PRE – HISTORY OF TAMIL LITERATURE

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> With the pseudonym, Sembian, this Czeck scholar has done an extensive and unbiased research on Indian literature. Here he traces the origin and development of Pre Aryan Tamil literature; an elaborate discussion about *Tolkappiyam* and a critical note on its English renditions at the end.

In spite of the over differentiated and complicated picture drawn some years back by Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the linguistic situation in late prehistoric and early historical Tamilnadu seems to have been recently reconstructed satisfactorily in a series of papers and it may be, in somewhat simplified terms, described as follows: Pre – Tamil developed into Proto Tamil and pre – literary Tamil when, about 250 B.C. Asoka's (272-232. B.C). southern system: we know this stage of the language from the earliest inscriptions, and it seems to be a type of language which is not too far removed from the language of the earliest literary records, though it shows some peculiarities such as abundance of vowel – clusters, great functional load of the genitive suffix– 'a' which are due to various factors, mainly to the strong influence of Prakrit on its vocabulary, and to the fact that the orthography of those epigraphs is still "rather halting and experimental". In a somewhat different language and in a very different style, the earliest bardic poetry transmitted orally during the pre – literary stage, now refined and transformed into sophisticated court poetry, and enjoying great prestige, began to crystallize around certain nuclei which became later, after the criticism of a body of scholars had been applied, the core of the anthologies. The inscriptions may represent a spoken variety of Tamil used by the (most probably

bilingual) Jaina and Buddhist monks, while the bardic corpus represents a literary language which at that period was in the stage of standardization. This literary language was taken as the basis for the description found in the grammar *Tolkappiyam*.

It seems that the informal (spoken), formal (written) language situation known as diglossia so typical of medieval and modern Tamil, prevailed also in the ancient period. Since the times of the *Tolkappiyam* all great Tamil traditional scholars have been well aware of this basic dichotomy, and commented upon it, or made use of this conception. The all important specific preface of the *Tolkappiyam* composed by Panamparanar speaks about the common speech (*valakku*) and the speech of poetry (*ceyyul*). The same terms for the same phenomena were used by the great medieval commentator Parimelalakar. Apart from a cultivated, standard literary language, contrasted with the sum of the spoken forms of Tamil, the indigenous theoreticians distinguished a standard local variety of the language (*centamil*, the correct Tamil) as against other local varieties which were considered incorrect (lit. "crude",. *kotuntamil*). They were aware that the *centamil* usage had a territorial basis, and that "crude" Tamil was spoken in a different territory, traditionally divided into twelve dialectal regions, well known for their provincialisms. Where the standard literary language developed, is still a matter of dispute. It is probable that it was based upon the dialect considered correct (*centamil*), and it is quite probable that this correct, standard, local dialect was spoken in and around Maturai, and cultivated and controlled by a kind of "academy".

Aryan Dravidian relations - Tamil and Sanskrit

What exactly the nature of the relationship between the Dravidians and the Aryans was in prehistoric times is still a matter of uncertainty and disputed. One should not take for granted that the relationship was necessarily inimical. Authors like Macdonell and Keith misinterpret the epithet *anas* applied to the enemies of the Aryans, the *Dasyu* or *Dasu,* as "nose – less", and see in this description the "flat nose" of the Dravidians; ergo, the enemies of Vedic Aryans were the Dravidians. But, as Filliozat rightly objects, they forgot that the Dravidians do not have flat noses. Even Alexander's Greeks observed that South Indians were a black as Ethiopians but did not have flat noses. According to G.Olivier, they are not flat – nosed but as having six eyes and three heads. This only seems to show that these enemies of the Aryans can hardly be identified

with the Dravidians. However, in early historical times, Sanskrit texts composed in the North of India show a rather unfriendly, even contemptuous, attitude towards the Dravidians, cf. *Man, X,44 Carakasamhita, Indriyasthana V, 28* mentions *dravida* and *andhraka i*n one breath with *candalas,* dogs etc. i.e. with beings one should not see in one's dreams since they are highly inauspicious. Bana, in the *Kadambari*, describes the *dravida dharmika* very unfavorably. The different *kamasastras* usually deal with the women of the South in not too flattering terms.

Intercourse between the North and the South had developed already by the end of the 4th cent. B.C. since Megasthenese, who never visited the South, tells the story of Pandaia, queen of Modoura, and of the Pearl Fishery coast. The references in Asoka's inscription to the independent Tamil kingdoms are well known. Though Sanskritic lore did not have much influence on early Tamil culture, there is evidence of lively interaction between the two cultures. The Tamil South was obviously not isolated culturally even in the remotest and the earliest period of Tamil civilized society. On the other hand, like Greek literature, Tamil classical poetry flourished during a relatively short period of two to three centuries and then fast disappeared; later it was only imitated; the period of the high water mark of Tamil classical literature was one in which the two great Sanskrit epics were already completed, but Sanskrit classical poetry was barely emerging with Asvaghosa. No stylistic feature or literary convention could have been borrowed by the Tamils (though of course there are borrowings of *Puranic* stories); the styles and conventions developed directly from an oral tradition which took shape with little or no contact with the Aryans. Later, Sanskrit became popular in Tamilnadu not only among the literati but in broader circles. There has been a heavy and permanent pressure of Sanskrit and the Prakrit and their culture upon Tamil ever since, but Tamil has always been strong enough to withstand it. However, there have always been also parallel developments in both. Though the dominance of Sanskrit was exaggerated in some Brahmanic circles of Tamilnadu, and Tamil was unduly underestimated by a few Sanskrit – orientated scholars, the Tamil and Sanskrit cultures were not generally in rivalry. Aryan culture was apparently welcome everywhere in the South, and Brahman ideals were generally welcomed.

One must admit, however, that the effort to achieve an Aryan–Dravidan balance and synthesis, which has obviously, in the history of Tamilnadu, been "completely" successful only for short periods and in the cultural activities of few, has had very frequently, the character of antagonistic tensions and conflicts.

As K.A.N. Sastri admits, "this is not to imply that all was smooth sailing all the time, that there were no differences or even conflicts and that the integration of culture was altogether smooth and perfect… Prakrit or Sanskrit never completely replaced the local language, at least in the Tamil country, as it did elsewhere in India and abroad. Tamil held its own and evinced a marvellous capacity for assimilating the incoming culture …..". The Pallavas played a prominent role from the 3rd – 4th cent. A. D. in the Aryanisation of the far South, and in the transmission of Indo Aryan culture to the lands and islands across the Bay of Bengal. Some authors speak of "a planned cultural conspiracy on the part of the Aryanised Brahmins to give priority and supremacy to Sanskrit, the language of the civilizing Aryans... This interference was not confined to the domain of religion and to that of the courts... but extended even to the Sanskritisation of place names, rivers and mountains." There are others, who, on the contrary, speak of the efforts to "Tamilise" original Aryan deities, etc. At the present time, there is on the one hand a strong opposition to Aryan influences identified with the Brahmans and with Sanskrit, which has merged with the social and political movement in a rather strong and popular anti- Brahman, anti – Sanskrit, anti Hindi and anti – Hinduism". On the other hand, the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit is still very intimate. Thus the story tellers or Pauranikas still give important passages of *Ramayana* or *Bhagavatha Purana* in Sanskrit, with an occasional Tamil paraphrase. There is still a group of traditional literati (distinct from the modern world – orientated intelligentsia) who guard the cultivation of Sanskrit learning; and the strong influence of Sanskrit – orientated culture may be seen in the work of such distinguished recent and contemporary scholars as S.Krishna swami Aiyangar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, and V. Raghavan.

Pre *Tolkappiyam* literature

It has been said that the Ganga in the North and the Kaviri in the South are the two foci of Indian civilization. And, indeed, the two classical languages, and the two classical literatures of India, are Sanskrit and Tamil.

The earliest attested literary evidence of the word Tamil is probably *Tolkappiyam Elutatikaram Stanza* 385: *tamilen kilavi*, "the word 'Tamil'". It also occurs in a number of bardic poems as a designation of the language, the land, the people. In *Civakacintamani* 2026, Tamil occurs in the meaning of sweetness and pleasantness. Tamil is sweetness. The dictionaries assign to the word the meaning of sweetness, pleasantness and correctness. It is obvious that the

Sanskrit Dravida, Pali Damila, damilo and Prakrit Davida are all etymologically connected with Tamil.

When we read the *Tolkappiyam* carefully we find a few data which clearly indicate that there must have been a relatively long and established tradition of a standardized language. Many lines in *Tolkappiyam* refer to previous scholars, previous texts etc. including the Specific Preface, there are at least 39 clear references to earlier literature. The most frequent reference is to *pulavar* and to *marapu.* One may in fact very plausibly argue an anterior literary development from entire sections of *Tolkappiyam.*

Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram 391 mentions the following seven forms of compositions (*yappu*): *pattu, urai, mil, vaymoli, pici, ankatam*, and *mutucol*; they were in vogue within the four frontiers of the Tamil land. Drama and epic poetry are conspicuous by their absence. The six kinds of composition which are not limited as to the number of lines are *nul, urai, pici, mutumoli= mutucol*, the additional *mantiram* described in 490, and "indirect" or "hidden statements" (statements suggesting other meanings, *kurippu).* All in all, *Tolkappiyam* enumerates nine different kinds of literary composition, and no eight or seven, as is usually stated. However, this section of *Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram* is badly organized, and it almost certainly contains later interpolations. One can therefore not accept these statements as very reliable information about pre – classical forms. It is, nevertheless, obvious that the language since it had evolved obsolete forms, and manifested shifts of meaning, and some words needed explanation even for *Toplkappiyar's* contemporaries. A rich and varied development of metres, sophistication and systematization of poetic experience, the beginnings of a philosophic rationalization of life, all this proves that there must have been rich cultural activity immediately preceding *Tolkappiam.* It itself "is.. intelligible when considered as pre Cankam" for and that is indeed very important many of the usages and genres quoted in *Tolkappiyum* are not found in subsequent literature, and can only be explained as applicable to tests which preceded the composition of the grammar. Later commentators (10th–16th cent AD) had a hard time identifying the genres and providing suitable examples of them. New forms of literature are referred to in the *Tolkappiyam* as *viruntu* (lit. "newcomers, guests"). It is also interesting that there are rules which prescribe the usage of Sanskrit loan words and provide for the translation of foreign words into Tamil.

The *Cankam* legend

The assembly of Scholars is a cultural institution of much antiquity and great popularity in India. But it seems that it was always a casual body, never assuming the character of a permanent institution. In contrast to the Tamil "academies", these literary bodies were probably occasional gatherings of poets and scholars convened only ad hoc. The Tamil tradition connects the "academies" with the city of Maturai, on the river Vaikai, which has always been related in a special way and a significant manner to the language, culture, and literature of the Tamils.

In Tamil history, the tradition of a literary Academy appears in both literary and epigraphic sources. In literary texts, we have to distinguish between accounts and references. There are two most important accounts of the *Cankam* legend. One in a commentary to Iraiyanar's *Akapporul* (ca 4th – 6th cent . A. D.) ascribed to Nakkirar (dated between A. D. 700 1000) which is either his work or the work of a Nilakantan of Muciri; and another in the Tamil *Puranas* dedicated to Maturai, the Tiruvalavayutaiyar *Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam* of Perumparrappuliyur Nampi and the *Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam* of Parancoti.

The literary accounts

The first developed account of the *Cankam* legend is contained in the commentary on *Akapporul* alias *Kalaviayl* ascribed to Iraiyanar. The author of the commentary is described as Nakkirar, son of the Kanakkayanar of Maturai; it was written down by a Nilakantan of Muciri. The commentary must be earlier than ca. 1000 A. D. but not earlier than A.D. 650-750.

The other detailed account of the legend is found in the Tamil *puranas* on Maturai. There are quite important differences between this late story and Naikkirar's version. It seems that the later version may be attached to the Sanskrit tradition according to which Siva is the father of grammar. This late version incorporated additional elements and other legends (the motif of the Cankam bench, the story of Tarumi and the two accounts are probably based on somewhat different, even partly independent, traditions. Though *Parancoti's purana* is rather late as a literary text it has certainly incorporated very early material. E.g. the main elements of the same legendary theme which is narrated in the 4th cent. B.C. by Megasthenes, if so it may also contain old authentic material about the *Cankam*.

Textual references

Among the literary references which probably preceded the account of Nakkirar, the earliest if found in line attributed to Appar which says: "Look at Him who was gracious enough to appear in the assembly as a poet of fine poems (*nanpattup pulavanayc canakm*) , and presented the purse of gold to Tarumi. Appar lived in the first half of the 7th cent. His younger contemporary Nanacampantar probably refers to a learned body at Maturai which he calls *Maturai Tokai*. In later devotional poetry, both Saiva and Vaisnava, there are many references to an "academy" or "assembly". This is important for it probably indicates that the Saiva and Vaisnava hymnists recognized a well established tradition of some assembly of scholars and/or poets as early as the 7th cent. A.D. and that this tradition was preserved, and found detailed elaboration in Nakkirar's commentary, and much later in the *Maturai puranas*. A popular legend must have existed about the *Cankam*, and "with the lapse of time the legend itself must have assumed different forms".

A few lines exist in the so called *Cankam* texts proper which might be interpreted as referring to a body of poets and scholars. However, these references are not explicit, and the conclusion is therefore purely speculative. The meaning of the term *Cankam* as an "association or assembly" of poets and critics seems to be based on a Jaina tradition found in Prakrit, according to which a *davida samgho* had been established in Maturai by a Jain named Vajjanandi in ca. 470 A.D.

Epigraphic references

I consider it quite significant that there is at least one definite reference to a *Cankam* in Tamil epigraphy, viz. in the larger Cinnamanur Plate (10th cent.) which praises a Pandya for a number of achievements, among them for having had the *Mahabharatam* translated into Tamil and for having established or maintained a *cankam* in the city of Madhura (*madhurapuric cankam vaittum*). According to. S.Krishnasvami Aiyangar and K.A.N. Sastri, this refers to the *Cankam* at Maturai. There is yet another inscriptional reference to *Cankam*: the Madras Epigraphists Report No. 334 for 1929 – 30 quotes an inscription in the *akaval* meter from Erukkankuti (Cattur Taluk, Ramnad Dist) of the 9th cent. which praises Etticattan who had among his ancestors a poet who sat on the famous *Cankam* bench According to Mu. Irakavaiyankar this may refer to Maturaik Kulavanikan Catanar, a bardic poet.

The rationale of the legend

Out of the bulk of the texts mentioned by Nakkirar as belonging to the First Academy (which we could very tentatively and purely speculatively date about 400 or 300 B.C. only a few grammatical aphorisms (17 in all) ascribed to an Akattiyanar, have possible survived; a few more fragments may have survived of the works ascribed to the second Academy: a few lines of *Mapuranam;* the 16 lines said to be a part of an ancient *Icainunukkam* are probably much late. Coming to the last Academy, we at once find ourselves on almost historical ground since most of the works Nakkirar quotes have been preserved: seven intact, or almost intact, two in great fragments, and one only as a minor fragment; four have disappeared entirely. While the years cited by Nakkirar are obviously fictitious, the number of the poets of the last Academy. i.e. 449, may be strikingly near the truth. On the whole then, the tradition about the academies cannot be dismissed as pure fiction; it could not have arisen without an historical basis, and it could hardly have been based simply on an assembly of Jaina or Buddhist monks. Normative and critical activities in the field of early Tamil bardic and classical literature are no fiction but a hard fact. As K.A.Nilakanta Sastri and K.K.Pillay say, fact and fiction have got mixed up in the various versions of the legend available to us. Let us try to indicate by way of a chart, the elements of historical truth and of fiction as they arise from Nakkirar's account;

Some additional facts emerge from Nakkirar's account: first, by the time he wrote his commentary the anthologisation of the collections including the later ones, must have already been an accomplished fact; secondly, the arrangement of the anthologies into the two super anthologies *Ettuttokai* and *Pattuppattu* had probably not yet been finished; thirdly, his account mentions, for the first time, *Tolkappiyam,* as a single finished grammatical work. The gods mentioned in the legendary account (Siva, Murukavel and Kubera) may indicate that the beginnings of Tamil literature and civilization were closely connected with the cults of Siva, Kubera and especially of Murukan who had always been considered the prince and patron of poets.

According to the indigenous traditions, Agastiya learnt Tamil from the God Siva himself and taught it to his twelve disciples, one of whom was Tolkappiyar. Another of the disciples, Panamparanar, composed the Specific Preface to *Tolkappiyam.* According to which the grammar was written by Tolkappiyar after a careful study of earlier treatises on Tamil modeled on

Aintiram and dealing with both the literary and common usage of Tamil in the land between Tirupati and Cape Comorin; it was first read at the court of a Pandya king for criticism and approval, in the presence of the grammarian *Atankottacan*. According to *Naccinarkiniyar*, the king was Nilantarutiruvir Pandya.

An obviously rather late myth runs as follows: The gods and the *rsis* were assembled in conclave on the Himalayas, and when the Earth began to sink because of their weight, they sent Agastya to the South to balance them. He first went to Ganga and obtained from her the Kaviri. Then he went to the *rsi* Jamadagni and took from him his son Trnadhumagni (who was to become Tolkappiyar), and from the *rsi* Pulastya his virgin sister Lopamudra. From Dvaraka he took, among others, eighteen crores for two classes of people, Velir and Aruvalar, and with them proceeded south destroying the forests, till he made his home on the Potiyill Mountain. He ordered his disciple to go and fetch his wife Lopamudra. As they were crossing the river Vaikai, sudden flood took her away, but the dutiful pupil save her and took her to his master. However, while saving her, he had not kept the prescribed distance of four rods, where upon both he and the woman were cursed by Agastya who ordered his disciple's grammar *Tolkappiyam* to be ignored.

Originally there were perhaps two rival medieval legends about Agastya current in Tamilnadu; both admit that the Vedic *rsi* was the pioneer of Aryanisation in the South, but one maintains that he was also the creator of the Tamil language and grammar and that Tolkappiyar was his pupil, whereas the other asserts that Agastya and Tolkappiyar quarreled and were enemies, and that the work of the latter is altogether independent of the former. In the second legend we may perhaps recognize elements of the opposition to Aryan influences identified with the Brahmans. There is, however, yet another, Buddhist tradition, according to which Agastiya learnt his Tamil from Avalokkita; he traveled through the kingdom of Damila and took up his abode in a park in Kaveripattana; finding no peace there, he flew across the sea to an island called Kara where he took up his residence and fed Indra who came as a Brahman begging for alms. According to the *Patikam* to the Buddhist epic *Manimekala*i, Agastya was also the carrier of the Kaviri, and is connected with the Chola country. All later generation credited Agastya either with the paternity of Tamil, or with decisive assistance in its birth: Kampan and Villiputturar believed that Tamil was created by Agastrya, while *Kancipuranam* and *Tiruvilaiyatar puranam* assert that Siva taught Tamil to Agastya just as he had in former days

taught Sanskrit to Panini. According to Civananacami, the Tamil grammar of Agastya was the only Tamil work that had come into existence on the day of the creation of the Tamil language.

Agastya is however, not mentioned either in the test of *Tolkappiyam* or in Panamparanar's preface. There is not a single reference to Agastya in the entire body of the early corpus of bardic poetry. In fact, for nearly one thousand years of Tamil literature, Agastya remains unmentioned. The earliest references in Tamil texts are found in *Paripadal, Cilambu* and *Manimekalai*. In later texts, and in the commentaries, references to Agastya are constantly present. Among other details, Peraciriyar tells us that Akattiyan was responsible for the division of Tamil into its three basic types, *iyal*, "literature, prose or poetry, intended to be read", *icai*, "literature intended to be put to music, or song", *natakam*, "literature intended to be enacted, dramatic literature", and that his work was the basic book (*mutanul*) of *Tolakppiyam*. Naccinarkiniyar (commentary on Mal. 145) the commentator of *Yappu* (*Eluttothu viruttiyurai*) also mention Akattiyan as a grammarian, to whom several books are ascribed. In Atiyarkkunallar's commentary, Akattiyan is considered to have been responsible for the three – fold division of Tamil, and his grammar is said to have been thus structured. The commentary to canto 3 explains *teyvamal varai* as the Potiyil Hill, and *tirumuni* as Agastya; the text itself, and the commentary speak of Agastya's course on Indra's son and on Urvasi for their unseemly behavior. In the commentary on 3.12 Akattiyan is mentioned as having initiated the classification of dance. It is possible that Akattiyan was indeed the main exponent of an extra Paninian *Aintira* system of grammar, since there are data which may be taken as evidence that a "grammar of Indra" had been in vogue in Tamilnadu. Thus, according to Atiyarkkunallar's commentary on *Cilappatikaram XI.* 99 100, the reference to the book of the king of gods (=Indra), which will be understood by the pilgrims if they bathe in the lake Caravanam, is to the text of an *Ainitiravyakaranam*. Even more important is the reference in XI. 1546 where "the nature of *Meyppatu* (= indication of the moods) in the book revealed by Indra of the world of gods" is mentioned. According to R, Raghava Ayyangar, a Grammar of Indra (*Aintiram*) which must have been popular and accessible in Tolkapppiyar's time, became rare, perhaps inaccessible later, a "mystery" to be disclosed by ritual baths only, as the epic tells us, and referred to as "the book of the prince of the celestials." Akattiyan was possibly a follower of this system of Indra the grammarian, and the originator of the three fold division of Tamil. The tradition was so persistent

that it also appeared in inscriptions which refer to the Pandya king as Agastya's pupil, and reveal that Akattiyan was the *purohit* of the Pandyas. According to other inscriptional sources, the Pandya king Maravarman established an Akattiya Pattapisekam, and Agastya is mentioned as the Pandya family priest and a Tamil tutor and author.

When judging the fragments of grammatical works ascribed to Akattiyan, we must distinguish between what seem to be parts of a genuine text, and more or less obvious and much later forgeries. We may consider, as possibly genuine fragments, the sixteen short sutras of unequal length contained in Mayilainatar's commentary on *Nannul*, and possible also the seven lines contained in the commentary on *Yappu Olipiyal*. These lines should be examined most carefully both for their content and their language. My own cursory and superficial examination does not suggest a late origin of these lines. The diction, practically identical with that of *Tolkappiyam* and the content, do not apparently show anything definitely counter to an early date. On the other hand, the lengthy sutra of 11 lines found in Mayilainatar's commentary on *Nannul Peyar*. 16 and with some modification in Teyvaccilaiyar's commentary on *Tolkappiyam Collathikaram Ec.* seems to be much later.

A work called *Akattiyarpattiyal* is mentioned as representative of a late type of grammar; it has not survived, but the type itself has survived in a number of works, e.g. in *Pannirupattiyal.*

The disciples of Akattiyan are given as (I) Tolkappiyan (2) Atankottacan, (3) Turalinkan (4) Cemputceey (5) Vayapikan (6) Vayappiyan (7) Panamparan (8) Kalarampan (9) Avinayan (10) Kakkaipatini (11) Nattattan, and (12) Vamanan. Some of these names are quasi historical in the sense that they are preserved independently (e.g. 9, 10,11) and that to some of them various tests were ascribed (1, 7 etc)

Seven of them figure in the commentary on *Yappu.* Other names sound strange and we do not know anything at all about their bearers. The twelve disciples of Akattiyan are supposed to be the joint authors of *Pannirupatalam* ("The Treatise) of Twelve Sections", a grammar of *Purapporul* "heroic matter" which is now lost apart from a few aphorisms preserved in Ilampuranar's commentary on *Tolkappiyam* and probably also in Naccinarkiniyar's commentary on *Civakachitamani* (kovintaiyar 20) and in the commentary on *Yappu*. An abridgement of this lost grammar is probably represented by the extant

Purapporulvenpamalai which is considered as a derived book of *Pannirupatalam*, its *mutamil* (basic, underlying book) as for No. 3 we know nothing; Cemputceey is said to have been the author of a book called *Kurriyal* which is no longer extant; about No. 5 we know nothing; Vayppiyan is credited with *Vayppiyam*, from which a few verses exists in the commentary on *Yappu*. Panamparan is the author of the Specific Preface to *Tolkappiyam* and is supposed to have composed *Panamparam*. We know nothing about 8. On the other hand, Avinayanar's grammar *Avinayam* seems to have been a work of exceptional merit; and to have been widely used before the 10th century; a commentary on it was written by Iraca Pavittira Palavataraiyan. There are data showing that Avinayyanar was a Jaina author in high esteem; a great number of his aphorisms have been preserved in various sources. More complicated is the case of Kakkaipatini. This author must also have been widely popular; data about his Kakkaipatiniyan may be found in Ilampuranar's commentary on *Tolkappiyam Porulathikaram Ceyyul* 4. There was obviously another, later author, *Cirukakakaipatini*, whose aphorisms were also preserved in later texts, and a poetess known as Kakkaipatiniyar Naccellaiyar. A few aphorisms ascribed to Nattattan occur in the commentary to *Yappu*. We know nothing of No12. in the *uraippayiram* to *Cilappatikaram* another disciple of Akattyan figures, Cikantiyar, the supposed author of *Icai nunukkam*, which is mentioned as one of the grammars of the second Academy in Nakkira's commentary.

Though the entire tradition of Akattiyan's grammatical school is fragmentary and covered by a layer of various legends, it is obvious that it was once a vigorous and very influential cultural phenomenon which deserves serious critical attention. Basically, there is nothing against the assumption expressed in the *Kancipuranam* of Civananamunivar as there was Panini, the first great grammarian of Sanskrit, so there was an Akattiyan who was probably the first to systematically observe and place on record the properties of Tamil language. It would be interesting to determine the connection between this ancient grammarian and the Agastya who has developed into a culture hero of the spread of Brahmanic civilization throughout South and South East Asia.

This is probably the earliest work of Tamil literature now extant in its entirety. There have no doubt been interpolations and later additions to all three parts of the book, and the hypothesis which sees the work rather as the result of a growth around an *Ur-Tolkappiyam* as its center, with the third part of *Porul* added later, is gaining ground, though it is bound to meet with vigorous objections. As

a source book, not only of linguistic and grammatical study but also of human geography, social anthropology, psychology, cultural ecology and culture – change of a past age, *Tolkappiyam* contains immensely valuable data, and its importance for the study of Tamil culture, and of culture in general can hardly be exaggerated.

Caldwell was probably right when he wrote that "whatever antiquity may be attributed to the *Tolkappiyam*, it must have preceded by many centuries of literary culture. And yet, the fact that Tamil tradition does not attribute any of the extant poems themselves either to Agastya or to any of his disciples including Tolkappiyar lends support to the hypothesis that *Tolkappiyam,* is earlier than the poems preserved in the anthologies. That some literature existed before even an Urtext of *Tolkappiyam* is not only a reasonable assumption, but is supported by hints given in the bases its rules on preceding authorities. A number of scholars have pointed out differences between the rules of *Tolkappiyam* and the actual linguistic usage of the classical poetry; since the type and style of the language are identical - the standardized literary language of the Old Tamil period - the *Tolkappiyam* and the bardic corpus obviously do not belong to quite the same age. Most of the *Tolkappiyam* is quite intelligible when considered as preceding the bardic corpus, but hardly makes sense if considered as being later.

We may, I think, safely conclude that the earliest version, the oldest layer of the grammar, is somewhat earlier than the majority of the extant Tamil classical poems.

Widely differing dates have been proposed for *Tolkappiyam*: it has been variously assigned to the period of some hundred years before the Buddha, its upper limit being 5320 B.C. between 1000-600 B.C. about 800-700 to the 5th cent. B.C. to the 4th cent. B.C. to a time anterior to B. C 350, to a period not later than the 2nd cent. B.C. to the pre–Christian era, to the 1st cent. A.D. to the period after the 3rd cent. A.D, and after A.D. 400 to A. D. 450 and to about A,. D. 500 not to speak of the obviously false late datings current in the days of Caldwell, Pope and Vinson. The problem of the definitive date cannot be separated from the questions of the integrity of the text, and of the relation between *Tolkappiyam* and various Sanskrit authors. Though there were flat denials of any such relationship, it is quite obvious that while the dependence of *Tolkappiyam* on any particular Sanskrit model cannot and has not been proved, the grammar reveals a

knowledge of Sanskrit and Prakrit, and profound scholarship both in Tamil and Sanskrit which must have been part of Tolkappiyar's education. Though there are undoubtedly interpolations in all the three books of the grammar and particularly in the third book, it would be naïve to consider every line which reveals knowledge of Sanskrit and Aryan traditions to be a later addition or wicked intepolation. Some scholars, e.g. P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, quote dozens of parallels between Sanskrit sources and *Tolkappiyam* as a proof of the dependence of *Tolkappiyam* on Sanskrit sources and on Sanskrit grammarians. A critical scrutiny however will reveal only six true parallels: the four parts – of – speech system" of *Tolkappiyam* noun, verb, particle, qualifier, seems to correspond to the fourfold system of Panini though the system of *Tolkappiyam* is first and foremost based on the actual state of affairs in Tamil . We may probably also connect *Tolkappiyam Eluttatikaram* 83 with Panini. *Tolkappiyam Collatikaram* 419 certainly not interpolated, is most probably indebted to Patanjali's classification of compounds. *Tolkappiyam* Col, 27 uses the term *ilakkanam* > Prakrit *Lakhana*, Sanskrit *laksana* in the sense of "grammar" and this usage seems to have been introduced by Patanjali, whose date is 150. B.C. *Tolkappiyam Collatikaram* would thus not be earlier than ca. I00 B.C. The 32 *uttikal* are a clear adaptation of the *tantrayuktis* mentioned in Kautiya's *Arthasastra*. The most striking parallel is that of *Tolkappiyam Porulathikaram* which enumerates the eight moods and their physical manifestations with the eight rasa of Bharata's *Natyasastra*. I am quite convinced that in this point *Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram* is indebted to a Sanskrit sources. Bharata's data is usually given as the 4th cent. A.D. In *Tolkappiyam Porulathikaram*, 100, the nine mental states are described of a man violently in love (within the framework of *kalavau* or clandestine sex) they seem to correspond closely to the *dasavasthah* of *kamasutra* (later than the 4th cent A.D) one can of course always object that before all these cultural matters became fixed in datable texts, they were probably current in the cultural tradition, and hence allusions to them are no real help in dating; moreover some of these traits may "originally" be pre – Sanskrit, even Dravidian, and (though this is hardly probable) inherited "directly" by Tolkappiyar. Apart from such parallels there are, again in the *Porulatikaram*, lines which show familiarity with the common usage and the dramatic idiom portrayed in the rather late classical texts of *Kalittogai* and *Paripatal*. In short, portions of *Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram* seem almost certainly to be not earlier than the 5th cent. A.D., ruling out a transfer of cultural material through channels other than the direct influence of Sanskrit

sources, and ruling out later additions of precisely those portions, we would then conclude that the date of the final redaction of *Porulatikaram*, and of *Tolkappiyam* itself, may be fixed as the 5th cent A.D. Since there is proof that the grammar as we have it today does not form a self – consistent whole, it is suggested that the present text underwent a final editing some time in the 5th cent., but that it is based on a much earlier Urtext which represented a bardic grammar of a possibly pre – Paninian Aindra school, and may probably be dated ca. I00 B.C. .

The name *Tolkappiyam* very probably means "Ancient Composition". Nothing authentic is known about the author(s) of *Tolkappiyam*. In the commentary on the Preface , Nanccinarkiniyar (14th cent,) identifies the author with Tiranatumakkini a Brahman *rsi*, and one of the disciples of Agastya. According to Peraciriyar, some scholars held that Tolkappiyar composed his work on principles other than those of Akattiyam, following some grammars no longer extant. The commentator refutes this view maintaining that Tolkappiyar was the most celebrated of the twelve pupils of Agastya. However, here is no mention of Agastya or *Akattiyam*, in the text of *Tolkappiyam* or even in Panamparan's Preface. A few data support the tradition that Tolkappiyar was a Jain from Travancore. In the preface Panamparan qualifies Tolkappiyar as *aintiram nirainta* – well versed in *aintiram*. The term *aintiram* of Indra is post Paninian. It is more than probable that the Kantara school of Sanskrit grammar was a revival of an ancient pre Paninian grammatical system. It arose in the South probably in the First cent. A.D. and is connected with the name of a Brahman courtier, Saravavarman who, on the request of a Satavahana king produced the grammar *Katantra* to teach the king Sanskrit within six months. It soon spread all over India and Tibet since it was easier to study than Panini. Katantra is also assigned to the 3rd 4th cent. A.D. According to A.C. Burnell, there are some correspondences between *Katantra* and *Tolkappiyam* in the arrangement of topics and the use of some technical terms.

The *Tolkappiyam* is divided into three books, *Eluthu* (Letters), *Col* (Words) and *Porul* (Matter). There are various commentators to *Tolkappiyam*. Mention may be of Ilampooranar, Naccinarkiniyar, Cenavarayar, Teyvaccilaiyar and Peraciriyar.

The total number of stanzas differs in various editions which follow various commentators who split the verse differently: according to Ilampuranar the total is 1595 aphorisms, according to Naccinarkiniyar and Peraciriyar, it is

1611. According to Ilakkuvanar it is 1571 after the removal of the interpolations. *Eluttu* has 483 aphorisms; *col* has 456 in Ilampuranar's arrangements, 463 in the arrangement of Cenavaraiyar and Naccinarkiniyar, and 453 according to Teyvaccilaiyar; *Porul* has 656 according to Ilampuranar and 665 according to Peraciriyar. The aphorisms are in the stanzaic form called *nurpa*, and vary in length from 1 line to 59 lines. (*Tolkappiyam* Porulatikaram 144) Seven commentaries are available, most of them fragmentary: 1. Ilampuranar's commentary covers all three books of *Tolkappiyam*. Because of the excellence and sensitiveness of the commentary, its author is known as the Commentator (Uraiyaciriyar). Many of his additions were incorporated into the standard Middle Tamil grammar *Nannul*. There may have been earlier pre Ilampuranar Commentaries in the oral tradition. 2. Cenavaraiyar probably a commander in the Chola kingdom in the 13th or 14th cent. wrote a commentary on *collathikaram*. Since he condemned Ilampuranar in certain places, he obviously belonged to a different interpretative school. Among modern scholars, one must menton P.S.Subrahmanya Sastri who deserves great praise for his valuable work on *Tolkappiyam.* In 1945 he published his *Tolkappiyam – Collatikaram*, with an English Commentary. Earlier, in 1930, he published the *Eluttatikaram* with an English paraphrase, and in 1945, 1952 and 1956 *Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram.* Unfortunately, his entire conception of the *Tolkappiyam* was marred by a strong pro Sanskritic bias, and many of his statements are quite unacceptable. E.S.Varadaraja Iyer (1948) free renderings of chapters 1,3,4 and 5 of *Tolkappiyam* Porulatikaram with a commentary is an elaborate but badly planned and uncritical work. In 1963, S. Ilakkuvanar's *Tolkappiyam* (in English) with critical studies, contains a very close English translation, an introduction and Studies in *Tolkappiyam*; unfortunately, his otherwise creditable work is marred by the bad, often barely comprehensible English of the translation, and by a strong, unreasonable anti – Sanskrit bias.

It is undeniable that the author of *Tolkappiyam* had an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit grammatical work. It is undeniable that *Tolkappiyam* shows in most aspects entirely independent thinking on the nature and structure of Tamil and its culture. Even a Sanskrit – orientated author like Civananamunivar (1785) pointed out that Tamil grammar had rules which could not be derived from any Sanskrit models (e.g. morphophonemic and syntanctophonemic rules), rules concerning the *tinais*. On the whole, *Tolkappiyam* represents much more than just the most ancient Tamil grammar extant. It is one of the finest monuments of human intelligence, the first literary expression of an indigenous pre Aryan

South Indian civilization, representing the essence and the summary of classical Tamil culture. For the evaluation of Indian linguistic thought, it is as important as the grammar of Panini. All the three books of *Tolkappiyam* show a mind of extraordinary depth, rare inwardness, brilliant expository power, and crystal clear formulation. In a few aphorisms, *Tolkappiyam* almost (but never quite) equals Panini in brevity of diction. Though it does not reach the level of Panini in economy, explicitness, consistency and terseness, the field of experience it describes is much wider and deeper than that of Panini. There is no doubt that it has exerted a lasting influence upon the Tamil mind.

Mapuranam and other pre *Tolkappiyam* grammar

According to tradition, *Mapuranam* is one of the pre – *Tolkappiyam* grammars, cf. Naccinarkinyar commentary on *Tolkappiyam Eluttatikakram* 6 in which a four line *venpa* from *Mapuranam* is cited; exactly the same stanza is quoted in Mayilaninatar's commentary on *Nannul Elutatikaram* 37. The commentary on *Yappu* quotes 12 stanzas from *Mapuranam*, dealing in great detail whit the "over – short *m*". A distich from *Mapuranam* appears in *Yappu* (*Alityottu*, *Virutti*) and another short stanza in the commentary on the *olipiyal* of the same book. We thus have 14 stanzas of this lost work, probably a grammar composed partly in *venpas* and partly in *sutras*. M.C.Venkatacami quotes and "ancient solitary stanza" which also refers to this grammar. Interestingly, the author of the *Mapuranam* lines speaks of authors of ancient books, and of earlier linguistic tradition. According to the Naccinarkiniyar Commentary on the Preface to *Tolkappiyam*, *Mapuranam* was one of the four grammar preceding *Tolkappiyam*. Another was *Putapuranam* of which we know nothing at all. These two grammars are also cited by Nakkairar as being the normative texts (*null*) of the Second Academy. Both Naikkirar and Naccinarkiniyar add another grammar, *Icainunukkam* which is ascribed to Cikanti, one of Akattiyan's disciples. According to Atiyarkkunallar, it was written to instruct Carakumaran Pandaya, the son of Anakulan and Tilottamai, in *Icaittamil.* In Atiyarkkunallar's time it may still have been available. We have 4 *venpas* of 16 lines ascribed to it in his commentary on *Cilappatikaram* However, these lines are very heavily Sanskritized (at least 50%) that this could be a fragment of pre-*Tolkappiyam* text is almost certainly to be ruled out.