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Canons, Conventions and Creativity: Defining Literary Tradition in Premodern Tamil South India

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Canons, Conventions and Creativity: 
Defining Literary Tradition in Premodern Tamil South India

by

Jennifer Steele Clare

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

South and Southeast Asian Studies

in the

GRADUATE DIVISION

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Committee in Charge:

Professor George L. Hart, Chair
Professor Anne E. Monius
Professor Alexander von Rospatt
Professor Eugene Irschick

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Canons, Conventions and Creativity:
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This dissertation looks at debates over the Tamil literary tradition in treatises and commentaries on poetics composed in South India between the eighth and the seventeenth centuries. Central to these discussions of what constitutes the literary was the relationship of new literary developments to the language and conventions of an ancient poetic system established in the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, known as “Sangam literature” or “literature of the assembly.” The chapters that follow look at these competing attitudes towards the classical tradition, beginning with the debates over defining the Tamil tradition found in Pērāciriyar’s thirteenth-century commentary on the section of poetics discussed by the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam, and the Virutti commentary on the metrical treatise Yāpparūṇkalam, dated between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The different interpretations of the Tamil past adopted by these commentaries reveal the capacity of the Sangam tradition to serve both as the foundation of an authoritative canon worthy of preservation as well as fertile material for experiments with new theories of literature and language, including those derived from Sanskrit. If the first two chapters explore the central role played by the Sangam conventions in Tamil literary theory, albeit mobilized for different interpretive projects, the next two chapters focus on the competing poetic system of the pāṭṭiyals, which theorize the capacity of Tamil language and literature to praise a royal patron, and explore the implications of this new understanding of the function of literary language. Finally, the dissertation ends with a seventeenth-century text, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, which attempts an integrated theory of Tamil literature, in which the most influential “new” developments in Tamil aesthetics, including the praise poetics of the pāṭṭiyals, are rendered compatible with the Sangam tradition. By providing a comparative look at approaches to interpreting the Tamil literary tradition, this dissertation hopes to bring attention to the important role played by comparative literary theory in our approach both to the study of South Asian literature and to the study of world literature more generally.
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Note on Transliteration and Translation

In the transliteration of Tamil words and Sanskrit words I have followed the convention of the Tamil Lexicon (University of Madras, 6 vols., 1924-36) with several exceptions. For the sake of readability, I have left more commonly used words untransliterated, such as Shiva for Śiva, Vishnu for Viṣṇu, Chola for Cōḷa, and the languages of Tamil, Sanskrit and Prakrit. In the case of Sanskrit words that have been transformed into the Tamil orthographic system, I have chosen to use the more familiar Sanskrit transliteration (as found in the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary) such as prabandham instead of pirapantam and śleṣa instead of cilēṭai.

All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
for my family, old and new
Introduction

Reading a (Premodern South Asian) Literary Tradition

While recent scholarship on world literature has focused on the political, linguistic and/or aesthetic relationships between Euro-American literary traditions and literature of the non-West, this dissertation addresses the methodological question of how to understand texts produced outside of contact with the West, texts that often demand alternative modes of reading and aesthetic appreciation.\(^1\) In the case of South Asia, where theoretical texts on language and literature have reflected and shaped both reading and compositional strategies for almost two thousand years, comparative poetics provides one particularly productive way to understand the ways in which interpretive processes are themselves embedded in complex cultural and historical contexts. My dissertation contributes to this discussion by looking at how the Tamil literary tradition was defined in texts on language and poetics produced in South India between the eighth and the seventeenth centuries. In particular, I focus on the shifting role of the classical past in the construction of this tradition in order to reveal the complex matrix of interpretive traditions competing for authority in the Tamil literary world.

Literary criticism of the last fifty years has centered around a basic mistrust of a text’s statements and assumptions about itself. This position has led to the diverse schools of thought we now call “theory,” united in their task of “provok(ing) a text into unpremeditated articulation, into the utterance of what it somehow contains or knows but neither intends nor is able to say.”\(^2\) This relationship of “strategic disrespect” is justified by its objective position vis à vis the text, its ability to offer “a standpoint of appraisal grounded somewhere outside the range of possibilities afforded by the text’s internal or authorized commentary.”\(^3\) Although few scholars of literature would advocate returning to a mode of criticism based on decoding a text’s singular “original” meaning, determining the standpoint from which to productively understand the multiplicity of any text’s meaning has overwhelmingly favored a vantage point embedded in the

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1 While the desire for a theory of world literature has defined Western literary scholarship since Goethe’s well-known attempt at a definition, in the last ten years the discipline of Comparative Literature has more seriously addressed the “problem” of adopting a more inclusive methodology without abandoning the rigorous linguistic competency that is still the foundation of the discipline. Scholars ranging from Damrosch to Bhabha to Apter have proposed ways to theorize “world literature” as literature that circulates, literature of the interstice, and literature in translation, among others. See David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Although this scholarship has opened up possibilities for understanding relationships between literary cultures previously neglected by literature departments, these understandings of “world literature” overwhelmingly rely on physical or theoretical contact with the West’s language and literary traditions. Within these frameworks, literature produced in contexts not in dialogue with Euro-American interpretive traditions, regardless of that literature’s significance in other regions of the world, is excluded from being a legitimate object of analysis.


3 Ibid., iv.
aesthetic and cultural worlds of the contemporary critic of the Euro-American academy. In its inability/refusal to acknowledge the possibility of a radically “other” cultural context, this interpretive framework is particularly problematic in the study of literature that inhabits a different cultural world with different assumptions about the nature of culture and literature themselves.4

This dissertation joins a growing field of scholarship engaged in historicizing the interpretive process itself, pointing out the range of ways in which literature has been read and appreciated outside the hegemony of Euro-American scholarship of the last fifty years. This development has been most notable in scholarship on medieval and Renaissance Europe, itself contending with the alterity of its object of study. To understand a literary culture in which post-Enlightenment distinctions between oral and literary, public and private, imitation and innovation are more porous and difficult to apply, scholarly attention has focused on historicizing the practice of “reading” along with the related histories of literacy and the book. These studies have centered around both the role of material culture in such histories as well as the role of physical embodiment in a literary culture that privileges memorization and performance of a text.5 These studies draw not only on literary and visual representations of reading as well as the shifting technologies of book dissemination and collection,6 but also on explicit reflections on the art and

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4 As the philosopher and intellectual historian Kwame Appiah, in his call for what he calls "thick translation" suggests, the study of literature (per Appiah, particularly the study of literature in translation) carries with it an ethical pedagogical imperative to combat the "the easy atmosphere of relativism" in which "an easy tolerance amounts not to a celebration of human variousness but to a refusal to attend to how various other people really are or were. In response, Appiah calls for "a thick description of the context of literary production, a translation that draws on and creates that sort of understanding, meets the need to challenge ourselves and our students to go further, to undertake the harder project of a genuinely informed respect for others." {Appiah 1993} In his reference to Geertz’s 1973 essay, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” Appiah intentionally associates himself with the discipline of anthropology, which has spent the last thirty years asking itself how to responsibly engage with the (unknowable) other. In Geertz’s famous essay, which represented a split with the previous structural model practiced by anthropologists, Geertz points out the importance of contextual understanding in the interpretation of signs. (In particular, he pointed to instances in which culturally embedded indirect signs might in fact undermine the literal meaning). One of his many contributions to the field of anthropology was this emphasis on cultural specificity as well as a new emphasis on mediation, coming from his suggestion that the interlocutor (native informant) and the ethnographer as both reader and writer of culture can be theorized themselves as objects of study.

5 Pollock provides a list of such possible approaches to textual culture in his manifesto for a disciplinary theory of a new/future philology, which he defines as the work of recovering “otherness” through the confrontation of textuality in the original language, including “the history of manuscript culture and what (he) once called script mercantilism; its relationship to print culture and print capitalism; the logic of text transmission; the nature and function of commentaries and the history of reading practices that commentaries reveal; the origins and development of local conceptions of language, meaning, genre, and discourse; the contests between local and supralocal forms of textuality and the kinds of sociotextual communities and circulatory spheres thereby created” {Pollock 2009@949}

6 See Roger Chartier, The Order of Books : Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994). In his more recent Inscription and Erasure (2007), Chartier focuses on the ways in which literary texts appropriate the technology, or “graphic culture” of their particular epoch.
practice of interpretation, such as the medieval art of *grammatica*, which provided the authoritative guide to how and what to read,\(^7\) and literary commentaries that “authorized” particular aesthetic and/or ideological projects.\(^8\)

In the case of premodern South Asia,\(^9\) treatises on language and literature are particularly important in establishing a critical vantage point for literary analysis in part because in many cases, such texts are the only artifacts that help us understand how such literature was defined, read and appreciated.\(^10\) However, such a focus is not only important because of the lack of other historical context, but also because of the central position held by such texts in South Asian literary culture. These texts, written on topics ranging from syntax to meter to literary theory, composed both in royal courts and in religious monasteries by authors identified with the diverse sectarian communities of Saivism and Vaisnavism as well as the heterodox traditions of Buddhism and Jainism, reveal a literary culture in which innovation is not associated with the spontaneous creative outpouring of an individual poet, but rather comes from a poet’s ability to maneuver within a system that privileges convention. Throughout the history of South Asian scholarship, texts on poetics have addressed this fine balance, whether through debates over

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\(^9\) In the wake of Said’s 1978 publication of *Orientalism*, which drew attention to the role played by European scholars in the representation of an Eastern “other” as weak, indolent and therefore requiring governance by a morally, culturally and physiologically superior colonial administration, the study of historical reading practices has played a different role in studies of colonial and postcolonial India, grappling with how to responsibly engage with knowledge about the past, seen as irrevocably transformed by colonial intervention. Scholars such as Michael Dodson 2007, Bryan Hatcher 2005 and Vasudha Dalmia 2003 have argued for a more prominent role of the pandit in the construction of knowledge about India, suggesting that their participation in the Orientalist project opened up possibilities for them to advance their own personal and political projects. Similarly, V. Narayana Rao 2004, in his essay on the development of standard Telugu in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, points out that there were in fact multiple indigenous experts competing for the authority to supply knowledge about language and literature to the colonial administration. Rao argues that it was the choice of pandits as the authoritative voice of Telugu language and literature over the prose style of the community of record keepers (karaṇams) with their more flexible interpretation of the language that led to the emphasis on classical (and Sanskritized) Telugu in the teaching of modern Telugu prose. If these scholars focus on the institutions and persons responsible for the production of knowledge about India, Trautmann’s work, in the series of books and articles that make up his self-titled “Languages and Nations” project, draws attention more specifically to the role of indigenous language theory itself in the development of the field of ethnolinguistics that came out of the Orientalist schools of Calcutta and Madras. In both “The Hullabaloo about Telugu” (1999) and further developed in his book *Languages and Nations: the Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (2006), he focuses on the role of the distinction made by indigenous scholars between Sanskritic and “local” roots of Telugu vocabulary on the “discovery” of the Dravidian family of languages.

\(^10\) The dating of most texts in this region of the world is dubious, and there is often no clear relationship between a text and its hors-texte, let alone the existence of material culture to provide details about reading practices. In many cases, the context of literary production must be excavated from the horizon of expectation provided by the texts themselves, including the layers of intertextuality which situates them in a larger network of cultural production.
acceptable meter and poetic content or through more explicit discussions on what is included and excluded in literary categories. On the one hand, as texts that make explicit the rules of the game with which a poet is expected to be familiar, these treatises on language and literature and the commentaries that accompany them dictate the framework within which literary innovation is possible. As such, they contribute to our contemporary understanding of the aesthetic priorities and poetic logic of literature generated within this (often foreign) framework; in other words, they help us access meanings in the text that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Yigal Bronner’s recent work on the genre of Sanskrit śleṣa (poetry of simultaneous narration, in which the different parsing of words in a line generates multiple meanings from the same set of syllables) exemplifies how the knowledge of premodern interpretive practices can inform a contemporary reading of a genre whose comprehension, let alone appreciation, requires reading strategies foreign to most contemporary readers in India and the West. Bronner shows how the poems themselves, through a series of cues, indicate to the learned reader the presence of such multiplicity in a particular section of a poem. The “training” of the śleṣa reader extended to an explosion of thesauri, wordbooks and handbooks which both provided poets with lists of homonyms for the creation of new śleṣa poems, but, equally important, supplied the reader with the tools to recognize and appreciate this poetic technique. In such a context, failure of interpretation gains increased importance and itself become an object of theorization. Śleṣa poetry serves as a good example of the importance of recognizing “other” modes of reading in the study of world literature because of the relative impossibility of comprehending these poems outside this “foreign” theoretical framework.

However, the relationship between literary theory and literary production in any culture is never one of a simple guide to traversing a complex landscape. As Monius points out in her work on the twelfth-century Buddhist text on language and poetics, the Vīracōliyam, and its commentary, such discussions of aesthetic value are never neutral, but rather reflect the concerns of the interpretive communities out of which they are born, whether local, cosmopolitan, national or global. Reflections on which innovations are acceptable and within which conventions, and the justification of such judgements reflect larger concerns with the legitimacy of a particular worldview and the rejection of interpretations seen as irrelevant or threatening to that ideological perspective. In her work, Monius shows how the theorization of language in the Vīracōliyam as well as the choice of examples used by the text’s commentary not only inform us about a religious community about which we know few other details, but, Monius argues, this discourse on language and poetics performs “cultural work,” carving out a space for Tamil Buddhists in the


12 Outside the South Asian tradition, Pauline Yu’s work on Chinese poetics offers another model for the role of interpretive traditions in the reading of world literature. In her study of the evolution of the use of metaphor in Chinese literature, Yu focuses on the role of the exegetical commentarial tradition in her readings of poems that reveal a use of metaphorical language that differs from that in the Western traditions. In her Ways with Words (2000), co-edited with Stephen Owen, Yu highlights the range of interpretations traditions available for the understanding of seven influential texts from the Chinese humanistic traditions of literature and intellectual history.
competitive intellectual milieu of Chola-period South India.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, Norman Cutler, in his work on the tradition of commentary on the Tamil didactic text \textit{Tirukkural}, compares the interpretive work done by the Shaivite Brahmanical commentator Parimēḷajakar with the commentary of Pulavar Kūltantai, inflected with new concerns associated with the construction of a non-Sanskritic Dravidian identity for Tamil culture.\textsuperscript{14} Such a reconstruction of the horizon of expectations revealed by premodern interpretive practices has been the basis of much of the recent work of Sheldon Pollock on Indian cultural history. In his book \textit{Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia}, Sheldon Pollock moves from a literary history of South Asia to what he calls “a history of literary cultures” in order to draw attention to the role of the history of definitions as a central part of the history of the literary. This methodological approach of “trying to understand what the texts of South Asian literature mean to the people who wrote, heard, saw or read them, and how these meanings may have changed over time. (...)\textsuperscript{15} places in the foreground people and texts invested with the task of generating, defining and defending literary categories, “includ(ing) everything from the sophisticated and powerfully articulated theorizations found in Persian, Sanskrit, and Tamil, among other traditions, to the entirely practical but no less historically meaningful judgments of anthologizers, commentators, and performers.\textsuperscript{16} Although the essays in Pollock’s book cover a wide range of South Asian literary traditions, ranging from genres associated with different performance contexts in premodern Kerala\textsuperscript{17} to the development of Sinhala as a literary language,\textsuperscript{18} all reflect his emphasis on the “recuper(ation of) historical reading practices” in the understanding of cultural history.\textsuperscript{19} Pollock’s voluminous work on Sanskrit literary culture follows a similar methodological line of thought, as he identifies the role of Sanskrit language and literary theory in the

\textsuperscript{13} Anne Monius. \textit{Imagining a Place for Buddhism : Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India} (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{14} Cutler 1992.

\textsuperscript{15} Sheldon Pollock, \textit{Literary Cultures in History : Reconstructions From South Asia} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14.

\textsuperscript{16} According to Pollock, such a “history of definitions would not only take account of both the semantic and pragmatic aspects, but ask directly how such definitions were formed and, once formed, were challenged; whether they were adequate or inadequate to the existing textual field, and by what measure of adequacy; whether, and if so, how, they excluded certain forms even while - and precisely by - including others.” (Ibid., 9-10)

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Freeman, “Genre and Society: The Literary Culture of Premodern Kerala,” in Sheldon Pollock (ed.), \textit{Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 437-500.


\textsuperscript{19} Pollock continues this line of inquiry into the study of the early modern period in his recently published \textit{Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet} (2011).
development of literature across South and Southeast Asia. As Pollock points out, a crucial component in the emergence of vernacular literary traditions across these regions was the simultaneous rise of grammars and texts on poetics modeled on the Sanskrit tradition, a development that legitimized the “new” vernacular language as a language capable of expressive articulation (as opposed to workly, documentary).

In its role in both shaping and reflecting literary culture, discourse on language and literature in South Asia provides an important contribution to the understanding of both a particular literary text as well as the broader literary world in which that text was produced. This understanding comes from both the intended meanings identified by these treatises, in their rules and reflections on acceptable literary production, as well as from the unintended and unpredictable meanings that our historical and cultural distance allows us to see more clearly.

My dissertation contributes to this understanding of how to read premodern South Asian literature by looking at the role of innovation and convention in debates over the Tamil literary tradition in treatises and commentaries on poetics composed in South India between the eighth century and the thirteenth century.

Sheldon Pollock, in his prolific writing on Sanskrit literature, is perhaps the most vocal advocate for the historicization of literary culture. Although he does not cite this theorist, his research interests revolve around what Foucault calls “epistemes”; distinct historical periods where a particular way of thinking (in Pollock’s case, an aesthetic way of thinking) is made possible by a historically specific relationship between culture and power. Using literary and inscriptive data, Pollock argues for two formative shifts in the development of not only Indian, but South Asian literature: the secularization and cosmopolitanization of Sanskrit around 0 C.E. and the supplanting of that Sanskritic cosmopolitan culture by vernacular literature a thousand years later. Pollock provides convincing evidence that during the reign of the Sakas, Sanskrit language was released from its earlier restriction to ritual language, enabling the development of kāvyā, or literature, as a genre. The timelessness of Sanskrit, borne out of a tradition that saw it as an eternal language existing outside the temporal/spatial limits of the human world, is extended into this new politically motivated literary usage of the language, because it provided a useful medium for kings desiring to associate themselves with the translocal, cosmic level of the Sanskrit language. This use of Sanskrit as a language that conveys eternal fame plays out not only in praśastis, which emerge for the first time in Sanskrit during this period, and remain almost exclusively in Sanskrit until the “vernacular revolution”, but also in a “grammatical explosion”, encouraged by the new linkages between political and grammatical correctness. By exploring the relationship between “historical” analysis and “cultural/literary” analysis, Pollock has opened up possibilities for histories of literary production that take into consideration the relationship between cultural production and political power, a relationship that is usually limited to assumptions about the Golden Age of a particular dynasty. Pollock has published widely on the cosmopolitanization and subsequent vernacularization of South and Southeast Asian literature. For the most complete account, see Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
and the seventeenth centuries. In particular, my dissertation focuses on the relationship of these conventions to an ancient poetic system established in the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, known as “Caṅkam literature” or “literature of the assembly.” This system, articulated in several poetic compilations as well as in an ancient poetic treatise, provided a powerful framework within which innovation could be appropriately introduced and accommodated. While all scholars writing between the eighth and the seventeenth centuries reveal some familiarity with this “classical” tradition, they reflect a range of strategies for integrating the older literary conventions with the newer developments in meter, style and literary genres that had appeared since that time.

The tradition of Tamil poetics dates back to the earliest stratum of Tamil literature. The earliest text on Tamil poetics, according to most scholarship, is the Tolkāppiyam, composed sometime between the first century B.C.E. and the fifth century C.E. This text includes 1600 verses divided into three sections: morphology (elūttu, lit. “letter”), phonology (col, lit. “word”) and poetics (porul, lit. “content, subject matter”). This incorporation of grammar and poetics in one text is distinctively Tamil, in contrast to the Sanskrit tradition, which distinguishes between grammar and poetics. The section on poetics is astounding in its scope and confounding in its organizational logic, addressing topics as varied as meter, thematic material, grammatical 

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21 Although Tamil has a long and varied history of reflection on language and literature, there exists few studies on or adequate translations of Tamil texts on poetics, a field ignored by both Tamil literary scholars and Sanskritists. Approaches to the field are primarily compendious, describing in detail the categories laid out by the treatises and judging their relationship to the extant poems of the period. These discussions rarely address extra-literary details to help historicize their texts of study, nor do they differentiate between the various strands of the tradition, presenting instead a monolithic body of material. For an introduction to Tamil poetics in English, see Zvelebil 1973, 1986, 1989 (whose teacher was the student of the great scholar U.V. Swaminatha Iyer) who has provided the Western authoritative voice on Tamil poetics for most of the latter half of the twentieth century. Zvelebil’s presentation of Tamil poetics, while a good introduction to the terms and ideas involved, does not address shifts in understanding in the several hundred years between the two treatises nor does his approach attempt to situate these treatises in a larger context of Tamil (or larger South Asian) intellectual traditions. Indra Manuel’s Literary Theory in Tamil (2001) presents a thorough, systematic discussion of the development of Tamil literary theory. Although her treatment of the historical development of poetic categories is more thorough than other accounts in English, she too does little to contextualize this development. She briefly mentions but does not satisfactorily discuss the influence of other traditions on Tamil theory, further contributing to the faulty impression that Tamil poetics developed in a vacuum. Hart 1975 is still the most thorough comparative study of Tamil and Sanskrit poetics. In his foundational book on Tamil literature, Hart identifies the poetic technique of suggestion as a phenomenon originating in early Deccani conceptions of language and religion shows how this technique was later adopted into Sanskrit literature and literary theory. Selby 2000 offers a different comparative view of the use of suggestion in Tamil, Prakrit and Sanskrit poetry. In the introduction to their translation of the seventh-century Iraiyāṉār Akapporuḷ, Buck and Paramasivan 1997 provide a overview of the poetics of akam, or poems of love and domestic life. Lehmann 2009 gives a more specific overview of the commentarial tradition.

22 Zvelebil dates the Iraiyāṉār Akapporuḷ before the Tolkāppiyam.

23 The Tolkāppiyam’s Chapter on Poetics is probably the latest section of the text, given the amount of Sanskritic influence, an influence that does not permeate the poems attributed to a slightly earlier period. Takahashi 1995 is the most thorough discussion of the dating of the Tolkāppiyam and subsequent theoretical texts.
commentary, and figurative language. The first five chapters of this section,\(^{24}\) which lay out the appropriate conventions for the \textit{akam} (poems of love and domestic life) and \textit{puram} (poems of war, ethics and kingship) poetic genres of Caṅkam literature, are explicitly related to the earliest extant corpus of Tamil literature.\(^{25}\) However, the remaining four chapters, both the Chapter on artistic manifestation of emotion (\textit{Meyppāṭṭiyal}) and the Chapter on Simile (\textit{Uvamaiyiyal}), as well as the Chapter on Poetics (\textit{Ceyuḷiyal}) and the Chapter on Traditional Usage (\textit{Marapiyal}), which includes classification of such diverse subjects as female and male animals, the four \textit{vāṇās}, and types of commentary, theoretically pertain to all literary production.

Although many of the verses in the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} reflect the customary deferral to an anonymous authority, as seen in the ubiquitous verse ending “as is said by scholars” (\textit{eṉmaṉāṟ pulavar}), nowhere does the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} explicitly refer to previous or contemporary scholarship, either as an authoritative source or as an example of an errant interpretation of the tradition.\(^{26}\) As such, although scholars have tried to identify sections of the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} with Sanskrit linguistic and literary theory, including the pre-Pāṇinian school of Sanskrit grammar\(^{27}\) and the early Sanskrit treatise on drama, the \textit{Nātyaśāstra}, we have little concrete information about the network of scholarship, Tamil, Sanskrit or otherwise, in which the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} might have participated.

In contrast to this sparse fragment of what may or may not have been a rich (multilingual) scholarly milieu in early Tamil literary culture, the period between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries witnessed an explosion of scholarship on Tamil language and literature in treatises and commentaries on syntax, poetic ornament (\textit{alaṅkāra}), meter, and poetic content, among other topics. These approaches to defining the Tamil tradition were in no way homogenous, but reflected new choices available to the Tamil scholar, including the choice of language and literary theory outside the poetics of the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} and the early poems. It is within this competitive intellectual milieu, which saw an unprecedented exhibition of new possibilities of interpreting Tamil literature, that the story of the Tamil classical past first appears. In this well-known story, the Tamil literary tradition originates in three great literary schools, or Caṅkams, populated by a collection of divine and semi-divine scholars. After a seven-year famine forced

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\(^{24}\) \textit{Akattinaiyiyal}, \textit{Puṟattinaiyiyal}, \textit{Kaḷaviyiyal}, and \textit{Karpiyal}

\(^{25}\) \textit{Akattinaiyiyal} introduces the reader to the \textit{tinai} semantic network, in which the natural universe (including gods) is organized according to five Tamil landscapes, named for a flower that grows in that area. The elements within each \textit{tinai} are organized according to whether or not they are related to time (\textit{mutal}), physical phenomena such as plants, animals, gods (\textit{karu}), or emotions (\textit{uri}). \textit{Puṟattinaiyiyal} arranges the \textit{puram} poems by categories that correspond theoretically to the \textit{akam} categories, although the use of \textit{tinai} in the \textit{puram} poems is far less systematic. The chapters on \textit{Kalavu} and \textit{Karpu}, or stolen love and married love, are organized around the monologic utterances of the stock characters involved in the \textit{akam} poems; these dramatic situations will be systematized into the \textit{turais} of the later grammars. \textit{Poruḷiyiyal} further classifies these dialogues, and also includes discussion of \textit{iṟaiccci} (35-37) and \textit{uḷḷuṟai} (48-50), terms that have not been sufficiently explored, but have both been equated with the concept of Sanskrit \textit{dhvani}.

\(^{26}\) This will be the subject of the first chapter.

\(^{27}\) See A.C. Burnell, \textit{On the Aindra School of Sanskrit Grammarians : Their Places in the Sanskrit and Subordinate Literatures} (Mangalore, 1875).
literary scholars into other kingdoms, the knowledge of the old tradition was lost, only to be recovered through divine intervention.\footnote{The story of the classical past has loomed large in Tamil national consciousness over the last one hundred and fifty years. According to these literary histories, the tradition was once again lost several centuries later and was only rediscovered and painstakingly revitalized by scholars such as U.V. Swaminatha Iyer in the late nineteenth century. While the role of this “Tamil renaissance” in the development of the Dravidian movement and modern Tamil nationalism has been well documented by scholars such as Irschick 1964, Venkatachalapathy 2005, Ramaswamy 1997 and others, few contemporary scholars have interrogated the complex history of this established story.} Beginning with Nakkirar’s eighth-century commentary on the poetic treatise \textit{Iraiyag\`ar Akapporu\,}, a commentary which implicates the Ca\'nkam poems and the poetic treatise \textit{Tolk\`appiyam} in the story of the divine origin of Tamil literature, the Ca\'nkam tradition emerges as an identifiable and authoritative canon in Tamil scholarship.

In their use of the Ca\'nkam poems and the \textit{Tolk\`appiyam} to establish the origins of Tamil as a literary language, Tamil scholars participated in a larger pan-Indian phenomenon of the creation and legitimation of literary languages ranging from Bengali to Kannada during this period, a phenomenon Sheldon Pollock identifies with new expressions of royal power situated in the vernacular idiom, in contrast to Sanskrit, which had dominated literary production in South (and Southeast Asia) for nearly 1000 years. However, unlike other vernacular traditions, which transformed themselves into literary languages through the creation of new literature and grammars, often modeled on Sanskritic literary genres, Tamil scholars constructed a classical canon with texts that had already influenced Tamil literary culture for several hundred years.

The invocation of these ancient texts is an important distinguishing feature of the Tamil literary tradition in the eighth through fourteenth centuries, in part because of the widespread familiarity with this canon, which extends beyond a particular sectarian group or courtly community. However, while Tamil (and Indian) literary culture can not be fully understood without taking into consideration the antiquity of the Ca\'nkam tradition, the hegemony of this canon has been overstated in Tamil scholarship over the last hundred and fifty years. In fact, the status of the classical tradition was always a subject of debate in Tamil scholarship; while literary scholars writing between the eighth and fourteenth centuries all display familiarity with the tradition, they do not all accept its canonical and/or divine status. Rather, in their interpretation of subjects ranging from language use to literary form and content, these scholars reveal a tension between the authoritative tradition of the Ca\'nkam conventions, and the newer developments in meter and literary genres that had appeared since that time.

The first part of my dissertation looks at these competing attitudes towards the classical Ca\'nkam tradition in scholarship produced between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries, and tries to situate these debates in larger sectarian projects of defining Tamil literary culture during this period. The first chapter looks at representatives of two approaches to this tension over defining the Tamil tradition, P\'er\'aci\'iriyar’s thirteenth-century commentary on the section of poetics discussed by the ancient grammar \textit{Tolk\`appiyam}, and the \textit{Virutti} commentary on the metrical treatise \textit{Y\'apparui\'ikal\,am}, dated between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While both P\'er\'aci\'iriyar and the \textit{Virutti} commentary reveal familiarity with this “classical” tradition, they reveal a tension between the authority of the Ca\'nkam tradition and the newer developments in meter and literary genres that had appeared since that time. For P\'er\'aci\'iriyar, the \textit{Tolk\`appiyam} and
the Čaṅkam poems, as representatives of the “classical” origins of Tamil, provide the sole authoritative source of Tamil language and literature in the face of the threat of multiple interpretations of the Tamil tradition, including those that prioritize contemporary literary developments. In contrast, the Virutti commentator is silent on the subject of the Tamil past but accepts the Čaṅkam conventions as one of many competing ways of introducing new developments into Tamil literature. These different interpretations reveal both the central position of this tradition in poetic texts of this period as well as the ways in which this tradition is mobilized to address a range of aesthetic and cultural concerns. In particular, I argue that the attitude towards tradition adopted by Pērācīriyar arose from a perceived threat to his version of the Čaṅkam past, a threat that can be understood in a larger context of competing sectarian literary cultures during this period.

Our understanding of Čaṅkam literature, in particular the akam poems (poems of love and domestic life) has been shaped by Pērācīriyar’s canon, in which the genre ceases to be productive outside a particular corpus of literature identified with the origins of Tamil literature. Even the later kōvai grammars protect the integrity of the original akam corpus, limiting innovation to a new genre with its own strict set of rules and conventions. The second chapter looks outside the Čaṅkam corpus to a set of akam “experiments” in the Yāpparunikala Virutti commentary, literary examples that apply new aesthetic priorities to the old akam conventions, resulting in poetry that recalls but does not imitate the Čaṅkam akam poems. In particular, this chapter looks at what these examples reveal about a shift in the use of literary language away from the emphasis on suggested meaning in the Čaṅkam akam poems to a system which draws attention to its own artificiality through the use of extensive alliteration and linguistic wordplay that can be “solved” by a learned reader.

If the first two chapters explore the central role played by the Čaṅkam conventions in Tamil literary theory, albeit mobilized for different interpretive projects, the third chapter focuses on a set of treatises in which the debates over the authority of the Čaṅkam past are replaced by a poetic system that theorizes the capacity of Tamil language and literature to praise a royal patron. This system, articulated by a genre of grammars called “pāṭṭiyals” (lit. “the nature of song, poetry), integrates praise literature from throughout the Tamil literary universe, including the Čaṅkam puṟam tradition, the devotional literature of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite compilations and the later courtly narrative genres of the kāvyā, ulā and parāni, among many others, with an extended discussion of the mantraic power of the first word of any poem to bless (or curse) the poem’s patron. The third chapter explores the articulation of this new poetics of praise in the pāṭṭiyal treatises of the Panniru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpa Pāṭṭiyal, and the implications of this new understanding of the function of literary language.

The poetics of the pāṭṭiyals, including the discussing of mantraic language and the classification of praise genres, is a radically different theorizing of Tamil literature than that presented by the Tolkāppiyam commentators. However, in a display of the reach of this shift in literary culture towards an emphasis on praise, even the conservative commentators of the Tolkāppiyam deviate from their standard canon of Čaṅkam literature to accommodate praise poetry. In their inclusion of poetic examples ranging from invocatory verses to the parāni to verses in the kali meter praising a range of divine and royal figures in the larger praise category.
of vāṭṭu, both the commentators Pērācīriyar and Nacciṟkkiṟiyar attempt to integrate this important new aesthetic development with the rules of the ancient grammar.

Of the prolific scholarship on Tamil poetics composed between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries, none29 attempt the integrated approach of the Tolkāppiyam, which combined discussions of grammar with the various branches of literary theory, including meter, poetic ornament and content. Rather, treatises were dedicated to specific fields of Tamil literature, and while a treatise on meter might incorporate details from other fields, for example, these details are relegated to sections on Miscellany and there is no reflection on their relationship with the larger project of the text. In the seventeenth century, however, the tradition of integrated grammar and literary theory returns to Tamil scholarship, and remains a productive theoretical framework for the next three hundred years. The final chapter looks at the first of such integrated grammars, the Ilakkana Vilakkam, which consolidates the most influential developments in Tamil aesthetics, including content from both the commentaries of Pērācīriyar and the Virutti, as well as the alaṅkāra theory of the Tantiyalaṅkāram and the praise poetics of the pāṭṭiyals. In its attempt to integrate new literary developments with the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam, this text, the Ilakkana Vilakkam, represents a different approach to the Tamil tradition. This chapter explores the differences between the strategy of intertextuality and integration adopted by the Ilakkana Vilakkam and the strategies of canonization and compilation seen in the commentaries of Pērācīriyar and the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti respectively and argues that the Ilakkana Vilakkam reflects larger shifts in the status of the Tamil tradition between the period of the earlier commentaries and the seventeenth century in which the Ilakkana Vilakkam was composed.

The texts and commentaries that are the subject of this dissertation represent a range of approaches to defining the Tamil tradition, from the canonizing project of Pērācīriyar to the compilation of different scholarly perspectives in the Virutti commentary, to the consolidation of authoritative traditions into one integrated theory in the Ilakkana Vilakkam. Whether as representatives of an authentic Tamil tradition or as fertile material for new literary experiments, the shifting role of the classical corpus in these projects reveals the multiplicity of interpretive frameworks available for a greater understanding of Tamil literature and literary culture more generally.

29 The exception being the twelfth-century Viracōliyam. See fn. 385 of this dissertation for more details on this exceptional text.
Chapter 1

Looking Back at the Interior Landscape: Debates over the Classical Past in the Tamil Commentarial Tradition

The story of the anxiety over innovation and convention that animates Tamil poetics begins in the eighth century with debates over the status of the earliest stratum of Tamil literature, the “Caṅkam” poetic collections of the Ėṭṭuttokai and the Pattupāṭtu and the ancient grammar, the Tolkāppiyam. Over the next several hundred years, which witnessed a period of prolific scholarship dedicated to defining the Tamil literary tradition, the Caṅkam tradition plays a central role in establishing the theoretical framework and technical vocabulary for interpreting Tamil literature. However, while literary scholars writing between the eighth and fourteenth centuries all display familiarity with this tradition, they do not all accept its canonical and/or divine status. Rather, in discussions of subjects that range from meter to poetic ornament (alaṅkāra) to content, these texts reveal a tension over how the Tamil literary tradition should negotiate the conventions of the early poetic system with the newer developments in meter, style and genre that had appeared since the Tolkāppiyam’s time.

This chapter closely examines representatives of two interpretations of the role of the Caṅkam past in the Tamil literary tradition: Pēṟāciriyar’s thirteenth-century commentary on the section of poetics discussed by the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam, and the Virutti commentary on the metrical treatise Yāpparṇālkalam, dated between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While both commentaries acknowledge the importance of Caṅkam poetics in their interpretation of Tamil literature, they differ in their interpretation of this tradition. For Pēṟāciriyar, the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems, as representatives of the “classical” origins of Tamil, are the sole authoritative source of Tamil language and literature to the exclusion of contemporary literary developments. In contrast, the Virutti commentator is silent on the subject of the Tamil past but accepts the Caṅkam conventions as one of many competing ways of introducing new developments into Tamil literature. These different interpretations reveal both the central

30 While the earliest text on poetics, the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam, dates several centuries earlier, the first text to discuss the Tamil literary tradition is Nakkīrar’s eighth-century commentary on the Ėraiyaṅār Akapporu. Because of Nakkīrar’s central position in Tamil poetics, I have suggested a starting date of the eighth century for this period. Most of the texts addressed in this chapter date between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries.

position of this tradition in poetic texts of this period as well as the ways in which this tradition is mobilized to address a range of new aesthetic and cultural concerns.

The classical poems that are at the center of these debates are well known to Tamil scholars. Although their dating is still a matter of scholarly contention, these poems, which come to be known as the “Caṅkam poems,” or “poems of the scholarly assembly,” are generally understood to have been composed between 100-300 C.E., based on considerations of meter, language and cultural references. These poems are the reference point for the earliest extant Tamil poetical treatise, the Tolkāppiyam (indicating that they were recognized by an early scholarly tradition) and the influence of their literary conventions extends to a wide range of literature from different sectarian communities, including the narrative epics of the Jain Cilappatikāram and the Buddhist Manimēkalai (500-600 C.E.), the devotional poetry of the Shaivite and the Vaishnavite bhakti saints (600-900 C.E.) and the Jain courtly epic Cīvakacintāmani (=900 C.E.).

Despite this familiarity with the conventions of the early poems, the Tamil literary and scholarly tradition prior to the eighth century contains no explicit mention of the poems nor references to a literary canon. As for references to the Caṅkam, or literary assembly in which the poems are said to have been composed, scholars such as Zvelebil and Sivaraja Pillai have suggested that the term “Caṅkam” referring to a group of scholars may have originated in the Prakrit Jain tradition, which claims a Dravidian Caṅkam was established in South India in the fifth century C.E. As Zvelebil points out, the term Caṅkam appears in the earliest literature

32 In part because of their important role in the construction of a Tamil identity, the Caṅkam poems have received considerable scholarly attention relative to other Tamil literature.

33 The dating of the Tolkāppiyam is even more problematic. Looking at inconsistencies within the text, Takahashi provides a convincing argument for the grammar’s being composed in layers, with the earliest stratum dating from the time of the earliest poems and later segments being added over several centuries. See Takanobu Takahashi, Poetry and Poetics: Literary Conventions of Tamil Love Poetry (Leiden; New York : E.J. Brill, 1995).


36 In his discussion of the early history of the Agastya story, Sivaraja Pillai suggests that the Caṅkam poems were “propped up” with the story of the Caṅkams as part of a larger Brahmanical response to the thriving Jain grammatical tradition. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, Agastya in the Tamil Land (New Delhi: Asian Education Services, 1985): 40-44.
with a different meaning; "the nearest meaning (of the word “Caṅkam”) to the one (adopted) later is that of the (sixth-century Buddhist epic) Maṇimēkalai, where Caṅkam signifies the Buddhist Sangha, the association of monks, one of the 'three gems' of Buddhism." The seventh-century Shaivite devotional poems of Appar and Campanar contain several scattered references to a literary assembly associated with the god Shiva, although whether these references are better understood as historical evidence of a Shaivite assembly or as a sectarian response to the Jain and Buddhist tradition is limited to speculation. Neither of these mentions of the Caṅkam refer to an associated literary tradition, nor do they provide details about the nature of such an intellectual community.

The first mention of these poems and their ancient grammar as an authoritative tradition appears in discourse on literary convention found in the commentaries on poetic texts produced between the eighth and thirteenth centuries. Beginning with Nakkīrar's eighth-century commentary on the poetic treatise Iṟaiyāṟṟum Akapporu, a commentary that implicates the Caṅkam poems and the poetic treatise Tolkāppiyam in the story of the divine origin of Tamil literature, the Caṅkam tradition emerges as an identifiable and authoritative canon in Tamil scholarship.

All commentaries produced during this period reveal the influence of the early tradition. In their discussion of subjects that range from the basic metrical elements of poetry (such as māttirai, eḻuttu, acai, cīr) to the system of symbolic signifiers (tiṇai) central to Caṅkam poetics, the commentaries use terminology and conventional frameworks first found in the Tolkāppiyam. However, while the influence of this tradition can not be overstated, most of the commentaries produced during this period acknowledge a balance between the old tradition and new literary developments. In their choice of literary examples, for example, the commentaries integrate


38 The influence of the poetic conventions found in the Tolkāppiyam and the early poems can also be seen throughout Tamil treatises on language and literature of this period. To begin with, the structures of most of the grammars produced during this period are indebted in some way to the ancient grammar. Grammars such as the twelfth-century Viracōliyam retain the chapter divisions of phonology, morphology and poetics given by the early grammar, while other texts cover in greater detail one or more subjects treated in these chapters. The thirteenth-century grammar Naṅgal, for example, covers the fields of phonology and morphology, while the general category of poetics discussed by the Tolkāppiyam is expanded into separate texts on meter, alaṅkāra and poetic content, covered by texts such as the Yāpparunikal, the Taṇṭiyalankāra, and the Akapporu Vilakkam respectively. However, while the Tolkāppiyam remains a reference point for most of the grammars produced during this period, all show various degrees of deviation from the ancient grammar. The Viracōliyam, for example, retains the basic chapter headings of the early grammar, but introduces new grammatical rules based on Panini. The grammars on the akam tradition (poetry of the interior, love) rearrange the basic system of poetic scenes laid out in the Tolkāppiyam into a narrative chronology, reflecting changes in this genre since the earlier time.
poems from the early compilations with “new” literary examples, either drawn from contemporary literature or created by the commentators themselves.\textsuperscript{39}

When situated in the larger context of these various approaches to the Tamil tradition, Pērāciriyar’s thirteenth-century commentary on the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} stands out as the most conservative. Both in his choice of literary and grammatical examples and in his rejection of contemporary literary developments, Pērāciriyar attempts to establish the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} and the Caṅkam poems as the sole authoritative source for all Tamil language and literature to the exclusion of contemporary developments.

Pērāciriyar includes throughout his commentary thousands of literary examples used to illustrate the rules expressed in the \textit{Tolkāppiyam}’s concise grammatical verses. While it is not Tamil commentarial tradition to identify the provenance of these verses,\textsuperscript{40} they are an integral part of the traditional method of teaching, which relies on a scholar’s vast recollection of these exemplary fragments.\textsuperscript{41} In contrast to other commentaries of this period, Pērāciriyar draws his literary examples almost exclusively from the early compilations of the \textit{Eṭṭuttokai} and \textit{Pattuppāṭṭu}, as well as the early didactic poems of the \textit{Patiṉeṇkīḻkaṇḍakku}\textsuperscript{42} and the Jain narrative poem \textit{Cilappatikāram}. Excluded are the bhakti poems of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite corpus, the early Buddhist narrative poem \textit{Manimekhalai}, the short love poems of the \textit{Patiṉeṇkīḻkaṇṭakku}, the longer Jain and Buddhist epic poems, including the well-known \textit{Civakacintamani}, as well as courtly literary genres such as the \textit{kōvai}, the \textit{kalampakam} and the \textit{ulā}. When situated within a larger intellectual milieu of scholarship on Tamil poetics, Pērāciriyar’s delimitation of the Tamil literary field represents a minority position, one that privileges the preservation of the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} and the Caṅkam tradition, while excluding contemporary developments.

Pērāciriyar justifies this strategy by appealing to the antiquity of this tradition, which he identifies with the story of the origins of Tamil language and literature first articulated by Nakkīrar in his eighth-century commentary on the \textit{Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḻ}. In this story, both the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} and the early poems represent the vestiges of an ancient literary culture associated with three great Caṅkams, or literary assemblies, presided over by a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} The treatises on the “love” or “\textit{akam}” genre of Tamil literature, for example, integrate examples from the Caṅkam collections with verses from the newer \textit{kōvai} genre. Other texts, such as the tenth-century \textit{Puṟapporuḷyenpāmāḷai} and the \textit{Tantiyalanḵāram}, do not cite from the Caṅkam compilations, but introduce poems in new meter that imitate the classical poems in style and content.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Editors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have provided citations, when possible.
\item \textsuperscript{41} This method of teaching is almost extinct in Tamil scholarship. The late Gopal Iyar was known for his ability to quote literary fragments in his teaching of Tamil literature and Tamil literary theory, most notably the commentaries of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar.
\item \textsuperscript{42} It is unclear why Pērāciriyar does not include the love (\textit{akam}) compilations of the \textit{Patiṉeṇkīḻkaṇṭakku}. In a later section, Pērāciriyar identifies a poem from the \textit{Tinai Malai Nurraimpanṭu} as an example of a violation of tradition. See Pērāciriyar’s commentary on \textit{Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal} 90, p. 476. I discuss the place of these poems in Pērāciriyar’s commentary and in the \textit{akam} tradition more generally in Chapter 2.
\end{itemize}
multitude of divine and semi-divine figures. According to Nakkirar, the third, or Final Caṅkam (kaṭai caṅkam), which took place in the city of Madurai, witnessed the composition of the poems of four hundred and forty-nine poets, including the compilations of the Akaṇṭaiyuru, the Kṟuṇṭokai, the Nṟṟnai, the Aiṅkuṟṟuṇai, the Puṇṭanai, the Pattiṟṟpptuṭṭu, the one hundred and fifty poems in kali meter (Nṟṟṟaiṟṟṟai Kali), the seventy Paripātal poems, the Kūṭṭu, the Cīṟṟcīai and the Pēṟṟcīai. Pēṟṟciriyar extends this list, which is the first mention of the Caṅkam poetic corpus in Tamil literary history, to include the collection of the Pattupāṭṭu, the Patiṟṟēṅkḍǎḷāṅkku and the Ciḷṟappatikāṟṟam. Furthermore, while Nakkirar mentions the individual compilations of the Akananuru, the Nṟṟnai, and others, Pēṟṟciriyar is first to classify these individual texts into the well-known compilations of the Pāṭṭu (Pattuppāṭṭu) and Tokai (Eṭṭuttokai). Although the coherence of the Caṅkam corpus is now taken for granted by Tamil literary scholars, Pēṟṟciriyar’s list implicates a body of poems composed over several hundred years in a range of styles on themes that range from scenes of romantic love to praise of Vishnu to didactic aphorisms in a body of literature that embodies the Tamil literary tradition.

Throughout his commentary, Pēṟṟciriyar appeals to the superiority of this old tradition. In his commentary on the last two chapters of the Tolkāppiyam that cover poetic conventions, Pēṟṟciriyar distinguishes between the Caṅkam era and his own (debased) time, identifying texts produced during the Caṅkam period as “poetry of excellent people” (cāṅrōr ceyyul) in contrast to the work of “scholars of today” (iṅkāḷṭāṭr), “later scholars” (piṅkāḷṭāṭr) who are “ignorant of poetry” (ceyyul ariyāṭār). This section is also the closest the commentator comes to an outright condemnation of contemporary literary developments when he critiques people who “write poems other than [the Caṅkam compilations] pāṭṭu and tokai (...) and claim that these [new]

43 The first Caṅkam (talai Caṅkam) was presided over by the god Shiva, his son Murugan and a score of other divine and semi-divine figures. The second, or Middle Caṅkam (iṭai Caṅkam), witnessed the composition of the Tolkāppiyam as well as several literary worlds that are no longer extant. See Buck & Paramasivan for an English translation of this story as it appears in Nakkirar’s commentary.

44 Pēṟṟciriyar acknowledges the same number of kali and paripāṭal poems identified by Nakkirar, and specifically identifies them as having been “compiled by people of the Caṅkam” (nṟṟṟaiṟṟṟai Kaliyurm elṟṟṟputu paripāṭalum eṛag caṅkattāṭr tokuttavarrṟṟu) (Pēṟṟciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 149, p. 340), in a retort to those who claim that these poems do not belong. He is also first to recognize the eight compilations on akam, or poetry of the interior, as the collection of the Eṭṭuttokai. He does not mention the Kūṭṭu, the Cīṟṟcīai and the Pēṟṟcīai, texts about which we have no additional information. Despite Nakkirar’s association of these poems with the early corpus, he does not include excerpts as examples throughout his commentary, presumably because they do not pertain to the akam conventions with which he is concerned.

45 The Tolkāppiyam is made up of three books, each of which contain nine chapters. The last book, the Poruḷatikāṟṟam, contains rules pertaining to Tamil poetics, including the Caṅkam conventions of akam (poems of love and domestic life) and puṟṟam (poems of kingship, war and ethics). The last two chapters of the Poruḷatikāṟṟam, the Chapter on Poetry (Ceyyuliyal) and the Chapter on Tradition (Marapiyal) are the most general; these rules theoretically apply to all Tamil literature, and not just those defined by the stricter Caṅkam conventions laid out in the earlier chapters.

46 Pēṟṟciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 90, p. 476.

47 Pēṟṟciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāṟṟam, p. 447.
poems are great and devoid of faults.”48 These references to later scholarship are not just rhetorical devices; while he does not mention any of these later scholars by names, he paraphrases and occasionally quotes their perspectives before following up with his ubiquitous “that is not so” (arru arru). He also identifies specific threats to the old tradition, such as the introduction of new genres not found in the early grammar, stating that “if a scholar creates genres according to his own interest, or according to the rules of people with other languages, this is not the tradition for creating Tamil literature.”49 This concern over genres reappears in his attack on a particular set of later literature that emphasizes sophisticated word play (cittirakavi, also miraikkavi) not found in the Caṅkam poems.50

He appeals to this logic to condemn competing poetic systems throughout his commentary, most notably in his rejection of new ways to theorize meter and literary genre. In his commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal verse 461 defining the meter kalippā, Pērāciriyar argues that the reworking of the fourfold metrical system laid out in the Tolkāppiyam into the new subdivisions of pā and pāviṇam51 should be rejected on the grounds that this new classification leaves too much open for interpretation. Not only can one stanza be in fact classified within twometrical categories at the same time according to this new system, but subdividing the basic meters opens up the possibility of further subdivisions, potentially leading to limitless metrical categories and thus renders them useless as a grammatical system. Arguing that this type of classification leaves too much open for interpretation, the Tolkāppiyam commentators show that one stanza can be in fact classified within twometrical categories at the

48 The full quote mentions that those learned scholars who compose these new texts will only be considered learned by a (limited) group of people (pāṭum tokaiyum allāṭaṁ cilanāṭṭik koṭu marṟu avaivyum cāṅṛō ceyyulaṁ, valuvi valakkamēṅpū urārāyin ikkālavuṭṭum orucārakkallatu avar cāṅṛō enappatār). Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 94, p. 482.

49 “ācīriyar vēntumārrāgum piṟapaiṭāi mākkal vēntu kaṭṭalaiyāṇum tamicceyyul ceytal marapagrenavāṟu” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 80, p. 237-8). The alternate reading is āriyar, or Northerner, usually referring to a scholar trained in Sanskrit. Although this is a plausible reading, given the following mention of “people with other languages”, the lack of such specific refutations of the Sanskrit tradition leads me to favor the reading of ācīriyar, or “scholar/teacher”.

50 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 90, p. 476.

51 See Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 149, p. 340. While the earlier system, developed for the shorter poems of the Caṅkam, designated one meter to a poem, beginning with the devotional poems of the Tēvāram and the Divyaprabandham, and extending to the long poems of the epics and prabandhams, meter had been rethought in terms of shorter poetic units, called īmams. A poem could now combine components from the earlier four meters without a problem of categorization. In this new classification, the four meters presented by Tolkāppiyam (ācīriyar, venpā, kalippā and vaṅci) are replaced by a twelve-fold system, in which each metrical category is further subdivided into subgroups, or īmams. This new presentation of meter, which continues into the present day, considers as its primary unit the stanza, rather than the entire poem. As a result, most long poems are now considered to be composed in multiple meters (īmams). This system, perhaps originating out of the longer poems of the Jain and Buddhist kāvvas, or the stanzaic form of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite bhakti poems, ultimately all but replaces the simpler Tolkāppiyam metric system. For the most detailed account of this metrical change, see Kandaswamy.
same time, denying the possibility of one fixed rule for that particular poem. He is also concerned with the introduction of new genres not found in the early grammar, stating that “if a scholar creates genres according to his own interest, or according to the rules of people with other languages, this is not the tradition for creating Tamil literature.” This concern with genres reappears in his attack on a particular set of later literature that emphasizes sophisticated word play (cittirakavi, also migmaikkavi) not found in the Caṇkam poems and therefore in violation of Tamil tradition. “Even if (one) creates a grammar (for such new genres), (...) and others make poetry based on these rules, one can’t say that these are (legitimate) grammatical rules because there is no limit to them.” These new classificatory systems are not found in the early grammar, and are therefore rejected as being not in accordance with tradition.

Adherence to tradition, mentioned throughout Pērāciriyar’s commentary, defines a literary scholar’s work. This perspective is defended on the logical grounds that grammar, if not limited to one authoritative tradition, degenerates into relative rules that are not useful in understanding language. If some grammatical texts define a ruby as red-colored, Pērāciriyar questions, and others as black-colored, how can we know or say anything about a ruby? Furthermore, if one creates a grammatical text that reflects the changes inherent in every era, Pērāciriyar points out that such a grammar would quickly become irrelevant as the language continued to develop. Pērāciriyar locates the solution to this threat to the stability of Tamil grammar in the authoritative tradition of the unassailable primary treatise. He includes a lengthy discussion on the nature of this tradition in his commentary on the last chapter of the Tolkāppiyam, the chapter on convention (Marapiyal). In this section, which reveals an anxiety over both the creation and the identification of a primary treatise, Pērāciriyar emphasizes that a

52 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuviy 149, p. 340. The full text reads as follows: “In addition to the three subdivisions of viruttam, tugai and tālicai, one could also add more, as they do for the musical category of tīraṅg, bringing the six types of meter to thirty. If one subdivides this way, it would lead to infinite divisions (virutta mum tugai yam tālicaiyamai oppu tīraṅgam engarpōl’vapa cilak̄ṭi aruvakaic ceyyuṭuṭuṭa muppattam; igit, avarγai vikaṭpittunokka enniganta pakutiyavām [...])”

53 “āciriyar vēntumāṟṟaṟugam piggeraptai mākkal vēntuṇa kasthalaiyāṟum tamileceyyuḷ ceytal marapagrenavāru” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuviy 90, p. 237-8). The alternate reading is āriyar, or Northerner, usually referring to a scholar trained in Sanskrit. Although this is a plausible reading, given the following mention of “people with other languages”, the lack of such specific refutations of the Sanskrit tradition leads me to favor the reading of āciriyar, or “scholar/teacher”.

54 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 90, p. 476.

55 ‘ōrrai iratṭai putti vittāra ‘engarpōl’vapa palavuni kastṭikkoṇtu avarṛāgē ceyyuḷ ceyyuṅg kaṭṭiyalākāmai’yin avarṛirku varaipāraivavakaiyāṉ ilakkanāṅkūṭa lākāvēnuṭatu. Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 90, p. 476. The first four words appear to be a quote from a specific text or tradition that Pērāciriyar is rejecting, although I have not been able to identify it.

56 The full sentence deals more specifically with a grammatian who chooses to write a text that contradicts the primary treatise. This type of text is identified in grammars such as the Naṇyūl as an etirnūl. “mānīka maniyāga cevvāmnam mutalaṅyiṇa cila ilakkanāṅkūṭa nil kītappak karuvannah mutalaṅiyavam, atakilakkanamēnu oruvṉa etirnūl eppatōr nil pīrkaḷattuc ceyyuṃviṇu atu ato ilakkanameṇap paṭāṭkalaṅeṇpatu” Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 93, p. 478.
scholar cannot create a text on poetics based on his own knowledge and that although there are Tamil texts that claim to be primary treatises today (mutunīl ulāva enru ikkālattu ceytukāṭṭigum), these texts must not be original because they did not exist in earlier times. Furthermore, if a scholar disagrees with a previous treatise and writes a treatise challenging these ideas in a later time, he is creating a text that goes against Tamil treatises and Tamil tradition. In fact, Pērāciriyar points out that even if a scholar in a later period creates a treatise that adheres to grammatical rules (in that it contains the necessary elements of grammatical verse [cuttiram], gloss [kāntikai] and commentary [urai]) the text will violate tradition if the content contradicts an earlier treatise.

Not surprisingly, Pērāciriyar locates this primary treatise in the same story of the three Caṅkams from which he draws his literary examples. This time he reaches back to the first Caṅkam, presided over by Shiva, Murugan and a host of other divine and semi-divine figures. According to both Pērāciriyar and Nakkērar, this Caṅkam witnessed the production of the first Tamil grammar, the Akattiyam, composed by the semi-divine grammarian-sage Agastya. Throughout his commentary, Pērāciriyar appeals to the authority of this primary text with his ubiquitous style of question and response. “If you ask whether or not one (should) accept this,” Pērāciriyar asks, “Accept (it) because it is thus said by the scholar Agastya who created the first treatise.” The appeal to the primary treatise provides the ultimate justification for the rejection of new developments such as the new classification of meter. “If later scholars want to mix up the meters,” Pērāciriyar says, “Clear up a student’s confusion (on this subject) by telling him that the primary treatise Agattiya has not discussed (this new metrical classification).”

After establishing the Akattiyam as the primary treatise, Pērāciriyar claims the Tolkāppiyam as the legitimate heir to the Akattiyam’s grammatical tradition as the authoritative secondary treatise (vaḷi nūl) and the main grammatical text for the Second and Third Caṅkams. Here Pērāciriyar draws on several sources, including Nakkērar and the preambles of three

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57 “oṇṟūn vaḷiye anṟiyum tām tām āṟintavāṟṟāṟum nūḷ ceyya peṟāṟō eniŋ, atu marapu anṟu” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 93, p. 478).

58 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram, p. 661.

59 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 94, pp. 479-481. Much of the discussion of the primary treatise in this section is incoherent, perhaps because it is corrupt.

60 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 105, p. 499.

61 The full quote identifies Agastya as the author of this treatise “atu errāṟperutum eniŋ mutaṅṉūḷ ceyta āciṟiyag akattiyagār collumāṟṟē perutum enṟvāṟu” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliya 51, p. 198).

62 . Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliya 51, p. 199) This line also include a reference to a musical classification established by Agstya, that of paŋ and tiraŋ. Agstya is supposed to have authored a treatise on music as well.
grammatical treatises that establish Tolkāppiyāṉar as the leader of all Agastya’s disciples. Pēṟāciriyar emphasizes that “all scholars concerned about violating tradition say that Tolkāppiyāṉar was the leader of the scholars who follow Agastya.” For Pēṟāciriyar, Agastya’s other students, despite their affiliation with their legendary teacher, disappear into the oblivion of second-rate grammarians in order to elevate the Tolkāppiyam to its monolithic status.

In his insistence on the proper identification of a Tamil tradition articulated in a genealogy of authoritative treatises, Pēṟāciriyar provides a methodological response to his anxiety over the multiplicity of interpretive frameworks that had appeared in Tamil since the Tolkāppiyam’s time. However, this firm stance on the maintenance of an authoritative grammatical tradition seems to contradict his very understanding of the way that language changes over time. In an earlier section of his commentary, in which he discusses tradition not as a grammatical phenomenon but as a component associated with poetry, Pēṟāciriyar interprets the term “tradition” as a concept that adapts to particular circumstances. Pēṟāciriyar explains, for instance, that the antiquated words for “there, here, and in between” (atōli iṭōli utōli) and for “cloud” (kuviṟ), even though they appear in the Tolkāppiyam, were not used in the Caṅkam collections Pattuppāṭṭu and Eṭṭuttokai because they had fallen out of use by the time of the creation of these poems. Similarly, later poetry should not use words found in Pattuppāṭṭu and Eṭṭuttokai if these words are no longer understood by people.

Pēṟāciriyar goes on to point out that even if words remain in usage, a poet has to be sensitive to the ways in which the meaning of the word shifts over time. He gives several examples, including how the words for “mountain” (malai and piṟaṅkal) were synonyms at the time of the Tolkāppiyam, but the word “malai” has since lost the sense of “height”. Other

63 In his defense of Tolkāppiyam, Pēṟāciriyar reserves a special place for Nakkūṟar, whose claim that the Tolkāppiyam was the authoritative grammar for the second and third Caṅkams is legitimized by Nakkūṟar’s status as one who has “foregone meat and undertaken austerities” (avar pulavut turanta nōppuṭaiyār) and therefore “does not tell lies” (poykiṟar). (Pēṟāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 94, p. 481).

64 iññagaṉ kūṟakkāḻ itu var marapuvuvaṉeṟru aṉći akattiyar vaḷittōṅγiyā ṛcīryareṟṟulluṅ tolkāppiyagāṟē talaivaṉeṟṟpatu ellā ṛcīryarù kūṟupaveṟṟatu (Pēṟāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 94, p. 481).

65 Jean-Luc Chevillard provides a detailed history of the story of Agastya’s disciples, including a thorough investigation of the way in which different versions of the story were transmitted into the nineteenth century. He proposes that the standard understanding of Agastya’s twelve disciples may be a nineteenth-century intervention by the Shaivite Arumuka Navalar, as part of a synthesis of what were previously different strands of the Agastya story. Chevillard, Jean-Luc, “The Pantheon of Tamil grammarians : a short history of the myth of Agastya’s twelve disciples” in Colas Gérard & Gerschheimer Gerd, (Eds), Écrire et transmettre en Inde classique. Études thématiques N°23. (École Française d’Extrême-Orient. Paris, 2009) 243-268.

66 Although most contemporary Tamil scholars date the Tolkāppiyam as posterior to the Caṅkam poems, Pēṟāciriyar assumes that the grammar preceded the poetry.

67 Pēṟāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 80, p. 235.

68 Pēṟāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 80, p. 237.
words have retained their meaning but have changed form, such as the towns of Kuṭṭavāy and Uṟaiyūr, which were called Kuṭṭantai and Uṟantai respectively in the Caṅkam poems. Finally, Pērāciriyar recognizes that the meaning of a word is also specific to a place and should not be confused with the meaning in other areas, just like the different decorations and costumes of people are specific to the eighteen linguistic areas. Unlike grammar, which requires strict adherence to the tradition of an authoritative older treatise, the tradition of literary language must reflect shifts in contemporary usage.

Furthermore, even though Pērāciriyar acknowledges divine influence in the beginnings of the Tamil grammatical tradition, he does not assume the divinity of the language itself. In fact, he stresses that Tamil is a language spoken by “those of the world” (ulakattār), even if those worldly speakers are understood to be superior, learned people (cāṅrō, uyartōr). For Pērāciriyar, scholarship on language covers not only poetic usage, but also colloquial usage, as he addresses in his commentary on the first verse of the chapter on poetics. In his overview of the subjects covered by this chapter, Pērāciriyar explains that while this chapter collects and discusses grammar for poetry, the other eight chapters in this section discuss colloquial language. In fact, Pērāciriyar explains that the boundary between poetic and colloquial usage is not hard and fast. As he mentions in his commentary on the verse on “usage” (marapu) in the Ceyyuḷiyal, or chapter on poetics, poetry can and does come from applying metrical rules to colloquial usage. To illustrate this point, he takes a sentence from colloquial usage and shows how it can operate as poetry with the addition of meter. Likewise, he points out that poetry can become colloquial usage, as in the example he draws from the Nālaiyār, a collection of moral aphorisms that may have been used to pepper everyday language, similar to a proverb. This mingling of poetic and colloquial language distinguishes this tradition from that of other South Asian grammatical traditions, in which “(...) a sharp distinction between literature and non-literature was both discursively and practically constructed by those who made, heard, and read texts in premodern South Asia.”

In his acceptance of the mutability of language in both literary and colloquial usage, Pērāciriyar abandons his strict position that Tamil language should be based exclusively on the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam texts. This contradictory stance on tradition, in which it has one meaning for literature and another for grammar, raises questions about the relationship between

69 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 80., p. 237. He cites Akam 60 and Param 69 as examples of the old forms.

70 “patiṇgpāṭait tēcikamākkal aniyiṅaiyuk kōlattigaiyum viravikkūrātu avvaṅṅūṭṭār pūṇumāṟṟaṟum puṇaiyumāṟṟaṟum ēṟpaccollutal marapu” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 80, p. 235).

71 See, for example, Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 80, p. 234.

72 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 1, p. 113.

73 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 80, p. 234.

74 Pollock 2006: 5.
grammar and literary production in Pērāciriyar’s commentary.\textsuperscript{75} How can a literary tradition stay faithful to an authoritative grammar on the one hand and on the other hand be reflective of linguistic changes? If literature does not need to adhere to grammar, what then is the function of a grammatical text, particularly a text on poetics?

One clue to these questions lies in identifying the cultural project to which Pērāciriyar is committed. Like much in South Asian literary history, scant extra-literary evidence exists to help historically situate these different interpretations of the role of the Caṅkam past. Little scholarship exists on these commentaries, and the few existing biographical details are often contradictory. Unlike the majority of commentaries of the same period, such as the \textit{Viracōliyam} and the \textit{Akapporu Vilakkam}, neither Pērāciriyar nor the \textit{Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti} are associated with a patron, royal or otherwise, and the manuscript tradition, which dates back only several hundred years, is relatively undocumented. However, the cultural project at stake in these commentaries becomes more clear when we locate Pērāciriyar’s interpretive strategies within a larger network of sectarian approaches to the classical past and the origins of the Tamil literary and grammatical tradition.

In his use of the Caṅkam poems and the \textit{Tolkāppiyam} to establish the origins of Tamil as a literary language, Pērāciriyar participated in a larger pan-Indian phenomenon of the creation and legitimation of literary languages ranging from Bengali to Kannada during this period, a phenomenon Sheldon Pollock identifies with new literary expressions of royal power situated in the vernacular idiom, in contrast to Sanskrit, which had dominated literary production in South (and Southeast Asia) for nearly one thousand years.\textsuperscript{76} As vernacular traditions transformed themselves into literary languages through the creation of new literature and grammars, Sanskrit literature and literary theory provided the model for much of this process. In contrast, Pērāciriyar emphasizes the non-Sanskritic elements of the Tamil past. He acknowledges the existence of other languages, but says that they have no place in his discussion of Tamil tradition.\textsuperscript{77} The story of the Caṅkams itself is rooted in a very local version of the Tamil past as

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\textsuperscript{75} Pērāciriyar attempts to justify this contradiction by attributing proper language usage to a select group of superior people (\textit{uyarntōr}) whom he identifies as “Brahmins and others with like knowledge.” A tentative attempt at reconciling these two sections might result in the speculative conclusion that tradition allows for certain types of changes, reflected in the language of the superior people, while other types of changes, reflected in the language of inferior people, deviate from tradition. Whether or not this formulation accommodates innovation is unclear. See Pērāciriyar’s commentary on \textit{Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal} 92, p. 477.


\textsuperscript{77} “(...) texts in other languages don’t need to follow this tradition;” “(...) because they aren’t Tamil texts, they aren’t researched here.” Pērāciriyar’s commentary on \textit{Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal} 93, p. 479; Pērāciriyar’s commentary on \textit{Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal} 97, p. 484.
\end{quote}
the Caṅkams take place in Madurai, under Pandya patronage. Although Pērāciriyar does not refer to Madurai, he refers to a flood that was said to have destroyed Madurai during the Second Caṅkam, using this detail of local history/legend to determine the chronology of two scholars. The second scholar’s mention of the sea as the boundary of Tamil country is evidence for Pērāciriyar that he composed his text after the flood eliminated the Kumari River and rearranged the boundaries of South India. Pērāciriyar’s silence on the Sanskrit tradition is also evident in his version of the Agastya story. While the majority of Agastya stories in Tamil address Agastya’s virtuosity in both languages, Pērāciriyar strips Agastya of his Sanskritic association. When situated within a larger network of approaches to the Tamil past, Pērāciriyar’s version reflects a view shared by other Tamil Shaivite scholars. To begin with, Pērāciriyar’s choice to identify with Nakkīrar’s version of the Caṅkam past situates his interpretation of the origins of Tamil language and literature within the Shaivite tradition. In Nakkīrar’s story, Shiva is not only the leader of the first Caṅkam, in which Agastya’s primeval grammar is composed, but he is also later responsible for the revival of Tamil poetics after the knowledge is lost due to the exodus of Tamil scholars from the Tamil land. While Pērāciriyar does not attribute Shaivite origins to Tamil as explicitly as Nakkīrar does, he does refer to Nakkīrar as an authoritative figure and acknowledges Shiva’s authorship of the grammatical treatise on which Nakkīrar comments.

More importantly, Pērāciriyar’s identification of Agastya as the founder of Tamil grammar draws on a widespread network of stories linking Agastya, Shiva and grammatical

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78 In an attempt to radically rethink the dating of the Tamil literary tradition, including the composition of the Caṅkam poems, Tieken 2001 uses inscriptive and literary evidence to attempt to link the entire Cankam tradition with the ninth and tenth century Pandyan kings. Rejecting the scholarship of Zvelebil, Hart, Kailasapathy, Marr, Gros, and countless others, Tieken argues that the Tamil Caṅkam poems are literary compositions of the ninth-century Pandyan court, as part of a project to identify the medieval Pandyan kings with the Caṅkam period dynasty of the same name. He does not accept previous attempts at historicization through the accounts of battles and kings recorded in the poems; rather, he concludes that this material is fictional, and not useful as historical evidence. Using a radically new interpretation of the poems, as well as extraliterary information about the nature of the Pandyan court, Tieken presents the Tamil poems as derivative of Sanskritic literary tradition, following similar poetic conventions as the Prakrit Sattasai as well as texts such as the Kamasutra. The story as it appears in Nakkīrar’s commentary is closely linked with the representation of the Pandya kings both as devotees of Shiva and as patrons of grammar. Interestingly, all reference to the Pandyas is removed in Pērāciriyar’s account.

79 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyāl 94, p. 482

80 See William Davis, Agastya: The Southern Sage From the North (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2000), Kamil Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1992): 235-262; K. N. Sivaraja Pillai, Agastya in the Tamil Land (1930. Reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1985) for the most thorough treatments of Agastya’s role in South India. For the relationship of Agastya to the Tamil grammatical tradition, including a detailed study of the legends surrounding his disciples, see Chevillard 2009.

81 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyāl 94, pp. 480-481.

82 He identifies the text as “perumāṇṭikāḷ kaḷaviyāl.” Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyāl 94, p. 480.
production. As Davis points out in his discussion of the Southern Agastya tradition, “Agastya is used to interpret the Tamil country as a domain of Shiva. He provides evidence of the presence of Shiva in the region, and of the god’s benevolence and goodwill towards it. (...) First, Agastya functions as an intermediary between Shiva and the Tamil country, responsible for the bestowal of things to the Tamils, including the Tamil language, rivers, government, and the sight of Shiva himself and his wife Parvati (…)”

Approximately one hundred years after Pērāciriyar, the Shaivite commentator Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar reflects this “special capability of Agastya to move easily between the divine realm and human” in his commentary on the preamble to the Tolkāppiyam. In contrast to Pērāciriyar, whose references to Agastya are primarily limited to the local story of the Tamil Čaṅkams, Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar introduces details of the Agastya story from the larger, translocal

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83 As Davis 2000 points out, most of the stories about Agastya in the Tamil country are talapuranams. He also points out that the biggest contributors to the Agastya myth are Shaivite sectarian brahmins.

84 Davis, 2000: 228. Also, in some of the talapuranam journey narratives Shiva’s presence in the Tamil country is also made concrete through the identification of Agastya with Shiva himself, as well as that of his wife Lopamudra with Parvati, the Kaveri (or other specific river) with the Ganges, and Potiyil Mountain with Mount Kailasa” (Davis, 2000: 228). Davis emphasizes Agastya’s special function of being able to “move(s) easily between divine realm and human” (Davis, 2000: 230).

85 Chevillard more explicitly implicates Shiva in the relationship between Shiva and the Čaṅkam tradition, stating that Agastya serves "as a symbolic intermediary between Siva and texts (such as the Ēḻuttokai and the Pattuppāṭu) that were already extant before the Shaivite bhakti wave" (Chevillard 2009: 21). In the same article, Chevillard points out the association between Agastya and Tamil in the Tēvāram that we have the association of Agastya with Tamil (Chevillard 2009:19).

86 While Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar shares many of the literary examples of Pērāciriyar, he also draws on more of the Brahmanical details from Nakkīrar’s story. To begin with, Nakkīrar is the first literary scholar in Tamil to attribute the benefit (payār) of spiritual liberation (vīṭu) to the reading and understanding of a scholarly text. Although spiritual liberation had been established as the most important of the four Hindu aims of life in Sanskrit texts by the time of the Tolkāppiyam, the ancient grammar only mentions “the three aims beginning with righteous action,” referring to the aims of righteous action (āṟam, Skt. dharma), prosperity (porul, Skt. artha) and pleasure (ēṟam, Skt. kāma). Despite the original text’s silence on the topic of liberation, the Tolkāppiyam commentators reflect Nakkīrar’s concern with this new important principle. In his commentary on the preamble (pāyiram) to the Tolkāppiyam, Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar defines both colloquial language (vaḷakkai) and poetry (ceyyul) as "that which conveys righteous action, wealth, pleasure and liberation in the words used in a certain time period." He predicts questions about the absence of the term “liberation” in the Tolkāppiyam, responding that while "neither Agastya and Tolkāppiyaṉar discussed the nature of liberation in a grammar, they discussed the causes of liberation, [referring to the other three aims of life] (Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Eluttatikāram, Preamble, p. 65. Emphasis mine. He follows this sentence with a odd reference to the author of the Tirukkural, saying that Vāḷḷuvaṉ, also of this perspective, also gave the causes of gaining liberation in the form of three chapters. Later, Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar explains that the Tolkāppiyam verse that specifically introduces the three aims of life does not include liberation because the verse pertains to literature about worldly customs, whereas liberation requires letting go of [these] worldly things (ulakiyar porunmiṟṟaiயum iṟaiyak kūṟ avarttai viṟumāṟun kūṟavē viṟuṟ kūṟiyṟai). Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Porulatikāram, verse 418, p. 132. Nacciṅarkkiṉiyar adds that poetry that covers liberation can be found in the section on koccaḵak meter, which is associated with divine praise. The treatment of devotional and praise poetry in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries is the subject of a subsequent chapter.

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world of the Sanskrit purāṇas and the greater Hindu pantheon. In Nacciṇārkkīniyir’s version of
the Agastya story, the sage is dispatched to South India by the gods to offset the weight of a
divine gathering in the North. On his way to the South, the holy man encounters various sages
and semi-divine beings, including Tiruṇatūmākkiṇiyir alias Tolkāppiyāṉār, son of the Vedic seer
Yamatakkī, as well as the demon Rāvaṇa from the pan-Indic Rāmāyaṇa story. Agastya
eventually settles in his home at Mount Potiyal, the sacred mountain with which he is often
associated. After an incident in which Tolkāppiyāṉār breaks his promise to Agastya in order to
protect his teacher’s wife Lopāmudra, Agastya curses him and tells the literary assembly not to
accept Tolkāppiyāṉār’s grammar.87 Nacciṇārkkīniyir’s story is as striking for its introduction of
non-Tamil elements88 as it is for its silence on details about the three Caṅkams given by
Pērācīriyar and Nakkīrā. Although the Caṅkams do not feature in this section of his
commentary, he refers to them throughout his later commentary.

Nakkīrā and the Tolkāppiyam commentators were not the only Tamil scholars of this
period to associate the Tamil past with the Tolkāppiyam and the mythological Agastya. When
situated within a larger network of attitudes towards the Tamil literary tradition, the privileging
of Caṅkam literature as well as the role of Agastya and Tolkāppiyāṉār in the origins of Tamil
seems to be an interpretation shared by commentators associated with the Shaivite tradition. The
preamble of the tenth-century Shaivite poetic treatise Purapporuvenpāmālai also attributes the
origins of Tamil to the sage Agastya. The details given in this verse overlap with those given by
Nacciṇārkkīniyir, including the mention of Agastya’s staying on the Southern Mountain at the
request of the gods, and the description of his role as Tamil teacher to his twelve disciples,
including Tolkāppiyāṉār.89 The Shaivite Aṭiyārkkunallār’s thirteenth-century commentary on the
epic Cilappatikāram contains even more details of the Agastya story, including references to
Nakkīrā’s commentary. While Aṭiyārkkunallār’s range of literary examples is considerably
greater than that of the Tolkāppiyam commentators, he also emphasizes the importance of the
Caṅkam past and Agastya’s role in that tradition. He begins his commentary by identifying the
Tolkāppiyam as the primary treatise for literary Tamil at the time of composition of the
Cilappatikāram, and by rejecting later grammars as unsuitable. His references to Agastya are
both local and translocal; on the one hand, he situates both Agastya and Tolkāppiyāṉār not only
in the second Caṅkam but specifically in the court of the Pāndyan king in the ancient Tamil town
of Kapāṭapuṟam. On the other hand, throughout his commentary, he introduces Agastya stories
found in the purāṇas, including the story of Agastya’s being sent to the South, a detail shared by
Nacciṇārkkīniyir and the Purapporuvenpāmālai commentator.

87 Nacciṇārkkīniyir’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Eluttatikāram, Preamble, p. 66.

88 As Sivaraja Pillai points out, Nacciṇārkkīniyir’s Tolkappiyantar story involves several unmistakable
parallels with the story of Parasurama, also a son of Yamatakkī and also known for settling the South,
supporting literary studies, and inhabiting a mountain. Sivaraja Pillai 1930 (1985): 30..

89 Unlike the Tolkāppiyam commentaries, however, this version of the story introduces a new grammar of
the same status as the Tolkāppiyam (the Panniru Patalam) as well as a new generation of students: the
Chera king Ayaṉār, who learned the grammar from Agastya’s disciples and created the
Purapporuvenpāmālai.
While Pērāciriyar’s interpretation of the Tamil past is significantly more conservative than that of Aṭṭiyārkkunallār or the Purapporulvenpāmālai commentator, they share a common tradition invested in the recovery and preservation of lost knowledge. Without the Tolkāppiyam, the knowledge of Agastya’s grammar would be lost, and with it the origins of Tamil language and literature. Pērāciriyar acknowledges this shared perspective by including these scholars in his commentary. In a rare reference to a contemporary scholar, Pērāciriyar cites the Purapporulvenpāmālai as an authoritative perspective on Agastya and the Tolkāppiyam.90

However, not all scholars writing during this period adopted the authority of Agastya, the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam past. The eleventh-century Jain Virutti commentator on the metrical treatise Yāpparuṅkalam, for example, reveals a very different approach to the classical tradition. To begin with, the Yāpparuṅkalam itself, an eleventh century treatise by the Jain scholar Amutacākara, integrates new developments in meter and poetics with the conventions laid out in the Tolkāppiyam. The first chapter of the Yāpparuṅkalam, the Chapter on Poetic Components (Uruppipiyal),91 begins with verses on the basic components of literary language found throughout Tamil poetics, including the Tolkāppiyam. The second chapter, the Chapter on Poetics (Ceyyuliyal), discusses the four major meters presented by the Tolkāppiyam before introducing the same metrical subdivisions of pā and iṇam condemned by Pērāciriyar. Finally, the third chapter, the Chapter on Miscellany (Olippiyal), includes only three verses, two of which list poetic topics with which a learned poet should be familiar. The topics addressed here are not limited to those covered by the Tolkāppiyam or ostensibly to any other particular tradition. Some are familiar from the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, the better known 12th century text on poetic figure based on the Sanskrit Kāvyādarśa, including six of the miṟaikkavī genres, rejected by Pērāciriyar.

The anonymous commentary, most likely composed by a student of Amutacakarar, presents a very different approach to the classical tradition privileged by Pērāciriyar. In contrast to the privileging of the Tolkāppiyam found in the Pērāciriyar’s commentary, the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti commentator integrates many different positions into his commentary without applying judgments of hierarchy. The commentary on one verse may include several different perspectives, complete with exemplary verses borrowed from other grammars to support each approach. This strategy of compilation, which presents discourse on a particular topic without one resolution, differs from the monolithic stance taken by the Tolkāppiyam commentators, in which any position that differs from the Tolkāppiyam is rejected. The Virutti commentator acknowledges the Tolkāppiyam tradition92 and a grammar called the “Caṅkam metrical text” (Caṅkayāppu)93 but recognizes them as only two of many potential interpretative traditions. Unlike the Tolkāppiyam commentators, whose story depends in part on the lost knowledge of Agastya’s grammar, the Virutti commentator refers to a text by Agastya that appears to be circulating during his time; he tells the reader to learn more about this text from those well-

90 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal 94, p. 481.

91 According to the Tolkāppiyam (Ceyyuliyal 1), literature is made up of a series of such poetic components.

92 See Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam 40, p. 166 for a good example of this catholic perspective.

93 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam 16, p. 79.
versed in the tradition since he doesn’t have the space to discuss it in his commentary. As for Nakkīrar, the Virutti commentator cites an anonymous cuttiram mentioning “Nakkīrar’s authoritative treatise” (kīrar aṭi nūl, p. 437) but does not attribute any special status to this mention. Additionally, the Virutti commentator stands out for his citation of his sources, an unusual practice among premodern Tamil scholars. By identifying his range of sources, the Virutti commentator draws attention to his compilative project with no attempt to present the heteroglossia of Tamil scholarship as a cohesive voice.

In contrast to Pērāciriyar, who insists on the distinctly local origins of Tamil language and literature, for the Virutti commentator Sanskrit is a productive source of literary genres and theories. In his commentary on the last verse of the Yāpparuṅkalam, which consists of a list of genres and poetic topics that, according to the commentator, display the author’s breadth of knowledge, the commentator discusses the same literary genres condemned by Pērāciriyar, identifying them as Tamil versions of genres “created in the vast ocean of Sanskrit.” He also occasionally introduces verses from Tamil scholars who follow Sanskrit (vaṭanūl uṭaiyār) without recognizing them as foreign or threatening.

As for references to the Caṅkam poetic framework discussed by the Tolkāppiyam, here also the Virutti commentator presents a range of interpretations existing during his time. In his discussion of landscape (tiṇai), a key concept in the poetics of the early poems, the Virutti commentator does not cite the Tolkāppiyam, but rather includes sources from alternative texts, including the Paṅgiru Paṭalam, said to have been composed by another of Agastya’s students, and a text called Tinai Nūl. As for a reference to tradition (marapu), the Virutti commentator’s only mention of the term refers to technical ways of describing the poem’s patron, a subject of much literary debate in later grammars.

The Virutti commentator is equally inclusive in his choice of literary examples. Although he occasionally includes Caṅkam poems as examples throughout the commentary, the majority of his examples are either contemporary examples, including the Jain epics Valaiyāpati, Cūḷamāni, and Cīvakacintāmaṇi, or unidentified poems that may have been written by the commentator or may have served as generic grammatical examples. These unidentified examples include a range of new literary genres, such as devotional Jain poems and poems inspired by folk traditions, as well as poems that imitate the Caṅkam poems in imagery and

94 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 16, p. 282.
95 “āriyam en gum pārirumpauvattu kāṭṭiyam akkaraaccutakamum, māṭtiraic cutakamum, pintu matiyum, pirēḷikaiyum mutalākavuṭaiyapavum, ipperiyē tamiḷākac collum miṟai kavikaḷum agintu kolka enṟavāru” (Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 96, pp. 525-553).
96 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 93, p. 370.
97 See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of this central concept in Tamil poetics.
98 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 96, p. 569.
99 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 96, p. 554-555.
literary convention. These Caṅkam “imitations” clearly indicate the poet’s knowledge of the Caṅkam conventions, although unlike Pērācīriyar, who implicates the poems in a canonizing project in support of an authoritative tradition, for the Virutti commentator, Caṅkam poetics provide a vehicle through which the commentator introduces new developments in meter, ālaṅkāra and content.

It is fairly clear through the intertextuality of the commentaries that Pērācīriyar saw the Yāpparuṅkāla Virutti or the tradition represented by the Yāpparuṅkāla Virutti as a threat that, though never mentioned by name, needed to be rejected on the grounds of violating Tamil tradition. Whether in the field of metrics, literary genres or the reinterpretation of Caṅkam conventions, the Virutti commentary represents the heteroglossia which threatens the cohesiveness of the Tamil tradition. This perceived threat to the monolithic authority of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam tradition may explain the conservative position of the Tolkāppiyam commentators. In fact, the insecurity over the status of the Tolkāppiyam during this period extended beyond challenges to its authoritative position to the instability of the text itself. In his commentary on the first verse of the Ceyyuliyal, Pērācīriyar expresses concern over a perceived lack of textual coherence of the Tolkāppiyam. He mentions that there are scholars who consider this section to be a separate chapter called the Yappatikāram, or chapter on meter. He refutes this suggestion, saying that this division would disrupt the symmetry of nine chapters in each section. Although the order of chapters and subsections within the Tolkāppiyam is now taken for granted, it appears that there was some insecurity during the time of the commentators as to how to understand the text as a whole. This insecurity was not unique to the Tolkāppiyam; Pērācīriyar discusses the erroneous conflation of the Caṅkam poems Paripāṭal and Kalittokai during his period. He states that “because these come as different compilations in [the Caṅkam compilation] Eṭṭuttokai, those who say that Paripāṭal comes within Kalittokai are ignorant of literature.” As Cutler has discussed in his work on the Tirukkuṟαl commentaries, one function of the commentary is to stabilize the text according to one interpretation. If the commentaries

100 In contrast to a scholar such as Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, who saw himself as an innovator within the Sanskrit alankāra tradition, the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti commentator doesn’t identify in such a way. See Tubb & Bronner 2008 (36): 619-632 for a discussion of Jagannātha and “newness” in Sanskrit poetics.

101 This is the subject of the following chapter.

102 See Pērācīriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 18, p. 151 for a direct refutation of the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti commentator, which includes an unusual citation of the Virutti commentary. Also see Pērācīriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 139, p. 323. In a later section of commentary, Pērācīriyar’s refutation of new meters in Tamil reflects the metrical system laid out in the Yāpparuṅkalam.

103 Pērācīriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 1, p. 112.

104 paripāṭalūn kalippāṅguḷ atāṅkumenpārum uḷār. kaliiyum paripāṭalu menṇa eṭṭuttokaṭiyuḷ irantu tokai tammin vēṟatiḷing avvāṟu kāṟuvār ceyyul āriyāṭāreṇpatu. Pērācīriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 130, p. 313.

felt such a need to stabilize the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems, this insecurity would help explain their stance of preservation in a highly competitive intellectual milieu.

On the one hand, this threat can be more specifically situated in the competition between sectarian intellectual communities. Just as the attempt to situate Tamil grammar within an authoritative tradition associated with Agastya fits within a larger network of Shaivite attitudes towards the Tamil past, the Virutti commentator’s approach to the Caṅkam tradition is shared by other scholars of the heterodox traditions of Jainism and Buddhism. The Buddhist commentary on the Viṟacōliyam quotes extensively from the Virutti commentary and also incorporates a range of scholarly perspectives without privileging the Tolkāppiyam.106 Both Mayilainathar’s fourteenth-century Jain commentary on the grammatical text Naṉṉūl, and the twelfth-century Jain commentary on the grammatical text Nēminātām mention Agastya and Tolkāppiyaṉār as grammarians devoid of any divine association. Like the Virutti commentator, these commentators include citations from a grammar they identify as the Akattiyam107 along with a range of other grammatical perspectives and literary examples. While all of these Jain and Buddhist commentators draw from Caṅkam literature in their examples, none mention Nakkanrār’s story of the classical past, including the earliest commentator on the Tolkāppiyam, Iḻampūṟanar, who is identified as a Jain. In fact, Pērāciriyar himself hints at the sectarian nature of these intellectual debates. In a rare example of identifying his opposition, Pērāciriyar refers to those who challenge the authority of the Tolkāppiyam as “renunciants” (āllätār) who violate Tamil tradition108 and “those who oppose Vedic practice” (vēta vaḻakkoṭu māṟukolvār), terms that could refer to either Jain or Buddhist practitioners.109

In their sectarian affiliations the commentaries take part in a larger movement in the creation of communities, profuse scholarship associated with the creation of many religious and literary communities. During a time when sectarian boundaries were being reworked, religious doctrine was often “defined and defended in the realm of the literary”, across a wide range of religious communities writing in both Tamil and Sanskrit. However, the sectarian role in debates over the classical tradition should not be mistaken for the types of sectarian polemic seen throughout Tamil literary history.110 The boundaries between these scholarly groups, most likely established at a court or another non-sectarian site of royal patronage, was porous. The Jain commentator on the Akapporu Vilakkam acknowledges the primacy of

106 The preamble to the Viṟacōliyam identifies Agastya as a student of the Buddhist saint Avalōkitēśvara, with no mention of the Tolkāppiyam or the story of the Caṅkams.

107 While the Yāpparunākalam Virutti commentator includes seven verses from the Akattiyam, the Naṉṉūl commentator includes sixteen. Iḻampūṟanar includes five. See Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1992), 246. “The richest collection of quotations from the work of Agastya the grammarian is found in Mayilainatar’s (13th century) commentary to the Nannul, which contains 18 fragments” (Chevillard 2009: 22).

108 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram, verse 645, p. 476.

109 Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram, verse 649, p. 481.

110 The Shaivite devotional poems are well-known for their attacks on Jains and Buddhists. The Shaivite minister Cēkkilār’s critique of the Jain Čīvakacintāmaṇi stands out as a notable example from this period.
Agastya and Tolkāppiyam, and the Tolkāppiyam commentator Naccinārkkiṇiyar is well known for his erudite and sensitive commentary on the Jain courtly epic Cīvakacintāmaṇi. Aṭiyārkkunallār, though himself a Shaivite, commented on the Jain epic Cilappatīkāram and his patron is said to be a Jain minister. Nowhere in the commentaries are doctrinal points explicitly discussed, and even Pērāciriyar concedes that the heretical position taken by non-Vedic people is specific to contemporary times; heterodox communities of the Āṅkam period would not have challenged Tamil grammar in such a way.111 The Virutti commentator, while identified as Jain in the introductory pāyiram and by the many Jain poems throughout his commentary, draws on multiple traditions in his literary examples, including those from Shaivite and Vaishnavite sources. Throughout his commentary, he singles out for praise the Shaivite grammarian Mayēccurar, whom he praises with numerous Shaivite epithets. Additionally, his imitative examples do not appear reflect a Jain aesthetic vision as does the Buddhist commentary on the Viṇacōliyam.112

The differences in understanding of the Tamil tradition may be more accurately situated in sectarian style, rather than in ideological polemic. While many of the Brahmanical commentators participate in a network of scholars who emphasize the authoritative power of a singular, classical tradition substantiated by mythical and divine origins, the Jain commentators accept multiple authoritative claims on Tamil language and literature, including those from other language traditions. In their more catholic approach to the Tamil tradition, these Jain commentators appear to participate in a pan-Indian Jain approach to poetics, an approach shared by the twelfth-century Sanskrit Jain poetician Hēmacandra, a contemporary of the Virutti commentator. As Gary Tubb explains in his work on this Jain scholar, “the amalgamative approach characteristic of Hēmacandra is in fact a distinctive feature of a whole body of work by Jain scholars”113 who emphasized “the importance (...) of taking different points of view into consideration.”114 Tubb points out that “underlying their approach was a shared attitude, an intellectual stance that Gerow, in discussing Hēmacandra, described as ‘a comprehensive skepticism rare among Indian śāstris,’”115 an attitude clearly shared by the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti commentator.

There exists almost no scholarship on the history of Jain poetics in South India, let alone the relationship between Jain poetic traditions in Sanskrit, Tamil and other languages, making a conclusive statement about pan-Indian sectarian styles impossible. However, thinking in such terms acknowledges the existence of interpretive communities that neither reflect the categories of “Jain”, “Shaivite” or “Buddhist” as they are commonly understood, nor do they reflect a

111 “vēta vaḷakkoṭu māṟukolvār ikkāḷattuc colliṅum iranta kāḷattup piṟa pācāṇṭikaḷum mūṅruvaikaic caṅkaṭtu nāṟku varunattotu paṭṭa cāṁṛorum atu kṛuṟ” (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Marapiyal 94, p. 481).


114 Ibid., 61.

115 Ibid., 54.
courtly literary culture free of sectarian concerns. In the case of South India during the eighth through the fourteenth century, when intellectual culture was shaped by the anxiety over defining Tamil language and literature, the vastly different interpretations of the role of the Tamil past in this project reveal the complexity of affiliations between these various scholarly networks.

Although the Caṅkam conventions continue to influence Tamil poetics, the next generation of Tamil scholarship centers around different aesthetic and cultural concerns. The next part of my dissertation looks at this transitional moment in the history of Tamil literary culture, during which time debates over the authority of the Caṅkam past are replaced by a new poetic system, in which all literature, old and new, is theorized in terms of a royal or divine patron. While the Caṅkam poems are included in this system, they are not granted a privileged place, and there is no mention of their early history. This new system, articulated in the pāṭṭiyal treatises, dominates Tamil scholarly and literary production until the late nineteenth century, when the strategy of preservation and recovery found in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries will again be privileged.
Chapter 2

Outside the Caṅkam Canon: Innovation in Akam Poetics in the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti Commentary

While Pērāciriyar’s identification of an authoritative past serves to justify the antiquity and excellence of the Tamil literary tradition, his canonizing project does not leave room for literary innovation within the conventions laid out in the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems. Rather, in inferring through both his choice of literary examples and his refutation of contemporary scholars that contemporary literature is not worthy of theorization, Pērāciriyar transforms the authoritative past into a relic, effective as a means to promote his interpretation of Tamil amidst a competitive intellectual milieu, but ultimately disconnected from actual literary production.

Among the scholars who share Pērāciriyar’s investment in the Tamil classical past, only Pērāciriyar takes such a conservative stance regarding new literary developments. However, even Nakkīrar’s commentary, which reinterprets the classical akam poetics of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems as a poetic system that privileges the new narrative genre of the kōvai,

\[\text{footnote}{116}{This despite his theoretical position on the flexibility of literary language, discussed by the previous chapter.}\]

\[\text{footnote}{117}{Pērāciriyar allows for several notable exceptions. Chapter 4 deals with the implications of such deviations from his standard position.}\]
does not attempt to revive the old poetic system through creative imitation;\textsuperscript{118} rather, a new genre must be devised for innovation.\textsuperscript{119}

However, not all scholars of this period limit the development of akam poetics in the service of a canonizing project. For scholars such as the Yēpparūṅkala Virutti commentator, who do not accept the story of the Caṅkam past or the authoritative status of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam “canon” as articulated by Pērācīriyar and Nakkīrār, akam poetics provide fertile material for new and varied literary production in the service of new aesthetic priorities. Unfettered by the need to adhere to a monolithic interpretation of the Tamil past, the Yēpparūṅkala Virutti commentary offers a range of alternative interpretations of akam poetics, interpretations that have been lost in Tamil literary history.\textsuperscript{120} This chapter looks at literary innovation in the “alternative” akam examples of the Yēpparūṅkala Virutti, in which akam poetics is not limited to the divisions of the Caṅkam compilations of the Eṭṭutokai (and to a lesser extent, the Pattuppāṭhu) and the new kō vai, but encompasses a range of literary experiments based on poetic techniques not emphasized in the early poems, such as new meters, alliteration and poetic ornament (alaṅkāra). In this model, the akam poems of the Caṅkam corpus do not reflect an ancient system that must be preserved or carefully managed at the risk of corruption, but rather

\textsuperscript{118} This reference to imitation as a productive form of nostalgia draws on Thomas Greene’s discussion of the Renaissance practice of \textit{imitatio}, which Greene distinguishes from the intertextuality of earlier literary traditions. Greene argues that it is the historical consciousness of rupture experienced by the humanists (first articulated by Petrarch) and the subsequent yearning to participate in a lost community of scholars that drives imitation in the humanist endeavor, which Greene identifies as a “revivalist initiative.” See Thomas Greene, \textit{The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry} (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1982.

\textsuperscript{119} Throughout his commentary, Nakkīrār juxtaposes verses from the seventh-century Pāṇṭikkōvai with selections from the Caṅkam compilations referenced by Pērācīriyar, situating the important new genre of the kō vai within the Tamil literary canon associated with the Caṅkam past. For Nakkīrār, such an introduction of newness does not pose a threat to the Caṅkam canon or the Tolkāppiyam, in part because the theoretical system laid out in the “new” grammar of the Iraiyaṅgār Akapporuḷ draws its authority not from its status as the earliest treatise on Tamil literature, but from its association with both the god Shiva, who is said to have composed the work after knowledge of the Tolkāppiyam had been lost, and the Pandyan king, whose prayers were responsible for the divine composition. However, while divine authorship and royal patronage may justify the introduction of the kō vai to the Tamil literary corpus, Nakkīrār’s framework should not be seen as an invitation to alternative interpretations of the tradition, but as a strict guide to acceptable innovation. In fact, even though the Iraiyaṅgār Akapporuḷ is understood to be chronologically distant from the composition of the Tolkāppiyam, nowhere does Nakkīrār acknowledge a substantive difference between the two texts. Rather, by identifying the Iraiyaṅgār Akapporuḷ as a replacement for the “lost” poetics of the Tolkāppiyam and by including illustrative verses from the Tolkāppiyam throughout his commentary, Nakkīrār presents the new akam poetics as a seamless interpretation of the old tradition.

The same limitation applies to the other major treatise on akam poetics from this period, the thirteenth-century Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam, which also limits its analysis to verses from the Caṅkam canon and the kō vai, explicitly identifying the text as being composed by one “having researched the ancient poems and the Tolkāppiyam.” (Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam pāyiram) These new theories of akam, both of which are firmly situated within the tradition discussed by Pērācīriyar, limit innovation in akam poetics to one schematic: that of the kō vai.

\textsuperscript{120} The degree to which these examples have disappeared in Tamil literary history reflects the hegemony of the kō vai tradition.
allow for the compatibility of the ancient tradition with new understandings of what constitutes literature and literary language.

In its exposition of the ninety-six verses of the Yāpparuṅkalam, the Virutti commentary provides hundreds of literary examples that differ dramatically from the literary examples seen in both the commentaries of Pērāciriyar and Nakkīrar. The scope of these examples is vast, ranging from the epics Culāmani and Civaṅkacintāmani to the devotional texts of the Jain Tiruppāmalai and the Shaivite Tiruveḷukkūrikai to versions of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Uṭayaṇa story. The Caṅkam compilations identified by Pērāciriyar and Nakkīrar also appear throughout the commentary, although they do not occupy a privileged position. While the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti provides an impressive display of the world of Tamil literature familiar to any contemporary Tamil scholar, the majority of the examples in the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti are poems which are not identified with an extant compilation or literary corpus, but reflect a Tamil literary universe about which we have little additional information, including whether or not these poems were limited to grammatical examples or were circulated in a wider literary milieu. The examples range in content, form and meter, including poems praising both the Jain arhat and the Brahmanical gods Vishnu and Shiva, poems that incorporate folk motifs and colloquial language, and “riddle” poems based on masterful word play. Amidst this large body of examples, many bear the influence of the akam conventions found in the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam akam poems both in their content and structure.

Determining the influence of poetic conventions in a tradition defined by anonymous intertextuality is a difficult (and often impossible) enterprise. Poets rarely mention their source material, and the conventions used by a poet often extend across different languages and genres, including genres outside the elite world of literate belles-lettres. Without the anchoring sense of property that a tradition invested in poetic authorship provides, metaphors, imagery and even syntax serve as “floating signifiers” available for borrowing without the need to acknowledge a predecessor. However, by including both verses from the Tolkāppiyam as well as individual poems from the Eṭṭutokai in his commentary, the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti commentator points to his familiarity with not only the poetics of the early akam tradition as it was articulated by the early treatise, but also with how this poetic system was expressed in individual poems associated with the early tradition.

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121 In his introduction, Ilaṅkumāṇg gives a comprehensive list of the literary and grammatical texts included in the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti commentary. See Yāpparuṅkala Virutti, 1973: 28.

122 See the previous chapter for discussion of the role of the Caṅkam past in the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti.

123 Like most Tamil commentaries, the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti does not identify the sources for these examples. According to Mu. Arunachalam, the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti is the first Tamil scholar to create his own examples. However, the use of these examples in other commentaries complicates this conclusion. The question of whether or not these were standard grammatical examples or literature circulated in a wider literary milieu is for now a matter of speculation.

124 An important exception is the formal genre of the avaiyattakkam, in which the author displays his humility and his indebtedness to past masters. See S. Cauntara Pantiyan, Tamilil Avaiyattakkap Patalkal (Chennai: Star Piracuram, 1988) for an overview of the genre.
These conventions represent one of the most complex poetic systems in South Asian literature. In its focus on the stages of romantic love between a well-matched hero and heroine, akam poetics cover a subject matter common to many South Asian (and world) literary traditions. However, akam poetics as reflected in the early Caṅkam poems and the Tolkāppiyam are marked by a highly conventional system that distinguishes the tradition from other literature on similar subject matter. This system, which has received substantially more attention from contemporary scholars than any other field of Tamil poetics, centers around short monologues set in the voice of a stock set of characters, including the hero, heroine, heroine’s girlfriend, the foster mother and the courtesan, among others. These characters are always anonymous, reflecting their status as archetypes with set limitations on how and what they can express.

The emotions articulated by these characters as they navigate their inner lives are described using a striking system of conventions that correspond the various stages of romantic love with specific landscapes of the Tamil country. In this system, called the tiṇai system, “a whole language of signs is created by relating the landscapes as signifiers to (...) appropriate human feelings.” The use of images conventionally associated with the landscape of the forest (jasmine, mullai), for example, would situate the poem in the emotional landscape of the heroine’s anxious waiting for her lover after he has left her.

In this highly conventional system, poetic innovation comes from the skillful manipulation of this “vocabulary of symbols” associated with these “interior landscapes.” As Ramanujan points out, “in this world of correspondences between (landscape) and human experiences, a word like kurinci has several concentric circles of meaning: a flower, the mountain landscape, lovers’ union, a type of poem about all these, and musical modes for these poems. But its concrete meaning, “a mountain flower” is never quite forgotten.” This semantic flexibility results in complex layers of meaning that are simultaneously independent expressions of poetic virtuosity and dependent on participation in the larger corpus, in which

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126 As Ramanujan explains in his discussion of akam poetics, “the girl friend of the heroine may speak out on the following occasions: when the heroine, left behind by her lover, speaks of her loneliness; when she helps him elope; when she begs the hero to take good care of the heroine; when she tries to dissuade the parents from their search for the runaway couple, or consoles the grieving mother” Ramanujan 1985 quoting Tolkāppiyam Poruṭatikāram 42 in his Afterword, p. 248).

127 In the Afterword of his collection of translations, Ramanujan provides a useful chart introducing the reader to the symbolic vocabulary associated with each landscape. See Ramanujan 1967: 107.

128 Ibid., 241.

129 Ramanujan’s well-known translation of the term “akattīṇai” and the title of his collection of translations.

“every (poem) resonates in counterpoint with all the other uses of the whole tradition (…)”.  

While the Tolkāppiyam discusses akam poetics as a mode that is not specific to a particular genre, thinking about the akam tradition as articulated in the Tolkāppiyam and the akam poems of the Eṭṭuttokai as a generic category is helpful in understanding the “rules of the game” associated with a conventional interpretation of the tradition.

On the one hand, the interconnected nature of such a poetic system limits interpretive possibilities. Significant deviation from the tradition, such as a poem in which the heroine takes a lover after marriage, or a metaphor that compares the heroine to an image associated with the hero, such as a kingfisher preying on fish, would signal to the learned reader that he was outside the horizon of expectations of the Cāṅkam akam genre and therefore outside the network of conventions on which a meaningful interpretation of the poems depends.

On the other hand, the poetic effect of the poems centers on the poetic technique of suggestion (uḷḷuṟai), in which “the interplay of symbols (in the early Tamil poems) causes the poems to create a resonant effect in the reader’s mind, with each symbol reinforcing the others to create an almost inexhaustible variety.” The suggested meaning comes from the juxtaposing of these symbols in relationships of comparison that “is often not implied by the word such as like or by an evident metaphor. Rather, the two objects are simply mentioned in different parts of the poem with no apparent connection, and it is left to the reader to relate them.” Such an evocative polysemic juxtaposition of images is evident in the following poem from the Cāṅkam akam compilation Kūṟuntokai, a poem set in the landscape of the forest during the time of the monsoon (mullai), also associated with the heroine’s waiting for the hero (irattal). In this forest (mullai) poem, the heroine’s friend (tōḷi) wants to confirm whether or not the sound she

131 Ibid., 282.

132 The discussion of genre in the Tolkāppiyam is limited to a brief section in the Chapter on Poetics (Ceyyuḷiyal) on the seven types of literature. While our understanding of the terms included is largely dependent on later commentarial intervention, neither the categories of “akam” or “puṟam” are included in this list. Genre becomes a central theoretical category in later poetics, ranging from the new kōvai akam grammars to treatises informed by Dandin’s Kāvyādarśa to the praise genres of the pāṭṭiyal tradition, discussed at length in chapters 3 and 4.

133 The relationship between this conventional system and the resulting limitations of interpretation is the basis of Selby’s distinction between the use of suggestion in Tamil and the use of suggestion in Prakrit and Sanskrit. See Selby 2000. As I discuss throughout this chapter, I think Selby overstates the limitations of early akam poetry, in which, as I see it, polysemy as the primary poetic logic in contrast to later literature. Here I follow Hart’s argument about the development of suggestion in South Indian literature and in Indian literature more generally. Hart 1975.


135 Ibid., 176.

136 As is the case in many of these poems, the heroine and her friend share an emotional life, making the distinction between the characters difficult. While the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti commentary does not specify the speaker of this poem, the commentary on the Kūṟuntokai poem below places this type of poem in the voice of her friend, who wants to reassure the heroine that the hero is coming. In the case of the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti poem, the interpretation is not affected by the choice of speaker; however, in the Kūṟuntokai poem, the choice of speaker opens up different possibilities of suggested meaning.
hears comes from the cows returning home as the sun sets, or from the lover’s chariot as he returns home to the chariot.

_Kuruntokai_ 275.

Let’s climb to the top of the high rock covered in sprawling jasmine, and make sure, oh friend!

Is that the sound of bells hanging on the necks of sweet cows chewing grass as they return home in the changing light with their mates?

Or is it the sound of bells on a chariot making its way through the wet mud as (our lover) returns home with a steadfast heart, his work completed, surrounded by his guards who wield strong bows?¹³⁷

Much of the beauty of this _Kuruntokai_ poem rests in the use of suggestion. By beginning with the word “jasmine” (_mullai_), the poem immediately signals to the reader that this is a poem that describes anxious separation. Throughout the poem the poet returns to images that remind the heroine (and the reader) of the heroine’s loneliness. The time is evening when the cows come home from their grazing, a time known for the intense pain it elicits in separated lovers. As Hart explains, “(in Tamil poetry) the agony of night is foreshadowed by evening and is not directly described; the most poignant time of suffering is its beginning, filled as it is with foreboding.”¹³⁸ If evening is the most painful time of day for separated lovers, the monsoon time is the most painful season, as this is the time when men return home from their various duties. The reference to the chariot’s coming through the wet mud (_īrmanal kāṭṭāṟu_) situates the poem in the rainy season. However, while interpretation of this poem is clearly situated within the expectations of the _akam_ conventions, there is no one “solution” to this poem. Whether in the implicit comparison between the cows returning home with their mates and the heroine’s loneliness, or in the question posed by the friend, which ultimately remains unanswered, the poem offers up a range of interpretive possibilities within the emotional world of sad longing.¹³⁹

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¹³⁷ _mullai yūrnta kalluya rērik kāṇṭaṇam varukaṇ cēmō tōli ellūrc cērtarum ēruṭai yīvattup pullār nallāṅ pūṁnaṅi kollō ceyviṅai muṭṭita cemma lūḷamoṭu valvil ilaiyar pakkam pōṛra īrmanṅ kāṭṭāṟu varūm tērmaṅi kollṅ tiyampiya vuḷavē.


¹³⁹ In his discussion of the technique of suggestion, Hart offers analyses of the polysemy of a range of poems from both the _akam_ and _puṟam_ compilations. See Hart 1975: 161-171.
On the one hand, the akam examples of the Yāpparūṇkala Virutti reveal familiarity with both the conventional structure and the symbolic vocabulary of the early akam poems. To an uninitiated reader, many of these poems could be mistaken for examples of the early corpus. For example, the following poem from the Yāpparūṇkala Virutti commentary echoes the Kuruntokai poem discussed above.

Let’s climb the mound of white sand and go see, oh friend!
The ship and its mast appear in the great sea
like a post and a war elephant
on the fertile seashore of that man who has forgotten us.\footnote{Note on translation: Literally, “in the land filled with seashores.”}

Both the structure and content of this poem situate it within the interpretive world of the early akam conventions. Set in the heroine’s voice, the poem presents a dramatic address to a girlfriend who is the heroine’s confidante and is, like the heroine, an anonymous character who expresses herself according to poetic convention. The poem centers around one simile - the form and nature of the hero’s ship likened to a war elephant and the post to which it is tied - before concluding with a description of the hero in terms of the landscape to which he belongs. The syntax of the poem emphasizes the importance of place in the poem; the Tamil ends with the oblique locative “in the land” (nāṭṭē),\footnote{Hart points out that “this is the most often used formula for suggestion in the poems” (Hart 1975: 186).} framing the emotions represented in the poem in terms of the landscape system central to the akam conventions.\footnote{Many of the emotions associated with the mullai landscape correspond to those associated with the neytal landscape. Hart points out that as the landscape of neytal is the least specific of the five landscape, “it was probably the last to take shape.” (Hart, 1975: 243).} The references to white sand, the ship and the sea as well as the identification of the hero as a man from a land by the sea situate the poem in the landscape of the seashore (nēytaḷ), associated with the sorrow the heroine experiences due to separation from the hero (irāṅkal).

However, the simile used in the Yāpparūṇkala Virutti example, while not outside the realm of a meaningful interpretation, does not elicit the same poetic effect as do the implicit comparisons featured in the Kuruntokai poem. In contrast to the Kuruntokai poem, where the suggestive juxtaposition of images opens up rich potential for interpretation informed by the knowledge of the akam conventions, the role of suggestion in this poem is not as clear. If the ship is likened to the elephant, does the post suggest anything other than the straightforward comparison of form with the ship’s mast? Even if the post suggests entrapment of the hero, the
most obvious concordance of meaning, how would such an interpretation relate to the larger context of the poem?

These poetic examples, in which *akam* conventions are used without the use of suggestion central to the early poems, are scattered throughout the *Virutti* commentary. In the following conventional messenger poem addressed to a heron, the description of the hero hints at the suggestive possibilities of earlier poems of this type.

Oh heron who hunts in the flowery pond for the tiru crab!
Is it so wrong for you to say one nice thing about
the lovesickness spreading across my chaste belly
to the man of a land
where waterfalls roar, releasing watery spray, pearls and black crabs?

This poem, which is structured as an address by the heroine to the heron, a trope familiar to the *akam* tradition, contains familiar references, such as the description of the hero in terms of his land and the description of the lovesickness that afflicts the heroine. Identifying an emotional landscape for this poem is not as clear cut because of the mixing of images associated with the landscape of first union (waterfalls) with the landscape of infidelity after marriage (heron, pond). However, this muddling of landscapes is often used to various poetic effect even in the more conventional poems and does not itself signal a violation of tradition. In the case of this poem, however, it is not clear whether or not the description of the hero is meant to elicit suggested meaning. If the reference to the heron’s hunting for crabs refers to the hero’s infidelity, a common correspondence in the *akam* poems, the suggested meaning ends there.

Although this poem resonates with a seashore poem (*nēyal*) from the early *Naṟṟiṇai* compilation, the use of suggestion in the *Naṟṟiṇai* poem is far more evocative. When we compare the poems, the difference in poetic effect is clear.

*Naṟṟiṇai* 54.

*Incomplete translation for the purposes of comparison:*

“White heron with strong legs!
Listen to me!
Even though you like going about with your family,
hunting in the swirling waters,
stay a while here with your kin,
nibbling on the dark flesh (of little fish) (...).
The early evening is full of sorrow.

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*144 tirunantu pūmpoykai tērntumnum nārāy!
oru naṟṟuraittal tavaṟo? - karunantu
muttuppan ṯumum mulparkuvi nātaṟken
pattiniṁai alku pacappu
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkala Ceyyuḷiyal 24 p. 227*
Talk to our lord of the seashore surrounded by screwpine trees
where young ŋāḻal trees, their tender leaves
plucked for garlands,
caressed by the clear shining waves,
so he knows of our suffering.¹⁴⁵

Both poems describe a similar situation, yet the imagery in the Nāṟṟinai poem conjures up a world of interpretive possibilities absent in the simpler address of the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti example. The heroine’s request for the heron to stay echoes her desire for her hero to stay with her. The image of the heron’s nibbling at the fish suggest the hero’s enjoyment of the heroine, as does the image of the tender leaves being plucked.

In the next Yāpparūṅkala Virutti example, the poet draws on the familiar convention of the heroine’s concern for her modesty after she has made love with the hero for the first time. Here she expresses her fear that no one but the surrounding forest will hold the hero to his promise of marriage.

Approaching the bank where my girlfriend, my other friends and I play
that man with his chariot and charioteer came and took my virtue.
If he leaves after saying words (sweet) like milk and honey,
Won’t the kāṉ flower, the grass and the screwpine tree all be my (only) witness?¹⁴⁶

The well-known Kuruntokai 25 echoes a similar theme.

Kuruntokai 25:
No one was there except that thief,
and if he lies what can I do?

¹⁴⁵ vaḷainīr mēyuntu kīlaimutar celli
vāppaṟai virumpuṟai āyin tum tuṟciṟai
irumpulā aruntunig kīlaiyōtu cirīturuntu
karunkāl venkuruku eṉava kēnmati
perumpulam piṟē cirupug mālai
atunī aṟiyig arupumūr uṟaiyai
notumal neṉcān kollātu eṇkurai
irṟāṅku uṇara uraimati taḷaiyōr
koṟkuḷai arupuṟyā kumāri ŋāḻal
tenṭṟai maṇippuṟan taivarunī
kaṇṭal vēlīnum turaiṅḷā kōṟkē!

¹⁴⁶ yāṉum tōliyum āyamum āṟum turaiṅṭṇit
tāṉum tērum pākagum vantē nalaṟuṇṭāṇ
tēṉum pāḷum pōḷvaṟa collip pirivāṇēl
kāṉum puḷḷum kaitaṟuṟum ēḷām kāṟivagṛē?
Virutti commentary on Yāpparūṅkalam, verse 95, p. 384. Also, Virutti commentary on Yāpparūṅkalam, verse, p. 350.
There was a heron
looking for eels in the running water,
its green legs like millet stalks,
when he took me. (transl. Hart)

Both poems describe the heroine’s isolation and helplessness faced with only the flora and fauna around her as witnesses to her love-making with the hero. However, while the heroine’s situation is made explicit in the Yāpparunikala Virutti poem, the Kūruntokai poem suggests the isolation of the heroine through the description of the indifferent heron, engaged in its own activity of consumption as the hero has consumed her. Although the akam conventions situate this scene in a particular interpretive context (this poem would not be set in the voice of the courtesan, for example), the relationship between the description of the heron and the relationship between the hero and the heroine is not made explicit, but is left for the reader to imagine.147

The following set of Yāpparunikala Virutti poems describe a theme also familiar to the early akam poems: that of the heroine’s fear for the hero as he traverses dangerous paths to return home to her. Each of these poems is clearly situated in the horizon of expectations of the early akam genre, but like the previous examples, lack the complex suggestive imagery of the early poems.

Oh man of the cāral tract!
If you don’t come back, I will be frightened.
The path that you take is filled with
beautiful spirits and
forest streams that rush with swirling eddies.148

Oh man of the mountain tract!
How will you come (safely) on that path where thieves
and tigers roam?
How will you swim in the rapid river that pours down from the great mountain
where the thick dark of the night
mingles with a cold wind
and clouds full and heavy over the shining mountain

147 The Yāpparunikala Virutti example contains other deviations of usage, including the involvement of the friend in the approach of the hero.

148 cūral pampiya cīrkaṉ yāṟē;
cūraṇa makaṣī rāraṇaṅ kīgarē;
vāralai ēṅjē yāṇaṅ cuvalē;
cūral nāṭa! nīvaṅa lāṟē
Virutti commentary on Yāpparunikalam, verse 95, p. 389.
after having taken water from the dark spreading ocean.\textsuperscript{149}

If you come thinking of us on the stony way on the banks of the forest river, as the tiger runs away, afraid.
Let the grey elephant fear the spear in your hand.
We are afraid of the mountain nymphs grabbing you.
So don’t go.\textsuperscript{150}

If you come on the mountain path, thinking of me, the fierce bull who even attacks elephants runs away in fear of you.
Let the elephants (also) fear the spear in your hand!
We are afraid of the sky maidens grabbing you.
So don’t go.\textsuperscript{151}

Compare with the way in which this “situation” is expressed in the early akam poems of the \textit{Aiṅkurunūru}.

Were you to go
on that forking, stony path
where elephants poach water
from the cattle troughs
dug by the sticks
of unskilled cowherds,
this soft-natured girl
with long, cloud-black tresses
will suffer alone.

Great Man with sturdy horses,
may you not be able to go. (transl. Selby)

\textsuperscript{149} Virutti commentary on \textit{Yāpparunākalam}, verse 95, p. 398.

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{karaiporu kānyāṛraṅ kallatār emmuḷḷi varutirāṅiṅ}
\textit{araiyirul yāmat tatupuli yēṛaṅci aṅṇṟupōṅa}
naraiyuru mēru nunkai vēḷaṅcum nummaṅ
\textit{varaiyara māṅkaiyar vavvutal aṅcutum vāṟalaiyō?}
Virutti commentary on \textit{Yāpparunākalam}, verse 76, p. 280.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{vāṅkac cōḷai varayātār emmuḷḷi varutirāṅiṅ}
yāṅkaṅ tāṛkkum ariyēṛu nummaṅci aṅṇṟapōṅa
yēṅaiyō nunkaiṅēḷ aṅcuka nummaṅ
\textit{vāṅara makaṅfir vavvutal aṅcutum vāṟalaiyō!}
Virutti commentary on \textit{Yāpparunākalam}, verse 76, p. 280.
The *Aiṅkuṟuṇūṟu* poem, among the shortest of the *Eṭṭuttokai* akam poems, reflects a different idiom than the *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti* poems on the same theme. In contrast to the *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti* poems, which explicitly state the danger faced by the hero, this short poem suggests the harsh nature of the path through the vivid description of a land so dry that the elephants must steal water where they can. The poem also contrasts this inhospitable landscape with the description of the heroine as gentle and soft, tempting the hero with the pleasures of domestic life if he stays.\(^{152}\)

This short selection of akam poems is representative of the transformation the tradition undergoes in the *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti* commentary. As poems that explicitly draw on the structure and conventions of the Caṅkam *akam* poems, these poems clearly intend to be associated with more conventional forms of the genre. However, without the use of suggestion and vivid descriptions that defines the *akam* poems of the *Eṭṭuttokai*, they push the boundaries of that generic category.

As many scholars from Frye to Jameson have argued, genre is not an objective category with impermeable boundaries that include or exclude individual expressions of the genre. Whether situated in social class or textual community, genre is a contract for purposes of interpretation that continually changes depending on new social and aesthetic contexts. Seen in these terms, while scholars invested in a more conservative interpretation might critique such innovations as an inferior use of the conventions at best and a violation of tradition at worst, the *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti akam* poems discussed so far generate interpretations that are meaningful within the horizon of expectations associated with the *akam* “genre,” a category that contains a range of poems even by the most conservative standard.\(^{153}\)

\(^{152}\) The Virutti commentator’s borrowing of akam conventions also extends to the borrowing from the imaginative world of the Caṅkam poems. The following two examples refer to the Caṅkam chieftains Kāri and Pāri, who figure in both the Caṅkam akam and puṟam poems.

Oh girl who trembles with shyness,
your arms like the bamboo that grows in Kāri’s victorious Mulḻūr,
Louder than the taṇṇumai drum that resounds on Pāri’s mountain
and louder than the paṟai drum of the Aryan kings
is the gossip in the heart of this famed city.
āriya maṇṭar paṟaiyin eluntiyampum
pāri paṟampiṇme踹ṇumai - kāri
viṟamullūr vēṅkai vetirnāṇuṇ tōḷāy
niraṇuullūr ulļa talar
Virutti commentary on *Yāpparuṅkalam*, verse 95, p. 393.

The feet of the women of Pāri’s land Parampu, suffused with dark-colored neytal flowers and kotti flowers make fragrant the hair of women from other countries, bowing (down before them).

“naṟuṇilai neytalum koṭṭiyum tiṇṭi
piranṭīṭup penṭir muṭināṟum pāri
paṟaṇṭīṭup penṭir aṭī”
Virutti commentary on *Yāpparuṅkalam*, verse 56, p. 238.

\(^{153}\) As in the long poems of the *Kūṅciippāṭṭu* and the *Mullaippāṭṭu*.  

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However, the next set of Yāpparuṅkala Virutti examples stretch the boundaries of the akam genre beyond the limits of the “contract,” making meaningful interpretation difficult. For example, the following poem places the characters of a conventional akam poem in a new context that frustrates meaningful interpretation.

The girl of the pālai lands which belong to the man with a golden chariot
beats the drum in the royal victory gate,
carrying a garland of fragrant kuvaḷai flowers
as the bees swarm around.\textsuperscript{154}

Why is a girl of the pālai lands, a desert not considered a real “landscape” by the tradition, beating a drum for this man? What is their relationship? In interpreting this verse as an “akam” poem, the reader is left stranded.

The following two poems retain the structure of dramatic address but also introduce new content that does not “make sense” in the interpretive world of the early akam poems.

Oh man of the mountains, where the gardens are surrounded by jewels,
grace the women/fools with your sweet words
even if they are old.\textsuperscript{155}

Oh woman with hair adorned with different types of flowers!
Embrace the man of the land of shining waters,
his chest decorated with finely-made garlands!\textsuperscript{156}

At first glance these poems do not appear so foreign; the structure of the poems is familiar and the hero is conventionally described. However, the introduction of two key words in these poems interfere with what would otherwise be a standard interpretive process. In the first poem, the description of the women as “old” violates all conventions, which dictate that the heroine be young, beautiful and well matched to the hero. In the second poem, the speaker violates convention by telling the heroine to “embrace” the hero. In the world of the early akam poems, such a command would not make sense. In what context would such a command be appropriate?

\textsuperscript{154} nar[korra vāyi[arūṅkuvaḷai tērko[ntu
cur̄umvan ūrppap pu[aitālē - po[ērān
pālai nal vāyi makal
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse , p. 237.

\textsuperscript{155} ma[ncucūl cōlai malaināta! mūttālum
aṅcol maṭavārkkku arūlu
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 59, p. 230.

\textsuperscript{156} iṇa malark kōṭāy! Ilaṅku nirc cērppaṇ
puṇai malart tārakalam pullu
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 59, p. 230.
Finally, the following poem retains the stock characters of the akam poems, but drops the structure and imagery.

She suffered more than him.
He suffered more than her.
And there is one who gave her away (her father).
And there is one who took hold of her ornamented hand (her husband).
He is a king of a beautiful mountain.
He is also a chieftain of the lovely seashore where puṇṇai trees grow.157

In this poem the stages of akam love are reduced to a simple series devoid of imagery or reference to the tiṇai system: the couple suffers and then they get married. The poet gestures towards the landscape tradition by describing the hero in terms of his land, but it is a confused description that identifies him both as a king of a beautiful mountain and the leader of the seashore. These descriptions appear in repetitive parataxis, as opposed to the compounded subordinate clauses that characterize the early akam poems, reflecting a different idiom. Without the interpretive guides provided by participation in the conventional akam genre, understanding the intent of this poem is difficult. Is the poem a commentary on the akam conventions? Although attempts at interpreting this poem are speculative, this could be taken as a poem that elicits humor.

The disorientation that results from reading these poems should not be confused with the poetic effect of suggestion, in which multiplicity of meaning prevents a “correct” reading. While the beauty of the early akam poems is derived in part from this openness, their participation in the conventional world of akam poetics guides the interpretive process. However, these poems should also not be seen as bad “akam imitations.” His deviation from the standard akam conventions is a deliberate move on the part of the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti commentator. Clearly familiar not only with the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam, but also with the individual poems of the Cāṅkam akam corpus, the commentator is deliberately eschewing the conventions in favor of some other project. How do we understand the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti’s choice to include these akam poems, which operate outside the interpretive guides to the tradition as established by the Cāṅkam poems and the Tolkāppiyam?

An answer to this question lies in the position of these poems in the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti commentary. These poems are not illustrations of akam content, but rather of metrical categories, most of which postdate the Cāṅkam poems. In fact, nowhere does the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti provide any analysis of akam content; even in his commentary on the last verse of the

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157 ivaṇiṇum ivaṇiṇum ivaḷ varuntiṇaḷē;
ivaḷiṇum varuntiṇaṇ ivaṇē;
ivaḷaiṇ koṭuṭōṇ oruvuṇum ulaṇē;
тоṭиккai piṭṭiṇo oruvuṇum ulaṇē;
naṇmalai nājaṇum ulaṇē;
puṇṭaiyaṇ kāṇal cērppaṇum ulaṇē.
Virutti commentary on Yāpparūṅkalam, verse 72, p. 271.
Yāpparůṅkalam which includes akam content\textsuperscript{158} among the topics with which a poet should be familiar, the commentator is silent, giving neither interpretation nor literary examples.\textsuperscript{159} Rather, throughout his commentary, the Yāpparůṅkala Viruttī commentator uses his akam literary examples to introduce a new aesthetic concern with the artificiality of literary language, from the emphasis on the decorative effects of alliteration and internal rhyme to poems whose interpretation requires readerly attention to their syntactic construction. Viewed through this interpretive lens, the content of the Yāpparůṅkala Viruttī akam examples, let alone their relationship to more conventional forms of the genre, is of less concern than the poems’ ability to illustrate this different conceptualization of the literary.

The akam examples used in the commentary on the second chapter of the Yāpparůṅkalam, the Chapter on Metrics (Ceyyuḷiyal) focus primarily on the effect of phonetic ornamentation on literary composition.\textsuperscript{160} Throughout his commentary on the Chapter on Metrics, his akam examples reflect this aesthetic shift. The example of the girl of the pālai landscape, discussed earlier as an example that frustrates conventional interpretation, is used as an example of a poem in nēricai cintiyal venpā meter, distinguished from other venpā poems for its use of second syllable rhyming (etukai, Skrt. dvitiyāksaraprāśa). Below is the Tamil version of that poem with the rhyming highlighted.

\begin{verbatim}
naṟkorra vaṉaṟaṅkuvaḷait tärkoṇṭu
cuṟumvaṇ tāṟppap puṭaṭṭālē - porṟēṟān
pālai nal vaṉiṅ makal
\end{verbatim}

Not only is this an effective example of a poem with second syllable rhyming, but the repetition of consonants throughout the poem, along with the long vowel ā, though not required for the meter, highlights the special use of language in this poem. Poetic content and its relationship to

\textsuperscript{158} The list includes the components (uruppu) of landscape (tinaǐ), speaker (kūṟru), time (kālam) found throughout akam poetics, including the Tolkāppiyam, but omits other components associated with this list.

\textsuperscript{159} The extent of his analysis of akam content is the inclusion in this section of several grammatical verses that reinterpret the two categories of akam and puṟam that govern the Čāṅkam poetics as articulated by the Tolkāppiyam with a fourfold system attributed to an alternate grammar, the Paṅgiruppataḷam. Throughout his commentary on this section, he emphasizes the diversity of the akam tradition by providing lists of exemplary grammatical verses from texts other than the Tolkāppiyam. However, despite his obvious familiarity with multiple articulations of akam poetics, he provides no literary examples in this section, either from the early corpus or from his “new” examples.

\textsuperscript{160} Although alliteration and internal rhyme also appear in the early poems, the use of such sonic effect is sporadic and does not follow specific metrical rules. “From a survey of ten poems of the Akananuru, the frequency of beginning rhyme in Tamil appears to be about 20 percent (…) Hart 1975: 210.

\textsuperscript{161} The English translation reads: The girl of the pālai lands which belong to the man with a golden chariot beats the drum in the royal victory gate, carrying a garland of fragrant kuvaḷai flowers as the bees swarm around.
the signifiers of the akam system is secondary to the ornamental use of alliteration, the use of which pervades the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti akam experiments in this section.

In the following poem from the same section, the poet invokes the heroine and the hero in a situation that makes their relationship unclear.

When the warrior comes with his bull,  
he (appears) with crowds of fierce soldiers,  
and he will destroy (others) with his powers of killing!  
Oh girl! Listen to me!

Although the poem echoes the akam conventions, the relationship between the characters is confusing. The speaker could be telling the girl to stay inside to avoid falling in love with the warrior on procession, in the style of the later kalampakam. Or the speaker could be reassuring the heroine that her lover will in fact come back alive because of his martial prowess. Here the multiplicity of meanings is not a productive evocation of interpretive possibilities, but rather results in a void of meaning. However, as an example of not only a nēricai cintiyal venpā poem, but a poem illustrating the poetic effect of multiple alliteration, it is extremely effective.

Not only does the poem contain second syllable rhyming, but less formally defined alliteration is scattered throughout the short poem. From the three instances of “kā” in the first line to the repetition of syllables in “naṅkāy! nam kē!” in the last line, this poem reflects an emphasis in sonic effect different from what we see in the Ėṭṭuttokai poems in which alliteration, especially the formal use of rhyming, is far less striking.

Even those verses not explicitly defined by their use of alliteration privilege this use of language. This extends even to poems composed in the āciriyappā meter familiar to the Caṅkam akam corpus, such as the poems discussed earlier that describe the dangerous path of the hero.

Alliteration is used throughout this poem, including second syllable rhyming.

vāṅakac cōlai varaiyatar emmullī varutirāyin

162 Virutti commentary on Yāpparūṅkalam, verse 76, p. 280.
This emphasis on a literary language that draws attention to its own artificiality reflects a shift in aesthetic sensibility in Tamil literature. In particular, the use of second syllable rhyme (etukai, Skrt. dvitiyākṣaraprāśa) is associated with the development of Shaiivite devotional literature, first appearing in the compilations of the Tēvāram (600-900 CE) and the Tiruvācakam (900 CE). The technique is also a standard feature of the long narrative poem in Tamil, beginning with the early Buddhist poem Maṇimēkalai and becoming more prominent in the epics (kāppiyam, Skrt. kāva) Cīvakacintāmani (900 CE) and the Kamparāmāyaṇam (12th century?). The shift from a poetics of suggestion to a poetics that privileges complex rhyme and meter may reflect the introduction of the Sanskrit emphasis on poetic ornaments (alāṅkāra) associated with sound, a central component of early Sanskrit poetics until Anandavardhana issues in a new paradigm.

However, this recognition of what may have been a new Sanskritic emphasis on rhetorical devices associated with sound should not be seen as a borrowing of Sanskrit prosody. As Bronner points out in his discussion of the Tamil and Telugu versions of the Sanskrit poetic technique of bitextual poetry (śleṣa), the Southern traditions adapt Sanskrit poetics to the contingencies of their own vocabulary and syntax. Similarly, although the increased use of alliteration in these poems may reflect a new interest in anuprāsa associated with Sanskrit literature and literary theory, etukai itself is “a distinctive feature of the poetry and musical composition in South Indian languages.”

This shift may be better understood in terms of a larger distinction between Sanskrit and Tamil understandings of literary language. While Sanskrit poetics has always centered on what distinguishes literary language from other forms of language, Tamil poetics, beginning with the Tolkāppiyam, whose theory of language includes both the language of literature, the language of the court and the language of merchants, does not make such a distinction. While a

165 The technique is also used in the Cilappatikaram, although less consistently.
166 Many of the stanzas of these poems are composed in the ācirīya viruttam meter, defined as four lines that contain etukai.
167 The seventh-century Kāvyādarśa dedicates seventy-seven verses to the poetic figure of “internal rhyme” (yamaka) in addition to a short discussion of alliteration (anuprāsa). For the “paradigm shift” in Sanskrit poetics, see Lawrence McCrea, The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, 2008). Ironically, this shift centered around the new role of suggestion (dhvani) in Sanskrit literary theory at the same time that suggestion was being de-emphasized in the Tamil tradition.
168 Bronner 2010: 132-140.
comprehensive comparison of the treatments of literary language in Sanskrit and Tamil is a subject for future research, the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti’s choice to include examples that highlight such a special use of language, even at the expense of coherent meaning, suggests the influence of this radically different conception of the literary.

If the examples in the Chapter on Meter (Ceyyuliyal) highlight an emphasis on the artificiality of literary language through the use of new modes of alliteration and versification, the examples in the last chapter, the Chapter on Miscellany (Olipiyal), reflect a similar approach to theorizing poetic content. In contrast to the akam poetics of suggestion, in which the construction and interpretation of content comes from the use of symbolic vocabulary associated with various emotional states, the poetics on display in the Chapter on Miscellany situate the interpretation of meaning in the proper unravelling of complex poetic structures that draw attention to their unnatural construction.

The simplest of these poems are included as illustrations of porukol, a series of poetic techniques which make explicit the role of the structure of the poem in the construction of meaning. For example, a niral nirai poem in this category draws attention to the semantic connections between words in a poem, particularly when these connections challenge conventional syntax. To illustrate the etir niral nirai poem, or a poem in which the semantic connections are reversed from conventional order, the commentary introduces the first example discussed in this chapter, an address by the heroine’s friend to the heroine about signs of the hero’s return.

To refresh, the poem reads as follows.

Let’s climb the mound of white sand and go see, oh friend! The ship and its mast appear in the great sea like a post and a war elephant in the fertile seashore land of that man who has forgotten us.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the relationship of comparison in this poem is obviously between the ship and the elephant, and the mast and the post, yet the syntax of the poem reverses the order of these images, forcing the reader to make the connection himself to generate a meaningful interpretation.

The next poem, discussed earlier as an example of an akam poem lacking in suggestion, illustrates a kugai en niral nirai poem, in which the poet draws attention to the lack of parallelism in the poem’s syntax.

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170 In her short discussion of niral nirai, Rajam identifies the technique as an example of a “mode of employing the various types of toṭai (which can refer to the repetition of sounds or content).” This definition explicitly associates the art of alliteration with the art of syntax. Rajam 1992: 205.

171 kuṟa venmaṇal ēri niru niru
iṅgaṁ kāṅkam vammō tōḷi!
kalīṟum kantum pōḷa nāḷikaṭal
kūmpum kaḷaṅum tōṅrum
tōṅral marantōr turai keḷu nāṭṭē
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 95, p. 382.
Approaching the bank where my girlfriend, my other friends and I play that man with his chariot and charioteer came and took my virtue. If he leaves after saying words (sweet) like milk and honey, Won’t the kāṉ flower, the grass and the screwpine all be my witness?

While the first, second and fourth line each contain three nominatives (my girlfriend, my other friends and I; (the hero), his chariot and his friend; the kāṉ flower, the grass and the screwpine), the third line only contains two (milk and honey).

The effect is more dramatic in Tamil.

1. yāṉum 2. tōliyum 3. āyamum āṭum turaiṇaṇnit
2. tānum 2. tērum 3. pākanum vanṭeṇ nalaṇṇṭāṇ
3. tēnum 2. pālum (third nominative missing) pōvaṇa collip pirivāṇēl
4. kānum 2. pullum 3. kaitaiyum ellām kariyangē?

Not only does the poem contain the alliteration discussed earlier, but it draws attention to its own structure as a series of parallel nominatives interrupted by the third line.

The next example illustrates the porulkōḷ mode called “⟨aṭimaṟi moli māṟru⟩,” or “poem in which the lines are interchangeable” without sacrificing meaning or rhythm (ōcai).

I have included a literal rendition of this poem to better illustrate this technique.

It is a little forest path with streams that rush with swirling eddies
There are forest deities (who come as) beautiful spirits
If you don’t come back, I will be frightened.
Oh man of the cāral tract! (This is) the path that you take.

In contrast to much of akam poetry, in which the compounding of images requires a deft use of syntax to obtain multiple layers of suggestion without sacrificing meaning, the classification of this poem is based on the status of each line in this poem as an independent semantic unit that can appear in any order.

Compared to a technique such as bitextual poetry (śleṣa), in which a poem can be read in one of two ways depending on the way a particular oronym is construed, these porulkōḷ poems

172 “Honey and milk” are nominatives in the Tamil version.

173 This poem is also used in the Ceyyuḷiyal as an example of a kali nilai turai poem, a type of poem that has five cirs in a line, and in which the lines are not interchangable (aṭi maṟi ākātu). See Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṇkalam, verse 88, p.

174 Earlier in the chapter I translated the poem as: Oh man of the cāral tract!
If you don’t come back, I will be frightened.
The path that you take is filled with
beautiful spirits and
forest streams that rush with swirling eddies.
Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṇkalam, verse 95, p. 389.
constitute a relatively simple method of emphasizing the role of structure in the interpretation of a verse. However, in his commentary on the last verse of the Chapter on Miscellany (Olipiyal), the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti commentator includes more “extreme“176 versions of this same aesthetic principle. In this verse, which outlines subjects with which a learned poet should be familiar, the Yāpparuṅkalam provides names of twenty-one poetic genres identified as “poems with hidden meanings (miṟakkavi pāṭṭu).”177 If the poruḷkoḷ poems indicate a shift away from suggestion towards a poetic technique that emphasizes its own constructed nature, the poems in this section represent a radical departure from the poetics of the Caṅkam poems and the Tolkāppiyam towards this new aesthetic. Like the landscape (tiṇai) system central to early akam poetics, these poems expect a initiated reader, but unlike the early akam poems, whose meaning is not entirely dependent on familiarity with the conventions, the majority of these poems are incomprehensible without the assistance of a commentary or learned teacher. The poems include “picture poems,” in which the syllables of the poem are arranged in the form of a wheel (cakkaram), the zig-zagging line of a cow’s urine (kōmūttiri), or a swirling pond (cuḻkulam). They also include poems in which each line contains a number in ascending and descending order (eḻu kāṟṟirukkai). Other genres share the bitextuality of the Sanskrit slesa, such as a genre that takes its name from a mythological one-legged bird (ekapāṭam), in which the use of homonyms and oronyms in a verse made up of four lines of the same syllables produces a distinct meaning for each line, and the genre of the “hidden story” (kātai karappu), in which a second poem can be construed from the syllables of the original. Similarly, the genre of orrup peyarttal, although defined as a poem in which the meaning can be changed by replacing the last word of the poem,178 is illustrated by poems that appear to be examples of slesa.179 Several of the genres include constraints on syllables, such as the poem of hard consonants (valliṉ am pāṭṭu), made up only of the letters k, c, t, p, and r.180 What these genres share in common, as indicated by the name of the meta-genre to which they belong, is the existence of meaning obscured by complex structures, to be disentangled by a learned reader. The pleasure derived from this “decoding” forms the aesthetic basis of these genres, for which no mention is made of content. Amidst a large array of poetic examples in the commentary on these “poems with hidden meanings,” the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti commentator includes two poems that explicitly draw on akam conventions, although the description of the genre contains no such injunction.

175 Several of the poruḷkōḷ genres correspond to the vyuktrānta riddle genre (prahelika) discussed by Dandin, in which the meaning of the poem is obscured by the manipulation of syntax in unexpected ways. An examination of the relationship between the new aesthetic of the Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti and specific Sanskrit aesthetic treatises warrants considerable attention in a future study.

176 Here I borrow from Bronner’s use of the term in his book of the same title.

177 Yāpparuṅkalam, verse 96, p. 525.

178 oru moliyav pāṭṭin īrutikkan vaittup piṟitoru porul payakkappāṭṭuvatu. Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam 96, p. 541.

179 Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam 96, p. 542.

180 Equivalent poems for mellinam and itaiyinam. See Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṅkalam 96, p. 540.
The first poem is the sole illustration given by the Yāpparunēkala Virutti of the genre of “a poem on one subject” (oru porūḷ pāṭṭu). The poem, as the name suggests, contains twenty-two lines, of which are an extended description of the natural features of the hero’s land, in particular the banana tree. Here the akam convention of compounded description of one subject has been reinterpreted in light of this new aesthetic of hidden meaning.¹¹¹

The second akam example given by the Yāpparunēkala Virutti illustrates the genre of “the mixing of lines” (pāṭa mayakkut). The commentator defines the genre as “the adding of (a poet’s) own line to three lines composed by three poets in (the meter) āciriyappā to construct the meaning (of the poem)” (mūvar mūnru ācirīya atī connāl, tān ōraṭi pāṭik kiriya koḷuṭtuvaṭu).¹¹² The example begins with three verses taken from the Caṅkam akam compilation of the Akananuru and the long poem Mullaippāṭṭu, included in the compilation of the Pattuppāṭṭu, also associated with the Caṅkam tradition.¹¹³

“Breaking open the wet termite mound” (īyar puṭhrat tūṟpurat tūṟutta) (Akananuru 8:1)

“The Brahmin who washes (his clothes) on a stone and dresses his body” (karrōṭi tuṭutta paṭivap pāṟppāṅ) (Mullaippāṭṭu 37)

“The gold-colored bamboo blooming in the auspicious time of the early morning” (maṇṇāṭ pūṭta poṇṇinār vēṅkai) (Akananārpu 85:20)

¹¹¹ maṇṇaṅkaṅin tāṅga maṇmicait tōṅrip paṇṇaṅkaṅi niṟṟattara parūuttāl muḻumutal nāṟpoti vaṟṟiṟū ṣiṟpoti meṟmuḷai tāntunirū ṃṭaṅga tōṟramoṭu kavinperat tīṟintuvit ṃṭaṅga tinkeḷu nuncuruḷ üli niṟḷai uyariya varaipurai kaliṅka mēyppa vākiya nekliṇtu vāḷiyaṅ karukkiṅ avvaiy paḷukka cālcumaṇ teḻunta cemmūk kāṇikulaḷ mūṅkā mēkkēṅt tōṅgīyāṅ keyṅtalarāṅ kōṭti yāyilai māṅkār paricara mēyppap palapōṭu potụḷi nāycirīt ṃṭaṅga tōṟramō tuṭumpiṅ tōḷurit ṃṭaṅga pūḷpaṭtu paṭṭaṅk killicica kēykkum pāvaīyam paṟṟukkāy iḷutī ṣaṅ iṅkaṅi ṣeṅti vāḷaiṭaṅ uṇakaiṅi māraṅkam ūṟaṅ muruṅkol yāŋga muṭtuppaṭai aḷuṅka arankol mākkalī rōṅrum nāṭaṅ apputuṟa vanta enpurukku paccalai ṃṭiṅmaruṇ tarīyāl aṅṇai uruvukilai antalī reṇunjemen raṭamen tōḷē Virutti commentary on Yāpparunēkalam 96, p. 543

¹¹² Virutti commentary on Yāpparunēkalam 96, p. 541.

¹¹³ The example is cited as a pāṭa mayakkut song sung by Pākkāṅar who sang his own line with three lines.
Taken out of context and in some cases, stripped even of their original subject, these verses are fragments of meaning. They require a poet who completes the poem with the following final verse which endows the poem with its “hidden” meaning.

I pick flowers for that girl as my heart melts (malarkoya luṟuvateṉ maṟamavaḷ māṭṭē)

The completed poem (functional translation):

I pick flowers for that girl as my heart melts, flowers of the gold-colored bamboo blooming on the day deemed auspicious by the Brahmin who dresses himself, having washed his clothes on a rock used to break open a termite mound.

The meaning of the first three verses is now “read” in the context of the last verse. This example reflects the felicitous flexibility with which the Yāpparunṅkala Virutti commentator wields the akam tradition. Unconcerned with the possibility of violating the original meanings of these poems, the commentator transforms individual lines from the Caṅkam corpus into fertile material for new poetic composition.

By introducing these akam poems as literary examples of “hidden meaning” poems, the Yāpparunṅkala Virutti commentator associates the use of akam conventions with genres explicitly identified with a tradition outside the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems. These “hidden meaning poems” are described by the Yāpparunṅkalam as having been composed by poets who fully understood (them) after looking at examples gathered from the sea of Northern texts” (vaṭanūṟ kaṭalul orukkuṭan vaitta utāraṇam nōkkī viṟittu muṟitta miṟaikkavip paṭṭē).

More specifically, these poems appear to be Tamil versions of the Sanskrit meta-genre of “poetry of wonder” (citrakāvya), defined by a focus on complex embellishment of structure and meter that prevents easy interpretation. However, the Northern texts to which the commentator refers are not obvious. With the exception of the the kōmūṭtiri form, none of the genres discussed by the Yāpparunṅkala Virutti commentator appear in the most influential Sanskrit treatise on poetics, the seventh-century Kāvyādarśa, despite their inclusion in the twelfth-century

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184 In Akaṇāṅūṟu 8, the bear is the subject mentioned in the next line of the poem.

185 Virutti commentary on Yāpparunṅkalam 96, p. 525. The commentator adds “(poems composed) by those who have expressed in Tamil the nature of hidden meaning poems such as akkarac cutakam, māṭṭiraic cutakam, pintu mati and pirēlijai which appear in the great dark sea that is "āriyam." (āriyam eṉum pāṟirumpuvaṉṟavukāṭṭiyā akkarac cutakamum, māṭṭiraic cutakamum, pintu matiyum pirēlijaiyum mutalākkavataiṟavum ipperriyē tamiḻkac collum miṟaik kavikaḷum aṟintu kolka eṉṟavāṟu) Virutti commentary on Yāpparunṅkalam 96, p. 547.
There is even significant variation between the citrakāvya genres found in the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram and those in the Yāpparunḵāla Virutti, indicating that there was no standard interpretation of the meta-genre at this time. The relationship between these genres and a “Northern” tradition is further complicated by the use of distinctly Tamil terms for these genres. Although several, like the kōmūṭtiṟi and the ēkapātam are Tamilized Sanskrit words, the majority of the genres are either “translations” into Tamil, such the kāṭai karappu, the mālai māṟru and the oru poruḷ pāṭṭu or expressed in a mix of Tamil and Tamilized Sanskrit, such as the pāṭa mayakku.

Although the provenance of many of these “hidden meaning” poems remains unclear, they clearly participate in a poetic system outside the tradition articulated in the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems. Like the alliterative poems used to illustrate the verses in the Ceyyuḷiyal and the poruḷkōḷ poems with their emphasis on syntax, these poems draw attention to their own artificiality in a move that suggests a shift in what constitutes the literary in Tamil poetics.

This shift in emphasis helps explain the “strangeness” of the Virutti akam examples, which were not meant to be read as examples of akam as the genre is understood in the Tolkāppiyam or the later kōvai treatises. However, given the commentator’s lack of interest in akam poetics, why would he include poems that use the akam conventions, albeit in strange and confounding ways? The scope of the examples familiar to the Virutti commentator indicates that he could have chosen from a wide range of Tamil literary conventions outside the akam corpus, including literary conventions that more closely reflected the aesthetic shift in which he was interested. While a detailed answer to this question awaits further research, including the role of these akam examples in other commentaries from the same period, the choice to draw on the akam conventions reflects the central status of this tradition in the history of Tamil language and literature. Although Zvelebil’s formulation that “akam” becomes a secondary meaning for

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186 The two texts even share literary examples, although the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram does not include the two genres for which the Virutti gives examples based in the akam conventions.

187 The relationship between the Sanskrit Kāvyādarśa and the Tamil Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram is far from a clear instance of translation. Little scholarship exists on the topic. For a discussion of the relationship between the two texts, as well as an discussion of the influence of the Kāvyādarśa on Tamil poetics, see Monius 2000.

188 Such as the later kāvya tradition, in which not only the new meters, but the focus on alliteration, plays a more central role.

189 Given the insistence by these commentators on the strict delimiting of the Tamil tradition, it is not surprising that the neither Pērāciriyar nor Nakkārar include the examples found in the Yāpparunḵāla Virutti commentary. However, these poems appear to have circulated in other commentaries, indicating that they were acknowledged as part of the Tamil literary landscape by the Yāpparunḵāla Virutti commentator’s contemporaries. The twelfth-century commentary on the Nēmināṭam, for example, contains several of the Yāpparunḵāla Virutti akam examples, as does Ilampuranar’s commentary on the Tolkāppiyam. The poems are also found in the seventeenth-century Ilakkaṇa Viḻakkam, which synthesizes the various positions on Tamil literature discussed in the first part of the dissertation. The Ilakkaṇa Viḻakkam and its project of synthesis is the subject of the last chapter.
“Tamil”\textsuperscript{190} may be overstated, he correctly observes the relationship between attempts at defining the Tamil tradition and akam poetics, most dramatically in Nakkīrar’s commentary on the akam treatise \textit{Iraiyaṉār Akapporu}, where we find the first articulation of the classical Tamil past and the divine origins of Tamil literature.\textsuperscript{191} In fact, the \textit{Yāpparuṅkala Virutti akam} poems are not the first examples of innovation in the akam tradition subject to debate in Tamil literary scholarship of this period. While the story of their composition and compilation has never been adequately explored, the akam poems of the \textit{Patiṅenkiṅkaṅakku}, (Eighteen [Short] Works),\textsuperscript{192} a compilation better known for its poetry on moral behavior, including the well-known \textit{Tirukkuṟaḷ}, display many of the qualities of the \textit{Yāpparuṅkala Virutti akam} examples, including an emphasis on alliteration and rhyme over the complex use of suggestion in the \textit{Eṭṭuttokai}.

Oh lord! Do not come this way!
The men of our family who live on this mountain
speak harsh words, and they carry bows, spears and fast arrows.
These men protect the ripe fields on the fragrant hillside.

\textit{viraikamil cāral vilaiypuṇāṅ kāppār}
\textit{viraivaiṭa vāranmig; aiya! -uraikaṭiyār;}
\textit{villinā vēlar viraintucel lampiṇar;}
\textit{kallītai vālīna remar.}

This \textit{Tinaimoli Aippatu} 5 poem, for example, spoken by the heroine’s friend to the hero, contains minimal suggestion other than the obvious correlation between the men as protectors of the fields and protectors of the heroine’s virtue. However, like the \textit{Yāpparuṅkala Virutti} akam examples, this short poem, in the “new” \textit{venpā} meter foreign to the early Caṅkam akam poems, has been constructed to display its deft manipulation of phonetics, including second syllable rhyming and extensive repetition of syllables. Similarly, in \textit{Tinaimoli Aippatu} 9, spoken by the heroine’s friend to the heroine so that hero can overhear, the suggestion is limited to conventional knowledge of the Veṅkai flower, said to bloom at the advent of the marriage season.

Oh friend!
Won’t our man of the beautiful mountains come back to us,

\textsuperscript{190} According to Zvelebil, using evidence generated by M.S. Venkataswamy, “Tamil = a culture-specific manner of love-relationship (i.e. the spontaneous love of \textit{kalavu}) particularly as reflected in literature and typical theme of classical Tamil poetry” Zvelebil 1986: xvii.

\textsuperscript{191} In Nakkīrar’s commentary, it is akam poetics that is restored by Shiva when the knowledge of Tamil poetics is lost. According to Zvelebil, not only Nakkīrar but also the \textit{Paripatal} and the \textit{Cilappatikaram} “try to perform a deeply significant task: to equate, to identify the \textit{kālavu} mode of love with Tamil itself” (Zvelebil, 1986: 14).

\textsuperscript{192} Often translated as “minor,” this reveals the lack of status of these poems in recent histories. According to the \textit{Pāṭiyal}, where the division of \textit{mēl} and \textit{kīḷ kaṅakku} is first established, the distinction refers to line length.
freeing us of our lovesickness\textsuperscript{193} and returning the plumpness to our bamboo-like arms\textsuperscript{194} in the evening, dark as deep sapphires, when bees swarm around the blooming Veṅkai trees, their flowers marking the season?\textsuperscript{195}

\begin{verbatim}
piṇiniṟan tiṟantu perumpaṉaitṭōl vēṅka
maṇimalai nāṭaŋ varuvāṅko rōli!
kaṇinirai vēṅkai malarntuvaṇ tārkku
maṇinira mālaip poḷutu
\end{verbatim}

However, this poem reflects not only second syllable rhyming in each of its four lines, but also the sonic effect of the repetition of “niṟan, nirai and niṟam” in the first, second and fourth line respectively. In Kāṟ Nāṟpatu 6, in which the heroine’s friend tries to comfort the heroine at the advent of rainy season, there is accord between the second syllables of the first three lines (ti, ĭtu, ūti), as well as the echoing of the third and fourth syllable of those lines ([y]iṭa, [v]iṭai, tiṭi).

Oh friend with wide eyes that divide the tender mango (of your face); Don’t suffer so, watching your arms grow thin, unable to keep bangles on. The cruel rain clouds thunder, telling that man who has gone far away not to extend his absence.

\begin{verbatim}
toṭiyitä vāṟṟā tolainatō ņōkkī
vaṭuviṭaip pōḷntakaṃṟa kaṇṇāy! varuntal
kaṭitiṭi vāṉa muraṟu neṭuviṭaic
cenrārai niṭaŋmi neṇru.
\end{verbatim}

The use of second syllable rhyme and alliteration is not just an experiment in several poems, but occurs in virtually all of the Patiṉeṅkikāṇakku akam poems, indicating a new aesthetic priority. While these poems do not challenge interpretation in the way that many of the Yāpparuṅkala Virutti akam examples do, they too occupy an ambivalent position vis a vis the Caṅkam

\textsuperscript{193}Lit. “so that the color of suffering goes away.” This is a reference to the greenish pallor (pacalai) that is said to spread over the body of a woman in love.

\textsuperscript{194}A reference to the weight lost by the heroine as she pines for the hero. The slipping off of her bangles is a common indicator of her lovesickness.

\textsuperscript{195}Lit. “the Veṅkai which are like astrologers.” Referring to Akamnuru 2, Dakshinamurthy points out that the blossoming of the Venkai flower signifies the advent of the marriage season. Dakshinamurthy 2009: 100.
On the one hand, they are excluded from the Caṅkam story first articulated by Nakkīrar and do not appear as literary examples in Pērāciriyar’s commentary. On the other hand, the entire compilation of the Eighteen [Short] Works is mentioned by Pērāciriyar as an acceptable “later text,” indicating his familiarity with all the poems in the compilation, and the poems are included in the kōvai commentary of the Akapporul Vilakkam. At some point there was a concerted attempt to associate the compilation with the Tamil tradition: the preambles of the Aintina Aimpatu and the Tinaimoli Nūṟṟaimpatu identify them as defenses of the Tamil tradition of stolen love (kaḷavu) and later poems associate the compilation with a Madurai Caṅkam. These references have been understood by contemporary scholars as reflections of a reaction to the anti-Tamil (Jain) culture of the Kalabhra period associated with a Dark Ages of the Tamil historical imagination. However, the lack of historical information surrounding this compilation raises the question of whether the addition of the akam poems to this compilation could be in fact a product of this later period as a way to exercise control over the alternative articulation of the akam tradition.

Whether or not the compilation was a later attempt to domesticate the akam poems of the Patiyeṅkīḷkaṇakkku by associating them with the classical tradition, the debates over these poems, as Zvelebil suggests, reflect a specific concern with the role of akam poetics in the correct interpretation of the Tamil tradition. Similarly, the reference to the akam conventions in the Yāpparunkalam Virutti examples signals to the Tamil reader the compatibility of his new ideas of literary language (including those derived from Sanskrit) with Tamil literature and situates his work within a tradition in which those conventions were themselves a central part of what could be considered literature.

These different positions on the possibility of innovation within the akam tradition reflect the debates over the definition of the Tamil literary tradition that define Tamil intellectual culture

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196 However, they have been critiqued as inferior poetry by contemporary scholars. See Zvelebil, 1974: 118-119. They have also been seen as an attempt to keep the dying akam tradition alive.

197 The status of the Patiyeṅkīḷkaṇakkku akam poems in Pērāciriyar’s commentary is unclear. On the one hand, Pērāciriyar does not draw from these poems throughout his commentary, despite his frequent reference to the moral poems in the same collection, except as an example of violation of literary usage (Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Marapiyal 90). However, he does refer to the both the Patiyeṅkīḷkaṇakkku and more specifically to the akam collection of the Kār Nāṟpatu. See Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Ceyyuliyal 235.

198 The preamble of the Tirikaṭaku, a moral text in the compilation, identifies his author with a Madurai Caṅkam.

199 Some scholars have tried to date the compilation by identifying the Caṅkam with the Dramida Caṅkam established by the Jain Vacciraṅanti in Madurai in 470 CE. This is said to be the “fourth Caṅkam.” See TP. Meenakshisundaram, Camanat Tamil Ilakkiya Varalāru (Kōvai: Kalaikkatir Veljiyitu, 1965), 53-4. The identification of these poems with Jainism further complicates their relationship to the Tamil tradition and is a subject for further research.

200 After all, the first mention of the compilation appears in Pērāciriyar. Additionally, these poems are understood by Tamil literary tradition to be composed by Jain authors, in part because of their association with the Tirukkural and the Nalatiyar, but both the veracity and the implications of this identification warrant further research.
between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries. On the one hand, scholars such as Pērāciriyar and Nakkīrar propose a monolithic interpretation of Tamil associated with a canon, divine origins and an authoritative original text. On the other hand, the Yāpparuṇkala Virutti represents a style of scholarship associated with Jain (and possibly Buddhist) vision of Tamil as able to accommodate innovation without concern over violation of the old tradition. For these scholars, the akam conventions of the Tolkāppiyam and the early poems were not incongruous with new attitudes about what constituted literary language, including the use of sound-based poetic ornament and the complex poetic structures of porūkkoḻ and citrakāvya. By using akam conventions to illustrate this new aesthetics, the Yāpparuṇkala Virutti commentator signals to his Tamil readers that such new theories of language did not replace the old tradition, but rather that, just as the tradition of Tamil poetics could accommodate a range of conflicting scholarly perspectives, so too could the parameters of the Tamil literary tradition accommodate diverse theories of what constituted the literary.
Chapter 3

Theorizing the Power of Poetry: Pāṭṭiyal Grammars and Literature of Praise

At the same time that Pērāciriyar and the Yāpparūṅkalam Virutti commentary were debating the role of the Caṅkam past in the definition of Tamil literature, a branch of poetics emerged that would eclipse both scholars in influence and popularity over the next seven hundred years. These treatises, called pāṭṭiyals (treatises on the nature of poetry) eschew both the conventions of the Tolkāppiyam and the Yāpparūṅkalam in favor of a system that theorizes both Tamil language and literature in terms of its capacity to praise a royal patron. By integrating theories about the power of language situated in both the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions with a classification of praise genres from throughout the Tamil literary universe, the pāṭṭiyals claim praise of a royal patron as a central condition of what constitutes the literary and demonstrate the suitability of both Tamil language and literature for such a project. This chapter looks at the two earliest examples of the pāṭṭiyal genre, the twelfth-century Paṉṉiru Pāṭṭiyal and the thirteenth-century Venpā Pāṭṭiyal,201 to better understand this shift in literary culture which would dominate the Tamil literary world until the nineteenth century ushered in other aesthetic and social concerns.

Despite their significant role in Tamil poetics, the pāṭṭiyals have received little attention from contemporary scholars. Reviled for “do(ing) great violence to the genius of the Tamil language,”202 or at the least rejected for their “foreign” status,203 the poetics of the pāṭṭiyals have almost completely disappeared from Tamil scholarship.204 However, if the number of pāṭṭiyals produced between the twelfth and the nineteenth century are any indication, this tradition represented the dominant paradigm in Tamil poetics until recent times.205

The neglect of the pāṭṭiyals is due in part to their failure to perform what contemporary scholars of South India expect from a treatise on poetics. Nowhere do they offer a coherent definition of poetry, either in terms of a list of internal linguistic and semantic characteristics (as we see in the Tolkāppiyam),206 poetic language and figures of speech (as we see in the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram) or the effect of those poetic conventions on an educated audience, as we see in

201 Also known as the Vaccananti Mālai, after the author’s teacher.
202 AC Chettiyar 1977: 188.
203 The pāṭṭiyals are critiqued in part for the impression that they follow a Sanskrit tradition (vatacol marapu). See Jayaraman 1977. Kovintaraja Mutaliyar, in his introduction to the Paṅgiru Pāṭṭiyal, refutes this “foreign” origin, and tries to associate the Paṅgiru Pāṭṭiyal with the Caṅkam tradition.
204 The degree to which this knowledge has been lost is a reminder of how dramatically Tamil scholarship has changed over the last hundred years, influenced in part by the “renaissance” of literature associated with a “pure” Tamil past. Y. Manikantan at Madras University is one of the few contemporary scholars who works on pāṭṭiyals; he has authored an edition of the later Citampara Pāṭṭiyal.
205 The tradition identifies eleven major pāṭṭiyals produced between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries. See Jayaraman 1977 for an overview of these materials. Also see Cuppiramaniam and Thomas 1982: 19-25.
206 See Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 1.
the Sanskrit alankāra tradition after Anandavardhana. Although they are associated with metrics in the later grammars of the Ilakkanā Vilakkam, the Mūttuviriyam and the Cuvāminātam,207 the pāṭṭiyals do not offer a description of metrical variations, either in terms of the four “original” meters outlined by the Tolkāppiyam or the later metrical system introduced by the Yāpparūṇkalam and its commentary.208 They also do not discuss the traditional thematic division of love/domestic life (akam) and war/ethics (puram) explored both in the Tolkāppiyam and in the later treatises of the Iraiyangār Akapporuḷ, the Akapporuḷ Vilakkam and the Purapporulveṇpāmālai.

In absence of these theoretical frameworks familiar to scholars of South India (and India more generally), what do the pāṭṭiyals do? This chapter looks at the two earliest examples of the pāṭṭiyal tradition, the twelfth-century Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal and the thirteenth-century Vāccaṇānti Mālai (also known as the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal) to argue that the pāṭṭiyal tradition represents a way of interpreting literature wholly new to the Tamil tradition: one based not on the paradigms listed above, but rather understood through a system of rules that marshal both the content and the special language of poetry in service of praise of a royal patron.

The pāṭṭiyals do this through the inclusion of two seemingly disparate sections: a section correlating the magic powers of the first word of a poem with identifying characteristics of the poem’s patron, and a section consisting of verses that list and describe a range of literary praise genres that differ in content, meter and style. In the case of the Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal, the section on phonetics contains in eighty-four verses, divided into the subjects of Phonology (Eḻuttu) and Morphology (Col). Although these divisions echo the first two books of the Tolkāppiyam, the similarity with the ancient grammar ends there. The second section, the section on literary genres, contains one-hundred-and-thirty-three verses in a chapter called Iṭhaviyal, or Chapter on Divisions.209 The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal contains a clearer exposition of the subject matter shared by both pāṭṭiyals, organizing its material into fifty-four verses210 in venpā meter in two chapters entitled Chapter on the First Word (Mutampoliyal) and Chapter on Poetics (Ceyyuliyal). However, to an uninitiated reader, the relationship between these two sections is not clear in either pāṭṭiyal; if the two sections did not consistently appear together throughout the pāṭṭiyal tradition, one might be tempted to suggest they had been stuck together by a confused editor. As for contemporary scholars of Tamil poetics, most focus primarily on the content in one section or

207 The later “five-division” grammars include the traditional categories of Phonology (Eḻuttu) and Morphology (Col) and Poetics (Porul), but introduce the fields of Meter (Yāppu) and Poetic Figure (Alankāra, Ani). Although the twelfth-century Vīracōliyam is the earliest of such five-fold grammars, it is not until the seventeenth century that the subjects covered by the pāṭṭiyals are incorporated into the chapters on meter.

208 Jeyaraman points out that in later texts, the terms ceyyul, pāṭṭu and yāppu are all synonymous (Jeyaraman 1977: 12).

209 The first thirteen verses of the Iṭhaviyal cover subject matter more appropriate to the first two chapters. The mixing of topics, which is not repeated in later pāṭṭiyals, comes from the dual meaning of “iṭham” both as “division” and as the more technical term of “metrical subcategory.”

210 This number includes the invocatory verse, the avaiyāṭakkam and an independent venpā verse praising his teacher.
the other, without investigating the relationship between the diverse material covered by the pāṭṭiyal. However, the relationship between these sections becomes more clear when we understand both sections as participants in an integrated theoretical system of praise poetices in which both semantics and phonetics play an important role.

To begin with the content addressed by the pāṭṭiyals that is more accessible to most contemporary readers, the second section, the section on literary genre, contains descriptions of an extensive array of praise genres that range in content, meter and style. The majority of the genres listed in both the Paṇṭhiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal can immediately be identified as genres of praise, either through their descriptions in the pāṭṭiyals themselves or through a survey of extant examples of the genre. Several genres praise the patron’s martial prowess, such as the parāṇi, which describes “the excellence of a man who has killed great elephants in a fierce war” and the cerukkalavaṇci, which “describes in vaṇci meter the [patron’s]ability in battle (moyyiṃ tigaṃ vaṇci pāviṃ maṭṭurattā ceyyiṃ cerukkalavaṇci).” The taṭaimālai also praises the excellence of his army (paṭaṭṭitiraṇi).

The mēykkiriti and the kayaṃmōṭāppā “sing (more generally of) the deeds of a beautiful king” (elī aracar ceyti icaippar). The body of the patron is also celebrated in the genres of the ankamālai, the pāṭṭikēcam and the kēcātipātam, which praise him from toe to head and head to toe in different meters. The ulā praises his beauty in the voice of women who admire him on procession. The patron is also the romantic hero of the maṭal, defined in the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal not by its more familiar description of a rejected lover who tries to woo back his love by publicly mounting a horse made of palmra stems, but as a poem “about love, (a poem which brings) pleasure and eschews (the other puruṣārthas) dharma, wealth and moksha, (in order to) elevate the resplendent name of the patron” (aṟamporul vīṭṭiči yuyartīppam [...] kāṭar poruṭṭākap [...] maṭalịraiva ṇonpēr niraṭta [...] He is also the hero of the kāppiyam and the peruṅkāppiyam.

A number of genres praise the constituents of the patron’s domain, including his town (ūr nēricai venpā, ūriṅnicai venpā and the ūr venpā), the beauty, power and loyalty of his elephant

211 Most contemporary scholars focus on the second section to understand literary genre in Tamil. Many of these discussions ignore the first section altogether. Zvelebil 19, Thomas (Tamil Prosody) both include brief section on pāṭṭiyals). Even Jeyaraman, who has published the most widely on pāṭṭiyals and prabandham literature, treats the two sections separately with no reflection on the relationship between the two in his Pāṭṭiyal Tiranyavu and Pāṭṭiyalum Ilakkya Vakaikalum.

212 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 38, p. 55. Later pāṭṭiyals specify that the hero of the parani is one who has killed a thousand elephants. (See Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam v. 78)

213 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 31, p. 49.

214 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 34, p. 52.

215 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 29,

216 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 27, p. 46.

217 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 28, p. 47.

218 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 13, p.34 and Venpā pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḻiyal v. 22, p. 41. The description of the first two explicitly refers to the patron as the leader, “mutavaṇ.”
(yānaivañci)\textsuperscript{219}, and the deeds and quality of his royal umbrella (kuṭai venpā). The tacāṇkam (poem celebrating the ten constituents [of the patron]) describes without using inauspicious letters\textsuperscript{220} the (patron’s) mountain, river, country, town, well-crafted garland, horse, murderous elephant, flag, drum, and strong staff.\textsuperscript{221} Similarly, the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal contains a verse on various descriptive poems in viruttam meter, including those on (the patron’s) unwavering royal umbrella, his spear, his sword as well as constituents mentioned in the tacāṇkam.\textsuperscript{222} The ical praises the patron’s family (cugrattalavā)\textsuperscript{223} and the purāṇam describes “the origins of (his) family” in kārikai meter (kulavaravu kārikai yāppig purāṇamē yām).\textsuperscript{224} As symbols of the king’s virility and power; the women of the court are also subjects of praise poems; the nayaṇappattu and the payāṭarappattu both praise a woman’s eyes and chest respectively,\textsuperscript{225} while the pukaḷccimālai provides a more general description of women.

Other genres serve more directly as a benediction addressed to the patron, such as the yāṇṭu nilai which requests that “the king rule forever over the world and that he last for years” (vaiyaka manaṇavaṇ maṇ..[.] pal yāṇṭu eytuka) and the kanpaṭai nilai.\textsuperscript{226}

The status of the patron is invoked not only in the content of praise genres, but also the form, as in the case of the kalampakam, a genre of mixed subject matter that appears in all of the major pāṭṭiyals, in which the number of stanzas is determined by the social status of the patron whom it praises. If dedicated to gods (icar), the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal explains, the kalampakam should contain one hundred verses; ninety-five if dedicated to brahmins (aiyar);\textsuperscript{227} ninety verses without defect (kācarra) for fierce kings (ikal aracar); seventy flawless verses for ministers (amaiccar); fifty for the tradespeople (vanikar); and thirty for everyone else (ēnaiyōr).\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{219} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 33, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{220} This is one of the few generic descriptions that incorporates the subject matter of the first part of the pāṭṭiyal. The verse refers more specifically to “poison letters” (naṇcu eluttu), which will be explained later in the chapter.

\textsuperscript{221} pullum malaiyāru nāṭur puṇaṭairnāma kolluṇ kaliru koṭìmuracam - vallakōl enrirai naicēluttō ūlē vakaiyuraippa nīga tacāṇkameṇa nēr. Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 19, p. 39. The cinnappu and the tacāṇkappattu are variations on this genre (v. 20, p. 39)

\textsuperscript{222} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 21, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{223} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 23, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{224} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 43, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{225} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 25, p. 44. Also see the tārakaimālai and the maṅkalavallai (Venpā pāṭṭiyal, v. 42, p. 50) as well as the pukaḷccimālai.

\textsuperscript{226} Paṅquiru Pāṭṭiyal, v. 119, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{227} The commentary interprets “aiyar” as “sage” (muṉivar).

\textsuperscript{228} Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal v. 12, p. 32.
Like the *kalampakam*, several other genres include in their definition praise of a god, although this is almost always in the service of a human patron. For example, the description of the *pillaikkavi* (poem describing the hero as a child) includes an invocation to god, asking (him) to protect the hero and his family from murder (*pillaik kaviteyvān kākkaveṇa koṇṭuraikkun tēvar kolaiyakarri [...] curraitālavā*)\(^{229}\) The *attamaṅkalam*, the *navamaṅimalai* and the *tacappirāṭṭupavam* all praise the various births of Vishnu, although the commentary interprets these in the service of protection of the patron (*kaṭavulait tutittu avar kākkak kaṭavar*).\(^{231}\) The *aimpaṭai viruttam* mentioned in the *Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal*, which praises the five weapons of Vishnu, probably served a similar purpose.\(^{232}\)

In cases where the *pāṭṭiyal* descriptions give no indication of eulogistic content, many genres can be identified as praise literature through a survey of extant examples of the genre. The *kōvai*, described in the *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal* as four hundred verses on love (*akapporu*) in *kalitturai* meter, is, as Cutler points out in his discussion of the *Tirukkōvaiyār*, equal parts akam and praise, as the patron appears in each of the four hundred stanzas.\(^{233}\) Similarly, the *ūlattipāṭu* and the *kuṟattipāṭu*, both described by the *Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal* without referring to a patron, “embed” the patron in the metaphors and symbolic vocabulary of the poems.\(^{234}\)

Deviating from the Tamil (and Indian) tendency to include and exclude literature based on the different contexts in which they were produced and performed, the *Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal* and the *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal* also include genres associated with the Shaivite and Vaishnavite devotional corpis of literature.\(^{235}\) Many of these genres are exclusively defined by their meter, such as the *antāti* genre, defined as “one hundred *antāti* verses, in which the last word of one verse is used as the first word of the subsequent verse,”\(^{236}\) the *iraṭṭaimanimalai*, defined as “twenty *antāti* stanzas in venpā and *kalitturai* meters”\(^{237}\) the *mummanikkōvai*, defined as “thirty *antāti* verses in

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\(^{229}\) The use of “*aḷavā*” here is not entirely clear. Also used this way in v. 23.

\(^{230}\) *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal*, Ceyyu-liyāl v. 6, p. 28.

\(^{231}\) See commentary on *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal*, Ceyyu-liyāl v. 24, p. 43.

\(^{232}\) This verse contains a mix of Sanskrit and Tamil words for these terms: *cakkaram, taṟu, vāl, caṅku, taṇṭu*.

\(^{233}\) Cutler 1987.

\(^{234}\) However, no particular patron is implicated in these discussions of genre, nor do the *pāṭṭiyals* include literary examples that celebrate a patron, as does the *Tantiyalaiṅkāram*. Rather, these praise genres serve as templates into which the name of any patron can be inserted.

\(^{235}\) Cutler makes this point in his discussion of the exclusion of devotional genres from the fifteenth-century compilation Puṟattirattu. Cutler 2003: 307. The *Tolkāppiyam* commentators also exclude this corpus from their classification of the literary, claiming that these poems are not of this world and are therefore outside the realm of literary theory. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

\(^{236}\) *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal*, Ceyyu-liyāl v. 9, p. 30. The verse mentions both *venpā antāti* and *kalitturai antāti*, distinguished by the use of different meters.

the meters of ācīrīyam, venpā and kalitturai respectively238 and the patikam.239 While the descriptions of these genres do not explicitly refer to a patron, all appear as devotional poems praising Shiva in the tenth-century compilation of the Tirumurai.240 However, in the schematic presented by the pāṭṭiyals, these genres are removed from their original provenance as poems to god and transformed into poems in service of a royal patron.

In their exclusive focus on praise genres from throughout the Tamil literary universe, including the Caṅkam puram tradition,241 the bhakti corpus, and courtly narrative genres,242 the pāṭṭiyals reflect a shift throughout Tamil literary culture to the central role played by praise of a royal patron in both the theorization and production of literature.

Praise has played an important part in Tamil literature since the earliest poems. In fact, praise is a defining characteristic of one of the two generic categories of the Caṅkam poems, the category of āṟṟam, which treats subjects of the external world, such as kingship, war, and ethics.243 Many of the puram poems of the Puṟaṉāṉuṟu and the Patigruppaṭṭu contain direct or indirect praise of a king, and describe the mutual dependence between a king and his poet.244 Puram 186 illustrates the importance of the king in these early poems.

Paddy is not life,
water is not life.
The life of this broad world
is the king,
and to know
“I am life”
is the duty of the king
with his many-speared army. (transl. G. Hart & H. Heifetz)

The Tolkāppiyam reflects this early categorization, dedicating one of the chapters of the section of poetics (Poruḷatikāram) to the puram genre (the Puṟattinaṭṭiyal). However, this chapter,  

238 āṇṭakaval muṁmuṟaiyē venpā kalitturaiya vantāti mummaṅṅkōvaikkku mutal. Vēnpā Pāṭṭiyal Ceyyuliyal v. 13, p. 34.

239 Puṟigruru Pāṭṭiyal, v. 111, p. 121.

240 The navamaniṁāḷai appears slightly later as a Vaishnavite praise genre in the work of the fourteenth-century Vedānta Dēśikar.

241 The purapporul τūrais that feature in the Puṟigruru Pāṭṭiyal and the Vēnpā Pāṭṭiyal: varalāṛru vaṅci, cerukkaḷa vaṅci, vākai māḷai, kaṇpaṭai nilai, τυτεलται nilai, kaikkilai, ceviyaṅguṟu, vāyuṟai vāḻtu, puṟanilai vāḻtu, ciṟṇappū, kaiyaru nilai (Jeyaraman, Pāṭṭiyal Tir analytics, 11)

242 Several of the verses also describe genres that are no longer extant, such as the kaikkilai, the alaṅkāra paṅcakam, the kuḷumakam, varukkamāḷai. Many of these appear only in the nineteenth century.

243 The other category is akam, or poetry of love and domestic life, discussed by the previous chapter of this dissertation.

244 For more on praise in the puram poems, see Hart 1975; Marr 1985.
which lays out the conventions acceptable for a puṟam poem. deals specifically with the puṟam poetic system, and not with praise poetry more generally.245

By the twelfth century, praise poetry in Tamil had expanded to many genres beyond those represented by the puṟam poems. This development first occurred in the devotional (bhakti) poems of the Shaiva Tēvāram and the Vaishnavite Divyaprabandham, which incorporated many of the early puṟam tropes into the new poetic forms of the maṭal, antāṭi, ulā and kōvai genres included in the pāṭiyals’ typology.246

Beginning in the eighth century, and expanding significantly in the period of the pāṭiyals, the praise genres developed by the bhakti poets transition from temple to court literary forms, and begin to be applied also to kings. While these courtly genres, later called prabandhams or “minor literatures” (cīrīlakkiyam), are significantly less studied by contemporary scholars than the Caṅkam or bhakti poems, they were, as Zvelebil has pointed out, “extremely productive over the centuries, offering standardized templates that a poet could readily deploy in the praise of a chosen subject or patron.”247

Simultaneously, beginning around the ninth century, another major literary genre affiliated with praise appeared in Tamil: the courtly epic, or kāppiyam (Sanskrit kāvya). While long narrative poems had existed in Tamil since the fifth-century Cilappatikāram and the sixth-century Manimekalai, these early “epics” lack key features associated with the category of “kāvya” and are only characterized as such by later theoreticians. In contrast, the kāvyas of the ninth through fourteenth centuries self-consciously identify with the larger discourse around kāvya as found in the Sanskritic literary and literary theoretical tradition, including the norms established by the Sanskrit theoretician Daṇḍin, who composed the earliest and most well-known grammar on the form. While the little existing contemporary scholarship on the kāvya tradition in Tamil emphasizes the proselytizing features of a genre dominated by Jain and Buddhist poets, these poems were not considered didactic, but rather participated in a wider, non-sectarian courtly literary milieu. In the case of the tenth-century248 Jain kāvyas Cīvakacintāmani and

245 One section of the Purattiniyiyal, the section on Pāṭantinai, contains references to a larger corpus of literature. As this section differs considerably from the rest of the Purattiniyiyal and is not well understood by the commentators, I have not included it in this chapter.

246 See Cutler 1987. Cutler argues for a poetics of bhakti that reinterprets even those poems in the akam mode as puṟam poems because of the relationship they establish between god, poet and community of devotees, echoing the relationship between king, poet and other subjects found in the earlier poems.


248 As we have little biographical information about the authors of these Jain and Buddhist kāvyas, the dates are highly speculative. Zvelebil claims a date of mid-tenth century for the Cūḷāmani, based on its mention in the Malliśena Epitaph at Śravana Belgoda, and in stanza 186 of the Rajarajan Ulā. (Zvelebil 1974). Po. Vē. Cōmacuntarāṇ, pointing out the strong position of the Jains in this text, wants to date the Cūḷāmani before the Tēvāram hymns. See Cōmacuntarāṇ’s introduction to Cūḷāmani. This dating is more difficult to support.
Cūḷāmaṇi, as well as the ninth-century Buddhist kāvyā Kuṇṭalakēci, this courtly context is made explicit in the address to the royal court (avaiyatakkku), a standard introduction to the kāvyā genre. As for the Jain Vālaiyāpati, for which no complete version exists, references to the text show up in such diverse literary contexts as the thirteenth-century commentary of the Shaivite literary scholar Aṭiyākkunallār, the eleventh-century Jain Yāpparunākalam Virutti commentary, as well as the fifteenth-century Shaivite collection of the Puṇattiratṭu. The Chola court poet Kampaṭ, composer of the Tamil Ramayana, was closely familiar with the Cīvakacintāmaṇi, borrowing imagery and prosody from the Jain kāvyā. Čekkilār, minister to the Chola king, was said to have composed the Shaivite Periya Purāṇam to mitigate his king’s interest in the Cīvakacintāmaṇi, indicating the popularity of this poem in courtly circles. While kāvyā does not praise a king as explicitly as do the prabandhams, the kāvyā genre, as Sheldon Pollock has argued, has been a genre associated with royal power from its Sanskrit beginnings. Although, unlike Sanskrit, the history of Tamil literature does not begin with kāvyā, these kāvyas of the ninth through the fourteenth centuries are, like their Sanskrit counterparts and the prabandhams, participants in a courtly literary world established to support a royal patron.

The first treatises to reflect these developments in praise poetry are not puram grammars, but the grammars of akam which cover the subjects of domestic life and romantic love. Beginning with the grammar Ḭṟaiyaṇār Akapporuṭ and Nakkīr’s eighth-century commentary, the akam grammars rearrange the short independent vignettes of the early akam poems into a chronological narrative sequence represented by the “new” akam genre of the kōvai. Central to the definition of the kōvai is the presence of the patron, who appears in all of the four hundred verses not as a participant in the action of the main anonymous characters, but “embedded” in the imagery and metaphors that make up the symbolic landscape for which akam literature is known. Often associated with images of fertility and death, the mention of the patron provides further depth for the ullurai, or suggested meaning, of the poem as the reader struggles to interpret the juxtaposed images of the erotic and the king’s world. This crucial role of the patron in the akam kōvai has led Cutler, in his discussion of the ninth-century kōvai Tirukkōvaiyār, to observe that while “it is obvious that the kōvai is a descendant of classical akam poetry, (it) is less well recognized that the classical tradition of heroic or puram poetry also contributed a great deal to this medieval genre.”

Cutler observes that in each verse of both the Tirukkovaiyar and the eighth-century Pāṇṭikkōvai “there is a ‘slot’ that is reserved for a reference to the poem’s (patron).” Cutler concludes that “from this point of view the kōvai poet’s first concern is to honor the (patron) and the akam framework is an instrument to this end.”

249 While we do not have a complete version of this text, the Invocatory verse identifies it as Buddhist. Also, the Jain kāvyā Nīlakēci is said to have been a rebuttal to this poem; the commentary on the Nīlakēci is the main source for our knowledge of the Kuṇṭalakēci itself.

250 For Pollock on the development of kāvyā, see Pollock 2006.


252 Ibid., 90.

253 Ibid., 83. Ebeling draws on Cutler’s schematic in his discussion of the interplay between akam poetics and praise in the nineteenth-century kōvai Kuṭattürkōvai (Ebeling 2010: 90-101).
The importance of the patron’s role is recognized in the kōvai grammars. The commentary on the Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ addresses the possible conflict in having two heros in one poem by suggesting the superiority of the patron to the anonymous primary hero. The text states that “if you say that it would conflict with the title ‘hero’ to say that (the primary hero) unites with (the heroine) in the land of another hero (the patron), it would not.” The commentary alleviates any doubts by elaborating that while the hero who participates in the love drama is “not the greatest among the gods, just the greatest of humans,” the patron is a Pantiyan king, and therefore belongs to a divine lineage.” This dual identification of the two heros eliminates any possible conflict in the hero’s romancing the heroine in the land of another man.  

However, while the akam grammars are the first to provide the theoretical vocabulary with which to discuss praise outside the context of puṟam poetry, their project is limited to the kōvai genre. Additional genres, even those that draw on the akam conventions, such as the kalāmpakam, are outside the purview of these grammars. The pāṭṭiyals expand the central role of praise in the kōvai grammars to a framework that makes praise of a royal patron the defining characteristic of what constitutes the literary in genres from throughout the Tamil literary universe, including the Caṅkam puṟam tradition, the devotional literature of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite compilations and the later courtly prabandham genres of the kāva, ulā and pāraṇi, among many others. In doing this, the pāṭṭiyals create a space in the Tamil literary world for the theorization of royal praise outside the conventions of the puṟam poems and the Tolkāppiyam.

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254 Buck & Paramasivan, 2001: 42.

255 And, as the second chapter discussed, they participate in a larger attempt to associate akam poetics specifically with the Tamil literary tradition.

256 The puṟam tradition also produces a new grammar in the tenth century, the Puṟapporuḷvenpāmālai (discussed in the first chapter), but these poems remain within the Caṅkam puṟam conventions, albeit in new meters, and do not address other praise genres or praise as a theoretical category more generally.

257 This expansion of Tamil poetics also allowed for the first substantial discussion of literary genre in Tamil. In the Ceyyuḷiyal, the Tolkāppiyam mentions seven types of literature that have been understood as a discussion of genre, including poetry (pāṭṭu), grammatical treatise (nūl), commentary (urai), riddle (pici), magical utterance (mantiram) and proverb (mutucol); however, whether or not these terms were meant to refer to different uses of language within a single poem or to poetic categories is unclear. Similarly, the eight “beauties” (vaṇappu) discussed by the Ceyyuḷiyal probably refer to types of language, rather than reference to “genre.” See Pērāciyar’s commentary on Ceyyuḷiyal 1 for a discussion of the difference between these eight and the previous uruppus. Although the categories of akam and puṟam are frequently used to refer to early genre in Tamil, these are more accurately interpreted as thematic conventions that can be used in a range of genres. The Tāntiyalaṅkāram, as Anne Monius points out, provides a more concrete schematic for the discussion of genre in its definitions of the poetic categories of kāva and mahākāva, “incorporat(ing) into Tamil (the Sanskrit descriptions discussed in Dandin’s Kāvyādārśa) to define categories of literature not accounted for in earlier Tamil literary traditions as exemplified by the Tolkāppiyam” (Monius 2000: 16). While the classifications of kāva and mahākāva may have, as Monius suggests, provided a means of including texts such as the long narratives Cīḷappatikāram, Manimēkalai, and Cīvakacintāmanī, these categories do not help make sense of the numerous additional genres that had appeared in Tamil since the time of the Caṅkam poems. Not only do the pāṭṭiyals expand this corpus significantly, but their flexible structure allows for the facile inclusion of new genres, as a comparison between the genres covered by the pāṭṭiyals attests.
Not only do the pāṭiyals reflect this shift towards praise content in Tamil literature, but they also reflect a shift in form, in which the independent stanzas of the Caṅkam poems are replaced by poems made up of multiple stanzas. By the sixteenth century (and probably earlier),258 most new literary production in Tamil is identified in terms of a hypergenre259 called prabandham literature. Despite its ubiquitous use by contemporary Tamil literary scholars, this term, which is used to refer both to “an abstraction (as well as to its) concrete manifestations” 260 is not well understood.261 As Zvelebil’s much-cited formulation articulates, “it is extremely difficult, probably impossible, to provide a formal definition of the Tamil prabandhas (...) on the classical model by identifying the ‘essence’ of this ‘super-genre.’” However, since one can group these literary forms under the heading of a single super-genre, they must obviously have something in common which distinguishes them from all other poetic genres (...).”262 Unable to go beyond what he admits is a “rather vague definition” of prabandham as “contain(ing) a narrative and a descriptive component (with) the character of a connected discourse about an event, or a series of events, or of connected description of an item or a person,” his conclusion is to “follow the good old Indian way of avoiding definition by taking recourse to a simple enumeration or classification of a wider class into a number of sub-classes.” This strategy ultimately results in an unsatisfying (Zvelebil admits as much) typology of the content of various prabandhams.263 However, in his “vague definition” of the prabandham in terms of its “principle of internal cohesion and connectedness, either formal or based on unity of content,”264 Zvelebil highlights an important but overlooked characteristic of this poorly defined category.

258 Atiyārkkunallār’s thirteenth-century commentary on the Cilappatikāram uses the term.


260 Marina Muilwijk points out confusion over relationship between prabandham and comprehensive definition of literature. While on the one hand, Muilwijk points out that in secondary sources, not all literature has been considered to be “prabandham” but on the other hand, “it is not explicitly stated that prabandham is only a part of literature, not literature as a whole” (209). re SV subramaniam and N V Jeyaraman, prabandhams refer to all literature, including epics. (marina, p.218-219) She distinguishes between Prabandham, “an abstraction, a general term which refers to all the prabandhams together, to the ‘prabandhamness’ of genres. One could say that Prabandham is a type of literature, of which the prabandhams are the concrete manifestations” (Muilwijk 1996: 209).


263 Ranging from “heroic narrative” to “erotic narrative” to “descriptive genres.” Ibid., 194.

264 Ibid., 193.
The *prabandham*, as its name suggests, does not consist of prose and solitary stanzas, but requires multiple stanzas connected both by meter and/or by content.

The *prabandham*s share another important characteristic, noted elsewhere by Zvelebil, but (strangely) not included in his typology. While the *prabandham* genres range significantly in content, they all share the common status as poems of praise, or, in Zvelebil’s words, as “standardized templates that a poet could readily deploy in the praise of a chosen subject or patron.” Other scholars have noted this distinguishing quality of the *prabandham*, which Mu. Arunachalam clearly defines as “panegyrical in nature praising a local deity or chieftain.”

Muilwijk concurs, stating that “*prabandham* works always have a hero or heroine. In other words, mere descriptions of, for instance, a mountain, cannot be *prabandhams*. Descriptions should always be connected to the hero/heroine. A *prabandham* is always a ‘story about somebody.’” In the footnote to this passage, Muilwijk further explains that “in many cases, the *prabandham* work is dedicated to the hero. Originally, the work was performed (recited, sung, danced) in the presence of this hero.”

Ebeling’s work on nineteenth-century Tamil literary culture reflects this understanding of the panegyric nature of the *prabandham* hypergenre. He argues that pre-modern literary production of the nineteenth century, which “almost entirely consisted of *pirapantams*,” was “firmly embedded in (an) economy of praise which included poets, audiences, and patrons, each with their respective interests.” According to Ebeling, praise, which “served to secure a poet a place with a patron on whom he depended to earn his living (was) ‘circulated’ or ‘traded’ in (the)
hypostatized, palpable form - the lines of the poets’ verses.”

“Praise, in its various manifestations, may be called the one unifying element, the common thematic thread running through almost all of these works.”

Like the genres described by the pāṭṭiyals, these nineteenth-century prabandhams reserve a place for the “insertion” of the patron, whether the poem is a kōvai in the akam mode or a poem describing the constituents of the patron’s kingdom.

Although the economy of praise in which these poems functioned had expanded beyond the courtly context of the pāṭṭiyals to include both temple deities as well as a range of people “under whose sponsorship literature was created,” the genres are recognizable from the early pāṭṭiyals. In his survey of the most conspicuous literary patrons of the nineteenth-century, Ebeling provides a catalogue of prabandham genres composed to praise under their sponsorship, including the genres of the kōvai, ulā, mummanikkōvai, nāṉmanimālai, pīḷaiikkavai, kalampakam, patikam, and antāti familiar to the Paṉṉiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal.

Although Ebeling’s discussion of the prabandhams is historically situated in nineteenth-century networks of patronage and cannot be uncritically projected back onto twelfth-century Tamil literary culture, when seen in connection with the pāṭṭiyals’ project, his work gestures towards a diachronic emphasis on multi-stanzaic poetry as the ideal vehicle for praise. This identification is more explicitly born out in the later pāṭṭiyals, which clearly identify the prabandham corpus as the subject of their analysis, either in their titles (Pirapanta Tipika, Pirapanta Tirattu, and Pirapanta Tipam) or in their announcement of their subject matter, as in the Pirapanta Marapiya, the Muttuviriyam, Cuvaminatam, and Prabandha Tipikai.

What about the Paṉṉiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal? Although these early pāṭṭiyals do not use the term “prabandham,” they hint at this early predilection for interpreting praise literature in terms of poetry composed of multiple stanzas. This constraint is identified in the closest the pāṭṭiyals come to a general definition of poetry. The Chapter on Genres (Iṉaviyal) of the Paṉṉiru Pāṭṭiyal begins with a verse that states that genre (iṉam) can be divided into three types, defined as: a genre composed of one meter (ōṉṟē ākiya iṉam), a genre composed of many meters (oṉṟu palavākiya iṉam) and a genre made up of many poems (pala oṉṟākiya iṉam). The subsequent verses define these types by example: the ulā, maṭal and āṟṟuḷapattai serve as examples of the first type, the kōvai and kāppiyam serve as examples of the second type, and the

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274 Ibid., 73. In a later section, Ebeling emphasizes the role of the invocatory verse (the ciṟappu pāyiram) as an ideal “currency” in this economy of praise. The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal also recognizes the special function of the invocatory verse, and dedicates several verses to its definition and description.

275 Ibid., 87.

276 Ibid., 116.

277 Ibid., 87.

278 Ibid., 116-132.

Caṅkam compilations of the Kalittokai, the Kuguntokai and the Neṭuntokai serve as examples of the third.\textsuperscript{280}

With the possible exception of the āṭṭappat\textsuperscript{\textit{a}}r, all the genres invoked by the Paṇñiru Pāṭṭiyal in this section are multi-stanzaic, either in the form of a long poem or in a compilation of independent poems. The Paṇñiru Pāṭṭiyal’s list of genres supports this. Excluded are independent stanzas, either those found in the Caṅkam anthologies or the wealth of anonymous poems found both in various commentaries as well as those better known independent poems (\textit{taṇippāṭals}) of Auvaipāyant, Kampan and Ottukkuttant.\textsuperscript{282} The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal replaces the definition of genre (\textit{inam}) with a typology of poets (kavi), identified as those “who compose (impromptu) verses according to the letters, words, content, meter and alaṅkāra requested by (someone else)” (ācukkavi), “those who compose (poetry) using sweet content and sound and the best words” (maturakkavi), “those who compose cittiram (poetry) such as mālaimārri, etc.,” referring to what must have been a well-known list of cittirakkavya shared by the Yāpparunākala Viruttī commentary and Pērāćiyyappar. Finally the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal describes the vittārakkavi (Skr. vistāra), who “composes (poetry) of two types: the beautiful stanzaic poem (pāṅku ār toṭārnilai pā) and the independent stanza made of many feet, both identified as extended verse (akalakkavi). While the reference to the independent stanza here is not entirely clear, both the word vittāram and akalam refer to long poems and appear to be synonyms for the later “prabandham.” As for “toṭārnilai pā,” which literally means “connected verse,” the term appears to be a Tamil “translation” of the Sanskrit “prabandham.” The literary genres discussed in the remaining verses of the Potuviyal are understood by the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal to be examples of vittārakkavi/akalakkavi, and while this identification is not made explicit in the verses themselves, the commentarial tradition interprets the description of the context of courtly recitation to pertain specifically to the recitation of an akalakkavi’s poem.\textsuperscript{283}

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\textsuperscript{280} The inclusion of these compilations, which are not praise genres, is not entirely clear, but probably suggests the tendency of the Paṇñiru Pāṭṭiyal to include all Tamil literature in its typology. Presumably, like the akam kōvai genre, even these akam compilations could be transformed into praise poetry with the addition of an invocatory verse that follows the rules of the \textit{poruttam} system. If true, this would be further evidence for the later addition of the invocatory verse, a point discussed in the following chapter. The Paṇñiru Pāṭṭiyal also includes as an example of the third the kalampakam and the mummatikōvai.

\textsuperscript{281} Although the āṭṭappat\textsuperscript{\textit{a}}r is a long narrative poem, because it is composed in the old meter of akaval, it is not stanzaic in the way that the other examples are. However, as a genre covered by all but one of the major pāṭṭiyals, including those that identify as grammars of \textit{prabandham} literature (see Pirapanta Tipika introductioni, p. 22), the pāṭṭiyal tradition recognized the genre as a “connected” poem.

\textsuperscript{282} However, in contrast to the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal or other later pāṭṭiyals, the Paṇñiru Pāṭṭiyal reserves a place for the “compilation” genres of kaṇakku and pāṭṭu, perhaps reflecting a need to incorporate the Caṅkam compilations in this schematic.

\textsuperscript{283} Why would Tamil literary scholars focus on multistanzaic poetry to exemplify their poetics of praise? Are they drawing from Dandin’s theorization of kāvya, defined in the same terms (toṭārnilaiçeeyyi) used to describe the \textit{prabandham} hypergenre? Or are they reflecting the influence of the devotional poems of the Shaivite Tirumuṭai and the Vaishnavite Nalāyirativaprabandham, in which the term \textit{prabandham} first appears? While an answer to these questions awaits more details regarding the relationship between these diverse traditions, the association between praise poetry and multi-stanzaic poetry represents an important turning point in Tamil literary culture.
If the second sections of the Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal address the ways in which the content of various genres can be marshaled for praise of a patron, through eulogistic description, benediction or the embedding of a patron’s name, in the new form of the multistanzaic poem, the first section goes beyond the use of semantic language to theorize the power of Tamil language to transform any poem into a poem capable of benediction (or curse) of a royal patron.

This highly codified discussion is known in the pāṭṭiyal tradition as the section on “poruttam,” defined by the Madras Lexicon as “joining,” “propriety,” “harmony,” or in its most common contemporary usage, as “the agreement of horoscopes between the two parties” in the determination of a marriage. Other English-language scholars have suggested the equivalents “augury”284 and “concord.”285 However, as these translations fail to elicit the range of meanings involved in the term, I have decided to retain the term “poruttam” throughout this chapter.

From the first verse, both the Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal immerse the reader in the secret code-like language used to discuss the poruttam system. According to the Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal, “if one talks about the nature of phonology (discussed) in the texts praised (by scholars), it is necessary to discuss (these phonemes’) birth (piṟṟappu), varṇa (varuṇam), path through stages of existence (kati), the two types of food (iruvakai uṇṭi), the three divisions of gender (mūvakai pāl), incomparable life-stages (poruvil tāṉam), time units (kaṇṇal), birds (puḷ), and the excellent astrological signs (nayam peṟu nāḷ).” The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal is slightly more explicit, announcing that “the excellence of the first word286 expresses the qualities of the ten (poruttams), here listed together as: auspicious (first) word (māṅkalam), word (col), letter (eḻuttu), life-stage (tāṉam), gender (pāl), food (uṇṭi), varṇa (varuṇam), astrological sign (nāḷ), nature (kati) and time unit (kaṇṇam).”287 The obscurity of these terms, which are used throughout the majority of the pāṭṭiyals,288 but not elsewhere in Tamil poetics, indicates that the pāṭṭiyals expected a readership familiar with this system. Although the ensuing verses expound on this system, they remain within the closed world of this shared language, and would be unintelligible without the assistance of a commentary or learned teacher.

As the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal suggests, these poruttams are the basis of a highly codified system of rules pertaining to the first word of a poem, called the “māṅkala col” or “auspicious word,” “invocatory word.” The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal begins with a sample list of such benedictory words, a list that includes words traditionally associated with auspicious qualities, such as excellent (cīr),

284 Chettiyar 1977.
286 The construction of this verse appears to contain a double meaning, in which “cīr” can refer to either “excellence” or “metrical foot,” an important feature of the pāṭṭiyal system.
287 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Mutan Moliyiyal, v. 2, p. 7. The first verse is the standard invocatory verse, which praises both Sarasvati and the Jain arhat in the same verse. The author does this through embedding the Jain arhat in a metaphor describing Sarasvati’s feet, which are like the (lotus) flower of Vāmaṇ, who (sits) under three umbrellas (that shine) like the moon.
288 The introduction to the Pirapanta Tipikai offers a helpful chart to see how these terms were used throughout the pāṭṭiyal tradition.
gold (poṇ), flower (pūṇ), auspicious/beautiful (tīru), jewel (maṇi), water (nīr), moon (tiṅkal), rain (kār), sun (pariti), elephant (vāŋgai), sea (kaṭal), world (ulakam), chariot (tēr), mountain (malai), horse (mā) and land (nilam). The list also includes less predictable words, such as letter (eluttu), word (col) and the river Ganges (kaṅkai). The second poruttam, the Poruttam of Words (Col Poruttam), further delimits the possibilities for the maṅkala word, stating that “it must not be split between metrical feet, it must not lack beauty, it must not have multiple meanings, it must not be meaningless and it must not utilize the poetic strategy of vikāram, (in which the poet has freedom to break grammatical rules regarding consonant and vowel usage).” These discussions of the nature of the maṅkala col straddle the worlds of semantic and phonetic power. On the one hand, the list of words provided by the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal elicit pleasant images that might contribute to the sweetness of a poem’s content, and the rules of Col Poruttam are considered to be standard markers of good poetry.

However, the power of these words extends beyond their aesthetic potential. As V. Narayana Rao points out in his account of the Telugu literary tradition, these auspicious words have the capacity to protect a patron against danger. According to Rao, “all literary texts that were dedicated to a patron began with the (auspicious) syllable śrī (in order) to ward off all evil.” This danger, as Narayana Rao explains, originates in the poem itself, in the power of a poet “(who) could curse the kings out of their kingdoms by uttering an inauspicious combination of syllables and (bring) them back to prosperity by uttering the syllables in auspicious combinations.”

The power of these syllables and the effects of their utterance make up the subject matter of the next nine poruttams of the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal. These verses shift focus from the first word of the poem to the first syllable, considered to be the most potent phonetic unit. Several of these rules apply generally to all patrons, such as the “food” (uṇṭi) poruttam, which differentiates between the letters that have the effect of “nectar” (amutam) and “poison” (naṅcu) on the patron. The Paṅgiru Pāṭṭiyal specifies that “if one uses those (letters) that are poison in accordance with a name (oru peyar maruṅku anaaya nirpiq), (they will) cause death (tuṅcal) and suffering (naṭukkum) resulting from disgrace (navai uru).

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290 Here I follow the order given by the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal. While the Paṅgiru Pāṭṭiyal covers much of the same material, the verses are split up among the three chapters.

291 This rule is problematic, as many of the maṅkala words have multiple meanings. Could this be a remark prohibiting slesa in the the first word in order to protect the patron from “hidden” meanings?


293 Ibid., p. 145.

294 The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal associates this rule with the literary genre tacāṅku.

295 Paṅgiru Pāṭṭiyal, verse 22, p. 11. The commentary on Venpā Pāṭṭiyal identifies a poem that utilizes poison letters as arakkavi. He directs the reader to the collection of poems called the Taṅippāṭal Tiruttu, in which the poet Kālamēkappulavar curses the villages of Kayirāru, Āṟur and Āṟumukamaṅkalam (see commentary on Venpā Pāṭṭiyal Moliyial v. 6, p. 14).
However, the majority of the *poruttams*, as their name suggests, require a “match” between the first syllable of the first word and the patron being addressed. In the case of “gender (*pāl*) *poruttam*, the gender of the patron determines the choice of vowels. If a poem praises a man, male letters should be used (short vowels). If a poem praises a woman, female letters should be used (long vowels). In the case of *varuṇa* (*varṇa*) *poruttam*, the “match” depends on the patron’s social class, (*varṇa*). The astrological sign (*nāḷ*) *poruttam* is a complex system which assigns astrological signs to letters in order to “match” the first letter of the poem with the first letter in the patron’s name. Likewise, the stage of life (*tāṉam*) *poruttam* uses the first letter of the patron’s name to assign certain letters to the various stages of life, including *pālan* (youth), *kumarṇa* (adolescence), *irācan* (kingship), *mūppu* (old age), and *marañam* (death). According to the *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal*, to being about auspicious effect, the first letter of the poem should be associated with youth, adolescence or kingship. If the letter is associated with old age or death, the poem will result in a curse. The *Paṇṉiru Pāṭṭiyal* interprets this *poruttam* slightly differently, assigning the relationship of friendship (*natpu*), neutrality (*utāciṉam*) and enmity (*pakai*) to the letters. The relationship the poet desires with a particular patron determines the letters he chooses.

Later scholarship has been critical of the *poruttam* system, decrying it, as Annie Thomas does in her treatise on Tamil prosody, as “unnecessary and ridiculous.” Thomas goes on to attribute this system to “a period of religious upheaval and caste feelings and creed differences, (when) even the language suffered certain restrictions and regulations (such as the *poruttams*), which cannot be accepted as logical or scientific.” In her brief overview of *poruttams* in a larger study on Tamil poetics, Indira Manuel suggests that “(other than the verses on the benedictory word and its aesthetic qualities [*col poruttam*]), the rest have no aesthetic base at all. They are just some sort of manipulations.” In his overview of Tamil grammar, Civaliṅkaṇar completely excludes the *poruttam* system from his discussion of *pāṭṭiyals*, despite their presence in all extant *pāṭṭiyal* treatises. Even scholars who attempt to explain the *poruttam* system, such as Jeyaraman and P. Kuļantai, gesture towards the importance of the patron in this system, but include little more than a brief description of the major *poruttams*, without providing a

296 Here the more common definition of “*poruttam*” as “the agreement of horoscopes between the two parties” in the determination of marriage is more fitting.

297 see commentary on *Venpā Pāṭṭiyal Moḷiḷiyial* v. 5.

298 Thomas 1999: 15.

299 Ibid., p. 15

300 Manuel 1997: 80.

301 Civaliṅkaṇar, *Tamil Ilakkaṇa Unarvukal*.

guide to understanding this poetic system in a literary or literary historical context. Particularly in the case of Kulantai, writing in the late nineteenth century at a time before the knowledge of the pāṭṭiyal system had been lost, this absence of interpretive guidance may have been due to the assumption of a readership already familiar with its conventions or perhaps the intended secrecy of the system.

However, despite the absence of contemporary knowledge in Tamil about this theoretical approach to the power of poetic language, the poruttam system draws on a long history of the relationship between language and magical effect in South India and India more generally. On the one hand, this endowing of Tamil with magical powers casts it in the role traditionally associated with the Sanskrit language and its long history of ritual use. From its earliest use in Vedic ritual to its use throughout India in temple practice, Sanskrit is a language theorized both in its capacity to represent the world as as its capacity to act upon that world. As a language with such powers, the use of Sanskrit has always been controlled, from the strict training in pronunciation to the grammars that dictate correct usage to the injunction on who had access to the language. In their positioning Tamil as a language with such powers, the pāṭṭiyals invest Tamil with the mantraic power of Sanskrit.

On the other hand, the theorization of Tamil as a language capable of effect on the world has deep roots in Deccani concepts of poetic language. Many of the Caṅkam poems describe a relationship between a king and his poet as one of mutual dependency, in which the position of the poet is derived not only from his “status as a broker of fame,” but also to his “power to curse, to mock, even to destroy.” In his discussion of the power of the Caṅkam bard, Shulman gives as an example Puṟam 202, in which the poet Kapilar threatens King Iruṅkovel after the king has rejected Pari's daughters in marriage. Kapilar warns that:

(...) This town of Araiyam is long established: but hear how once it was ruined, Pulikaṭimāl with your dense garland, worthy scion of your father-one of your ancestors, brilliant like you, scorned Kalāttalai’s fine words of praise, and that was that, master of lovely chariots (...)" transl. Shulman (94)

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303 Jeyaraman, Pāṭṭiyal_Tiranayvu. Jeyaraman follows AC Chettiyar in associating the poruttam tradition with the Northern tradition (vaḻaṭṭi marapu), and adds that this “foreign” system was first introduced into Tamil by the Yāpparunikalam Virutti commentary (Jeyaraman, Pāṭṭiyal_Tiranayvu; 22).

304 The role of Sanskrit in the theorizing of the power of Tamil warrants further investigation, especially the question of how this project relates to other similar efforts in South India, such as the introduction of Tamil as a ritual language in the Sri Vaishnavite tradition.

In this poem, Kapilar warns the king not to offend him by reminding him that in former times disrespect of a poet led to the ruin of the kingdom of one of his ancestors. Although an interpretation of this poem depends in part on recognizing the relationship between its documentary and rhetorical use of language, the concept of the power of poetic language (and the special status of poets) is a significant part of the Tamil cultural imagination.\footnote{306}

Similar stories exist in other South Indian traditions.\footnote{307} Narayana Rao points out that in the informal literary tradition of Telugu \textit{cātu} verses, recited and exchanged among communities of poets, many stories exist about the magical powers of poetry. In these stories, “a poet is not one who has merely learnt the skill of making verses; he or she has the power to make reality conform to his or her speech.”\footnote{308} The poet Bhīmakavi, for example, is “(...) famed in the \textit{cātu} tradition as \textit{sāpānugraphasamartha} (capable of cursing and blessing); he is said to have cursed kings and destroyed and restored thrones.”\footnote{309} His powers extend outside the world of his royal patrons; insulted when he was excluded from a Brahmin feast in the village, Bhīmakavi composed a verse that “cursed the Brahmans” and turned their “fried cakes into frogs, their rice into lice, and all the side dishes into fishes. When the Brahmans, witnessing these transformations, begged his forgiveness, Bhīmakavi sang a second verse” and turned their food back into food.”\footnote{310}

Although they draw on a long existing tradition of formal and informal attitudes towards magic and phonetic power in South India and India more generally, in their formalizing of this power in the theorizing of Tamil, rather than Sanskrit, the \textit{pāṭṭiyals} represent something new in Indian thinking about language and literature. How do we understand this dramatic new

\footnote{306} Also see the well-known account of the recital of the \textit{Nanti Kalampakam}, in which the king burns to death as he listens to the final verse of the poem dedicated to him, unable to pull himself away from what he realizes is a magical incantation aimed at his destruction. The poet Kalamekappulvar is also known for his powers to curse. Implicated in the destruction of several Tamil villages, he is also known for cursing a king to be swallowed up by dust because he refused to recognize the poet’s superiority. See \textit{Abitana Cintamani} for a discussion of this poet.

\footnote{307} Hallissey (2003) points to the existence of a similar “occult” tradition in Sinhala literary culture. The relationship between the texts mentioned by Hallissey and the \textit{Yāpparuṅkalam Virutti} is striking and warrants further research.

\footnote{308} Rao 1998: 11.

\footnote{309} The full story is as follows: Bhīmakavi’s mother was a widow living at her parents’ house. One day she went with a group of pilgrims to the Shivarātī festival at Dakṣārāma, the temple to Bhīmeśvara-Śiva. She saw her fellow pilgrims praying to the god for boons. Skeptical herself, she said to him: ‘If you give me a son like you, I will give you a tank of water as oil for your lamps and four tons of sand for your food.” The god was pleased at this challenge and visited the widow that night; he slept with her and promised her a son, whom she was instructed to name after him. She called the boy who was born Bhīma. One day his playmates mocked him for being a bastard. HE ran to his mother and threatened to hit her with a rock if she didn’t reveal the name of his father. She said: ‘That rock in the temple is your father; go ask him.” Now the boy went into the temple and threatened to hit the god with a rock. Bhīmeśvara-Shiva, afraid, appeared before him in his true form and announced that he was, indeed, the boy’s father. “In that case,” said the boy, “from now on whatever I say must come true.” The god granted him that boon. Rao 1998: 11.

\footnote{310} Ibid, 12.
theoretical system in the context of Tamil (and Indian) literary culture? Historically situating the pāṭṭiyals is fraught with the usual problems associated with premodern Tamil literary history. To begin with, the dating of the pāṭṭiyals is highly tentative. The Paṇṇiru Pāṭṭiyal in particular does not include any mention of an author, let alone a patron or other identifying characteristics. Attempts to date it based on the literary genres it describes are unsatisfactory, in part because of the lack of extant literary examples of many of the genres. The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal offers a slightly more helpful picture, in part because of the existence of an old commentary, which identifies the author as Guṇavīra Pantitar who lived in the time of Tirupuvaṉ Tēvaṉ, identified with Kulottunga III (1178-1218). Guṇavīra Pantitar was also said to have composed the grammatical treatise Nēminātam, a detail corroborated by the invocatory verse of the commentary on that text and by the poem on the history of Tōṇṭai Nāṭu (the Tōṇṭai Nāṭu Catakam). Informal tradition associates him with the famous Chola court poet Oṭṭukkuttar, although this detail does not correspond with the more common dating.

David Shulman’s recent work on Southern Sanskrit and Telugu alaṅkāraśāstra provides an important clue to historicizing the theory of magical phonemes found in the pāṭṭiyals. In an attempt to challenge the dominant account of alaṅkāraśāstra as a coherent teleology culminating in the “climax” of Anandavardhana’s “magisterial synthesis at the turn of the eleventh century,” Shulman points out that the Southern tradition articulated both in Telugu and Sanskrit reveals the diversity of ideas in the tradition, a diversity that, though marginalized by later scholars, has consistently invigorated alaṅkāraśāstra across India. He focuses on the concept of camatkāra (wonder, clicking sound) because of its association with “a highly charged use of language, which, when properly controlled or mastered by the poet, is capable of astonishing transformative effects.” This acknowledgment of the importance of phonemes in poetic composition, Shulman argues, can be seen throughout the alaṅkāra tradition, but most visibly in the Southern texts such as Viśveśvara’s late fourteenth-century Camatkāracandrikā.
composed at the court of Śiṅgabhūpāla II in Telangana.\textsuperscript{317} From its invocatory verse, which characterizes the goddess of speech, Vāc, “in terms of the primary phonemes and the technical process of their articulation, even before they achieve syntactical coherence and potential meaningfulness, on one or more levels, in the complete sentence,” the text concerns itself with the “pride of place” held by phonemes in poetic composition. Shulman likens the poet’s role in linguistic manipulation to the ritual awakening of the divine from its “prior, latent or potential state - in stone, or mind, for example.”\textsuperscript{318} This process of awakening the power of the divinity is outlined in a series of rules on “useful meta-phonetic properties” of the first word of a poem. In Shulman’s translation, “these phonemes generate rasa and so on, when appropriately used; placed at the beginning of a poem, each has its own divinity and can cause auspicious and inauspicious results, as the case may be, for the author, the patron and the listener. The sound a confers pleasure, unless used in negation (prohibition) when it effects the opposite. Ā gives joy; it is not appropriate for contexts of anger and suffering. I, ī, u, and ū make for satisfaction and the fulfillment of wishes. (...) c leads to a loss of fame. ch and j remove disease. (...)” The verse continues in this fashion. According to Shulman, “this list is fairly standard and recurs, with some significant variation, in the works of all the major Andhra ālāṅkārīkas (...).”\textsuperscript{319}

The similarities between this system and the system of poruttam outlined by the pāṭiyals are striking. Both are concerned with the phonetic power of the first word of a poem, and the role of both patron and poet in this linguistic manipulation. The similarities extend beyond shared theoretical concerns; both systems draw from the same technical vocabulary in their common identification of letters with certain gods (called “birth/origins” [piṟappu] in the Paṅgiru Pāṭiyal) as well as the identification of certain letters as “poisoned food.” And the Telugu variations of this system, like the Tamil pāṭiyals, associate the first phoneme of the poem with a social class (varṇa) which should match the social class of the patron to whom the poem is addressed.\textsuperscript{320}

Shulman’s brief essay, which gestures towards a shared Deccani preoccupation with “linguistic metaphysics” but does not address the pāṭiyals specifically, generates more questions than it does answers. If the Paṅgiru Pāṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭiyal are accurately dated to the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, in what form, if at all, would they have come into contact with the Sanskrit and Telugu materials? Or does the material discussed by Shulman force us to

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 250.

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 268.

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid; 267. Shulman points out that this system is not limited to “normative, rule-oriented discussions” but also appear in literary analysis. He points to the example of the commentary of Carla Venkaṭasūri, “an eighteenth-century commentator on the Sāhityaratnākara - from West Godavari District, and thus naturally immersed in the Andhra ālāṅkāra way of thinking” (Shulman 2010: 270). Venkaṭasūri questions how a invocatory verse to Vināyaka could begin with the word ālingya, when “as everyone knows, initial ā is a source of some slight discomfort, while l burns and brings disaster. Even worse the ta-gana, which has empty space as its divinity, means emptiness and destruction. Neither the varṇa nor the metreme is proper to the beginning of a book.” I have yet to find a comparable example in Tamil literary commentary.

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., 268.
rethink the pāṭṭiyals’ dating? While answers to these questions must await further collaborative work on Deccani poetics, Shulman’s work on phonetics in alaṅkāraśāstra points out the scope of these ideas throughout South India.

Endowed with the luxury of more confidently dated material, Shulman associates this development in poetics with specific shifts in patronage and the aestheticization of kingly rule during the Nayak period. According to Shulman, "one clear innovation widely represented in the new Deccan alaṅkāra works is the elevation of the author's patron to the role of the exemplary Näyaka, the hero of most of the (...) verses. (...) We could argue that the post-Kākatīya period of Velama rule in Rācakoṇḍa and the Reddi kingdoms of Koṇḍavīḍu and Rajahmundry produced the most far-reaching aestheticization of the political domain ever seen in South India. In effect, an entirely new basis was laid down for kingship, now legitimized in largely aesthetic terms."321

While Shulman’s essay does not address the implications of language choice in such an aestheticization of kingship, this has been the focus of Pollock’s recent work on premodern South Asian literary culture. Like Shulman, Pollock argues for a political theory of South (and Southeast) Asia in which political power came not from coercion or Brahmanical legitimization, but from participation in an aesthetic world associated with a particular use of language. In particular, Pollock demonstrates how the introduction of literary languages ranging from Kannada to Tibetan to Khmer around the beginning of the second millennium indicate what he refers to as the “vernacular revolution,” in which the articulation of royal power shifted away from the cosmopolitan language of Sanskrit to regional languages, albeit modeled after Sanskrit language and literary theories. Thinking in terms of the role of Tamil language and literature in such a new vernacular aesthetic of the court helps us better understand the pāṭṭiyal project. On the one hand, the introduction of formalized rules demonstrating the capacity of both Tamil language and literature to express royal power reflects the vernacularization process described by Pollock, a process in which the institutions of grammar and poetics play a central role. On the other hand, the pāṭṭiyals complicate Pollock’s thesis with their incorporation of non-Sanskritic theories of both language and literature in that project. Just as the poruttam system reflects a synthesis of theories of the power of Sanskrit with attitudes about linguistic power rooted in the Tamil and larger Deccani tradition, likewise the section on genres capable of royal praise are primarily not genres derived from Sanskrit but genres that in many cases occur only in Tamil.

Praising the royal patron using the magical language of Tamil is at the center of the theoretical system presented by the pāṭṭiyals, as the “subject” of the praise genres and the intended “object” of the poet’s linguistic manipulations. Despite the origins of many of the genres in devotional corpus of Shaivite and Vaishnavite literature, the pāṭṭiyals are not theories of devotional literature. The poet to whom the pāṭṭiyals are addressed should not, despite their mantraic powers, be confused with the poet-saints of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite tradition, whose power comes from their ability to experience and articulate the divine.322 In contrast to these poet-saints, who distinguish themselves by the surrender of poetic knowledge, the power of

321 Ibid., 261.

322 See Shulman 1993 for a discussion of the distinction between these types of authors in Tamil literary history.
the pāṭṭiyal poets is clearly situated in the world of grammatical rules and institutions associated with a royal court.

This courtly context is made explicit in a series of verses in the last chapter of the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, the Chapter on General Rules (Potuviyal), which situate the work of the poet in the world of the courtly assembly. In these verses, the author describes the requirements for the auspicious recitation of a poem before a courtly assembly. The section begins with a description of the poet, who must:

come from the four varṇas (kulams) free of disgrace, [be] well read in all subjects, [...] have a divine nature (teyvam), [exhibit] dharma (aram) and good behavior. (He must also be) capable in the three fields of Tamil, and must “recite (kavi urai) excellent poetry.”

The courtly assembly for whom the poem is recited is also described. The good court (nal avai) consists of:

those who persist on the path of famed dharma;
those who are without hatred (cerram), anger (ciṉam), shame (ikaf), lust (kāmam) and lies (poy),
and those who know all the arts (nikalkalaikal)

The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal further distinguishes an “excellent court” (niṟai avai), made up of that audience (kēṭpōr) that “has virtue (nalaṉ), self-control (atakkm), excellence (cemmai), balanced nature (naṭuvuvgilai), wisdom (nāṉam), noble birth (kulan) [and who] are free of blemish (kōtil) and who have conquered their senses (pulan illōr).”

The Venpā Pāṭṭiyal also describes a bad court (tīya avai), which the commentator convincingly suggests is unfit for the auspicious recitation of poetry. Those in the bad court “do not recognize excellence (avaiyiṟam ariyār)” and “do not speak with deep knowledge suitable [to the court] (āyntamarntu collār).” They are also guilty of “not discussing without [first] eliminating defects (navai īnri tām uraiyār),” and they are immodest (nāṉār). They do not recognize poetic flavor (cuvaṉ uraiyār) and they do not understand the subtle arts (āva kalai teriyār).” The last quality of the bad court also stands out as unusual in its description as “those without fear (aṅcār avar)”.

323 The commentary interprets this term to refer to the poet’s devotion to god.
324 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Potuviyal, v. 7.
325 The significance of distinguishing between the good and the excellent assembly is not clear.
326 Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Potuviyal v. 9. This section stands out for its discussion of the criteria for poetic appreciation, a topic familiar to Sanskrit aesthetics, but foreign to the Tamil tradition.
The next several verses of the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal outline the auspicious times (muhūrttam) at which the recitation of such (praise) poems should occur. In keeping with the pāṭṭiyal’s emphasis on the first letter of the poem, the auspicious time is dependent on the phonemes that begin a poem. Poems beginning with the vowels a and ā should be recited during the kaṭikai (time measure of twenty-four minutes) of the Sun (katirōṇ), and so on in that order. Of these, the pāṭṭiyal explains, the first three kaṭikais are the most beautiful.

Here the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal uses the term “beauty” (aḻak) to refer to a poetic quality not limited to the aesthetic. “Well-researched (use) of beauty in the first word (of a poem),” the pāṭṭiyal explains, “is not just a matter of saying something in a beautiful manner. It is good to make (poetry) by saying things beautifully so that all evil is removed from a poem. If not, that is bad.”

The next verse explicitly addresses the relationship between the first word of the poem and the absence of defect/evil (tītu) from both the poem and the assembly, stating that “among those attached to the learned assembly, those who are without fault, whose actors are without fault and who recite without fault, the many [possible] meanings diffused through recitation depend on the first word.”

The transformation of a praise poem into an auspicious benediction extends to the rituals surrounding the recitation as well. In the next verse, the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal describes the proper worship of Sarasvati at such a recitation.

Worshipping the Goddess of Speech (nāmakal), (who sits) on the great seat (cāl tavacu)-by lighting lamps hung on strings, so that they shine, appearing like shining golden jewels, spreading (their light).
(Such worship) is good.

327 The whole verse reads as follows:
kaṭaṇā makaravā kāran katirōṇ uṭaṇā yeṣuṇikatikai yorāru - ṣṭaṇāki ēṇa yuyirkkuṟu mivvakaiyāl vantutittāl āṇamutan műru maḻaku. (Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal, v. 26, p. 75).

328 aḻakāk mugmoḷikkan āryantaṇavum alaṅkākañ colinavum ṣṭrī - alaṅkākac ceyyōkku uraittanavum ellām ceyyirīc ceyyīy nuṟu aṟṟāyīy tītu. (Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal, v. 27, p. 75).

329 tītīlā nūluraittā tīṭīlāc ceeyuḷait tītīlōr nallavaiyir cērttattapiṅ - āticol pāvīr kiyaiya viraikkēr palaporūḷum tāvil porulōṭuṇ cántu. (Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal, v. 28, p. 75)

330 cāṇti menṭuk taraṭṭ tiralparappik kānti mani kāṇakaṅ Kannūri - vāyntalaranta tūmamū nāṟṉi vilakkhiṭṭuc cāṟaviciel nāmakaḷai yēṟṟuvitta nāṟku. (Venpā Pāṭṭiyal, Ceyyuḷiyal, v. 29, p. 75).
Finally, the *Venpā Pāṭtiyal* stresses the importance of grammatical knowledge in the proper execution of this system. According to this verse, “the power (held) by good people to recite poetry well in front of (other) good people who have having composed (poetry) only after fully understanding the *pāṭtiyal* treatises which have been compiled in line with the good tradition of Tamil treatises studied by those with excellent knowledge. -- that is intellect/(true) knowledge (mati).\(^{331}\)

The courtly provenance of the *pāṭṭiyals* is also revealed by the inclusion of two standard accessories to a courtly test: the invocatory verse (*kaṭavul vāḷtu*) and the address to the court (*avaiyatakku*), in which the poet expresses his humility and debt to those who have preceded him. In these verses, in which the author praises Sarasvati, the Jain *arhat* and his teacher, Vacaṉanti Muṉivar, for whom the text is named, he exhibits his familiarity with the conventions of a larger intellectual culture associated with courtly literature.

Despite rules that presumably applied to the proper performance and composition of literature, neither the *Paṉgiru Pāṭtiyal* nor the *Venpā Pāṭtiyal* contain literary examples to help us understand the relationship between this system of literary theory and specific literary production of this period.\(^{332}\) Narayana Rao’s informal example from the Telugu tradition gives the best sense of how this system may have operated outside the world of theoretical treatises. This story, which recounts the dedication of the narrative poem *Vasucaritramu* by the poet Rāmarājabhūṣaṇa to his patron King Krishnadevaṛāya, centers around the importance of the proper syllables in the first word of a poem. When Rāmarājabhūṣaṇa went to present the poem to his patron king, the jester-poet Tenāḷī Rāmalīṇgādu, also of Krishnadevaṛāya’s court, warned the king against accepting the poem. In order to illustrate the danger that awaited the king if he accepted, Tenali wrote the syllable “śrī” on his hand with vibhūti ash and began to recite the first stanza. Upon recitation of the bilabial syllables of this stanza (*śrībhūtpri vīvāhavela*) the vibhuti ash was blown off Tenali’s hand. “Your śrī,” said the jester-poet to the king, ‘will be blown off just like this if you receive dedication of this book.’\(^{333}\) The moral of this story, like many stories involving Tenali, centers around the double meaning of both the words śrī and vibhūti, which can also mean “wealth” in Telugu. Without knowing it, the poet Rāmarājabhūṣaṇa had composed a poem that threatened his patron’s prosperity.

Understanding the poetics of the *pāṭṭiyals* allows for the possibility of theorizing literature not in terms of its expressive qualities, its aesthetic effect on a willing connoisseur, or even its role in political representation, but rather in terms of its extra-semantic magical power to

\(^{331}\) *naṅkuṇuṇtō rāẏanta tamiṅṇulīṅ naṅṇerīyai muṇṇuṇartu pāṭṭiyvāṅ muṟṟuṇartu - pāṅṭumartu
daḷḷuruvu ngalḷy nalamār kaviyuraikka vallutu laṇṅō matī. (Venpā Pāṭtiyal, Ceyyuṭiyal, v. 30, p. 76)*

\(^{332}\) As far as I know. For the most part, the commentarial tradition on the *pāṭṭiyals* provides grammatical examples from other *pāṭṭiyals* to help explain the verse, but does not provide literary examples. although the commentary on the fourteenth-century *Navanīta Pāṭtiyal* draws from the *Vikkrama Chola Ulā* to show that the first line “cīrtanta tāmarayāḷ kēṉān” adheres to the requirements of the “life stage” (tāṉam) *poruttam* because the relationship between the “vī” in the name “Vikkirma” and the syllable “cīr” results in an auspicious “match” associated with “youth” (pāḷaṉ) (Jeyaraman, Pāṭṭiyal Tiranayvu, 34).

\(^{333}\) Rao 1998: 144.
transform the patron in ways that must be carefully controlled. More specifically, by theorizing both Tamil language and literary genres as the ideal vehicles for literature composed for a royal patron, the pāṭṭiyals participate in a larger shift in the use of language in the expression of royal power, albeit informed by non-Sanskritic elements that complicate Pollock’s vernacularization theory.

The schematic of the pāṭṭiyals reveals the range of literary interpretive traditions in Tamil over the last thousand years. Despite the important role played by Tamil in both the theorizing of language and the selection of genres, neither the Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal nor the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal explicitly refer to language choice, either in defense against a perceived threat or as a source of new literary developments. The Caṅkam poems have no pride of place here, nor are they explicitly excluded as in the infamous invocatory verse of the eighteenth-century Ilakkaṇa Kottu, which declares that the reading of classical literature, including the Caṅkam poems, is a waste of time. Rather, the pāṭṭiyals represent an alternative way of thinking about Tamil literature, one that, as Ebeling’s work reveals, resonated in Tamil culture until new economies associated with print technologies and university education as well as a new interest in “purifying” Tamil literature, rendered the pāṭṭiyal poetic system obsolete.

334 Moreover, the identification of a corpus of literary genres defined in part by the context of their recitation reflects a larger pan-Indian predilection for distinguishing genres based on their performative context. As Bronner has recently argued for stotra literature, an equally poorly defined literary genre, "their mode of consumption as well as their function in delivering public messages to certain groups or communities may be taken as important components of the definition of the stotra genre, beyond the the minimal formal features identified at the outset" Yigal Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Diksita and the Function of Stotras." in Journal of the American Oriental Society 127, no. 2 (2007):128.

335 The only reference to other languages in Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal is in a verse on the genre “tēva pāṇi,” which is defined as the equivalent of “tēvap piranavam” in the “northern language” (vaṭa moli). As for references to Tamil, the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal identifies the pāṭṭiyal as belonging to a tradition of Tamil texts. The only genre defined by its use of language is the “garland of pure Tamil” (centamīl mālai), is described by the Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal as coming in one of twenty-seven varieties of meter? genre? (pāṭṭu) on any subject matter, in contrast to the “garland of the earth” (tārakai mālai). See Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal 193-195. Given the lack of literary examples, this distinction is unclear. This lack of emphasis on language choice is especially significant given what Shulman demonstrates was a tradition spanning multiple linguistic traditions.

336 Although the Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal include the genres of kanakku and pattuppāṭṭu, understood by later scholars to refer to the Caṅkam compilations of the Eṭṭuttokai, the Patinekkiṉanakku and the Pattuppāṭṭu, as these descriptions refer only to metrical limitations and not content, it is unclear what they were originally intended to describe. The Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal also differs from other pāṭṭiyals in its inclusion of exemplary grammatical verses associated with grammarians whose names are familiar to the Tamil literary and grammatical world, including those who share names with the Caṅkam poets. (Convention attributes authorship of the Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal to the twelve disciples of Agastya, giving rise to the mention of “paṇṭiru” (twelve) in the title). Although this phenomenon has elicited debates on the relationship between these pāṭṭiyal grammarians and the Caṅkam past (see Introduction to the Paṇṭiru Pāṭṭiyal), no convincing evidence exists to shed light on the provenance of these grammars, which were probably composed several centuries after the early poems.

337 See Venkatachalapathy 2005: 551 for a discussion of this text in the context of the diversity of canons privileged by interpretive communities of premodern South India.
Chapter 4

Praising God in the Court:
Theorizing (Devotional) Praise Poetry in the Tolkāppiyam Commentaries

While the grammatical verses of the Tolkāppiyam’s chapter on poetry (Ceyyuḷiyal) theoretically address all Tamil literature, the Tolkāppiyam commentators, in their interpretation of these verses, primarily draw from a particular corpus of poems identified by their association with the Caṅkam past and the authority of the grammarians Tolkāppiyaṉār and Agastya. This deliberate privileging of the old tradition includes the explicit rejection and/or omission of theoretical perspectives seen as deviations from the Tolkāppiyam, including the new theories of language presented by the Yāpparukalam Virutti and the pāṭṭiyal treatises. However, despite their position excluding new literary developments that might threaten the status of the older tradition, the commentators are not immune to the changes that had occurred in Tamil literary culture since the earlier period. If a survey of the texts privileged by the Tolkāppiyam commentators reveals the interpretive choices involved in the defining and canonizing of Tamil literature, the moments of deviation from that standard corpus reveal the literary world outside that canon, a world that was too important for the commentators to ignore completely.

The most striking deviation from the standard corpus can be found in the interpretation of praise genres introduced in the Ceyyuḷiyal. In their discussions of these verses, both Pērāciriyar and Naccinārkkīriyar refer not to the Caṅkam poems, but to a range of post-Caṅkam and contemporary literary genres including the invocatory verse (kaṭavul vālṭtu), the prabandham paraṇi genre, the later epic (kāvyā) and others. These references to new literary forms are not isolated references scattered amidst Caṅkam examples; rather, this section highlights these new literatures in place of the Caṅkam examples. At first glance, these new literary examples are not clearly related; the structure and form of the genres of paraṇi and kaṭavul vālṭtu, for instance, share little in common. However, the Tolkāppiyam commentators understand these diverse

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338 The first verse of the Ceyyuḷiyal provides a list of the poetic components (uruppū) that are elaborated in verses throughout the chapter. These components, which range from basic metrical elements (beat-count, syllable, foot, line) to poetic content, are not limited to a particular set of literature despite their application to a limited corpus by the later commentaries. I have added “Tamil literature” here because although the Ceyyuḷiyal does not specify acceptable language for literature, other sections of the Tolkāppiyam suggest that the grammar pertains exclusively to Tamil. See the prefatory verse (pāyiram), which identifies the grammar as covering “[...] usage [of language] in the good world where Tamil is spoken, between Veṅkatam [mountain] in the North and Kumari in the South” (vaṭavēṇkaṭan teṅkumari āyiṭait tamikāṟu nallulakattu vaḻakkūṇ ceyyuḷum āyiṟu mutaliv) and Collatikāram Eccaviyal 1-7, which identify the four types of language as different idioms of Tamil, including Northern words (vaṭa col), “made Tamil” by the omission of letters foreign to the Tamil alphabet. As for the list of what constitutes literature provided by the first verse of the Ceyyuḷiyal, several of the components refer to poetic categories specific to Caṅkam literature, including tinai, kaikōl, kūṟru and tūrai. Others are more ambiguous, such as kaḷaiy, kaḷām and meyppāṭṭu, and many are general, such as the metrical elements mentioned above. For a discussion of the poetic components introduced in the Ceyyuḷiyal and their relationship to akam literature, see Manuel 1997.

339 As discussed in the first chapter.
poems as participants in a common literary genre: that of praise (vāḻtти). While they do not borrow the theoretical framework of the пăţiyалs, the aesthetic category of praise, discussed across the commentaries to over seventeen verses in three sections of the Ceyyuḷiyal, allows the commentators to address developments in literary production that demand accommodation in the theorizing of the Tamil literary world, even one as conservative as that of the Tolkăppiyam commentators. This chapter looks at the theorizing of praise poetry in the commentaries on the Ceyyuḷiyal, and what this theorizing reveals about the importance of this aesthetic category during this period.

If new literary genres in Tamil were in part defined by the emphasis on praise, this development in Tamil literature did not go unnoticed by the Tolkăppiyam commentators. In fact, of the body of literary examples that fall outside their standard canon, the majority are affiliated with these courtly genres of praise, including the kāvya, the prabandham, and the introductory poems which accompany these genres, such as the address to the court (avaiyāṭakku) and the invocatory verse (kaṭavuḷ vāḻtти). As these are not Caṅkam poems, they do not, for the most part, appear as literary examples in the majority of the Tolkăppiyam commentaries, including those on the Puṟattiṇaiyiyal. However, this introduction of new genres in the commentaries on the Ceyyuḷiyal is possible in part because unlike the Puṟattiṇaiyiyal, the Ceyyuḷiyal does not explicitly refer to the puṟam category (or akam), but rather provides a more general theory of literature, including verses that introduce praise genres without specifying which literature they are describing. The flexibility of these verses allows for the Tolkăppiyam commentators to include these new literary developments while still remaining within the poetic system of the original grammar.

The discussion of praise poetry in the Ceyyuḷiyal begins with a general verse on vāḻtти, or praise, poems. Situated in the middle of a set of verses which introduce the four major meters, this verse states that “the types of vāḻtти come in (all of these) four meters [vāḻttiyaḷ vakaiyē nāṛpākkum urittē].” The commentaries on this verse establish a basic and important distinction that will be referred to throughout their commentaries on this and related verses. The commentators distinguish praise poems that treat worldly subjects, identified as sages, kings, brahmins, cows, country, and rain, from poems that praise god (kaṭavuḷ vāḻtти). This distinction is in itself a commentarial invention; nowhere does the Tolkăppiyam refer to two types of vāḻtти, and in fact the term “kaṭavuḷ vāḻtти” is never used in the original verses of the Ceyyuḷiyal. For the poems that praise worldly subjects, the commentators present familiar examples from the Caṅkam and post-Caṅkam poems of the Patiruppattu and the Tirukkuṟal. For example, to illustrate praise of sages, Nacciṉarkkiṉiyar gives Kūṟal 24, which likens “men who master their five senses with the goad of self-control” to “a seed meant for the earth of the supreme.” He draws from Patiruppattu for his praise of kings, and returning to the Tirukkuṟal for praise of

340 As discussed in the previous chapter.

341 The term shows up once, however, in a verse in the Purattinaiyiyal section on păṭān tiṇai. As I mention in the previous chapter, the section of commentary is problematic for several reasons.

342 uraṉ eṉṉum tōṭṭiyā yōraintuṅ kăppāṅ
varaṉ eṉṉum vaippukkōr viṭtu
Nacciṉarkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkăppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 109, p. 134.
rain, he cites Kuṟaḷ 19 which states that “if raindrops don’t fall from the sky, green blades of grass are difficult to find.”

As for praise of brahmins, cows and country, the commentator doesn’t give specific examples, suggesting that the reader identify these poems when they come.

The next four verses introduce vāḻtu distinguished by their subject matter as well as by their metrical limitations, describing the generic categories of puṟanilai, vāyugai, avaiyaṭakkam and ceviyarivuru. Unlike the more general vāḻtu, which can refer to sages, rain, etc., these types of praise poems all refer to a king or patron, identified by the commentators as “cāṭṭan”. Several of these themes are familiar to readers of the puṟam poems. The poet’s mixing of praise with the giving of truthful advice, difficult to hear, (vāyugai, which is interpreted by the commentators as “medicinal advice”) is a common theme in the puṟam collections, as seen in Puṟam 363, used by both commentators to illustrate vāyugai. In this poem, the poet offers harsh advice to the king, suggesting that he accept the impermanence of life and renounce the world. Although the poem does not directly praise the king, the commentators interpret this as a praise genre, as the poet alludes to the greatness of the king before reminding him of the temporary nature of this greatness. Ceviyarivuru, or “the suggestion to exhibit modesty despite one’s greatness” is also a puṟam theme. To illustrate this genre, the commentators give Puṟam 6 and

343 vicumpir ruiviḷi gallāṇmaṟṟāṅkē
pacumpir gалаikāṅ paritu
Naccīṟāṟkkinitjar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuiliyala 109, p. 134.

344 oḷintaṇa vantulik kāṅka
Naccīṟāṟkkinitjar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuiliyala 109, p. 134.

345 According to the Tolkāppiyam, this set of genres only comes in āciriyappā and venpā, not in kali or vañci meters. Naccīṟāṟkkinitjar distinguishes this set of four from the previous category vāḻtu, called “natural” (iyarkai), presumably because of its lack of metrical limitations.

346 Puṟam 363 (transl. George Hart & Hank Heifetz):
Blissful kings who have protected and ruled over the vast earth encircled by the dark ocean so that not even a speck of land as large as the center of an umbrella thorn leaf belonged to others have gone away to their final home on the ground where corpses burn, more of them than the sand heaped up by the waves. All of them have gone there and have perished as others took their land. And so you too should listen! There is no life that endures with the body and does not vanish! Death is real and not an illusion! Before the grim day comes when on the burning ground where thorn bushes grow wound together with spurge on that broad site where the biers rise up and a man of a caste that is despised picks up the boiled, unsalted rice and does not look anywhere around him and gives it to you so that you accept a sacrifice for which you have no desire with its dish the earth itself, before that happens, do what you have decided to do and utterly renounce this world whose farthest boundary is the sea!
which praise the martial victories of a king before advising him to “never boast of (these) victories” and “lower (his) head with respect before the hands raised in blessing by those Brahmins who chant the four Vedas!”

However, the other two genres, praising king under the protection of a god (puṟanilai vāḻtu) and address to the royal court (avaiyaṭakku) are not found in the early poems. In the absence of available Caṅkam examples, the commentators introduce new poems to illustrate this verse. For puṟanilai vāḻtu, Nacciṅārkkiṅiyar gives two unfamiliar examples:

May you and your sons flourish with unending wealth, a result of your blessed duty, protected by (Vishnu), who stays on his snake bed in the sleep of knowledge, oh king of the Pūḻiyar!

As the sons of the lord of sweet Tinkalūr flourish like the young rays of the moon, may you prosper, unwavering, your joy growing, protected by Shiva.

Pērāciriyar adds another example.

Oh Nandi, who is generous as a thundercloud, may you and your many relations and friends live long, for more years than the stars in the great dark sky, in the middle of the seven seas which reside in the shade of your one royal umbrella, (this part unclear?) protected by Shiva, whose consort is Umā, and who holds the young moon,

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347 Pērāciriyar adds Kural 10.5.

348 Puṟam 6, transl. George Hart.

349 aṟuṟuṟai laravanai yamarntōn kāppa arūṅkaṭam pūṇṭa vakalāc celvamoṭu niyum niṇ putalvaruṇ ciṟantu vāḻya perum pūḻiyar kōvē Nacciṅārkkiṅiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 110, p. 135.

350 tīṅkal īḷaṅkatirpō rēntiṅka lūṛtēvaŋ maintar ciṟappa maki-ciṟantu - tīṅkaṭ kalaiperra karraic caṭaikaṭaṟavūl kāppa nilaipeṟṟu vēḻiyarō ni. Nacciṅārkkiṅiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 110, p. 135. This poem is also given by Pērāciriyar.
and whose three eyes never blink.\footnote{351}

Like the other poems in this section, the \emph{puṟanilai vāḷtu} poems are praise poems to a royal patron. However, as the verse describes, these poems introduce god (\emph{vaḻipaṭu tēyvam}) into the relationship between the poet and patron. Despite god’s being the reason (\emph{ētu}) behind any actions undertaken by the patron (\emph{etuttukkoṇṭa kāriyam}), the commentators are quick to point out that the king is still the primary object of praise in these poems.\footnote{352} While many of the \emph{puṟam} poems reference a particular king, none invoke god’s protection in this way. These examples herald a new type of praise poem, in which the poet marshals the power of the god described in the bhakti poems to support his royal patron.\footnote{353} This set of poems also introduces a literary historical problem that pervades the examples in this section. In contrast to many of the commentators of this period, including the commentaries of the \emph{Vīracōḷiyam} and the \emph{Tañṭiyalankāram}, which can be historically identified by their praise of one royal patron, the praise examples in the \emph{Tolkāppiyam} commentaries reference a range of kings from the three major dynasties of the Cholas, Cēḷas and Pāṇṭiyas, as well as the “new” Pallava dynasty, which does not figure in the Caṅkam poems.

The last praise genre in this section, the \emph{avaiyatākku}, also references the world of the royal patron. In these poems, the poet praises the members of the court, speaking modestly and using sweet words so that the court will accept (his poem) (\emph{avaiattār ataṅkumāṛyāḷ iniyavākac colli avaraip pukaḷtal}). Nacciṅārkiṅiyar gives the introductory verse from the Jain courtly epic \emph{Cīvakacintamanī} as an example.

\begin{quote}
If one doesn’t polish a diamond, spit from a stone, 
it’s beauty is ruined.  
Just so, those who accept this flawed (work), emerging from language as perfect 
as the beautiful white moon,  
and make it beautiful by polishing it with their knowledge -
\end{quote}

\footnote{351} \textit{īmaiyā mukka nilaṅkcūṭar vāynta}  
\textit{vumaiyōru pākat toruvaṅ kāppaniṅ}  
\textit{palkilaiē curramōtu nalliti ġanti}  
\textit{nīpala vālijya vāyvāṭ cēppiniṅ}  
\textit{ṇorukuṭai varaippī ţīlal perruk}  
\textit{kīṭanta veḷukaṭa ṽāppa}  
\textit{ṇakaliru vicumpī ġiṅiṁum palavē}  
Pērāćiriyar’s commentary on \emph{Tolkāppiyam Ceyyaḷiyal} 110, p. 288.

\footnote{352} The commentators consider this to distinguish these poems from the \emph{kaṭavul vāḷtu}, in which god is privileged, even if a patron benefits.

\footnote{353} The “newness” of this example is also highlighted by the introduction of a historical king who postdates the Caṅkam poems. The earliest reference to a King Nanti is to the early sixth-century Pallava king Nantivarman I.
they are indeed great scholars.\textsuperscript{354}

The commentators also give another avaiyāṭakku, identified as that of Pūtattār.

Neither the examples given for puṇanilai vāṭṭu nor for avaiyāṭakku belong to the corpus of poems used throughout the majority of the Tolkāppiyam commentaries.\textsuperscript{355} However, because the Tolkāppiyam verses provide fairly detailed descriptions of these praise genres, including poems outside the standard corpus does not threaten the Tolkāppiyam’s authority. For the genres represented in the Caṅkam corpus, they use the older poems as examples; for genres which have no Caṅkam counterparts, they create their own examples or draw from other literature. Even though these poems may lie outside the parameters of Tamil literature displayed throughout the rest of the commentaries, they are made acceptable by their description in the Tolkāppiyam itself.

The second category, that of praise of god, is not so well defined by the Tolkāppiyam. As a result, these verses are more open to commentarial interpretation, allowing for the introduction of literary developments not addressed by the verses themselves. Although the commentators distinguish these praise poems to god from their worldly counterparts, the literary examples given by the commentators reveal this distinction to be more a question of emphasis than a strict demarcation. On the one hand, the commentators understand this category, called alternately kaṭavuḷ vāṭṭu (praise of god) and tēva pāṇī (song to god), to include praise of a particular god, both in the form of second person address and third person description. On the other hand, it is in the examples to these sections that we see the influence of the courtly praise poems of the prabandham, kāvyā and related genres. Pērāciriyar and Nacciṅārkkiṇiyar break from their usual canon to include a vast range of post-Caṅkam genres associated with the court, including the prabandham paraṇi, the invocatory verse, the courtly epic (toṭarnilaicceyyul) and over thirty uncited poems and excerpts which are not found outside these commentaries. Many of these poetic examples draw from tropes found in the bhakti devotional poems, but they ultimately belong to the world of the royal patron and the literature of the court.

The bulk of the discussion of praise poems to god takes place in a series of verses on kalippā, one of the old Tamil meters best known for its use in the late Caṅkam akam collection Kalittokai. The Tolkāppiyam itself identifies four major types of kali, defined for the most part by their metrical characteristics (ottāḷicai, kali venpā, koccaka kali and uraṅkali). Of these, the ottāḷicai kali receives the most commentarial attention. The commentators understand this genre to be further subdivided into two major categories: ottāḷicai kali poems treating the akam (love) theme, and ottāḷicai kali poems praising god in the second person. They make this distinction in part because of the existence of a puzzling verse which says that “the other is praise of god in second person (eṇai yonrē, tēvarp parāaya mun-nilai kaṇṇē),” While it is unclear which body of

\textsuperscript{354} karpā lumiṇṭa maniyuvkālu vāṭṭu viṭṭā
nappā laḷiyu nakaiveṃmati pōgī raṁta
 corpā lumiṇṭa maṟuvv matiṟg kalūuvip
porpā vilaittuk koḻarpālar pulamai mikkār

Nacciṅārkkiṇiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 113, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{355} While Nacciṅārkkiṇiyar is not as conservative as Pērāciriyar, he too mainly includes Caṅkam poems. However, he does refer to the Čivakacintāmani in his commentary, and in fact provided a commentary on the text itself. However, the inclusion of the avaiyāṭakku is specific to this section.
literature the original rule may have been describing, this is the only such mention of such limits on subject matter in the section on kalippā, and nowhere does the grammar mention the distinction between akam poems and praise poems suggested by the commentaries. Not only that, despite any such clear indication in the Tolkāppiyam, the commentators interpret the following thirteen verses to refer to a larger category of praise poems, including those we would not identify as divine praise poems, poems in the second person, or poems in kali meter.

Not surprisingly, for the akam kali examples, the commentators exclusively use poems from the Caṅkam Kalittokai. The examples used to illustrate the praise poems to god, however, are primarily outside the literary world expected of the Tolkāppiyam commentators. The first set of praise poems to god, identified as vannakam ottālicai kali poems by the commentators, are poems to Shiva, Vishnu and other Brahmanical gods in the kali meter. Because they are ottālicai kali poems, they contain the poetic components also found in the akam poems of the same meter, including the introductory stanza (taravu), refrain (tāḻicai), connecting word (taṇiccol) and concluding stanza (curitakam). The following poem illustrates the use of kalippā components in an akam poem.
Kali 54 (Kapilar)

introductory stanza (taravu):
koṭiyavum kōṭṭavum nīr īgī niṟam peṟa,
poṭi aḷal puṟantanta pūvāp pūm polaṅ kōtai
toṭi ceṟ cēyṟu amai arimūṅkai, ānait tōḷāy!
āṭi uṟai arulāmai ottō, niṟakku?” eṇṭa,
narantam nāṟu iru kūntai eṇcātun naṉṕāṟṟi,

refrain x 3 (tāḻicai):
1. polam puṇai makaravāy nuṇkiya cikilikai
nalam peṟac cūṟi kural amai orukā
viral muṟai cūṟṟ, mōkkalum mōntaṅaṅ;
2. naṟā aviḻntaṅaṅ ēṇmel virāṅ pōtu koṇtu,
ceṟāc ceṅkan putaiya vaṟṟu,
paṟāk kurukiṅ uyirttalam uyirtaṅaṅ;
3. toyyil ilaṟulai iṟiya taivantu,
toyyal am taṭak kaiyĩṅ, vēḷpiṭ aḷikkum
maiyal yāṇiyĩṅ, mariṭṭalum maruṭtiṅaṅ.

concluding stanza (curitakam):
allal kaḷaintaṅaṅ, tōḻ! namakar
arunkaṭi niṟvāmai kūrĩṅ, naṟugu eṇa
niṟṇṭo cūṟval, tōḻi ‘nayampurintu,
iṉṭatu ceytāl iṉal’ eṇa,
maṇṇa ulakattu maṇṭuvatu puraimē.

Kali 54 (Kapilar) transl. AKRamanujan

introductory stanza (taravu):
O you, you wear flowers of gold,
their colors made in fire,
complete with pollen,
while the flowers on creeper and branch
are parched, waterless.
Your lovely forearm stacked with jeweled bracelets,
shoulders soft as a bed of down,
is it right not to let me
live at your feet?

And didn’t let go at that,
but stayed on to grab
all my hair
scented with lemon grass,

refrain x 3 (tāḻicai):
1. my hair-knot held together
by the gold shark’s-mouth,
and with a finger
he twisted tight
the garland in my hair
and smelled it too (mōntaṅaṅ).
2. Not only that, he took
my fingers
(unfolding now
like crocus buds,
I suppose)
to cover his bloodshot eyes
and fetched a huge sigh,
blowing hot like a blacksmith
into his bellows (uyirtaṅaṅ).
3. And,
like a deluded bull-elephant
fondling with his trunk
his beloved female,
he fondled my young painted breasts

till the paint rubbed off
on his rough hands.
Then he stroked me all over,
just about everywhere (maruṭtiṅaṅ - lit. “bewitched”?).

concluding stanza (curitakam):
Yet (translator included connecting word) friend,
with that act of his
I was rid of all my troubles.

And I tell you this
only so that you can go
and persuade Mother:

May the sweet smells
of my marriage in our house
cling to no man
but him,
and that will be good.

It will guarantee a lasting place for us
in this world that doesn’t last.
In an *akam* poem, these divisions of *kalippā* can designate shifts in meter and/or content. In this example, the break between the introductory verse and the refrain allows for both the repetition of the three lines as well as for the placement of the hero’s actions at the end of the line, resulting in the powerful identification of the hero as one who “smelled”, “blew”, and “bewitched”. Five of the six lines of the introduction are addressed to the heroine in the hero’s voice, although the next line “en cātu naṅi pārī [grabbing large handfuls of my hair]” reveals that this is in fact the heroine’s retelling of the story using direct discourse. The concluding stanza returns to the second person address, only this time the heroine addresses her friend, telling her to tell their mother that this man has ended her suffering and that they should now get married. Like most of the Caṅkam *akam* poems, the *kali* poems are vignettes centering around the relationships of a series of stock characters: the heroine, the hero, the friend, the mother, etc. The *Kalittokai* is distinguished from the other *akam* collections by the inclusion of these unusual metrical components, which the poets use to craft a poem that emphasizes the dramatic elements over the complex embedded imagery found in the *Akaṇṭūru* and the *Naṟṟai*.

Although these *akam* examples remain the reference point for discussing the *kali* components in the praise poems, the commentators identify important differences in their composition. In particular, the various *kali* components serve particular functions in a praise poem, in contrast to their less specified function in an “*akayilai*” *kali* poem. Nacciṟarkkiṟiyar points out that in a praise poem, the introductory stanza praises god in the second person, while the refrain stanzas praise god through description. He goes on to say that the refrain stanzas of *akam* poems, on the other hand, do not serve this function of descriptive praise.

After a long sequence of commentary that establishes such distinctions between the *akam* and divine praise poems with no literary examples, the commentators finally provide a display of divine praise examples in their commentary on verse 458. These examples retain the *kali* components seen in the above *akam* poem, but with significant differences in content. Consider the following example, directed at an unspecified god.356

**Introductory stanza (taravu):**

There are those who name you when they see the god whose forehead contains a fiery eye (Shiva), he whose consort is the young creeper (Parvati) and when they seek the god who sits on a lotus (Brahma) and when they seek the Dark One (Vishnu) who is seated, holding in his two hands the shining discus, and the swirled conch, the color of milk, while Lakshmi rests on his great chest, glowing like a jewel. If one says that you take a form other than the forms in those people’s minds, you are that other form as well. You are difficult to know even by the immeasurable Vedas.

**Refrain stanza 1 (tālicai):**

356 The references to “color of milk”, “the cool moon”, “hot fire”, “the ālamaram” suggest that Shiva is the object of praise. However, the poem also includes references to the god’s “dark color” and his “six faces”, descriptions which usually refer to Vishnu and Murugan. The other verses do not further identify the god being praised.
Your job is to be the life for all living things.
But after joining with those beings, you abstain from giving your grace.
As they drown in the sea of cruel births, suffering from the evil karma they have accumulated,
You stand there, and don’t remove that karma.
Is this your compassion?

**Refrain stanza 2 (tālicai):**
They say that it is your nature to create all life.
Trapped in the web of cruel karma, the pain of living beings grows sharper.
So is this your compassion, abstaining from removing this suffering which makes them tremble,
teaching them good conduct,
so they don’t drown in misery?

**Refrain stanza 3 (tālicai):**
They say that your job is destruction.
But if you destroy all living beings, you also destroy all emotions,
and teach them the way to be forever without sin,
is this really destruction?
Is this your grace?

You are the ritual action of the tireless brahmins
who perform their sacrifices and act according to the rules.

You are the salvation of the sages
who do sublime penance to remove their karma.

“You are not” for slanderers who say you don’t exist;
“You are” for believers who say you exist;
You have form for those who say you have form;
You are formless for those who say you are formless;
You are the radiant knowledge which removes obstacles.

You are the color of milk;
You are the god who has the cool moon;
Your body is a dark color;
You are hot fire;
You are the unique god of six faces;
You are the god of the ālamaram;
Your body is that which obtained Śrī;
You are the desired birth;
You are earth; you are sky; you are the mountains; you are the sea; you are numbers; you are letters; you are night; you are day; you are pañ; you are meter; you are song; you are a sentence; you are the best; you are pure; you are compassion; you are meaning.

**Connecting word** (*taṅiccol*):
so...

**Concluding stanza** (*curitakam*):
Oh lord who is all these things! We praise your feet, bowing with our heads low for many days, so that we might reach (those) lotus feet, not difficult to achieve with dedication, you who gave salvation created by austerities, removing all ripened attachment so that it is destroyed,

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357 elder brother? (*aṇṇaṇ*)
wanting to remove the pervasive births from all the souls on this earth covered in flowers.\textsuperscript{358}

In this example, the reader enters a world quite unlike that of the \textit{Kalittokai} and other Ca\textit{n}kam poems. The specific, localized descriptions that populate both the akam and pu\textit{r}am genres of the C\textit{a}nkam poems have been replaced with translocal descriptions of gods well known to the Shaivite and Vaishnavite world. There are no complex metaphors here, and little natural imagery. Although the poems retain the \textit{kali} components of the \textit{Kalittokai} akam poems, the poetic effect is quite different. The impact of the introductory stanza is in its invocation of a reality outside the material world and on the representation of god as simultaneously with form and formless. The refrain verses are characterized by a set of three questions addressed to god, retaining the dramatic quality of the \textit{Kalittokai}. This section introduces a new tone into the poems, as the poet criticizes the god for acting in ways that he can’t understand. “Is this your compassion?” the poet asks, “creating living things and letting them suffer from their karma?”


Naccin\text{"ar}kki\text{"in}\text{y}ar’s commentary on \textit{Tolk\text{"a}ppi\text{"a}m Ceyulu\text{"i}yal} 146.

95
The three refrain stanzas are followed by a section not found in the akam *kali* poems. This section, called *en* or *ampōtaraṅkam*, is a comprehensive list of short descriptions of god, signifying the impossibility of describing something as comprehensive and contradictory as the divine. Here the god is described as simultaneously existing and not existing, as earth, as sky, as numbers, as letters, and as other gods. The poem then returns to components familiar to the akam *kali* poems, including the connecting word and the concluding stanza. The concluding stanza contains the most direct address to god, asking for his benediction. Here the poet inserts himself into the poem, with the conventional “We praise your two feet...” in order to receive whatever blessings have been requested.

The other examples in this section follow the same format. The second example celebrates Shiva as a beggar, whose “body, smeared with ash, shines like the hot midday sun” as he comes to beg at women’s doors on his bull. The introductory stanza begins with references to the story of Shiva’s burning the love god Kama and to conventional insignia associated with Shiva, including the moon, his sacred thread and his consort Parvati.

**Introductory stanza (taravu):**

Holding in your right hand the shining axe unfit for begging,
you loosen your beautiful belt, garlanded with young shoots, over your tiger skin.
The beauty of your white sacred thread splits in two the shining beauty of your body.
Cool soft petals cover your head, where the moon also rests.
Undisturbed by the women’s chatter, undefeated by their pretty smiles,
you destroyed his form with the power of your eye

Now you go wandering around in Kanchi, near the joyful sea
dorned with the mark of [Parvati’s] breasts that shine like sweet young mangos.

The first refrain stanza gently critiques Shiva’s choice to go begging, asking him if Parvati will be able to bear the suffering of such a lifestyle.

**Refrain stanza 1 (tāḻicai):**

Your body, smeared with ash, shines like the hot midday sun.

Now you go wandering around in Kanchi, near the joyful sea
dorned with the mark of [Parvati’s] breasts that shine like sweet young mangos.

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359 This line is not entirely clear.

360 *paliyuruvir kēlāta paṭaimaluvāl valaṅěntip
puliyurimēz paintalaitāl pāṅkaaccai virittamaittuk
kāṅkavaru tuṟumēni ven-nilin kaviṅpakaipiṭpat
taṅkamaḷpiṇ tāritaḷi talaimalintu piṟaṭayāṅka
moṭivalattāṅ mayaṅkāṭe muṟuvalār rōḷāṭē
viḷivaḷattā nuṟuvaḷimōṅ vēṭaṅkan ūṇarvaliyāṅ
kālikēḷu kaṭaṟkaccik kāmilian tēmāvi
ṉoḷitaḷiru mulaiccuvaṭu muṭaṇciṟappa valulavuṅkāl*
The second and third refrain stanzas shift tone, introducing line repetition that creates the effect of a simple song, rhythmically pleasing and easy to remember.

**Refrain stanza 2 (tālicai):**
Taking on yourself the burden of begging, with your beggar’s pot heavy with alms, you come and please the hearts of the girls with breasts that rise like hills, When you come and please the hearts of girls with breasts that rise like hills, should they offer grass to your fierce bull?

**Refrain stanza 3 (tālicai):**
When you go to beg from the shy women, Even if they grab the snake you wear, it won’t puff up with anger. Even if we grab the snake you wear, will this royal snake, which doesn’t hiss or puff up with anger, drink the milk we offer?

This poem introduces another kali component not found in the akam poems, the arākam, which praises god in short two line stanzas, and acts as a transition between the refrain stanzas and the section of short epithets.

**Transitional descriptive section (arākam):**
Is it best that you wander around with your begging pot in your bent left arm? Begged by the gods, did you drink the poison from the roaring sea even when Uma stopped you? What did you teach to the seven worlds as your fierce bull stopped at each doorway for only a blink of an eye?

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361 nīṟēṟ un tirumēni neṭumpakalē nilaverikka vēṟērik kaṭaitōru mitupalikku varutirā lēṟēri yiṭupalikku varumpolūtu miṭaipiriyāk kūṟērum pacumpakaṅ koḻumō koḷḷātō
362 pallēṟra parikalattup paliyēṟṟann mēliṭtu vallēṟra mulaimakalir maṇamēṟpa varutirāl vallēṟra mulaimakalir maṇamēṟpa nīṟvarunkār koḷḷēṟruk kaṟukitaṅū koḻumō koḷḷātō
363 nāṇāka maṭantaiyarppār palikkenru naṭantakkār pūṇākan taḷiikkoliṟum ponkātu pōḷumār pūṇākan taḷiikkoliṟum pukaiyuvirttup ponkātā koṇākam yāntarupāl kuṭikkumō kuṭiyātō
Hearing that you wanted to go begging, the gods suffered.\textsuperscript{364}
Did Gangai with her flowing waters hide in your matted hair in shame?

The section on epithets presents a list of elements traditionally associated with Shiva, including the bones he wears, his \textit{tumpai} garlands, his \textit{pūtams}, his role as teacher of the Vedas, and his role as dancer.

\textbf{Section on epithets (\textit{en/ampōtaraṅkam})}
You wear bones as ornaments; you are adorned with tumpai garlands; you rule the \textit{pūtams} (ghosts); you taught the Vedas; many demons make music for you; you play the \textit{vīṇai}, your matted hair flows all around; your golden anklets chime.\textsuperscript{365}

\textbf{Connecting word (taniccol)}
So...\textsuperscript{366}

Finally, the concluding stanza introduces another character into the relationship between the god and the poet: that of the king, who features in half of these kali examples. In these poems that include a king in the concluding stanza, the blessings requested are not for the benefit of the poet, but for the king or patron. In this case, the poet praises Shiva so that “the glory of Valavaṉ/Valavan may last forever.”\textsuperscript{367}

\textbf{Concluding stanza (\textit{curitakam})}:
Oh beautiful one! Wanting to beg from women with shining bangles, you wander from door to door. We praise you - so that the glory of Valavan may last forever, Valavan, who protects the world along with Jampudvīpa that make up Tamil akam, like Veṅkaṭam which resounds with music. Valavan, whose powerful body conquered the southern lands

\textsuperscript{364} \textit{erikala gimaikku miṭavayi ṭotikkaip parikala nēntum pariciṇan tatukol umaiyavai vilakkavu moliṅa ngaṅca mimaiyavar tammai yirantuṅ tatukol iṭaiyēlu pōlikaṭku mimaippalavir kollērē kaṭaitōru matunipak karṇīṭa vūrevaṅkōl irappunē vēṭṭatukēṭ ṭimaiyavareṇ pāṭṭaṅgarē parappunīṅk kankaiyō pāṭarcaṭaiyīṅ karantatē

\textsuperscript{365} pūṭaṅha veṇṇu; puṅaivaṭu tumpai; aṅṭaṅha pūṭam; aṟṟaiṅa vēṭam; icaippaṅa palapēy; eḷḷiyatu vīṇai; accippaṅa vēṇi; ativaiṅa pōṟkaḷal

\textsuperscript{366} ṇavāṅku

\textsuperscript{367} This is an important distinction. Although the Kaḻakam edition reads Valavaṉ, a more general description of a powerful king, this could also read “vaḷavaṉ”, which would refer to a Chola king. This concluding stanza is unclear and difficult to construe.
after being crowned victor of the northern direction, wearing powder from a vessel decorated with flags.  

The third example praises the sun god, describing his emerging at dawn (“you make the sweet lotus buds bloom to announce your arrival”) his lightening up the stars, and his role as creator of the moon (“you created the moon to remove the darkness by flooding it with moonlight”). In the concluding stanza of this poem, the poet requests the god not for freedom from bad karma, or from suffering, but rather for “the power of flowing words” so that “(he) may shine with victory in the midst of good and learned poets”, “(his) successes growing for generations.”

**Introductory stanza (taravu):**
You emerge, revealing a discus of a thousand rays of light on one side.
You make the sweet lotus buds bloom to announce your arrival as you open in all directions like the waking flowers. 
As the sleepless eyes of the gods stand witness, the gods who don’t disappear as you disappear in the west, telling the world that he is the one who illuminates the thick darkness.

**Refrain stanza 1 (tālicai):**
(first stanza unclear)
You attack with your blessed form so that those who worship different gods in the sky both as those who give and those who take contend with each other. They don’t know that you have given them (the gods?) in different forms.

**Refrain stanza 2 (tālicai):**
Those who don’t realize that in the dawn you are the twinkling stars because your form looks smaller in the long sky don’t know that in the evening you brighten the stars that hide in the morning.

**Refrain stanza 3 (tālicai):**
People think that you and the full moon appear as one, rising from the cool receding ocean, which swells to meet the moon. They don’t understand that you created that moon to remove the darkness.

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368 elvalai makali rítupali nacaipp
palkaṟai tiritaruṇi celvanir paravutuṇ
koṭiyañi yēṇam poṭiyañintu kiṭappa
vaṭṭaticai vākai cūṭit tegricai
veṇri vāyita vaṇrāl valava
nimilicai vēṇkaṭam pōḷat tamīḷakattu
nāvaloṭu peyariya nālaṇ
kāval pōṟri vāḷiya netițē
Nacciąṟkkiṇiyyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 146.

369 See Nacciąṟkkiṇiyyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 146 for complete poem.
by flooding it with moonlight.

**Section on epithets (en/ampōtaraṅkam)**
Becoming water, you created the earth;
Becoming fire, you created water;
You lift the wind of the end of time;
You reveal the sky after granting light;
You are a treasure; you are poverty; you are the rule; you are fate; you are form; you are formless; you are one; you are many;

**Connecting word (taniccol)**
so...

**Concluding stanza (curitakam):**
Oh primordial lord who appears to sink into the great sea with roaring waves!
I praise you so that I should experience joy that knows no sorrows,
removing my sins and holding dear my relations and my treasures,
and that I may have the power of flowing words
my successes growing for generations,
so that I may shine with victory in the midst of good and learned poets.

The last two examples praise Vishnu in his various incarnations, including this introductory stanza that depicts his slaying of the demon Hiranyakaśipu in his avatar as Narasimha.

**Introductory stanza (taravu):**
Great sages, free from blemish, rise up together and praise you.
As a lion, you fought,
your thick mane dense as the ocean, glowing with a rich light,
and your red eyes flames of fire.
Your broad murderous arms split the chest (of the raksasa) with your nails,
scattering the crowns and garlands of enemy armies
so that golden dust swelled up
and streams of blood flowed all around.

The refrain stanzas use the mocking tone familiar to several of these kali examples.

**Refrain stanza 1 (tālicai):**
As the muracu drums resound throughout wide Madurai,
Brave warriors clash in battle,
their thick, strong arms decorated with stitched bands.

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370 This poem also appears in the Yāpparūkala Virutti commentary. See Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 146 for complete poem.
Heads and feet broken, they fall to the earth, spent of life.
Is this your fame that fills the cruel battlefield as the dust rises?

**Refrain stanza 2 (tālīcai):**
As the great noisy earth trembles and shakes,
your chakra, shining and strong, shatters the courage of your enemies, along with their bodies.
Is this destruction of men, their hostility shaken, weakened by ignorance born of enmity throughout the wide distant skies your anger?

**Refrain stanza 3 (tālīcai):**
The herd of cows scatter and flee, their little bells jangling.
As the splendid lightning strikes and the rain roars down, raging with a fierce strength, fear and confusion spread and the cows’ orderly lines disintegrate.
Is this your great power - making them stay in the cowshed, full of fear?

**Transitional descriptive section:**
Oh dark one (Vishnu), with strong arms, which hold the swirled conch from the beautiful vast sea,
Your color is like a shining emerald

When you slew the bull, your towering body burned with anger like the color of new gold or sprawling clusters of kōṅkam flowers.

**Section of epithets (eṇ):**
Your crowned head is a burning fire that attracts the eyes
Your chakra destroys enmity with its cool flame
Your flag, flying high, is the vulture, who is like the wind
Your feet have the strength of a towering chariot.

You defeated the warring asuras; you split the two marutam trees; you measured the beautiful earth; yours are the five weapons which thwart protection;

You are the end of the world; you are the world; you are form; you are formless; you are the chakra; you are compassion; you are dharma; you are honor.

**Connecting word (taniccol):**
so...

The concluding stanza references King Accutaṅ, a Kalabhra king.

**Concluding stanza (curitakam):**
Oh great one with skill in killing! We praise you
so that the incomparable shining rule of our king Accutan
-who wields a great spear, his strong arms generous like a cloud, his warrior’s anklets well-formed,
[...]
over the ancient oceans and the entire world.

At first glance, this type of poem appears unlike anything we see in Tamil literature. The late Caṅkam collection Paripāṭal contains praise poems to Murugan and Vishnu, using several of the kali components, but the commentators do not draw from this collection, presumably because the Tolkāppiyam has established it as an akam genre. The Tirumurukāṟṟupatāi also contains praise of Murugan, but is not included, despite Nacciṅārkkīṭiyir’s deep familiarity with it.

They are also not poems of devotion, although they share many referents with the bhakti poems of the Shaivite Tirumurai and the Vaishnavite Divyaprabandham. If, as Ramanujan, Shulman and others have argued, the bhakti genre is characterized in part by the spontaneous outpouring of devotion, in which “the poet explores his emotions and gives them form in verse not for their own sake, nor for the sake of any individual self-realization, but because they are his only real gift to god” these poems do not share that generic quality. By following so closely the kalippā structure, they self-consciously publicize their familiarity with meter, a poetic choice that the bhakti poets reject as contrivance. Also, these poems contain no references to the merging of poet and devotee characteristic of the bhakti poems, in which the emotional impact of the poem rests in the tension inherent in the impossibility of complete connection with the divine. Rather, the poets of these poems have earthly demands of the divine, whether they be fame for generations or a life without suffering. In their function of harnessing divine power in the service of a royal patron, they share more in common with the previously discussed puaṅilai vāḷtu, in which the poet explicitly invokes the god in the blessing of his king.

In fact, if we look at other post-Caṅkam versions of this genre, we find corroboration of the courtly provenance of these poems. Perhaps the most striking example appears in the first verse of the Nantikkalampakam, a ninth-century courtly kalampakam poem that praises the Pallava king Nantivarman II. This poem, which praises Shiva, retains the kali components seen in the tēva pāṇi poems of all three commentaries, while introducing variations to the form. The poem begins with an invocation to Shiva in three introductory (taravu) stanzas.

371 Nacciṅārkkīṭiyir, in his role as literary commentator, wrote a commentary on the entire Pattuppāṭṭu compilation, in which the Tirumurugāṟṟupatāi is included.

372 Shulman, 1990: xlvii. For more on what distinguishes bhakti literature from other genres, see Ramanujan 1973; Cutler 1987; Shulman 1993.

373 The form is also used for the invocatory verses of the Kalittokai and the Paripāṭal.

374 This verse is understood to be the first verse of the poem, following four additional invocatory verses in other meters. We do not know if these additional verses were originally associated with the poem, or added later.
Oh Shiva! Your holy body is the earth; it is the sky; it is the wind; it is the roaring flood; it is the brilliant light; it is both one form and three forms.
Oh Shiva! (your holy body is all these things)...

(second verse corrupt)

Oh lord with a shining trident! Leaving behind as insignificant Kuṟugiri, made in your image, the rare Vedas, and the cool sky, you (instead) play in the heart and the blessed crown of Nanti whose weapon is a shining spear, (Nanti) who is Nārāyaṇaṇ and who rules the earth.

The poem continues with a second person invocation to Shiva, in the *arākam*.

(The eye on your) forehead burned to ash the beautiful body of Mataṅ who shoots as his arrows bunches of fragrant flowers!

With only one finger you intervened, making the ten heads of the demon who raised the foot of the beautiful mountain tremble!

Only after the *arākam* does the poet introduce four refrain stanzas (*tālicai*). However, these refrain stanzas do not take the form of a question, as we saw in the commentarial examples.

**Refrain stanza 1 (*tālicai*):**
In your hair is the rich white moon
resting amidst a garland of woven *konraī* and white *erukku* flowers
in your matted hair, full of flowers.

**Refrain stanza 2 (*tālicai*):**
You wear a belt of a a dark snake with a thousand mouths that spit fire.
lying on the skin of a pouncing tiger, spots covering its entire body.  

**Refrain stanza 3(*tālicai*):**
You wear as your shawl the skin of an elephant, its musk rising,
as its flowing blood [...] drips down like pouring rain.  

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375 It is unclear whether this verse refers to Shiva or to Vishnu. On the one hand, the reference to the snake with a thousand heads appears to describe Vishnu’s snake Adiśeṣa; however, the reference to the snake as a belt (*kaccāi*) and to the tigerskin indicate Shiva. Much of the interpretation of this verse rests on the last word “*acaitāṇa*”, which can refer to Shiva’s dancing, to Vishnu’s resting, or to either god’s embracing of the snake.

376 Reference to Shiva’s slaying of the elephant-demon Gajāsura.
Refrain stanza 4 (tāḻicai):
The four directions trembled at the sight of the powerful poison that you drank.
All life trembled at the sight of cruel Death whom you kicked.

Next is a familiar series of twelve epithets (ampōtaraṅkam/en) depicting the contradictory nature of representing god.

You are the birth of all the worlds;
you are the death of all the worlds;
you are the sorrow of all the worlds;
you are the joy of all the worlds;
you are the father of the gods;
you are the grandfather of those who have come
you are the leader of the rest;
you are the lord of all creatures;

You are the end of the world; you are the world;
you are form, you are formless;
you are the chakra; you are the nectar;
you are dharma; you are honor;

Connecting word (taniccol):
so...

The poem concludes with a curitakam that asks for Shiva’s blessing over King Nandi.

Concluding stanza (curitakam):
Oh unique great god! We praise you and ask you to show your grace so that our King Nandi, garlanded with fresh flowers, ruler of Mamallapuram, protector of Mayilai, born in the line of the Pallavas, may rule majestically in the shade of a wide unique umbrella, as his generosity and his auspicious victory spread from the Northern mountains to the Southern Pōti hills.

This poem, composed several centuries before the Tolkāppiyam commentaries, hints at the possible provenance of these poems. While Shiva remains a major character in this poem, the context as well as the concluding stanza make clear that this is a poem of the court, composed for the blessing of the patron and of the literary work that he has commissioned. These ottāḻi kalai forms also appear in the invocatory verses of the Caṅkam collections.

377 “The directions” could be a metonym for “all beings in all four directions”

378 This appears to be a reference to an episode in the Mārkanteya purāṇam.
Paripāṭal and Kalittokai. These verses, which were most likely added several centuries after the poems’ composition (perhaps at the time that they were compiled and the explanatory colophons added), act as auspicious introductions to the poems, praising Vishnu and Shiva; by the time of the Tolkāppiyam commentaries, they had become a standard part of the Čaṅkam collections.

In fact, the commentaries on an earlier verse on vāḻttru indicate that Nacciṅārkkiṉiyar and Pērāciriyar understood the invocatory verse to be a key example of the category of kaṭavul vāḻttru, or “praise poem to god.” In the introductory verse on vāḻttru, in which the commentators first distinguish between these poems and praise poems of worldly subjects, they present as examples of praise poems to god the invocatory verses from the Čaṅkam collections Nāṟṟiṉai, Kalittokai and Aiṅkuruṇūru, as well as from the Patiṇeṇkiḻaṅakkku collections Nāḷaṭiyār and Iṅgā Nāṟpatu.

These invocatory verses (kaṭavul vāḻttru), share little with the content of the poems which they introduce. The benedictory verse for the ākam collection Nāṟṟiṉai, for example, praises the comprehensive and creative nature of Vishnu, identifying his body with the creation of the natural world.

He made the great earth into his beautiful feet;
He made the roaring sea, with its conches and its pure waters, his dress.
He made the sky his body, the directions his hands.
And he made the sun and the cool moon his eyes.
They say that he is the primordial god of the Vedas,
who created all things, taking them into himself.
His shining chakra removes all evil.

The content and style of this poem stand in sharp contrast to the poems on love and domestic relationships within the Nāṟṟiṉai collection. While the Nāṟṟiṉai poems may contain references to Vishnu, praise of the god is never central to the poem as it is in the invocation. Despite the frustratingly minimal amount of details given in the commentary on this verse, the commentators do reveal the following features of this important category. To begin with, despite the absence of any such description in the Tolkāppiyam, these poems are understood as invocations, in which the poet’s praise of god can result either in benefits for himself (taṇakkup payaṇpaṭṭuḷ) or in benefits for others (paṭarkkaip poruṭkup payaṇpaṭṭuḷ). If the above poem to Vishnu is a rather unclear example of a poem that benefits the poet, the invocatory poem to the Aiṅkuruṇūru, in which Vishnu causes the orderly appearance of the three categories of the world, is a more apparent example of a poem that benefits not only the poet, but the entire world.

379 The term “kaṭavul vāḻttru” is now a common term for such an invocatory verse.

380Mā nilam eevaṭi āka; tū nīr
vaḷai naraḻ poucham utukkai āka;
vicumpu mey āka; ticai kai āka;
pacuṅkaiti matiyamoṭu cuṭar kan āka;
inyaḷa ellām payiṉru, akatu aṭakkiya
vēṭa mutalvaṇ eppa
ṭīṭu aṭa viḷaniyāki tikiriyōnē
Nacciṅārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Ceyyuḷiyal 109
Because of the lack of reliable historical data surrounding the compilation of the Caṅkam poems, identifying a courtly provenance for these invocatory verses is not as simple as establishing that of the Nanti Kalampakam. However, by the time of the Tolkāppiyam commentators, the genre of kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu was well established as a form intimately linked with the courtly literary genres of the kāvyā and the prabandham. While we don’t know when this tradition began, and whether it pre or postdated the addition of the kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu to the Caṅkam compilations, the benediction, dedicated to the preferred god of the poet and/or patron, had become a standard feature in courtly narrative poems, across sectarian lines. Whether dedicated to the Jain god, as in the ninth century, the Caṅkam collections obtained kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu sometime after the composition of the poems. The dating of these Caṅkam kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu is shaky, but it is striking that they would have had these addenda while the the poems went without. Even though Kampan, an avaiyaṭaku, were also products of the court, and contained kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu (and in the case of Kampan, an avaiyaṭaku), these were not included in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries.

381 While the kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu does not appear in the Cilappatikārām or the Manimekalai, the Caṅkam collections obtained kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu sometime after the composition of the poems. The dating of these Caṅkam kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu is shaky, but it is striking that they would have had these addenda while the the longer poems went without. Even though Kampaṇ, and Periyapurāṇam were also products of the court, and contained kaṭavuḷ vāḷṭtu (and in the case of Kampan, an avaiyaṭaku), these were not included in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries.

382 In verse 8, which outlines the components of a narrative poem, Tanṭi suggests that “when we speak of the nature of the perunikāppiyam (mahākāvyā), it is suitable to include a vāḷṭtu, a vaṇakkam, and an introduction to the subject which will be discussed” (perunkap piyaniilai peçuń kālai vāḷṭtu vaṇakkam varupporu livarriŋon rērupūtait ŭkī).
vāḻtu in Tamil, particularly in light of the fact that neither the courtly epics of the Cilappatikāram nor the Maṇimēkalai include such invocatory verses? Might these kaṭavuḷ vāḻtu poems have been a strategy for transforming the Caṅkam poems into legitimate courtly literature in the later period, when the kaṭavuḷ vāḻtu was a required (and well theorized) literary component?383

While these answers remain hidden in the frustratingly obscure early history of Tamil literature, by the time of the Tolkāppiyam commentators the kaṭavuḷ vāḻtuś of the Caṅkam collections were seen to participate in the same category of those poems more explicitly associated with a royal court. The praise poem to god in ottālicai kali appear to also belong to this category. While we don’t have enough evidence to definitively claim that these ottālicai kali poems were a template for a type of kaṭavuḷ vāḻtu, the existence of the form in the first verse of the Nanti Kalampakam, as well as in the beginning of the Paripāṭal and Kalittokai, hints at such a possibility.

Furthermore, if we turn our attention to other commentarial traditions of the same period, we see that these poems participated in a larger body of kalippā poems that invoked god and king across sectarian communities. Versions of these types of poems dedicated to the Jain arhat and the Buddha show up in the commentaries on the Jain text on metrics Yāpparuṅkalam (discussed in the previous chapter) as well as in the commentary on the Buddhist grammar Vīracōḷiyam. In fact, the total body of such devotional poetic examples is significant: twelve in the Vīracōḷiyam commentary and approx. twenty-five in the Yāpparunkalam Virutti commentary. Although these praise poems address different sectarian communities, they are clearly modeled after the same poetic tradition. And like the examples in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries, many of these poems also invoke a king in their concluding stanzas.

*from the YKV Commentary:*384

**Introductory stanza (ṭaravu):**
Decorated with jeweled diamonds and shining pearls from the sea with its waves, you sit happily on the jeweled throne carried by lions who stay on the mountain. as the three worlds together praise you in the holy city, filled with sound. As the supreme lord (īṣay) you remove the two types of karma and establish dharma as the dharma of grace/compassion (arul), the sweet nectar for rishis and gods, so their ignorance will be removed and [establish this dharma] as delusion for enemies.

**Refrain stanza 1 (ṭālicai):**
You are the action which destroys the enemy of unattached karma with thoughts that burn like an enemy army and the shining light of knowledge without ignorance.

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383 There was in fact a later Peruntēvaṅgar, who composed his Pāratam in the 9th century under the reign of King Nandivarman III. It is tempting to suggest that the kaṭavuḷ vāḻtuś of the Caṅkam collections may have been added during this time.

384 For the full poem, see Virutti commentary on Yāpparunukalama Ceyyuliyal 30 p. 308-310.
Is it your grace to give us grace so that we can attain grace?

Refrain stanza 2 (tāḷicai):
Like one who sits blissfully in the cool shade
presenting your face to devotees so they can reach kati, like a sun that rises on the mountain.
Is it your greatness that makes us realize that you sit happily in the shade of the umbrella, in order to destroy karma like a murderous battlefield?

Refrain stanza 3 (tāḷicai):
If you want to take away stain (malam), you leave your home and enter the forest.
Thinking that “excessive wealth is wrong for those who want to destroy karma,” is it your greatness to stay in the world, surrounded by kings and gods with limitless great wealth?

Transitional descriptive section:
Kings and gods sit in the shadow of your feet,
you who are the words which contrast the roaring sound of the beating murasu drums.

Your color is [...]

Your speech is the sound of the rushing rain, the crashing waves, and the special roaring that comes from within a cave.

Section of epithets (ēṇ):
You conquer the enmity that is karma along with its roots, difficult to conquer.
You are the boat for those who want to conquer karma.
Becoming one person, you came to realize the whole world.

You know the whole world
You are the color of the moon
You are the grandfather of sages
You are the pīṇṭī tree with its blooming flowers
You are the protection for all lives
Your body is cool like shade
You blissfully sit on a flower
You are the sage of sages

Connecting word (taniccol):
so...

Concluding stanza (curitakam):
Oh you whose grace is unique! We praise you so that
the upright scepter and powerful white royal umbrella of Nanti-decorated with his anklets, king of Nantimāl mountain, who gave many lands to praise a man who has strong legs, and who has a conch and a wheel that takes away darkness - so that his umbrella may spread its shade far and wide.

*From the Vīracōliyam commentary*385

**Introductory stanza (taravu):**
As the multitude of creatures that live on earth, the gods who live in the sky, and the *nākar* clans who live in the cavern rejoice,
the heavenly *tuntumi* drums resound and the gods dance.
As the ascetics sing your praises, you sit majestically on the lion throne under the shade of the wide royal umbrella, decorated with pearls, while divine beings (*intirar*) pour down flowers and the gods wield fans, oh great one with no equal!

**Refrain stanza 1 (tālicai):**
You are the yogi who, never leaving, is a part of every womb that is born and that dies, [wombs] said to be limitless from the smallest ant until Brahma.
Whatever sorrow arises for any life in any body, becoming the life for that body, your blessed body showers down compassion.

**Refrain stanza 2 (tālicai):**
[...this part corrupted]
As you explained to me one subject, your blessed rare words were received without confusion because of the true content.

**Refrain stanza 3 (tālicai):**
On that day, and until this moment, you alone took on the burden of compassion, protecting all creatures, taking away their karmas, the burden of ignorance.
Oh great one!
Does your body, which is shared by all who come to worship at your honey flower feet, also belong to you?

**Transitional descriptive section:**
If you give your compassion in order to protect all precious lives, how can you protect [all of these] by giving your body to one creature?
If you get angry with Kāmaṇ when you are in front of women like tender shoots, with eyes black as rain, and hair garlanded with fragrant flowers,

385 Peruntēvaṇār’s commentary on *Vīracōliyam Yāppatikāram* 11, p. 143-144.
The similarities between these poems and the poems used by the Tolkāppiyam commentators are unmistakable. Not only do these poems use the same kali components of taravu, tāḻicai, arākam, en, taniccol and curitakam, but other poetic modes seem to have been shared across the traditions. 386 The poet’s gentle mocking of god seen in Naccinārkkiñiyar’s examples shows up in the refrain stanzas of the Yāpparunikala Virutti example as well as in the transitional descriptive section of the example from the Viracōṭiyyam. Although the individual poems may have reflected sectarian interest, the genre appears to have been a template recognized by grammarians and/or

386 In fact, several of these poems are shared across the Tolkāppiyam and Yāpparunikala Virutti commentaries, surprising given the competitive relationship between these two.
poets of all religious communities. Also, like the kali poems found in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries, these poems bridge bhakti and court genres; despite the emphasis on the deity throughout the poem, many of the concluding stanzas return to the royal patron.

If there was any doubt about the courtly context of these kali praise poems to god, the second set of poems makes this connection more explicit. While the first set of kali poems are more strictly delimited by their inclusion of known metrical components, the boundaries of this second type are more fluid and inclusive. Drawing on a verse that defines this type (koccaka oru pōku kali) as a poem in which the kali poetic components are optional, but which is distinguished by “different” meter and content, the commentators take a liberal interpretation and include a range of examples, including many that would not ordinarily be classified as divine praise poems or kalippā. These poems include the prabandham paraṇi genre, the invocatory verse, the courtly epic (toṭarnilaicceyyul) among many others. The content of these poems covers diverse territory, from Kannaki’s lament over her murdered husband in the fifth-century epic Cilappatikāram to a short poem on Vishnu’s heroism to the gruesome worship on the battleground of the paraṇi. The poems refer to gods from different sectarian communities, including Buddhist, Jain, Shaivite and Vaishnavite. Several of the examples, such as the excerpt from the Song of the Hunters in the Cilappatikāram, which contains three refrains addressed to a young girl from the hunter community, don’t even refer to god, despite their being classified as divine praise poems. With all these differences, how can they be understood as participating in the same aesthetic category?

The answer to this question lies in an important distinction, made by the commentators, between this collection of diverse poems and the devotional poems of the bhakti corpus. While both genres may be identified by their inclusion of divine praise, the commentators intentionally distinguish between the two, stating that the bhakti poems of the Shaivite Tēvāram and the Vaishnavite Divyaprabandham can not be considered here as literary examples because “they are not poetry of this world” (avai ulakavālakkaṇṇaṇiyyir kattāmaṇām). In contrast, the poems used by the commentators, even those exclusively dedicated to praise of god, are poems of the world, and more specifically, poems of the court.

Of the forty-one examples given by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar in his commentary on this verse on koccaka oru pōku poems, seventeen are explicitly associated with modes of courtly literary production. He begins his commentary on this verse by specifically identifying the prabandham genre of the paraṇi as a type of song for god (tēva pāṇi) poem in koccaka oru pōku kali, despite the fact that this genre is best known for celebrating the martial accomplishments of a king. Later, when he introduces an excerpt from an unknown paraṇi, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar addresses this categorical problem, claiming that even though the paraṇi praises a patron, including many puram elements, it is still a divine praise poem, in part because it includes the practice (of the ghouls) worshipping the goddess who stays in the burial ground with sacrificial porridge and the

387 See Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 149, pp. 175-189.
388 While Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar includes poems from all of the major sectarian traditions, the majority of his unidentified examples are Shaivite.
389 Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 149, p. 176.
tuṇaṅkai dance on the day of the paraṇī star. He provides nine excerpts from the fifth-century. Cilappatikāram, which was considered a courtly kāvya by this time and one from the tenth-century Jain kāvya Cuḷāṇaṇi.

His examples are also drawn from the kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ of the Jain epics Vaḷaiyāpati, Cintāmaṇi and the Cuḷāṇaṇi, as well as from the avaiyaṭṭakuḷ, or modest address to the court. While not as ubiquitous as the kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ, the avaiyaṭṭakuḷ also shows up in many of the courtly poems, including the Cintāmaṇi, the Kuṇţalakēci, the Nīḷakēci and the Kamparāṁāyaṇam. In describing the debut of the text to the royal court, the avaiyaṭṭakuḷ makes explicit the courtly context of these poems.

Of the remaining examples, many are short two or four-line poems that follow a standard kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ form, asking the god for salvation or blessing. Although it is difficult to identify these poems, which do not appear in other collections of Tamil poetry, their inclusion in a section that privileges courtly forms indicates that they were understood as examples of vāḷtuḷ in a courtly context and not as poems of the temple. The courtly context would also explain the leniency towards poems from the Buddhist and Jain traditions in a section of commentary that otherwise privileges Shiva. Despite the identification by later scholars of Nacciṉārkkiyinar as a Shaivite, neither he nor Pēṟāciriyar provide commentary on any of the sectarian features of these poems.

If we look back to the larger category of vāḷtuḷ poems, we see the emphasis on courtly context extending beyond the specific examples of the kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ to the larger category of vāḷtuḷ poems. Although the initial verse gives examples of vāḷtuḷ to rain, sages, etc., the following four genres are distinguished by their placement of the king/patron as the central object of praise. As earlier mentioned, the commentators stress this central position of the king in their interpretation of the puganilai vāḷtuḷ, emphasizing that it is he who is the main object of praise and not the god. As for the avaiyaṭṭakkiyalar, like the kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ, this genre is closely associated with the long narrative poems of the court. Nacciṉārkkiyinar acknowledges this use of the form, telling the reader “to occasionally accept avaiyaṭṭakkiyalar for long narrative poems,” giving the Cintāmaṇi avaiyaṭṭakuḷ as his example.

Unlike the praise category of pugam, which referred more specifically to poems in the Cāṅkam corpus, the genre of vāḷtuḷ could accommodate a range of new literary forms, as long as they could be justified by a flexible interpretation of the Tolkāppiyam. The commentators used this flexibility to respond to the most influential of these new forms, namely those associated with courtly production and praise of a royal patron. Even those poems identified as divine

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390 maṟṟu paraṇīyāvatu kāṭukēḷu celvikkup paraṇināṭ kūḷum tuṇaṅkaiyum koṭṭuttu valipaṭṭuvatōr vaḷakkupparṟiyattu. atu pāṭṭuait talaiavaṇgai peytu kīṟagāṟ purattinai palavum virāyirēṟum tēvapāṇiyeṟām
Nacciṉārkkiyinar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyūliyalar 149, p. 176.

391 As seen in the commentaries of Aṭiyārkkunallār and Mayilaināṭar.

392 He also includes the kaṭavuḷ vāḷtuḷ of the Kalitthokai.

393 arirtapa eṟṟaṭṭanāṟ cirupāṇmaī vāṟṟiniyum vēṟṟuṇṭṭa koccaṭattā kūṟum toṭarṇilaić ceyyūtkum avaiyaṭṭakkiyalar kolk. Nacciṉārkkiyinar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyūliyalar 113, p. 158.
praise poems were interpreted within this larger understanding of vāḻtu, while poems of the temple were not considered appropriate literature for inclusion.

The category of divine praise in kalippā also allowed the Tolkāppiyam commentators to address (and reject) the most significant metrical development since the early poems: the subdividing of the original four meters into the categories of iṉam. While the four meters of the Tolkāppiyam refer to the poem as a metrical unit, the new iṉam system takes the stanza as its basis for metrical identification. This was an important shift since Tamil poetry, had transitioned from individual poems of ten to fourteen lines to larger poems with multiple stanzas, requiring new metrical classification. A poem with ten stanzas could now contain multiple iṉams, a concept that was not part of early Tamil metrics. In fact, many of the poems used by the Tolkāppiyam commentators in this section would be not identified as kali poems either by contemporaries of the Tolkāppiyam commentators or by modern scholars, but rather in terms of their various iṉams. Although the Tolkāppiyam commentators wanted to acknowledge these new poems, they refused to accept this new metrical system that would challenge the authority of the Tolkāppiyam, a metrical system that was first theorized in the Yāpparuṅkalam, a text considered by the Tolkāppiyam commentators to be a violation of Tamil tradition. As a result, the commentators use the flexibility of the kali meter, particularly the koccaka oru poku kali division, which allows stanzaic interpretation, to accommodate these new poems into the old metrical system laid out by Tolkāppiyam. Now all stanzaic poetry can be understood in terms of kali components such as introductory stanza (taravu) and refrain (tāḻicai) rather than accepting classification by iṉam.

For example, in his commentary on koccaka oru pōku kalippā poems, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar begins with an explanation of those kali poems that include only the refrain (tāḻicai) and not the introductory taravu. For a poem to fit this description, it must have a repeating refrain on one topic, and each stanza should not be more than three or four lines in length. The paraṇi, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar explains, belongs to this category because it consists of two line stanzas on a connected theme. If we look, for instance, at the best known version of this form, the Kaliṅkattu Parani, we see that the text is broken up into thirteen sections of short stanzas on one subject, such as the nineteen two-line stanzas on the “description of the ghouls” (pēykalaiṉ pātiyatu) or the twenty-four stanzas describing the Kāḷī temple. While the meters of the paraṇi are usually identified in terms of iṉam, the Tolkāppiyam commentators replace this system with the terminology of kalippā and remain within the framework of the original system.

This way of understanding stanzaic poetry is also true for the the patikams of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite bhakti poems, which the commentators reference although they are not able to be used as literary examples. These poems consist of ten, eleven or twelve stanzas on one temple site, which are referred to throughout the decade. The import of this stanzaic structure extends

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394 This may also explain the other context in which both Pērāciriyar and Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar accept new literary examples: the section on vagappu, a poorly delineated category in the Tolkāppiyam interpreted by the commentators to pertain specifically to multi-stanzaic poetry. See Pērāciriyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 235-252.

395 As discussed in the previous chapter.

396 Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuliyal 149, p. 176.
beyond common references to one temple site. As David Shulman has argued, understanding the poetic impact of the Tēvāram poems requires acknowledging the coherence of the patikam and treating the stanzas within as a whole. Using Patikam 9 of Tiruṇāṟaṉacampantar’s verse on Tiruvariciṟkaraipputtir, Shulman points out how one patikam contains “themes (...) enunciated in one verse tend to emerge again, slightly altered, in subsequent verses, (...) adding contrapuntal tones.” Without an understanding of the decade as a poetic unit, much of the richness and allusions within the individual stanzas would be overlooked.

Although the paraṇi and the bhakti patikams are the most obvious examples of this organizing of stanzaic poetry, Nacciṇārkkiṉiyar extends this classification to other genres, including the long narrative poems of the Cilappatikāram and the Cīvakacinṭamani. The verse also allows for poems with only an introductory taravu and no refrain. For these, Nacciṇārkkiṉiyar gives the invocatory verses from the Cūḷāmani and the Vaḷaiyāpati, identifying them as taṉittaravu (solitary taravu). Epic is likewise classified; in Nacciṇārkkiṉiyar’s commentary on the Jain epic Cīvakacintamani, he identifies the narrative poem as a tēva pāṇi kalippā poem.

In conclusion, the categories of praise, both the general category of vāḻtu and the more specific kaṭavul vāḻtu, allowed the commentators to address two major anxieties in new literary development: the new literatures of the court, defined in part by an emphasis on praise, and the new meters associated with these literatures. The choice of praise as a site to introduce new literature to the canon defined by the Tolkāppiyam commentaries was not random; rather, this inclusion reflected the increasing influence of the courtly praise poem in both the production and theorization of Tamil literature during this time. These moments of violation of the original grammar indicate the force of the influence of these developments; rather than being exemplary servants to grammatical rules, these developments force the commentators to reinterpret the rules in order to accommodate them. The flexibility of the Tolkāppiyam verses allows this interpretation to occur gracefully, without the acrobatics seen in other such examples (such as the application of Sanskrit grammar to Tamil language in the grammar of the Ilakkaṇa Kōṭtu, for instance).

However, the importance of theorizing new modes of literary production affiliated with the court was outgrowing even the flexible categories of the Tolkāppiyam. At the same time that the Tolkāppiyam commentators were attempting to maintain the relevance of the old grammar, the new grammars of the pāṭṭiyals were emerging to address these very developments. If the number of pāṭṭiyals produced during the twelfth through the nineteenth centuries is any indication, this type of grammar eclipsed the impact of the Tolkāppiyam commentaries during this later period.

397 Shulman, 1990: xliii.

398 See Nacciṇārkkiṉiyar’s commentary to the kaṭavul vāḻtu of the Cīvakacinṭamani for this discussion.
Chapter 5

Consolidation of the Tamil Tradition:
Intertextuality and Integration in the Seventeenth-Century Ilakkaṇa Viḻakkam

Whether through refutation, imitation or direct borrowing, Tamil texts on poetics produced between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries reflect the complex intertextual nature of literary scholarship during this time. The emphasis on praise poetry developed in the pāṭṭiyals appears not only in the section on kali meter in the Tolkāppiyam commentaries discussed in the previous chapter, but also in the akam treatises of the Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ and the Akapporuḷ Viḻakkam as well as in the eleventh-century Virutti commentary on the list of topics with which a poet should be familiar provided by the Yāpparuṇkalam, a text that primarily treats meter. Likewise, discussion of akam conventions appear in the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal as well as in the metrical treatise of the Yāpparuṇkalam and its Virutti commentary. Commentaries on very different source materials share grammatical and literary examples, both those drawn from the Caṅkam “canon” identified by Nakkīrār and Pērācirīyar as well as those outside any identifiable compilation.

However, despite this recognition of both common conventions and shared material across the scholarly world, there were few attempts during this period at an integrated theory of literature that incorporated the fields of the study of literary language (phonology and morphology) and the individual fields of poetics, including content (poruḷ), meter (yāppu) and poetic figure (anī, Skrt. alaṅkāra). Rather, beginning with the seventh-century akam treatise, the Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ, the fields of grammar and the various branches of poetics, seen as one integrated system in the Tolkāppiyam, were divided into individual treatises. Other fields are included within these specialized texts, but topics outside the treatise’s focus are relegated to the margin, usually included in chapters on Miscellany with no clear connection to the material

399 In their description of the new narrative genre of the kōvai, a poem in the akam mode that invokes the patron in all of its four hundred stanzas, both the Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ and the Akapporuḷ Viḻakkam reflect the shift in Tamil courtly literary culture towards multi-stanzaic praise poetry. More specifically, Akapporuḷ Viḻakkam 245 and 246 refer to the pāṭṭuṭaittalaivaṉ, the technical term for the patron also used by the pāṭṭiyals. Also, the commentary on the introductory verse (pāviraṉ) of the Akapporuḷ Viḻakkam identifies the author, Nāṟkavirāca Nampi, as one who has knowledge of the four types of poetry (ācu, matura, cittira and vittāra) discussed by the pāṭṭiyals. Nakkīrār’s commentary on the Iraiyaṉār Akapporuḷ also includes reference to the pāṭṭuṭaittalaivaṉ.

400 As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the Virutti commentator interprets “tradition” (marapu) in terms of the insignia of the pāṭṭuṭaittalaivaṉ. See Virutti commentary on Yāpparuṇkalam 96.

401 The twelfth-century Viracōḷiyam stands out as a striking exception. This text, which revisits the “three-fold” division of the Tolkāppiyam into the subjects of phonology, morphology and poetics, deviates significantly from the Tolkāppiyam tradition in its integration of Sanskrit grammatical and literary theory into its interpretation of the Tamil tradition. While the text and its commentary inhabits the same textual world as the other scholars of this period, particularly the Yāpparuṇkalam and the Virutti commentary, the Viracōḷiyam and its commentary reflect a Buddhist vision of Tamil language and literature, in which Sanskrit and Tamil are integrated. See Monius 2000.
covered by the rest of the text. As for a general definition of literature, in contrast to the Tolkāppiyam, which begins its Chapter on Poetics (Ceyyuṭiyal) with a verse that implicates these disparate fields in the production and interpretation of all poetry, the later poetic texts do not reflect on the relationship between the limited field of their purview and the larger project of theorizing literature more generally.

Not until the seventeenth century does the Tamil tradition again see a poetic treatise that attempts to reconstruct the integrated system of the Tolkāppiyam and create a comprehensive theory of Tamil literature. This text, the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam, along with its auto-commentary, composed by the seventeenth-century Shaivite scholar Vaidyanātha Desikar, ushers back in the genre of the integrated theoretical system seen in the Tolkāppiyam, an approach to poetics that is subsequently adopted by a number of treatises produced throughout the nineteenth century. Despite its reputation for “bringing back the Tolkāppiyam,” earning it the name “Little Tolkāppiyam” (Kuṭṭi Tolkāppiyam), the relationship between the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam and the Tolkāppiyam is more complex than such a moniker implies. While the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam hold an important place in the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam, the text also acknowledges the developments in the literary world since the time of the Tolkāppiyam’s composition. This chapter looks at the study of poetics in the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam to understand how this text explicitly tries to reconcile the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam with these later poetic systems. This chapter argues that in contrast to the strategy of canonization displayed in the commentaries of Pēṟāciriyar and Nakkīrar, or the strategy of compilation of various traditions shown in the commentary of the Yapparūṅkalam Virutti, the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam represents a different approach to the Tamil tradition, one that identifies an authoritative treatise for each major branch of poetics developed after the Tolkāppiyam and consolidates these perspectives into an integrated theoretical system informed by the structure and content of the ancient grammar. The difference between the strategy of intertextuality and integration adopted by the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam and the strategies seen in the commentaries of Pēṟāciriyar and the Yapparūṅkalam Virutti reflect larger shifts in the status of the Tamil tradition between the period of the earlier commentaries and the seventeenth century in which the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam was composed.

Like the Tolkāppiyam, the Ilakkaṇa Viṭakkam is split into three books, covering the subjects of phonology (Eḷuttu), morphology (Col) and poetics (Porul). However, unlike the

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402 The first verse of the Ceyyuṭiyal includes a list of components (uruppu) necessary for the composition of literature. The extent of this list reflects the Tamil integration of grammar and poetics; the first two elements on the list are māṭirai (a unit of measurement of sound equal to the snapping of two fingers) and eḷuttu (letter). The next ten are what Indra Manuel identifies as “formal” elements, as opposed to the latter twelve, which are “thematic.” This identification is helpful for understanding the basic structure, but the verse itself does not accommodate such graceful categorization. Contrast this definition of literature with the concise Sanskrit definitions, such as Vamana’s claim that “style (ṛiti) is the soul of poetry (kāvya)’’.

403 See the nineteenth-century Muttuviṟiyam and what remains of the nineteenth-century Cāmināṭam. For a basic introduction to these texts and their place in the Tamil theoretical tradition, see Ilavaracu, Coma. Ilakkana Varalaru. (Citamparam: Tolkappiyar Nulakam), 1963.

Tolkāppiyam, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam interprets the Book on Poetics to include not only the chapters on the poetic conventions of akam and puṟam familiar to the Tolkāppiyam, but also topics outside the purview of the ancient grammar, including a chapter on poetic figure (aḷaṅkāra) explicitly indebted to the twelfth-century Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, the Tamil “transcreation” of the seventh-century Sanskrit Kāvyādarsa, as well as a chapter on the poetics of praise literature outlined in the pāṭṭiyals, a later poetic system not included in the Tolkāppiyam. This expansion of Tamil poetics in the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam presents a synthesis of all the major theoretical developments that had emerged since the Tolkāppiyam. However, in contrast to a text like the Yāpparūṅkal娃 Virutti commentary, which presents a range of conflicting scholarly perspectives without any commentarial mediation, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam consistently attempts to reconcile this new material with the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam.

As their names suggest, the first two chapters of the Book of Poetics of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, the Chapter on Akam Conventions (Akattinaiyiyal) and the Chapter on Puṟam Conventions (Puṟattinaiyiyal) reflect the content presented by the Tolkāppiyam. The first chapter of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, the Akattinaiyiyal, contains 225 verses on akattinai, or rules associated with the conventions of an akam poem (treating the themes of love and domestic life) covering the subject matter included in the five chapters of the Tolkāppiyam that relate to akam poetics: the Chapter on Akam Conventions (Akattinaiyiyal), the Chapter on Love before Marriage (Kalaviyal, lit. “Stolen Love”), the Chapter on Love after Marriage (Karpiyal) and the Chapter on General Akam Content (Poruliyal).

For the most part, the topics covered by the Akattinaiyiyal are familiar to the akam tradition as it is articulated by the Tolkāppiyam. After a discussion of the general conventions of akam poetry, including an introduction to the five landscapes (aṁtinai) for which akam poetry is known, as well as the system of signifiers associating particular chronotopes (muṭal) with related flora and fauna and other constituents (karu) to suggest the emotional state of the hero and heroine (uri), the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam introduces the scenes (tuṟai) central to akam poetics, in which the akam poet expresses the stages of love between the young couple in the voices of stock characters, including the hero, the heroine, her girlfriend, and her foster mother.

405 The subject of chapter 3 of this dissertation.

406 The tradition identifies this framework as a “five-fold” approach to Tamil poetics, which includes phonology, morphology, poetic content (covering akam and puṟam conventions), meter and poetic figure. The pāṭṭiyal tradition is considered a subsection of meter (yāppu). This development is in contrast to the “three-fold” approach of the Tolkāppiyam, in which meter and aḷaṅkāra are seen as subsections of content (porul), and the pāṭṭiyal tradition is not discussed.

407 The second chapter, the Puṟattinaiyiyal, attempts a similar synthesis of the other major theoretical category in the early Tamil tradition, that of puṟam, or poems on war, kingship and ethics. Although a detailed treatment of puṟam in the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam is beyond the scope of this chapter, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam is said to have brought back the Tolkāppiyam system that had been changed in the tenth-century treatise on puṟam, the Puṟapporulvenpāmālai. See Manuel 1997: 590.

408 See Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of the akam conventions as well as a short bibliography on scholarship on the akam tradition.
However, despite the discussion of these conventions in the *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Ilakkana Viḷakkam* does not draw on the ancient grammar in its understanding of the *akam* tradition. Rather, the *Ilakkana Viḷakkam*’s interpretation of the akam conventions is informed by the later akam tradition of the thirteenth-century *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* by Nārkavirāja Nampi, which reworks the individual vignettes of the earlier akam tradition into the chronological sequence of the narrative genre of the *kōvai*, reflecting the emphasis on multi-stanzaic poetry since the time of the *Tolkāppiyam*. In fact, beginning with verse 6 and continuing throughout the *Akattinaiyiyal*, the *Ilakkana Viḷakkam* directly borrows from the grammatical verses of the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* with little to no variation of wording.

In its borrowing from the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam*, the *Ilakkana Viḷakkam* draws on a text that, while better known for its articulation of *kōvai* poetics, itself represents a synthesis of the *Tolkāppiyam* akam tradition with that of the later *kōvai* tradition. The middle three chapters, the Chapter on Love before Marriage (*Kaḷaviyal*), the Chapter on Marriage (*Varaiviyal*) and the Chapter on Love after Marriage (*Karpiyal*), clearly reflect the transition of akam poetry to a narrative schematic. The section on Love before Marriage (*Kaḷaviyal*), for example, begins with a verse that elaborates the sixteen stages associated with the consummation of the love between the hero and the heroine, beginning with the hero's deciding to beg for the heroine's love (*irantupiriyarkennal*) and passing through chronological stages such as the hero’s attempts to touch the heroine (*meyottupayiyal*), the heroine’s hiding from the hero (*valjpāṭumāruttal*), the heroine’s smiling at the hero after he praises her beauty (*varitunakai tōṟral*) and the hero’s recognizing the intent behind the heroine’s smile (*muguvarkurippuntartal*) before ending with the hero’s praising the heroine after they have consummated their union (*pukaṭtal*). The rest of the verses in the Chapter on Love before Marriage, the verses in the Chapter on Marriage and the Chapter on Love after Marriage outline the scenes associated with the hero and the heroine as

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409 According to the commentator, the name of this poet is a reference to the four types of poets discussed in the *pāṭṭiyal* tradition, including poets who compose impromptu verses (*ācu*), poets who compose sweet poems (*matura*), poets who compose cintira kāvyas (*cittira*) and poets who compose *prabandham* literature (*vittāra*). The *pāṭṭiyal* focus on the last type of poet in their analysis of Tamil literature. Such a description of a scholar on *akam* poetics suggests that these categories were known outside the tradition of *pāṭṭiyal* poetics.

410 The *kōvai* is not only multi-stanzaic, but is more specifically a praise poem expressed in multiple stanzas, called a *prabandham* in the Tamil tradition. The emphasis on the multi-stanzaic praise poems of the hypergenre *prabandham* gives rise to a new branch of poetics, that of the *pāṭṭiyal* treatises. See Chapters 3 & 4 of this dissertation.

411 However, while the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* includes four chapters on *akam*, *kaḷavu*, *kaṟpu* and *oḻipu*, the *Ilakkana Viḷakkam* discusses all material related to *akam* in the *Akattinaiyiyal* chapter.

412 *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* v. 27, p. 66. In this schematic, excluded from the category of “stolen love” are several scenes which precede the meeting, including the first sight (*kāṭci*), the hero's wondering whether or not the heroine is a human or divine woman (*aiyam*), the resolution of this doubt as the hero notices the human characteristics of the heroine (*tunivi*) and the hero's noticing the signs that the heroine has also noticed him (*kuippāṟtial*). As these stages happen before a relationship has been established between the hero and the heroine, they are not considered part of the five landscapes (*aṁṭinaţi*) of love, but rather participate in the category of *kaikkiḷai* ([the hero's] one-sided love) until the heroine responds and they can enter a relationship of mutual love.
they lament being separated from one another, make plans to meet again, eventually decide to marry and then suffer through new forms of separation, as the hero temporarily leaves the heroine both to gain wealth and honor and to enjoy the love of other women (parattai).

Although many of these scenes are also discussed in the Tolkāppiyam, they appear in a different organizational framework. Rather than the narrative in which they are embedded in the Akapporul Vilakkam, the Tolkāppiyam organizes its Chapter on Love before Marriage (Kaḷaviyal) in terms of the character in whose voice the poem is set. For example, Kaḷaviyal verses 98 through 100 enumerate the scenes vocalized by the hero, including his imagining his future with the heroine, and his asking his friend to help him meet the heroine again. Scenes such as the above mentioned “hero’s attempt to touch the heroine” and “hero’s recognizing the intent behind the heroine’s smile” are also included in this list, but whereas the Akapporul Vilakkam list also includes scenes from the same chronological moment centering around the heroine and other characters, the Tolkāppiyam reserves discussion of those scenes for separate verses with no concern for violation of the narrative sequence. For example, verses 109 through 111 cover the scenes expressed in the heroine’s voice and verse 112 covers the scenes in the voice of the heroine’s girlfriend (tōḷi), while other verses are dedicated to the utterances of additional characters, such as the hero’s friend and the heroine’s foster mother. In this system, each scene is interpreted as an independent dramatic monologue (kūṟṟu). Understanding the “scene” relies on knowing the rules and limitations associated with a particular conventional character, rather than on knowing its place in a larger narrative.413

For the majority of its treatment of akam poetics, the Akapporul Vilakkam eschews this system of independent dramatic monologues in favor of the organization of the narrative sequence of the later kōvai genre. However, the text reserves a section for akam poetics as they are articulated by the Tolkāppiyam. This discussion comes in the last chapter, the Chapter on Miscellany (Oḻipiyal) which addresses, among other topics, the components (uruppus) used to make an akam poem.414 Both the term “component” (uruppu) and the list that follows are taken directly from the Tolkāppiyam’s definition of poetry, found in the first verse of the ancient grammar’s Chapter on Poetics (Ceyyuḷiyal). In this verse, the Tolkāppiyam defines literature (ceyyuḷ) in terms of the inclusion of thirty-two “components” (uruppu) beginning with the most basic metrical units of the shortest measure of time (māṭirai) and the syllable (eḻuttu) and progressing through a range of topics related to content, poetic ornament and style. Although the list as it exists in the Tolkāppiyam theoretically applies to all literary production, the Akapporul Vilakkam interprets twelve of the components to refer specifically to akam poems, including the components of landscape (tiṇai), major stage of love (kaikōḷ, further divided into “love before marriage” [kaḷavu] and “love after marriage” [karpu]) speech (kūṟru), audience (kēṭpōr), place (kalag), time (kāḷam), result (payan), physical manifestation of emotion (meypāṭu), suggested meaning (eccam), relationship between speaker and audience (muṇṇam), content (porul), and

413 The colophons of the Caṅkam akam poems also follow this organizational system.

414 This section also includes topics familiar to the pāṭṭiyal tradition, including the conventions surrounding the pāṭṭutaittalaivan, or subject of praise poetry.
scene (tuṟai).

Nowhere in this framework is there a discussion of chronological arrangement of scenes as is seen in the rules informed by the kōvai. Rather, these components provide a guide to the interpretation of a particular utterance within the system of independent dramatic monologues as they are presented by the Tolkāppiyam.

Although the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam discusses the material covered by the five chapters of the Akapporu Viḷakkam in one integrated chapter (the Akattinaiyil), otherwise the text closely follows this dual presentation of akam poetics. Throughout the sections on Love before Marriage, Marriage and Married Love, as well as the section on Miscellany, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam follows the Akapporu Viḷakkam closely, both in the order and wording of individual verses, even in instances when the Akapporu Viḷakkam deviates from the Tolkāppiyam.

A comparative look at the grammatical verses of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam and the Akapporu Viḷakkam reveals little substantial difference between the overall theory of akam presented by the two treatises. Both use the sections on Love before Marriage, Marriage and Love after Marriage to interpret the akam tradition in terms of the later kōvai framework and both reserve a section for the discussion of the Tolkāppiyam’s treatment of akam in sections on Miscellany at the end of each treatise.

However, the literary examples used in the commentaries on each treatise reveal a difference in the way each text understands the relationship between the old akam system and the later development of the kōvai schematic. Throughout its commentary, the Akapporu Viḷakkam⁴¹⁸ integrates literary examples from two distinct sources: that of the akam poems of the classical corpus identified by Pēṟāciriyar (expanded to include the akam poems of the

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⁴¹⁵ The translation of these terms is approximate, given the different interpretations of the terms throughout the tradition of Tamil poetics. For a more thorough discussion of these terms, see Manuel. The earliest extant grammar on akam, the Iṟaiyār Akapporuḷ and its commentary, appear to interpret these akam components as commentarial strategies for interpreting a verse. See Buck & Paramasivan 1997: 307-311.

⁴¹⁶ Besides the obvious reworking of the Tolkāppiyam’s poetics into the kōvai narrative framework, other deviations include the introduction of scenes not found in the Tolkāppiyam, such as the first two scenes of “the hero decides to plead for the heroine’s love” (irantuippinippazhakkennal) and “the hero pleads for the heroine’s love” (irantu pinnilai nīrhal), as well as the exclusion of scenes discussed by the Tolkāppiyam, such as the scene of love-making (puṇarceći).

⁴¹⁷ There are exceptions to this privileging of the Akapporu Viḷakkam over the Tolkāppiyam; Manuel points out several cases in which the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam opts for the treatment as given by the Tolkāppiyam. Manuel, 1997: 189.

⁴¹⁸ Although scholars such as Aravindaṇ (1968:506-509) suggests that the commentary was also composed by Nāṟkavirāca Nampi, the invocatory verse that he cites as evidence, in which the author is said to have elaborated on the subject matter, in order to remove confusing, giving the text the name “Akapporu Viḷakkam” (akapporuḷ viḷakkam enru ataṟku oru nāmam pulappatutu irutapp porulvirittu elutippp) does not necessarily indicate that the author composed a separate commentary. Kā. Rā Kōvintarāca Mutaliyar, in his short introduction to the Akapporu Viḷakkam, says only that no identifying details are known of the old commentary (Kovintaraja Mutaliyar, 1948, 2001: 5-6).
and the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai, a thirteenth-century kōvai poem composed by Poyyāmoḻippulavār (lit. “the poet whose words are free of lies”) in honor of a general in the service of the king Kulacakāra Pāṇtiya (1196-1266). Throughout the chapters that describe the chronological scenes of the kōvai, including the Kaḷaviyil, the Varaiyil and the Karpiyil, the Akapporu Vilakkam includes at least one verse from the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai as well as verses from the early akam corpus associated with the Caṅkam tradition.\footnote{An early compilation better known for its didactic poetry, including the well-known Tirukkural. While Pēṇciriyar cites profusely from other collections in the compilation and identifies the compilation by name, he excludes the akam poems from his commentary. Possible reasons for such an exclusion are covered in chapter 2.}

For example, to illustrate the verse enumerating the ways in which the hero comforts the heroine after their union (vaṟṟugaiyil viri), the commentary includes seven verses from the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai as well as poems from the Caṅkam akam compilations of the Kuruntokai and the Narrinai.\footnote{Although the relationship between the text, the commentary and the literary examples still raises many questions, all extant manuscripts of the Akapporu Vilakkam and its commentary come with the Tanjai Vanañ Kovai and the “Caṅkam” examples. See M. V. Aravindan, Uraiyaciriyarkal. (Citamparam: Manivacakar Nulakam, 1968), p. 508.} The commentary on the five ways that the heroine suffers once she is separated from her lover (pirivul黏 kalaṅkaliyil viri) displays a similar set of examples, drawing from four verses from the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai as well as poems from the Caṅkam akam compilations of the Ainkurunuru and the Narrinai.\footnote{The commentary also includes a rare reference to the Paripāṭal. Not only is the inclusion of this poem to illustrate akam rules unusual, the commentary’s explicit reference to it as a paripatral poem raises the question of whether or not it is interpolation. See commentary on Akapporu Vilakkam, v. 128, p. 73.}

In the commentary on the Chapter on Miscellany, which more closely follows the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam, the Akapporu Vilakkam commentary does not include many literary examples, but the several examples that appear are also split between the early akam examples and the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai. In its embedding the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai within the corpus of “classical” akam examples, the Akapporu Vilakkam commentary presents the later akam tradition of the kōvai as a continuation of the Tolkāppiyam akam tradition, with no distinction between the two systems. Also, while the rules of the kōvai section of the Akapporu Vilakkam theoretically address all kōvais, the Akapporu Vilakkam includes only the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai and makes no mention of the existence of other kōvais for which the rules might apply.\footnote{Commentary on Akapporu Vilakkam, v. 133, p. 77-79.}

The relationship between akam poetics as discussed by the Tolkāppiyam and the later kōvai tradition plays a different role in the commentary on the Ilakkaṅa Vilakkam Akattinaiyiyal. In contrast to the commentary on the Akapporu Vilakkam, which integrates the Caṅkam akam examples with the Tanjai Vanañ Kövai throughout the commentary, in the choice of literary examples on the Akattinaiyiyal, the Ilakkaṅa Vilakkam commentary acknowledges the existence of two related but distinct akam traditions, each with its own body of examples.\footnote{The same is true of the earliest commentary on kōvai poetics. Nakkırar’s seventh-century commentary on the Iraiyañār Akapporu, which integrates verses from the Pantikkovai with Caṅkam akam examples.}
In the sections that present akam kōvai rules, including the sections on Kaḻavu, Varaivu and Karpu, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary, like the Akapporṩ Vilakkam, includes kōvai verses to illustrate this narrative reworking of the akam tradition. However, unlike the Akapporuṩ Vilakkam commentary, which draws exclusively from the Tanjai Vānaṉ Kōvai, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary includes kōvais produced throughout the Tamil literary tradition, including the ninth-century Shaivite Tirukkōvaiyar, the thirteenth-century Ampikapatikkōvai, said to have been composed by the son of Kampan, author of the Tamil Ramayana, the seventeenth-century Shaivite Tiruvenkaikkōvai, the sixteenth-century Tiruppatikkōvai, composed by the author of a Vaishnavite treatise on akam poetics, the Mayūrakirikkōvai, the Tiruvāṟurkkōvai, the Maduraikkōvai, the Kapparkōvai, among others. While the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary is also aware of the Tanjai Vānaṉ Kōvai used by the Akapporṩ Vilakkam commentary, it does not hold a privileged place in the commentary’s choice of literary examples. Verses from the Ĉaṅkam akam poems are not absent from the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary but they are few in number, compared to the Akapporṩ Vilakkam commentary, in which the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai verses and the Ĉaṅkam akam poems appear in more equal numbers.

The difference in the range of the examples of the two texts is evident in the commentaries on the sixteen stages of the consummation of the love between the hero and heroine. For this verse, the Akapporṩ Vilakkam commentary provides twenty-five examples, including verses 5-19 of the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai. The remaining ten examples come from the Ĉaṅkam akam compilations of the Akamanuru, the Narrinai, the Kuruntokai and the Kalittokai as well as the Cilappatikaram and the Tirukkural, both considered part of the classical corpus by Pēṟāciriyar. The Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam shares several of these examples, including the same Kural verses and the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai. However, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam replaces the remainder of the Ĉaṅkam examples used in the Akapporṩ Vilakkam commentary with other examples from the kōvai tradition, including the Maduraikkōvai, the Tirukkovaiyar and the Ampikapatikkovai.

For the verse elaborating the ways in which the hero consoles the heroine, for which the Akapporuṩ Vilakkam gives seven verses from the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai as well as poems from the Ĉaṅkam akam compilations of the Kuruntokai and the Narraṉai, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam includes eight kōvai verses, including one verse from the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai, five verses from the Tirukkōvaiyar, two verses from the Ampikapatikkōvai as well as two “Ĉaṅkam” Kuruntokai poems. For the five ways that the heroine suffers once she is separated from her lover (pirivul ķalaikaliy viri), illustrated in the Akapporṩ Vilakkam commentary by four verses from the Taṅcai Vānaṉ Kōvai and the Ĉaṅkam akam poems of the Aṅkurunuru and the Narrinai, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary includes three verses from the Ampikapatikkovai, and two verses from the Tirukkovaiyar as well as a verse from the Aṅkurunuru and the Tirukkural.

The literary examples in the commentary on the section that reflects the akam tradition as it is interpreted by the Tolkāppiyam looks quite different. In contrast to the Akapporuṩ Vilakkam commentary on this section, which contains minimal examples, divided evenly between the Ĉaṅkam akam compilations of the Narrinai, Akamanuru, Aṅkurunuru and the Tanjai Vanan

\[\text{424} \text{Other than its publication by the UVS library in 1958, I could not find other details about this text.}\]
Kōvai, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam commentary on this section eschews the kōvai examples in favor of a range of literary examples, all drawn from the “classical” corpus of Caṅkam poetry.

The difference between the literary examples in the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam and Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam commentaries reflects the different attitudes towards the relationship between the “old” akam poetics of the Tolkāppiyam and the later poetics of the kōvai. While the literary examples used by the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam help create continuity in the akam tradition, the literary examples used in the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam commentary reveal a division of labor between the two theoretical models. For the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, verses following the kōvai schematic are primarily illustrated with kōvais, while verses associated with the Tolkāppiyam are illustrated with Caṅkam examples. The Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam recognizes that different literature is associated with different theoretical frameworks with no concern for violation of tradition.

By identifying the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam as the authoritative voice for the section on akam poetics, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam draws on a text that explicitly identifies as part of the Tolkāppiyam tradition. Not only does the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam draw on the material of the Tolkāppiyam throughout the root text and the commentary, but the introductory verse (pāyiram) explicitly implicates the author in the mythical origins of the Tamil literature and grammar. In this verse the author is identified as having followed the content of akam poetics as it was elucidated in the Tolkāppiyam, student of Agastya who, at the request of the gods, took the great Vindya mountains in his hand, destroyed their greatness, controlled the raging ocean, and stayed in the (Potiyil) mountain. The author is also described as having read and collected the literature of flawless excellent poets (ikapporuṉ cāṅrōr ilikkiya nōkkit), using a term that Peraciryar identifies as referring to the Caṅkam poets.

The third chapter of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, the chapter on poetic figure (anī, Skrt. alaṅkāra), also identifies an authoritative treatise for the basis of much of its content and commentary. However, if the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Akattinaiiyal draws on a text that self-consciously identifies with the tradition of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems, the chapter on poetic figure identifies a source clearly outside the Tolkāppiyam tradition: that of the twelfth-century Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, a Tamil “transcreation” of the seventh-century Sanskrit Kāvyādarsa. Both in its subject matter and in its literary examples, the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram is outside the tradition of the Tolkāppiyam and the early Tamil poems. Nowhere does the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram discuss the Caṅkam poems of akam and puṟam, nor does it identify Tolkāppiyam as an authority. In fact, the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram does not borrow from any extant Tamil grammatical tradition, but rather covers topics recognizable to the larger pan-Indian alaṅkāra tradition, such as the categorization of literary genres into muttaka, kulaka and saṅghāta (the latter replaced in the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram by the divisions of compilation [tokaigilai] and multi-stanzaic poem

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425 One section stands out as an exception in the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam commentary. This is the section on “acceptable deviation” (valu amaiti) which include Caṅkam poems. part of a larger trend in both the commentaries of the Akapporuṉ Viḷakkam and the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam of justifying deviation from grammatical rules by pointing to usage in the early poems.

426 The second chapter, the chapter on puṟam conventions, integrates rules from the tenth-century puṟam treatise Purapporuṉvenpamalai with puṟam poetics as they are articulated in the Tolkāppiyam.

427 I avoid the word “translation” here because of the significant differences between the two texts.
the discussion of style (gunaṃ) in terms of the divisions of vaitarppam (Skr. vaidarbha) and gaudam (Skr. gaudam), the extensive classification of poetic figures based both on meaning (porul, Skrt. artha) and sound (col, Skrt. sabda), and the discussion of poetic flaws (valu, Skrt. dosa). The examples, said to have been composed by the author of the treatise, known only as “Tanṭi the Scholar” (Tanṭiyācīriyī) after the Sanskrit Dandin, are short four-line verses composed primarily in venpā meter428 in honor of the author’s patron, the Chola king Anapayan.429

Throughout the Aniyiyal, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam closely follows both the rules and the literary examples of the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram. Just as the Akattinaiyyal primarily consisted of quotes from the Akapporul Viḷakkam, the majority of the verses in the Aniyiyal are direct citations of the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram, with minimal to no change in wording. As for literary examples, in contrast to the commentary on the Akattinaiyyal, which introduced different examples than those found in the Akapporul Viḷakkam commentary on the same verse, the vast majority of the examples found in the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Aniyiyal reflect the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram’s use of the venpā poems to King Anapayan. Consistent with the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram’s indifference towards Tamil literature other than these dedicated praise poems, throughout the section of the Aniyiyal that draws on rules of the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam commentary does not include examples from the Caṅkam Eḻuttotkai or other literature associated with the “classical” tradition.

However, just as the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam reserved a section of the Akattinaiyyal to discuss the “old” akam poetic system of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems alongside the later narrative kōvai schematic, the text also dedicates a section of the Aniyiyal to the ancient grammar’s treatment of poetic figure. This section comes in the discussion of simile (uvamai, Skrt. upamā), considered by the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram to be the second type of poetic figure based on content (porul anī). Of all the poetic figures covered by the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram, simile is the only figure discussed by the Tolkāppiyam, which dedicates the seventh chapter (Uvamaiyyal) of the Porulatikāram to the treatment of the subject. Just as the Akattinaiyyal consolidated the study of akam poetics by including both the akam poetics of the Tolkāppiyam and the later poetics of the kōvai, here the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam attempts to present the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram and the Tolkāppiyam as one integrated approach to simile.

The first verse in the section on simile in the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Aniyiyal addresses this project of assimilation of the two systems. The main content of the verse follows the classification of simile as it is articulated by the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram.430 According to the first three lines of both Tanṭiyalāṅkāram verse 31 and Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam verse 267, “That which is called

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428 Several of the examples are in other meters, such as kali viruttam, kalittuṟai.

429 In their sophistication as independent poems and in their distinct status from the grammatical verse which they illustrate, the examples of the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram differ significantly from their Sanskrit counterparts. Scattered references to examples from the Caṅkam corpus show up in the later commentary on the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram but we don’t know if they were associated with the original text or added later.

430 The categorization of simile in this way in the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram is a deviation from the categorization of simile in the Kāvyādarśa, in which the author does not give such a general schematic but introduces a typology of similes, including those also covered in a later section of the Tanṭiyalāṅkāram.
simile is the comparison that arises from the juxtaposing of one thing with one or many other things (based on a common property) of nature (pañpu), function (toḷil) and/or purpose (payañ). This three-fold classification of simile is in contrast to the four-fold scheme of the Tolkāppiyam, in which the basis of comparison in a simile is divided into function (viṇai) purpose (payañ), color (uru) and form (mey).

The verse draws attention to the different classificatory schemes at work in the addition of a fourth line absent from the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram verse. This line, which tells the reader to “accept the classification (tiṟam) of simile as (it has been given) by those who are knowledgeable (of the subject)” (uvamaiyā mataṇriya muṇarntaṇar koḷal) appears gratuitous in a text that primarily borrows verbatim from the verses of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram. However, by introducing this line, the Ilakkana Vilakkam draws attention to a possible contradiction between the classification of simile in this verse and the classification of simile in the Tolkāppiyam, a contradiction that is more explicitly addressed in the commentary on this verse. The commentary begins by identifying these “uṇartōr” as “texts such as the Tolkāppiyam which understand these divisions in terms of the (united hypercategory) of ‘simile’, which is then elaborated upon.” (ataṅ kāṟupatukalellām uvamaiyoraṇaiyē virittukūṟun tolkāppiyam mutaliya nūlkāḷaṇ [...]). The commentary then goes on to resolve any contradictions by saying that “If the reduction of the four categories of function (viṇai) purpose (payañ), color (uru) and form (mey) (found both in the Tolkāppiyam and in the Ilakkana Vilakkam Akattinaiyial) into these three seems wrong, it is not, because “color” (uru) and “form” (mey) can both be understood in terms of “nature” (pañpu),” thus eliminating any contradiction between this classification and that found in Tolkāppiyam.

In the middle of the commentary on this verse, the commentary introduces related verses on simile found in the Tolkāppiyam but absent from the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, such as a rule that “the object being compared (poruḷ, Skrt. upameya) and the object to which it is compared

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31 Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram 31
pañpuṇ toḷilum payaṇumey rivarriŋ
oruṟum palavum poruḷoṭu poruḷpṇaṛart
toppumai tōṅrač ceppuvva tuvamai

Ilakkana Vilakkam 267
pañpuṇ toḷilum payaṇumey rivarriŋ
oruṟum palavum poruḷoṭu poruḷpṇaṛart
toppumai tōṅrač ceppi ṇatuvē

The wording of the third line in the Ilakkana Vilakkam is slightly different to accommodate the addition of the fourth line.

32 Commentary on Ilakkana Vilakkam Aniyival v. 267, p. 361.

33 The first part of this commentary is confusing, as the examples in this section are “Caṅkam” examples shared by the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram commentary, which postdates the text. As little is known of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram commentary, we don’t know whether or not it predates the Ilakkana Vilakkam and which text first introduced these Caṅkam examples, a significant detail in understanding the choice of examples in this section.
(uvamum, Skrt. upamāṇa) should match,” a rule introducing the creation of similes that highlight the qualities of excellence (cirappu), virtue (nalaṅ) and love (kātal) in the upameya, and a rule adding an additional type of simile based on a degraded upameya (kilakṣitu poruḷo tāṭaintu mākum).

To illuminate these Tolkāppiyam verses, the commentary deviates from its standard inclusion of Taṅti’s venpā verses and gives examples from the Caṅkam poems of the Porunarrupatai, the Purananuru, the Pattinapalai as well as several uncited examples. Although the division of labor is not as clear as that in the Akattinaivyāl commentary, the commentary on this verse appears to reserve Caṅkam examples for the Tolkāppiyam rules while Taṅṭiyalankāram rules are illustrated by Taṅṭiyalankāram examples.

This division of labor between the Tolkāppiyam and the Taṅṭiyalankāram is even more evident in the commentary on the next two verses on simile. The next verse, which catalogue types of simile, is a more detailed version of Taṅṭiyalankāram verses 32 and 33, providing more substantial descriptions of the same types of simile in the same order. Consistent with the rest of the Aniyiyal, the literary examples used in this section are Anapayān venpā examples drawn from the Taṅṭiyalankāram.

The subsequent verse, however, returns to the Tolkāppiyam in its list of particles that indicate comparison (uvamai urupu). Although the Taṅṭiyalankāram includes its own list of such particles, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam draws not on the Taṅṭiyalankāram, but on the list provided by Tolkāppiyam. Consistent with the association of the rules of the Tolkāppiyam with early literature, twenty-two of the approximately fifty verses used in the commentary on this verse are drawn from the early compilations, including the Ainkurunuru, the Akananuru, the Kalittokai, the Purananuru, the Murugarrupatai, and the Malaiportukatam, providing a veritable illustration of the Caṅkam corpus given by Pēṟāciriyar.

At first glance, this apportioning of literary examples in the Aniyiyal appears to reflect that of the Akattinaivyāl, which recognized two theoretical systems for akam, each with its own corpus of relevant examples. Whenever a Tolkāppiyam rule is invoked, the commentary eschews

434 According to the commentary, this verse implies that there are acceptable and unacceptables uses of simile. For example, one can say “hair like a peacock’s tail” (mayirukoipōlum kāntal) but can’t say “hair as black as a crow’s feathers” (kākaic cirakagya karunayir) and one can say “he leapt like a tiger” (pulpōlap pāiynta) but can’t say “he leapt like a cat” (pūcai pōlap pāiynta). (Commentary on Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam 267, p. 362)

435 Like much of the Tolkāppiyam Uvamaivyāl, this verse applies specifically to the use of simile in akam poetics, in particular the description of the characters of the hero and heroine.

436 Tolkāppiyam v. 280.

437 The Tolkāppiyam includes no such list, which explains the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam’s return to the Taṅṭiyalankāram for this verse.

438 The exceptions appear in sections on grammatical deviations justified by use of the Tolkāppiyam verses and the Caṅkam poems. See fn 408, this chapter.

439 The list given in the first verse of the Chapter on Simile differs from the list in the internal verses. The Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam draws on the list given in the internal verses.
the examples associated with the later rules of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram in favor of an example from the classical corpus. However, a look at the uncited examples included in the commentary on this verse reveals a different logic behind the association of the Caṅkam poems with the Tolkāppiyam-based rules. Of the twenty-eight uncited examples, all but three come from the commentaries of Pērāciriyar and Ilampuranar on the original verse in the Tolkāppiyam. This borrowing from the Tolkāppiyam commentators is not limited to the uncited examples; the “classical” examples also come from Pērāciriyar’s commentary on the same section.

As such, in contrast to the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Akattinaiyiyal commentary, which introduced new examples to supplant those given by the Akapporu Viḷakkam commentator, the Aniyiyal commentary adheres to the examples traditionally associated with a particular verse, whether it is the Anapayan venpā examples of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, or the examples (Caṅkam and otherwise) provided by the Tolkāppiyam commentaries. In its division of labor between examples, the Aniyiyal commentary is not so much a commentary on the scope of certain rules as it is a reflection of the way these grammatical rules were passed on from teacher to student, embedded in authoritative commentaries associated with specific literary examples.

Although the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam acknowledges both the rules and examples of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram as an authoritative voice on poetic figure, the Aniyiyal explicitly situates this introduction of material from the later Tamil tradition within the larger theoretical framework of the Tolkāppiyam, associating the entire study of poetic figure with the akam and puṟam poetics of the early grammar. The first verse of the Chapter on Poetic Figure defines poetic figure (aṇi) as “the elucidation of meaning (porul pulappatuppatu)” defined by the commentary as the conventions of akam and puṟam discussed earlier in the treatise. This announcement of the relationship between ani and porul stands in contrast to the beginning of the Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram, which launches into an exposition of literary genres after the invocatory verse which announces that the author “will discuss poetic ornament (aṇi) after meditation on Sarasvati’s feet.” Despite its origins in the Sanskrit alaṅkāra tradition articulated by Dandin, the study of poetic figure is not considered by the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam to be outside the Tamil tradition, but rather is part of a consolidated vision of Tamil poetics, integrated through the framework of the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam.

In both the Akattinaiyiyal and the Aniyiyal, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam and its commentary consolidate the Tamil tradition of akam poetics and poetic figure through the integration of an authoritative later treatise with the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam. Whether as an illustration of the division of labor of two theoretical systems or as a standard corpus of examples associated with a particular verse, the literary examples reflect the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam’s acknowledgement of the important role played by both the classical literature associated with the Caṅkam corpus as well as literature from later Tamil traditions.

440 The entire verse stipulates that this elucidation of meaning is done through (kuṇam) and poetic ornament (alaṅkāra). Neither the definition of kuṇam nor the distinction between aṇi and alaṅkāra is made clear in the verse or the commentary. Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Aniyiyal v. 1, p. 349.

aniyenap paṭuṭvatu tunipurak kilappir
kuṇamalan kära maṇivṛt tīrttār
porulpaṭ paṭuppṭe tṛṇaṇār paḷavar
In its theorizing of both _akam_ conventions and of poetic figures, the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ draws on the _Tolkāppiyam_ when possible,⁴⁴¹ apportioning topics outside the purview of the ancient grammar to the later treatises of the _Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam_ and the _Tañṭiyalaṅkāram_ respectively.⁴⁴² This strategy of reconciling the old poetic system with new literary developments acknowledges the role played by new grammars in the Tamil tradition while still recognizing the importance of the older text. Because both _akam_ conventions and poetic figures are covered in some capacity by the _Tolkāppiyam_, such a reconciliation can happen with minimal commentarial contrivance.

However, the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ must adopt a different strategy in the last chapter, the chapter on _pāṭṭiyals_, which introduces a theoretical system entirely outside the domain of the _Tolkāppiyam_. This chapter, as its name suggests, treats the subject matter common to the _pāṭṭiyal_ genre of literary theory, including the “_poruttam_” system of investing the first word of a poem with the benedictory power as well as a catalogue of multi-stanzaic praise genres (_prabandhams_).⁴⁴³ The _pāṭṭiyal_ chapter also includes a discussion of the benefits of the reciting and hearing such poems, as well as a description of the court, the poet, etc. Unlike the _Akattinaiyal_ and the _Aniyiyal_, the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ _Pāṭṭiyal_ does not defer to one authoritative treatise, but is rather a presentation of general _pāṭṭiyal_ rules, perhaps because _pāṭṭiyals_ were still a productive genre of grammar in the seventeenth century. While these subjects are foreign to the _Tolkāppiyam_, they are familiar to anyone trained in the _pāṭṭiyal_ poetic system.

In contrast to the _Akattinaiyal_ and the _Aniyiyal_, in which an overlap in subjects covered by the _Tolkāppiyam_ and the later grammars of the _Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam_ and the _Tañṭiyalaṅkāram_ allowed for a graceful integration of the old and the new systems, the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam’s_ attempt to suggest continuity between the two disparate traditions of the poetic system of the _pāṭṭiyals_ and the poetics of the _Tolkāppiyam_ is more forced. The _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ integrates the two through an extended discussion of the term “_pāṭṭu_” (poem, song). Although the term appears in Ānkaṭam literature as well as in the titles of the long poems of the _Kurincipāṭṭu_ (lit. “Song in the Kuriṇci Mode”) and the Ānikaṭam compilation of the _Pattuppāṭṭu_ (lit. “the Ten Poems”) the term is not frequently used in the _Tolkāppiyam_. Throughout the _Tolkāppiyam_, the

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⁴⁴¹ However, in its inclusion of the _Tolkāppiyam’s_ discussion of simile, the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ leaves out an important feature of the role of simile in the ancient grammar: the _Tolkāppiyam’s_ explicit association of the poetic figure with the conventions of _akam_ poetry. Seven of the thirty-five verses in the _Tolkāppiyam’s_ _Uvamaṇiyiyal_ are identified with _akam_ poetics, either in their relationship with a particular character from the _akam_ mode (heroine, hero, etc.) or in their connection with the poetic technique of suggestion (_ullurai_) central to early _akam_ poetics. The section on simile in the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ neither includes nor refers to this emphasis in the ancient grammar.

⁴⁴² While a detailed study of the fourth chapter, the chapter on metrics (_ceyyuliyal_), is outside the scope of this project, the strategy employed by the _Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam_ resembles the chapters discussed so far. In this case, it is the tradition of the _Yaṭṭparunkalam_ and the _Yaṭṭparunkalakkarikal_, with its new metrical classification of the subcategories of _pāṭṭu_ and _iṉam_, that provide the authoritative “later” text to be integrated with the _Tolkāppiyam_.

⁴⁴³ See previous two chapters for extended discussion of this poetic system. Identified here alternately as _toṭarnilai ceyyul_, _akalakkavi_ and _vittārakkavi_.

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128
The term “ceyyul” (that which is made) is the general term used to refer to literature. However, in a verse that introduces the seven literary genres (ēḻu nilam), the Tolkāppiyam includes the term pāṭṭu as a genre that has metrical limitations (aṭṭ alavu) in contrast to the genres of treatise (nūl) commentary (urai), riddle (pici), proverb (mutumoli), mantra (mantiram) and (poems made of?) suggested language (kurippumoli).

The pāṭṭiyal grammars, on the other hand, as their name suggests, are entirely dedicated to the discussion of the nature (iyal) of pāṭṭu. However, despite the central position of the term across the pāṭṭiyal tradition, the pāṭṭiyal treatises include no definition of pāṭṭu, and use alternate terms (kavi, īṇam, prabandham) in their discussion of literature.

In spite of the lack of a clear definition of this literary category in either the Tolkāppiyam or the pāṭṭiyal tradition, the Ilakkanā Vilakkam combines these two under-theorized uses of the term “pāṭṭu” in order to integrate two poetic systems that have historically shared little in common. The first verse of the Ilakkanā Vilakkam Pāṭṭiyal, which discusses the subject matter to be covered in this chapter, reflects this attempt to consolidate the two interpretations of the term. The first half of the verse introduces seven “remaining topics of grammar (that which were not covered in the previous chapters), including the nature of pāṭṭu, which is made with māṭtirai etc. and put together sweetly, the nature of a treatise (nūl); the nature of commentary (urai); the nature of riddle (pici); the nature of proverb (mutucol); the nature of mantra (mantiram) and the nature of (poems made of suggested language) (kurippurai). In its understanding of pāṭṭu in this section of this verse, the Ilakkanā Vilakkam draws directly from the Tolkāppiyam’s interpretation of the term in the verse on the seven genres mentioned above. However, the Ilakkanā Vilakkam verse does not end there, but introduces a second set of topics to be discussed by the chapter, including the nature of two types of tradition (marapu) the nature

444 As in Ceyyuliya, the Chapter on Poetics. The term is often juxtaposed with valakku, or “colloquial usage.” Both the Tolkāppiyam and the Ilakkanā Vilakkam claim to discuss both valakku and ceyyul, although the meanings of these terms are not clear in either text. A history of the significance of these terms and their place in Tamil theorizing about language and literature warrants further investigation.

445 Although aṭṭ alavu literally means “line limit,” the term refers to rules surrounding meter.

446 As the ambiguity of these terms suggests, the discussion of genre in the Tolkāppiyam is problematic. For one thing, this list differs somewhat from an earlier verse which replaces kurippumoli and mantiram with the genres of satire (anakatam) and true utterance (vāymoli). Although the list is understood by later commentators to refer to literary genres, the original meanings may also have referred to different uses of language within a poem. How pāṭṭu fits into this schematic, however, is not clear. However, although the literature referred to in this section of the Tolkāppiyam is not entirely clear, the list endures in the grammatical tradition, also showing up in the Yāpparunkala’s commentary.

447 Although the term persists in marginal discussions in later grammars, it is not the preferred term for literature. However, the patron is consistently referred to as pāṭṭutaittalaivan, or hero inside a poem.

448 or because of?

449 Probably a reference to the poetic components (uruppus) discussed both by Tolkāppiyam and by the Ilakkanā Vilakkam Ceyyuiliya.

450 The commentary specifies that this refers to the tradition of poetic and colloquial language.
of caste (varunam); the nature of poets (pulavar); the nature of the courtly assembly; the nature of those who recite (compose?) (koṭuppōr) multi-stanzaic praise poetry (akalakkavi); and the nature of those who hear (kolvōr) multi-stanzaic praise poetry (akalakkavi). This second set of topics is drawn not from the Tolkāppiyam but rather from the theorization of multi-stanzaic praise poetry (akalakkavi, prabandham) in the pāṭṭiyal tradition. As the commentary on this verses makes explicit, the justification of juxtaposing such seemingly unrelated subjects is in the interpretation of the term pāṭṭu as akalakkavi, an interpretive shift which explains the introduction of the latter topics. Not only does the interpretation of the term pāṭṭu as akalakkavi enable the introduction of the pāṭṭiyal poetics in this chapter, but in an interpretive sleight of hand, it allows for a theoretical model in which the rules for akam and pugam also apply to prabandham literature.

If pāṭṭu is interpreted as prabandham literature in the first verse of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, the term is used in a different context in the second verse, which defines pāṭṭu more generally as “that which is made with the poetic component of metrical rhythm (ōcai) brought about by meter in the cool Tamil land” (pāṭṭeṇap paṭuvatu paintamiḷ nāṭṭakatt tiyāppurac ceypā vuruppeḷun ticaikkum). This definition appears to return to the Tolkāppiyam’s emphasis on meter in the understanding of the term, a speculation encouraged by the fact that the commentator borrows from Pērāciriyar in this section. The third verse returns to the pāṭṭiyal poetics to introduce yet another definition, in which the term includes all four of the literary hypergenres identified by the pāṭṭiyal tradition, including not only prabandham, but also improvised poems (ācu), sweet poems (matura) and poems that emphasize verbal and visual manipulation (cittira). This contradictory usage of the word as a general term for metrical poetry as is suggested by the Tolkāppiyam, a term for literature as articulated by the pāṭṭiyals and a term for the specific category of prabandham literature is not addressed by the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam or its commentary, nor is the question of how literature outside the pāṭṭiyal paradigm fits into this new definition of the term. And, as the pāṭṭiyal tradition does not include the use of literary examples to illustrate the verses, no corpus of commentarial examples helps resolve this problem.

Rather, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam appears to use the term to synthesize the definition in the Tolkāppiyam with the definition(s) in the pāṭṭiyal tradition, an attempt that causes more confusion than clarification. In fact, the commentary justifies this shift in emphasis to prabandham literature by claiming that the prabandham hypergenre was in fact first introduced by the Tolkāppiyam. To make this claim, the commentary includes a verse from the Tolkāppiyam

452 For an extended discussion of the prabandhams and the pāṭṭiyal tradition, see Chapters 3 & 4.
453 This interpretation comes from the commentary on this verse. See commentary on Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam Pāṭṭiyal, v. 3, p. 2.
that mentions the prabandham genre āṟṟuppaṭai⁴⁵⁵ as well as two verses on the construction of meaning (māṭṭu) that the commentary suggests refers to the composition of multi-stanzaic literature despite the ambiguity of the original meaning in the Tolkāppiyam.⁴⁵⁶

As for the poruttam system central to pāṭṭiyal poetics, in which the first word of a poem is endowed with benedictory powers, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam reinterprets this concept in terms familiar to the poetics of the Tolkāppiyam, more specifically the akam tradition. In verse 9 of the Pāṭṭiyal, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam deviates from the standard interpretation of “poruttam” to a more general sense of the word as “match” between the heroine and the man she loves. According to the verse, “the (poet) must preserve the ten poruttams between the heroine of the virittapa and the man she loves” (virittapa makaṭkum vēṭkum īraikkum poruttam īraintum pōṟṟal vēṇṭum).⁴⁵⁷ Within the pāṭṭiyal tradition, the ten poruttams are conventionally understood as qualities of the first word of a poem that match the name of the poem’s patron. However, here the poruttams refer to the qualities that make an appropriate match between the hero and the heroine, including their age, social standing, etc. However, after this attempt to make the poruttam system relevant to the Tolkāppiyam, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam goes on to elaborate on the poruttam system as it is understood in the conventional pāṭṭiyals.⁴⁵⁸

Whether in the discussion of akam poetics, poetic figure, or the poetic system of the pāṭṭiyals, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam consolidates the major developments in Tamil poetics through

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⁴⁵⁵ This verse does not actually belong to the Porulatikāram, but is the penultimate verse of the Collatikāram (Book of Phonology) of the Tolkāppiyam. The placement of this verse in the Collatikāram is unclear and may suggest an interpolation.

Collatikāram v 66
muṇṉilai cuṭṭiya orumaik kilai
paṟmaiyoṭu mutiyiṉum varainilai yinē
āṛṟuppaṭai marunkir pōṟṟal vēṇṭum

⁴⁵⁶ Tolkāppiyam Ceyyuḷiyal 218 and 219 discuss māṭṭu, one of the uruppus listed in the first verse of the Ceyyuḷiyal.

Verse 218 defines māṭṭu as a way of making and interpreting meaning in which the words of a poem are construed to make meaning, regardless of whether or not those words are spread apart or close to one another. In an unusual use of the term pāṭṭu, this verse identifies māṭṭu as pertaining to the nature of pāṭṭu.

akanṟuporuḷ kiṭappiṇu maṇukiyam-nilaiyinum
iyagruporuḷ mutiyat tantaṇa ruṇṭartal
māṭeṇa moliḷa pāṭṭiyal valakkiṇ

The following verse, which includes the term “multistanzaic” (tōṭarnilai) adds that māṭṭu is not necessary for the composition of such a poem. It is not clear what the Tolkāppiyam refers to here.

The commentator also includes Tolkāppiyam Puṟattinaiyiyal 87 (tāvi gallicai karutiyai kiṭantōṛkkuc) which lists types of poetry associated with the category of eulogy (pāṭṭan). As I have mentioned in other sections of this dissertation, both the verses and the commentary on this section are not clear, although the commentators appear to interpret this section as part of the same category of courtly praise poem as the vāṭṭtu, discussed in Chapter 4. As such, it would not be surprising that the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam commentary also interprets this verse as a discussion of prabandham literature.

⁴⁵⁷ The verse replaces the more typical terms of talaiyav and talaivi with makaḷ and īra.

⁴⁵⁸ Additionally, the Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam itself follows the injunction of the pāṭṭiyals in its choice of a first syllable.
the integration of an authoritative later treatise with the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam. In its acknowledgement of poetic conventions outside the purview of the Tolkāppiyam, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam differs from Pērāciriyar’s rejection of later developments on account of their threat to the Tamil tradition. As for the origins of Tamil literature and the Cankam past, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam is mainly silent. While the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam contains one mention of Agastya as belonging to the first Cankam (talaiacakattār) he does not give more details of the Cankam story, nor does he mention the mythical scholar in his definition of a primary treatise (mutal nūl). Furthermore, he includes verses attributed to a real grammarian Agastya that appear in the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti commentary. In this case, his mention of Agastya as belonging to the Cankam may be more of a reflection of his borrowing from a section of Pērāciriyar’s commentary, rather than a reflection on the Tamil past.

However, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam’s insistence on maintaining a privileged place for the Tolkāppiyam both in the inclusion of its poetic systems as well as in the adoption of its structure distinguishes the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam project from that of the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti, where various conflicting traditions were presented with no attempt at an integrated coherent system for Tamil literature. While a detailed study of the shift in South Indian literary culture that produced the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam is a topic for future research, the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam reflects a new approach to the Tamil tradition in which the primary concern animating theoretical production is the desire for a theory of literature that can accommodate rules on language and diverse branches of literary theory in the service of literature from throughout the Tamil literary universe.459

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459 As I argue in Chapter 1, the difference between the strategies adopted by the commentaries of Pērāciriyar and the Yāpparūṅkala Virutti can be understood in terms of a larger network of sectarian scholarly approaches to the Tamil language and literary tradition. How do we understand the project of consolidation of the Tamil tradition effected by the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam? While a detailed answer to this question warrants further investigation, including a more thorough understanding of the relationship to other forms of theoretical production during this period, especially the other major Tamil grammars of the seventeenth century, the Pirayōka Vivēkam and the Ilakkaṇa Kottu, as well as the prolific tradition of Sanskrit scholarship produced in South India during this time. What we do know is that although the author of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam is clearly identified with the Shaivite tradition, Shaivite scholarship of the seventeenth century is no longer identified with anxiety over a monolithic interpretation of the Tamil tradition, along with a origin story and one authoritative text. Rather, the two other major Tamil Shaivite grammars of the seventeenth century reflect a very different approach to the Tamil tradition, one in which Tamil is interpreted within the Sanskrit grammatical system. Both the seventeenth-century grammars of the Pirayōka Vivēkam and the Ilakkaṇa Kottu reflect their claim that Tamil and Sanskrit share the same grammar. The organization of both texts reflect this emphasis on Sanskrit.

Although the exigencies of contemporary Tamil scholarship may pit the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam and the Ilakkaṇa Kottu against one another as examples of Tamil versus Sanskrit approaches to the Tamil tradition, the relationship between these two authors seems to have been one of respectful dialogue, rather than hostile defense of a particular way of thinking about Tamil. In the seventeenth century, in contrast to the thirteenth century in which Pērāciriyar was writing his commentary, there appears to have been a space for dissenting perspectives on the Tamil tradition.
Conclusion

Beginning with the nineteenth-century “discovery” of the Caṅkam poems, thought to have disappeared from Tamil scholarship after the composition of the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, we enter more familiar territory in the history of the Tamil literary tradition. By the middle of the twentieth century, discourse on poetic figure and meter were replaced by a literary criticism informed by the analytical frameworks of literary histories and liberal humanistic inquiry. Although the texts featured in this dissertation continued to be printed well into the twentieth century, given the lack of serious scholarly interest in their content, this appears to have been more of a symbolic act than a sign of their continued relevance.460

However, in contrast to the almost complete disappearance of premodern Tamil intellectual history from twentieth-century Tamil scholarship, the classical literary past continues to occupy a central position in Tamil culture. In June 2010, the State Government of Tamil Nadu spent over eighty million dollars461 on a World Classical Tamil Conference, meant both to celebrate the establishing of Tamil as a classical language by the Indian Government in 2004 and the imminent retiring of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi, himself a poet and Tamil scholar. Part cultural showcase, part ceremony for the worship of Tamil, part demonstration of political will, the conference drew scholars from around the world to discuss titles such as Ancient Tamil Moral Literature and Was the Indus Valley Script Dravidian?.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including the president of India himself, attended the event, which was also televised around the world. The Tamil composer A R Rahman, better known for his work on Bollywood movie scores as well as the Oscar-winning Slumdog Millionaire, composed a theme song, students and government workers were granted a holiday, and commemorative postcards were distributed as souvenirs. The spirit was festive, and after all, there was reason to celebrate: with the establishing of Tamil as a classical language, the government poured money into a new Center of Excellence for Classical Tamil, with opportunities for seminars, awards for Tamil scholars and fellowships for both Indian and international students. Throughout the week, the visitor was awestruck by the antiquity of the Tamil past and inspired to conduct further research on these materials. In an intellectual climate such as South India, where the humanities are under a greater level of threat than even in the West, seen as the best option for a student failing at more lucrative degrees, such support of literary study, and in particular premodern literary study, appears like a beacon of a new era of Tamil intellectual life.

In many ways, the cultural and political conditions that gave birth to such an event share key characteristics with those which produced the treatises and commentaries on poetics

460 As examples of the antiquity and excellence of Tamil intellectual culture, the commentaries of Pērāciriyar and Naccinarkkiniyar are celebrated for their scholarly prowess, although the little scholarship that exists on these commentators rarely extends beyond brief attempts at situating them in Tamil literary histories, much of it speculative. Scholarship on the Virutti commentary is even more limited, and despite scholarly appreciation of the vast literary corpus included in the examples of the Virutti, I was unable to find one scholar who had read through these poetic examples. As for the pāṭṭiyals and the Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam, they have become rarefied knowledge.

461 As reported by Delhi-based news conglomerate NDTV.
discussed by this dissertation. Both periods witnessed a rash of new ideas about the literary, many of them derived from sophisticated traditions in the translocal languages of English and Sanskrit respectively. Both periods saw considerable centralized political support for Tamil as well as support for scholarly production originating from a range of sectarian and caste communities. And as a result of this introduction of new literary and language developments, the “classical” becomes a central concept around which debates over authenticity and language identity can be framed in both cultural milieux.

However, with the erasure of the Tamil intellectual tradition, the Tamil literary world has erased a distinguishing feature of premodern Tamil literary culture. Contemporary support of classical Tamil masks a radically conservative intellectual culture, in which innovation, both in literary production and scholarship, is carefully managed, even censored, to reflect continuity with the ancient tradition. In contrast to the long history of multilingual scholarship in Tamil, today the Tamil scholar is predominantly monolingual, and in fact the study of comparative language and literary traditions, especially Sanskrit, with its association with Brahmans and the hegemonic “North,” is discouraged. As this dissertation has pointed out, while there has arguably never been a time in Tamil scholarship when the influence of the classical past was completely absent, there have always been a range of approaches to the role of this corpus and its conventions in the definition of the Tamil literary tradition. Not only that, but if the intertextuality in the commentaries is any indication, there was an expectation of scholars to engage with different theoretical views, both those influenced by Tamil and those in Sanskrit and other languages.

The first chapter of this dissertation looked closely at these debates in Pērāciriyar’s thirteenth-century commentary on the section of poetics in the ancient grammar Tolkāppiyam and the eleventh century Virutti commentary on the metrical text, the Yāpparunlkalam. By exclusively associating the rules of the Tolkāppiyam with a canon of literature identified with the divine origins of Tamil, Pērāciriyar contradicts his understanding of language and literature as capable of historical change. This chapter argues that this contradiction comes from his response to what he saw as the threat of multiple interpretive traditions to the authoritative status of the ancient grammar. Although Pērāciriyar represents the most conservative approach among Tamil theoreticians of the eighth through fourteenth centuries, even he acknowledges alternative scholarly perspectives throughout his commentary, if ultimately to reject those approaches. If Pērāciriyar introduces dissenting perspectives as part of a rhetorical strategy to support his own canonizing project, the Virutti commentator includes a greater range of interpretative approaches, with no judgement of hierarchy. For the Virutti commentator, the Tamil tradition is characterized not by its association with an authoritative school of thought, legitimized by an ancient grammar and a literary canon, but is rather informed by a range of diverse traditions, including those originating in other Indian language and literary traditions, none more legitimate than another. The first chapter provides a comparative analysis of these different approaches to the role of the classical past in the definition of the Tamil tradition and tries to situate these differences in larger sectarian approaches to literary scholarship of this period.

If Pērāciriyar participates in a group of scholars investing in controlling the interpretation of the ancient poems, the Virutti commentary opens up the classical conventions to new expressive possibilities. The second chapter looks at a set of literary examples in the Virutti
commentary that draw from the highly conventional system of the akam genre of poetry (poetry of love and domestic life) central to the classical Caṅkam poems and the Tolkāppiyam. Although these new “akam” articulations retain imagery and syntax and style recognizable from the early akam poems, they replace the poetic logic of the old poems, in which the conventions serve to elicit complex layers of suggested meaning, with new aesthetic priorities that emphasize alliteration and word play. These experiments with akam poetics, many of which were shared across the Tamil literary theoretical world, call into question the boundaries of the akam genre and highlight the different use of literary language between the Caṅkam poems and later Tamil literary culture.

At the same time that the Virutti commentary was experimenting with different applications of the akam conventions, the akam genre underwent a powerful transformation, one that, unlike the Virutti examples, would define the genre for the next thousand years. In this paradigm, the short vignettes of the early akam corpus are reorganized into a chronological narrative in which every stanza praises the royal or divine patron of the poem. In this transformation, the akam genre participates in a larger shift in Tamil poetics towards a system in which all literature is theorized in terms of its capacity to praise in multiple stanzas. This new poetics of praise is the subject of the third chapter, which looks at the earliest theoretical articulations of this new paradigm, the Paṇgiru Pāṭṭiyal and the Venpā Pāṭṭiyal. In these treatises, the concerns over authenticity and antiquity of the Tamil tradition are replaced by a poetics in which not only are Tamil literary genres theorized as ideal vehicles of praise, but the power of Tamil language is seen as capable of magical effect on the patron of the poem.

On first glance, the tradition of the pāṭṭiyals, though contemporaneous with the commentaries of the Virutti and Pērāciriyar, does not appear to participate in the same literary world. However, as the fourth chapter demonstrates, the shift towards praise poetry in Tamil literary culture permeates even the conservative commentaries on the Tolkāppiyam with their rejection of contemporary literary developments. The fourth chapter looks at the ways in which the Tolkāppiyam commentaries attempt to accommodate praise poetry without violating the interpretive rules of the ancient grammar.

Despite the recognition of the existence of discourse on a range of topics relating to Tamil literature, Tamil treatises and commentaries produced between the eighth and the fourteenth century were produced as specialized knowledge on one field. This specialization of knowledge was replaced in the seventeenth century by attempts at an integrated theory of Tamil literature that incorporated the major theories of language with the various fields of literary theory, including theories of meter, alaṅkāra and genre. The last chapter focuses on the first of such integrated treatises, the Ilakkaṇa Viḻakkam and its auto-commentary, which borrows from theories of literature in the commentaries of both Pērāciriyar and the Virutti as well as from the praise poetics of the pāṭṭiyals and the alaṅkāra theory of the twelfth century Tāṇṭiyalaṅkāram. Although the Ilakkaṇa Viḻakkam introduces a range of new conceptual frameworks into its formulation of Tamil poetics, throughout the text and its commentary it attempts to integrate these developments with the conventions of the Tolkāppiyam and the Caṅkam poems. The reconciliation of theoretical positions seen as antithetical at the time of their composition reveals the ways in which perspectives seen as innovative themselves become representative of tradition in a new cultural context that does not share the same anxiety about the past.
The scope of this project necessitates leaving many important questions unanswered. None of the treatises in this study have received significant scholarly attention in Tamil, let alone in English, and there are even fewer translations to facilitate work across languages. The relationship between these texts and the South Indian tradition of Sanskrit scholarship has only begun to be explored, let alone the relationship between Tamil scholarship and other South Indian languages such as Kannada, Telugu or Malayalam. Tamil literary culture of the seventeenth century and its relationship to the development of the Shaivite mutt as center of scholarly production is a subject virtually unexplored.

However, my choice to present such a wide range of theoretical treatises highlights the multiplicity of interpretations of the Tamil tradition, a multiplicity that challenges the tyranny born of language nationalism. Such an emphasis on the complexity of the relationships between various language and literary traditions in premodern South India also highlights the limitations of Pollock’s brilliant but highly problematic formulation of the development of South and Southeast literary culture. On the one hand, Pollock highlights aspects of literary development in Tamil that accurately reflect what he identifies as the vernacularization process, in which Tamil replaces Sanskrit as the language that articulated royal power, from inscriptive poetry to the poetics of praise discussed in this dissertation.462

However, in Pollock’s definition of the vernacular as the creation of a local literature “according to models supplied by a superordinate, usually cosmopolitan, literary culture,” he ignores a wide body of literature that challenges his thesis, choosing instead to focus on the development of Kannada literature, which illustrates this process beautifully.463 While such appropriation occurs in Tamil, Pollock’s emphasis on these texts ignores the complexity of cultural production during this period, flattening it to fit his argument. As this dissertation demonstrates, on topics ranging from poetic ornament (alaṅkāra) to the theorizing of magical language to literary genre, Tamil treatises produced during the time of Pollock’s “vernacular revolution” were overwhelmingly characterized by their complex and often confounding integration of theories of language and literature derived from both Sanskrit and Tamil, as well as from language traditions which we have not yet begun to understand.

Pollock’s failure to seriously consider and collaborate with Tamil scholars prevents him from asking the more interesting questions of choice introduced by this dissertation: why were

462 Pallava inscriptions reveal that until the Chola period, Tamil functioned only as a documentary language, while Sanskrit performed the duty of representation. Like the other vernacular languages that Pollock details, the literarization of Tamil in the inscriptions begins around 1000 C.E., when Tamil begins to replace Sanskrit in the prasastis. This “new” function of Tamil is accompanied by new forms of literature that support Pollock’s thesis: the 9th century Mahabharata by Peruntevanar, and the 12th century Kamparamanayam. These new literatures, along with the grammatical and commentarial works of the period, participate in the phenomenon Pollock calls “territorialization”, whereby Tamil culture is demarcated and localized using cosmopolitan models. See Pollock 2006 for the most detailed treatment of the subject.

463 The first text on Kannada poetics, the 9th century Kavirajamargam, states such a purpose: to define, based on scraps of available Kannada literary material, a Kannada literature of Place informed by the cosmopolitan Way. This definition, which explicitly incorporates Sanskrit sources in its deliberate use of the terms “Place” and “Way”, generates a local literature that also claims cosmopolitan status within a delimited area.
certain Sanskritic categories adopted, while others were rejected in lieu of alternative understandings of the literary? Although he frames his theory in terms of the significance of choice (the choice of the Śakas to use Sanskrit in an entirely new way), he fails to acknowledge literary systems that may have competed with Sanskrit.

By providing a comparative look at approaches to interpreting the Tamil literary tradition, this dissertation hopes to challenge the myopia of the literary critical vantage points of contemporary scholarship on world literature (both from the Euro-American perspective and from the perspective of the Sanskrit scholar) and bring attention to the important role played by comparative literary theory - both the intentional articulations of how to read, what to read and the benefits of proper reading as well as the unintentional but equally important cultural work of such theorization - in our approach both to the study of South Asian literature and to the study of world literature more generally.
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