph, extracted from the preface to the *Vaṭacorṟamiḻ Akaravaricai,* compiled by the daughter of the well-known Maṟaimailai Aṭikaḷ, reproduces part of an utterance made by him, in 1916, for her benefit, when she was a child, which she saw retrospectively as the beginning of her life's mission.

[56] Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ, after reciting in 1916 for the sake of his child daughter a poem

the juxtaposition of (γ) and (α), with a sarcastic/satirical passage where a native speaker of English mocks the abuse of learned French (or Latin) words. However, it has not been my intention to embark here in a study of the root of purism (in English or in Tamil literature) or to document the fight against linguistic invaders (be they users of French or of Sanskrit). One of my goals being to document the history of the language and the manner in which theoretical constructs (such as those seen in grammars) arise, I believe that one of the main weak points[57] (for lack of usable tools) in this attempt (and in other attempts also, probably) is the extreme difficulty in distinguishing between what belongs to the period which I have referred to inside section 5 as "The Age of *maṇṭilam*", and what belongs to the (subsequent) "Age of *maṇṭalam*", because of the generally insufficient practical knowledge of Prakrit.[58,] The *Kalittokai* belongs to "The Age of *maṇṭilam*" but its commentator, Naccinārkkiṉiyar, belongs to "The Age of *maṇṭalam*" and this is the main reason why he proposes, in (14) and in (17),

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composed by Irāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷ, told her it would have been even better if the author had used the (native Tamil) word *yākkai* "body, …" instead of using the Northern Word *tēkam* (which is the tamilised form of Sanskrit *deha* "body").

[57] I am keenly aware of the fact that I should have read Ollett (2017) in order to be better informed on the status of Prakrit, and that it would be even better to be capable of reading the primary sources on which Ollett reports. For the same reason, I regret not being able to make full use of all the good advice provided by the anonymous reviewers, such as the benefit I could have derived from consulting both Pischel and the *Pāiasaddamahāṇṇavo*. One of the reviewers, commenting on my discussion of the form *maṇṭilam*, remarks: "Is this a sound change one regularly encounters in Prakrit *sensu lato*? p. 663 of the latter [i.e. the *Pāiasaddamahāṇṇavo*], which contains no entry for *maṃḍila, would suggest it is not. This might, then, be a local phonetic shift, with no need to posit any intervention by 'Prakrit' *sensu lato*". I reproduce this remark so that the younger generation, who will follow, might be in a situation to pursue the enquiry beyond the spot where I stopped.

[58] Formulated otherwise, everyone knows the word "Prakrit" (that is the purport of "general" in my sentence) but that almost no one can open a book in Prakrit and read it fluently.

virtuoso (or possibly playful) interpretations of a passage which must have been just a clever attempt at direct translation, made by a poet who was possibly bilingual, but who was not yet at the stage of freely mixing Tamil and Sanskrit, although his language contained Indo-Aryan borrowings, as attested by the presence of *maṇṭilam* and of *mukam* in *Kalittokai* 25, but those two items had not entered the Tamil language through the generalisation of Sanskrit education.

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TVM = *Tiruvāymoḻi*, see NATP.

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