

WHISPERING OF INSCRIPTIONS

SOUTH INDIAN EPIGRAPHY

AND ART HISTORY

VOLUME I.



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WHISPERING OF INSCRIPTIONS

SOUTH INDIAN EPIGRAPHY AND ART HISTORY

PAPERS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

IN MEMORY OF

PROFESSOR NOBORU KARASHIMA

(PARIS, 12–13 OCTOBER 2017)

EDITED BY

ÉDITH PARLIER-RENAULT &

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VOL. I.



INDICA ET BUDDHICA

2021

First published in New Zealand 2021 by Indica et Buddhica®
Littledene, Bay Road, Oxford 7430, North Canterbury

Design, Editing, Production: Richard Mahoney

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A catalogue record for this book is available from
the National Library of New Zealand.

Kei te pātengi raraunga o Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa
te whakarārangi o tēnei pukapuka.

ISBN 978-0-473-56773-6 (hardcover)
· 978-0-473-56772-9 (softcover)
· 978-0-473-56774-3 (pdf)

Typesetting : Lua_T_EX + Con_T_EXt 20210822 LMTX
Typeface : Adobe Source Serif Pro

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS publication results from a two-day international symposium « Épigraphie et histoire de l'art de l'Inde méridionale: Colloque international en mémoire du professeur Noboru Karashima » held on 12–13 October 2017 at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris. This symposium was organised jointly by the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)–UMR 7528 Mondes iranien et indien and the Centre de Recherches sur l'Extrême Orient de Paris–Sorbonne (CREOPS). We are thankful to all our institutions for their encouragement and generosity in organising the symposium. We would like to express our gratitude to EPHE–UMR Mondes iranien et indien, Sorbonne University, École Française d'Extrême-Orient and the Tamil Virtual Academy (Tamil Epigraphy database project) for their financial support. We are thankful to our anonymous reviewers for critically reading the manuscript and suggesting substantial improvements which helped improve and clarify the contributions presented in these volumes.

We would like to acknowledge our indebtedness to the contributors of these volumes. They all responded promptly to all our queries and furnished us with all complementary notes and information whenever required.

We owe a special thanks to Indica et Buddhica publishers and particularly to Richard Mahoney for all his suggestions and support in publishing this work.

PREFACE

IN October 2017, an international symposium was held in Paris as a tribute to Noboru KARASHIMA who gave a new impetus to the study of South Indian and Tamil epigraphy.¹ The contributions to these volumes illustrate the wide range of related topics in the fields of archæology, epigraphy and history of art that were presented at the symposium. These domains, an integral part of classical studies, have generally been considered as distinct areas of research, however nobody can deny their mutual interdependence. The title of this work, ‘Whispering of Inscriptions,’ is borrowed from one of KARASHIMA’s publications.² KARASHIMA, who himself was convinced of ‘the importance of epigraphy in the task of historical reconstruction,’ had ‘noticed a defect in past studies in the field of socio-economic history, due to the arbitrary use of epigraphic evidence.’³ KARASHIMA was of the view that historians should avoid arbitrary judgements and concluded his essay by saying: ‘In sum, scholars of ancient and medieval South Indian history should be acquainted with inscriptions and listen honestly to their whisperings.’⁴

To some extent, the whole question of methodology rests on the way the researchers tend to interpret and theorise the textual content.⁵ We are aware that while handling historical source materials, whether literary or epigraphic or iconographic, researchers face two challenges: on the one hand, understanding the meanings of the sources and motivations of the authors as in the past, and on the other, interpreting them successfully without imposing models and categories of the present experience. Scholars like KARASHIMA address these issues and have come up with basic methodologies for studying the historical sources. In the Indian context, reconstructing the meaning of these sources requires the practise of contextualisation and this is most closely associated with the interpretation of the texts. In sum, honouring KARASHIMA comes to refining the research methodology and to ‘consider the cultural context (“whispering”) of the inscriptions in [their] time and place [...]’⁶

¹ See (Subbarayalu, 2021).

² (Karashima, 2001).

³ *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵ (Spencer, 2001).

⁶ (Hall, 2001), p. 7.

These volumes witness this very challenge of contextualisation of epigraphic and iconographic data. They contain a variety of contributions demonstrating the richness and diversity of contemporary research on South Indian temple inscriptions and copper plate charts as well as on art and archæology. During the last decade, the field of South Indian epigraphy and archæology has come up with important findings which have brought in unprecedented data shedding new light in the area of historical studies, particularly of South India. These essays attempt to highlight some of these discoveries and to update the epigraphical and archæological resource materials. They are intended to stimulate discussion and analysis in a multidisciplinary perspective, through new and divergent theoretical and methodological conceptions, and to broaden our perception of the early and mediæval South Indian societies. Each one is original in its approach to the South Indian inscriptions, monuments and images and relates to a particular domain of South Indian history.

The first articles focus on social and political history. As a starting point, SUBBARAYALU, Y. presents a comprehensive account of Professor KARASHIMA's contributions to the study of South Indian history and his innovative research methodology in the analysis and interpretation of South Indian inscriptions. In the next paper, through a detailed survey of all the occurrences of the title *araiyan* and its variants in epigraphy, SUBBARAYALU, Y. outlines its historical evolution and varying significance, and demonstrates how the study of a title or a component of a proper name helps us to understand the social and political development of mediæval South India.

Emphasising the fact that the Pāṇḍya queens seemed until now almost absent from epigraphy and that they are very seldom referred to as donors, Valérie GILLET describes her recent discovery of three inscriptions and explores their role in the first Pāṇḍya Empire. She discusses their identity, analyses the patterns of endowments made by them and places their donations in the general context of the period. VIJAYAVENUGOPAL, G. offers a reading of a rare and unique hagiographic inscription and stresses the role of ascetics as royal gurus, based on the supernatural powers that they were supposed to possess and parallel to the development of different Śaiva traditions in Tamil Nadu. Emmanuel FRANCIS gives

an overview of the copper plates of the Cōḷa period (10th–13th centuries CE) issued in Tamil Nadu by different agencies, the Cōḷa chancellery, temple authorities or ‘magnates.’ He takes into consideration their material aspect, their origin and content, as well as their language: Sanskrit or Tamil, sometimes used simultaneously, in the bilingual charts. He also tackles rarely mentioned issues, such as the falsification of charts, a practice not often discussed in academic papers, or the epigraphical references to plates.

The next two articles deal with economic and technical issues. After having scrutinised the inscriptions containing data on the irrigation systems in the Papanasam region of the Kaveri delta, ATHIYAMAN, N. shows that they provide a clear description of the typical irrigation pattern in the *brahmadēya* and reflect their spatial organisation. Relying on the inscriptions of the Cōḷa period in Tamil Nadu, SELVAKUMAR, V. attempts an extensive analysis of the measurement systems they describe, which were essential for taxation and economic transactions and formed an important component of mediæval administration in South India. He presents a detailed account of the methods applied to use the different types of weight and volume measures and explains how they were preserved in the written texts of mediæval Tamil Nadu.

The linguistic and palæographic aspects of epigraphy are taken into account in two papers. RAJAVELU, S. discusses the later developments of *Vatṭeḷuttu*. In the light of several recently discovered inscriptions, belonging to the 6th–8th centuries CE, he tries to fill some of the gaps in the palæographical charts of both the *Vatṭeḷuttu* and Tamil scripts and to trace with more clarity their origin and development. Appasamy MURUGAIYAN presents data from the Tamil epigraphic texts in support of two important features of Tamil and Dravidian historical linguistics: the typological shift from isolated type to agglutinative and the presence of some archaic linguistic features attested in mediæval Tamil. The linguistic study of the inscriptional Tamil sheds more light on the diachronic development from classical Tamil to mediæval and finally contemporary Tamil.

The literary and ideological dimension of epigraphy, particularly through the Sanskrit eulogies, is dealt with in four contributions. Sylvain BROCQUET gives a new translation as well as an in-depth analysis of the famous inscription of the Pallava king Mahendravarman, written in a highly poetical (*kāvya*) style and set in the Tiruccirāppallī ‘Rock-Fort’ cave. He provides evidence on its nature and function, showing that the interpretation of the whole

epigraphic poem, aimed at the legitimisation of the king like other dedicatory epigraphs, involves an approach of the political and ritual conceptions of the period. Perrine ESTIENNE reviews the main features of the rhetoric of the Eastern Cālukya inscriptions: the use of royal epithets (*birudas*) and of various *topoi* which place the king between men and gods. She gives an analysis of Ravikīrti's eulogy engraved on the Aihole Meguti temple and of the intertextuality that appears to be its main key. She shows that like most of the epigraphic eulogies of the Eastern Cālukya dynasty, it is fashioned like a *mahākāvya*, containing numerous references to their *topoi* as well as to their epical background and abounding in various figures of speech (*alaṃkāra*). Vasu RENGANATHAN examines the links between mediæval Tamil inscriptions, devotional literature (*bhakti*) and iconography. He focuses on the opposition between Sanskrit Āgamic tradition and Tamil modes of worship, and highlights different aspects of their contest over hegemony during the colonial and post-colonial period.

Stressing the enigmatic nature of the royal foundation of Gaṅgaikondacholapuram of Rajendra I, particularly its location and the absence of any epigraphic eulogy (*meykkīrtti*), Charlotte SCHMID proposes to solve the riddle by putting back the temple and its epigraphy into a wider perspective: she suggests that while the Tamil panegyrics engraved in the Tanjore temple of Bṛhadiśvara rooted the king's rule in his territory, Sanskrit panegyrics were meant to spread a message beyond the frontiers of a Tamil kingdom. Both temples thus form together a bilingual structure that can be also traced in their iconography.

The last half of the second volume focuses more specifically on archæology and art history. RAJAN, K. argues that the emergence of the Early Historic period in South India needs to be reassessed in the light of the new archæological findings. He shows, through an analysis of primary archæological sources and of the radiometric dates calculated for various recently excavated sites, that the Early Historic period can be pushed back a few centuries earlier than commonly admitted. Anne DAVRINCHE reassesses the value of epigraphical data for the dating of monuments through the case study of the Nāyaka Veṅkaṭaramaṇa temple in the Senji fortress. Though one of the inscriptions of this building is dated from 1391, and would imply that the core of the temple might have been built at that period, a close stylistic analysis of the architectural style points

actually to a deliberate archaism, aimed at legitimising the authority of the new dynasty on the country: in this view the epigraph could have been used as a way of consecrating the antiquity of the site.

Marion LE SAUCE-CARNIS presents a few Vaiṣṇava themes illustrated on the pillars of the Vijayanagara temples located in the southwest of present day Andhra Pradesh, the region traditionally known as Rāyālasīma, analysing and comparing the specific representational modes used for the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Kṛṣṇa reliefs, as well as for other *avatāras*. Virginie OLIVIER examines the various and complex aspects of the relationship between Brahmā and Śiva which can be traced in the Pallava and Cōla iconography, where the first one is included and sometimes symmetrically opposed to the second one in the iconographic programme of Śaiva temples. The two gods may embody the Brahmin *purohita* (Brahmā) and the king (Śiva), but also the confrontation between orthodox Brahmanism and a new form of knowledge centred on the worship of Śiva. The alliance of both is also illustrated in a unique series of Śaiva representations obviously inspired by the iconography of Brahmā. Karine LADRECH studies divine images of shifting identity: Hindu deities may be inserted into the Jain pantheon, such as Bhairava-Kṣetrapāla, the Hindu traditional temple guardian directly assimilated by Jainism, and Brahmadeva, who has affinities with the Tamil god Aiyaṇār. She also describes some cases of the Hindu conversion of Jain images and shrines.

Édith PARLIER-RENAULT draws a parallel between visual arts and epigraphical poetry based on an interpretation of the Mahendravarman inscription in Tiruccirāppallī. She analyses the interplay between the Gaṅgādhara sculpture housed in the cave and the poem that accompanies it. She highlights the importance of epigraphy for understanding the metaphorical aspect and the implicit meanings of the images, as well as their specific features. She further focuses on the analogous process of alternate borrowings and innovations that runs through inscriptions and visual representations.

É. P.-R. & A. M.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

CONTRIBUTION OF NOBORU KARASHIMA TO SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY Y. SUBBARAYALU

PROFESSOR NOBORU KARASHIMA (1933–2015) was one of the few outstanding Japanese historians who has enriched Indian historiography during the last five decades. He will be remembered for long for his path-breaking studies in the agrarian history of South India, particularly of mediæval Tamil Nadu. Son of a Professor of Chinese language, he had been working on South Indian history using Tamil inscriptions as primary sources ever since he submitted his graduation thesis on an aspect of Cōla history (in Japanese) in the Department of Oriental History in the University of Tokyo in 1958. Japan being a Buddhist country, the major Indian studies in Japanese Universities had been related generally to North India using Sanskrit-related sources. Hence KARASHIMA's choice of Cōla history using Tamil sources was a revolutionary change in Japanese universities. In the subsequent three decades of his teaching career he could motivate more students to study South India and his achievement in that venture may be clearly seen in the many contributions of his students to his last major edited work *A Concise History of South India: Issues and Interpretations* published in 2014. He joined in 1967 as a Lecturer in Indian History in the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA for short) attached to the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. In 1974 he returned to the University of Tokyo, his alma mater, as Associate Professor in South Asian History and then served as Professor from 1981 to 1994. After that he served as Professor of Indian Studies in the Taisho University, Tokyo from 1994 to 2004. He continued to be Professor Emeritus of both the Universities until his demise.

In the first stage, from his graduation to about 1980, starting from scratch he gradually mastered the technique of handling the epigraphical sources. In 1963 he enrolled in the History Department of Madras University as an exchange student and spent most of his time in Ootacamund where the Epigraphy Office of the Archaeological Survey of India was located at that time to learn Tamil and study inscriptions. After he joined the ILCAA in 1967, he could

spend more time in the Epigraphy Office at Mysuru whereto the office had been shifted in 1966. During 1968–70 he actually lived with his family for nearly two years in Mysuru and started his passionate and intensive epigraphical studies under the guidance of senior epigraphists like K. G. KRISHNAN. It is at this juncture that he started his first collaborative work with B. SITARAMAN of the Epigraphy Office on the Revenue Terms in the Cōla inscriptions.

In this work he tried to experiment with his new methodology of studying inscriptional data using quantitative methods, taking cue from a suggestion of NILAKANTA SASTRI, the doyen of the Cōla history, who had despaired about the prevailing unsatisfactory interpretation of the data on taxes and stressed the fact that any explanation at that stage could be only some tentative inferences from the records which would require confirmation or modification in the light of further study. KARASHIMA took up this challenge:

It is not only the meaning of the revenue terms that we do not know but also their correlation and degree of importance. In fact, the very mode of occurrence of these terms, which present a rich variety, is rather arbitrary and often irregular. The only way to bring light into this darkness, therefore, is to study those revenue terms systematically and to examine each of them analytically.¹

He thought that a concordance of all the revenue terms, within certain time and spatial parameters is a desideratum, may help in the statistical analysis of the terms, give contextual clues to their correct meaning and also suggest the overall significance of the individual terms in the revenue system of the day.

During 1973–5 the next major project in Cōla inscriptions was undertaken (in collaboration with Y. SUBBARAYALU), to study the personal names and titles for understanding the social and political organisation of the Cōla times. A concordance of nearly 9000 names was prepared by using hole-sort punch cards in the first stage. Subsequently, under the guidance of Professor Toru MATSUI, the punch-card data were transferred into computer cards to analyse the data by using the mainframe computer facilities of the Tokyo University. In 1977 another study on ‘Socio- and Agro- Economic Terms in the Inscriptions of Thanjavur District’ was made by KARASHIMA and SITARAMAN. A concordance of the agrarian and other correlated socio-economic terms was prepared in order

¹ (Karashima, 1984), p. 69.

to understand the historical setting for a big research project of the ILCAA, namely to study the agrarian society in the three big river valleys in South Asia, namely, in the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta in Bangladesh, Mahaveliganga valley in Sri Lanka and the lower Kaveri valley in South India. The Institute sponsored a team of Japanese specialists in cultural anthropology, history, economics and geography to South India in 1979 to carry out field survey in the lower Kaveri valley in collaboration with some Indian scholars. This project carried out over a three-year period, 1979–82, gave an opportunity to KARASHIMA and his Indian associates to study thoroughly the archæology and inscriptions of the Tiruchirappalli District and to produce some interesting publications. KARASHIMA completed his major paper on the emergence of private landholding in the later phase of the Cōla rule, mainly on the basis of the inscriptions collected in this area. In 1984, his first collection of essays entitled *South Indian History and Society* was published. This included all the important papers pertaining to the Cōla times, starting with his first seminal paper made in 1966 on Allur and Isanamangalam, which proposed the existence of communal landholding until the 10th–11th centuries.

As a natural sequel to his Cōla studies, KARASHIMA took up his research in the Vijayanagara history thereafter. He decided to make a comprehensive study of the Nāyaka (or Nāyamkara) system by using Tamil inscriptions to verify and elaborate the pioneer study of N. VENKATARAMANAYYA who had depended mostly on the Telugu sources. Along with this, a collaborative study was made of the Vijayanagara period revenue terms found in Tamil inscriptions (1988). This was later extended to Kannaḍa and Telugu areas too (1993). The second major book *Towards a New Formation* (1992) may be said to be an important landmark in Vijayanagara historiography; it clarified the structure and functioning of the Nāyaka system and brought in sharp focus the changes in the society. An extension of this study was his book *A Concordance of the Nāyakas* (2002), which put together all the relevant information relating to some five hundred Nāyaka chiefs in the Tamil area. Another subsequent study of Cynthia TALBOT on the basis of Telugu inscriptions fully corroborated the findings of KARASHIMA on the Nāyaka system.

Three other projects, all in some way related to each other, extended the horizon of his research activities beyond the confines of South India. One is the exploration for the Chinese trade ceramics in South India (1987–9 & 2002); two, a project on the trade and

cultural contacts between South India and Southeast Asia (1991–5); three, the analysis of trade guild inscriptions of South India and Sri Lanka (1997–8). In all these projects, involving field surveys, several Japanese and Indian scholars were involved. The findings from these projects were all put together in a comprehensive volume (2002). A companion volume on ceramic sherds with fine illustrations was published in 2004. An observation may be made here on the above projects: KARASHIMA's encouragement to team work. In a way this is the hallmark of the several study groups active in Japanese academic institutions. Brought up in this academic atmosphere, KARASHIMA showed great interest in organising collaborative projects with the financial help from the Japanese Government, Mitsubishi and Japan Foundations, and also Indian Council of Historical Research and saw to their successful completion producing much new knowledge on the mediæval history of South India.

When KARASHIMA published his first volume in 1984, there was a scholarly criticism about his concentration on micro-level studies. Actually those earlier studies introduced the necessary corrective to many of the previous studies, which used the inscriptions arbitrarily without reference to spatial and temporal parameters. Later when he became more familiar with the nature of inscriptional sources and confident in handling them, he extended his studies to macro-level too as may be noticed in his study of the Vijayanagara period and that of the trade guild activities. From the beginning he was very meticulous in analysing the empirical data and at the same time he was not for pure descriptive methods. Though he is not so explicit or dogmatic in his theoretical stand, Marxist or other, he always gave emphasis to the scientific interpretation of the data.

There is another aspect of KARASHIMA which is least known to English readers. He encouraged his students to write in English for communicating with the outside world, which he also practiced. At the same time he was an effective writer in Japanese language and published most of his English papers in Japanese versions also. He wrote and edited a number of books in Japanese. There is a popular book on Gandhi for children. He encouraged his wife's book on India (*Watashi tachi no Indo*, 'This is Our India'). Until 1990 he used to write the Japanese articles only by hand as the Japanese typewriter was a cumbersome machine to handle. Once the Japanese word processor (prelude to the actual desktop computer) became available he started using it and gradually shifted to computer.

KARASHIMA was quite devoted to his academic pursuits; he was certainly a workaholic. In 2004, when he retired from Taisho University, he wished to retire from active academic work and take to his old-time hobby of woodcarving. But it would not happen; he went on producing more papers to make his third major book *Ancient to Medieval: South Indian Society in Transition* in 2009. Then he started the work on *A Concise History of South India* (2014), which he once thought would be his posthumous publication, as he was off and on becoming critically ill at that juncture due to the malfunctioning of his liver. Just a month before his death, he had almost completed the editing of two books for the Indian Study Section of the Toyo Bunko Research Department.

He was the General President of the Epigraphical Society of India for the year 1985. He was closely associated with the International Association of Tamil Research and presented several papers in its annual conferences. He was its President for more than a decade since 1989. The Indian Government conferred on him the *Padma Shri* award for his contribution to Indo-Japanese understanding. Professor KARASHIMA and his wife loved India very much and have a number of Indian friends. They had planned to visit India in January 2016 after a two-year gap. Unfortunately the visit could not materialise as he was hospitalised early in November 2015 and breathed his last on November 26, due to sudden development of Leukemia.

CHRONOLOGY OF NOBORU KARASHIMA'S ACADEMIC CAREER

1958 – Graduation thesis in Cōla history in Department of Oriental History, University of Tokyo.

1958–67 – Research Assistant in Department of Oriental History, University of Tokyo.

1967–74 – Lecturer / Associate Professor, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo.

1974–94 – Professor in Department of Oriental History, University of Tokyo.

1994–2004 – Professor in Taisho University, Tokyo.

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WHISPERING OF INSCRIPTIONS
SOUTH INDIAN EPIGRAPHY
AND ART HISTORY

CH. I
A STUDY OF THE ARAIYAN NAMES IN INSCRIPTIONS
Y. SUBBARAYALU

ABSTRACT

The social and political developments in mediæval South India may be understood to a considerable extent by studying the names of persons using the title *araiyan* and its variants (*araiyar*, *araicar*, *arasar*, *arasu*). A general pattern may be noticed in the titles and attributes of the chiefs, somewhat different from those of the contemporary kings. From the 10th century and after, all these titles lose their earlier tribal connotation and become titles of general ranking among the ruling elite. Thereafter a distinct ruling class, with high-sounding titles, was brought forth by the exigencies of complex administration. The higher the status of a person the longer becomes his name, with one or two titles added to the given name. The proportion of the *araiyan* names are found to fluctuate over time and gradually increases over the centuries and reaches a peak in the 12th–13th centuries. The metamorphosis of the *araiyan*-titled officials into locality chiefs is an interesting development during these centuries.

THE term *araican* (*araicar* in plural or honorific plural) and its variant *araiyan* is found frequently in Tamil inscriptions from about the 6th century onwards to denote a chief or small ruler. The form *arasar* is met with in contemporary Kannaḍa and Telugu inscriptions. Still earlier, the forms *araicar* / *aracar* and the neutral forms *araicu* / *aracu* occur in classical Tamil literature. But their occurrence is very rare compared to that of the synonymous Tamil terms *kō*, *vēntaṇ* and *maṇṇaṇ*. The term *kō* was a popular term of address or attribute to the kings or big chiefs.¹ Moreover, this term was continuously used as such till the 14th century.²

¹ (Mahadevan, 2003), pp. 405–7; (Sivathamby, 1998), pp. 40ff.

² Since the administrative language of the Sātavāhana state and of its successor states in the Deccan was Prākṛit

until the 4th century CE and Sanskrit thereafter, we do not get any idea about

the indigenous terminology in Telugu and Kannaḍa languages comparable to that in Tamil.

The *Tamil Lexicon* derives *aracaṇ* from the Sanskrit term *rājan*.³ Though these terms are seemingly related, the Sanskrit-based derivation is not sustainable by Tamil morphology, as *rājan* can naturally be Tamilised as *irājan* / *irācaṇ* only. The form *irājan* is found attested to in Tamil much later, in the 9th century and after. Actually *aracan* must be derived only from the shorter Prākṛit forms *raja*, *raya* or *raña*. The Tamil form *araiyaṇ* or *araican* would suggest that *raña* is more appropriately the root word than the Sanskrit *rājā*. The shortening of the long vowel is a feature peculiar to certain Prākṛit dialects. In the Shahbazgarhi edicts (presently in Pakistan) of Aśoka this trend is clearly found.⁴ In Sātavahana inscriptions of western Deccan the shorter form *rañō* (in genitive case) is frequently used. In their bilingual coins carrying on one side the legend in Prākṛit and on the other side the same in Tamil (or proto-Telugu), the correspondence is clearly seen: *rañō vāsiṭhīputasa* = *aracaṇaku vāciṭṭi makaṇaku*.⁵

Sanskrit replaced Prākṛit in the copper-plate inscriptions of the southern Deccan and coastal Andhra from about the late 4th century CE. Naturally the Sanskrit terms that had been in use in the northern states from the 1st century CE onwards⁶ were adopted without much change. The Pallava, Kadamba and Ganga kings were mentioned in their Sanskrit records with the attributes *rājā*, *mahādhirāja*, *dharma-mahārājādhirāja*, etc. The Cālukya kings who followed the Kadambas in the latter half of the 6th century also used the same attributes.

Alongside the above states, there existed until the 9th century a number of small lineage chiefs ruling over small territories, like Ganga, Bāṇa or Vāṇa, Perumbāṇa, and so on (Tab. 1).⁷ Some of them are mentioned in the records of the Cālukya and Pallava kings as subordinates occupying some interstitial localities. Some others are known from their independent inscriptions that were inscribed in memory of heroes who gave up their lives by rescuing the cattle of their village. There is found a general pattern in the titles and attributes of the chiefs, somewhat different from those of the kings. They do not have the prefixing *rāja* attribute. The *aracan* title is post-fixed to the lineage names: *Vāṇakō-araicar* (Tab. 1). There are three related titles: i. *muttu-rāju* / *muttu-araicar* / *muttu-arasar*;

³ (University of Madras, 1982).

⁶ (Sharma, 1968), pp. 276, 292, 322.

⁴ (Hultzsch, 1991), pp. 184ff.

⁷ p. 12.

⁵ (Krishnan, 1989), p. 313.

ii. *ati-araicar* (*adhi-rāja*) or *pēr-aracar*; and iii. *ila-araicar* (translated as *duga-rāja* in Sanskrit). The use of *mahārāja* by the chiefs, either as an attribute or post-fix is rare; it seems that it was restricted to the kingly circle. Of the other titles, *muttu-araicar* means the senior or elder chief and *ila-araicar* means the junior or younger chief.⁸ In the beginning these two titles might have been used respectively to differentiate the distinguished members of the senior and junior lines. In the case of the Telugu-Cōḷas of Rēnāḍu, who used the *mahārāja* title occasionally, mostly used the *mutturāju* title, showing that they were more in the stage of a tribal chieftaincy than of a kingdom (Tab. 1, names 1–3).⁹ The Gangas of southern Karnataka, who certainly had a better claim to be kings by the 6th century, continued, along with the *mahādhirāja* title the tribal title *muttarasar*¹⁰ until the 8th century (Tab. 1, names 6 & 7). It is possible to take this as due to the influence of the tribal environment all around until then. The significance of the title *ati-araicar* which is found in the above group is not so clear. Anyhow from the context it can be taken as used for a chief of some standing. From the 10th century and after all these titles lose their tribal connotation and become titles of general ranking among the ruling elite.

The era of big states began in South India from the establishment of the Rāshtrakūṭa state (ca. 750–975) followed by the Cāḷukya state (975–1200) in southern Deccan, and the Cōḷa state in the Kaveri delta (ca. 850–1250). This is a period of remarkable changes in society and economy. The large number of *brahmadēyas* and temple centres that had come up since the 6th century acted as catalysts to agrarian development. Agrarian expansion was accompanied with increase in urban and commercial centres. With the expansion of the big kingdoms, the tribal groups that were in the fringes of the plains society were drawn into the latter through one channel or

⁸ K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI and M. VENKATARAMAIIYA who edited the inscriptions of these rulers correctly interpreted the significance of *mutturāju* / *muttarasar* as senior or elder member of the family (EI, XXVII, pp. 222–3). But influenced by the usual Sanskrit terminology they took *dugaraja* (variant of *yuvārāja*) as the prince-elect and rightful

heir to the ruling king. This is contradicted by the same inscriptions, which show clearly that *mutturāju* is given the additional kingly title *mahārāja* in a different context.

⁹ p. 12.

¹⁰ This is translated as *vṛiddharāja*, ‘elder or senior *rāja*’ in the same inscription.

other, particularly by recruitment to the military. A distinct ruling class was brought forth by the exigencies of complex administration. All these factors led to increased stratified relations in the society. Except in some nooks and crannies, tribal vestiges almost disappeared leading to the culmination of a mature caste society by the 12th century. The social distance between the kings and the people became wide. The kings were no longer simple *rājas* or even *mahārājas*, they preferred to use for themselves the more respected designations, *uṭaiyār* ‘Lord Possessor,’ *cakravartti* and *tribhuvana-cakravartti*, reserving the older ‘rāja’ titles for their subordinates.

In the absence of more explicit evidence, an analysis of the names of persons figuring in inscriptions in various capacities helps one in understanding the nature of the society and polity of the day. A quick perusal of the names would suggest that they reflected the hierarchical social relations that existed at the particular point of time. The elites in the society were distinguished from the general rung of people by their long and grandiloquent names with some special attributes. This is clear from the Cōḷa-period names which are available in thousands.¹¹ By a contextual analysis of the names, it has been found that the longer the names,¹² the higher the status of the person concerned. One or two components or segments of such names appear to be titles indicating possession of land or those relating to official or other privileged status. There are some titles which relate to the particular person’s profession or community / caste affiliation. Above all there are two prominent titles, namely *mūvēnta-veḷāṇ* (or just *veḷāṇ*) and *araiyaṇ*. Usually both

¹¹ Nearly 9600 names of persons have been listed from a corpus of 3200 Cōḷa inscriptions in a codified concordance along with the contextual information relating to the social status, role and such other aspects of those persons. (Karashima, Subbarayalu & Matsui, 1978).

¹² The most basic form of a person’s name in Tamil inscriptions can be segmented into two: i. his father’s name followed by ii. his given name (always in the same order). The other segments

which may precede or follow these two segments relate to the concerned person’s ancestral village (in the case of *brāhmaṇa* names) or the village where he has landholdings, the *gōtra* name (in *brāhmaṇa* names), and titles conferred by the king or by the local bodies. The longest names, which are however a few, have six segments; generally persons with some status and title have four-segment names. (ibid., Introduction, pp. xv–lvi; also see (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 48–58.

of them are suffix components of the full titles (Tab. 2, column 5).¹³ In Table 2, names 1 to 4 are *araiyaṇ* names and name 5 is a *mūvēnta-vēḷāṇ* name (which is given just for comparison).

It may be seen that the title segments are themselves in compound forms, made of two or three components. The first component, that is the pre-fixing part is usually a title of the ruling king and sometimes the name of some chiefly lineage. Vāṇakō in name 1 is a lineage name, while Kēraḷāntaka, Poṇmēntacōḷa, etc. in names 2 to 5 are titles of the Cōḷa kings. Name 2 has *viḷupp(u)* as the middle component, name 3 has *pirama* (*brahma*), and name 4 *pallava*. The term *pirama* or *brahma* stands for *brāhmaṇa* and is used only and invariably in the titles given to the *brāhmaṇa* dignitaries. The two terms *viḷuppu* and *pallava* look like lineage names. The last component is either just *araiyaṇ* or *rāyaṇ* or its compound forms, *mārāyaṇ* (*mahārāja*), *ati-araiyaṇ*, or *pēr-araiyaṇ*.

Titles ending in *araiyaṇ* (or its variant *aracaṇ*)¹⁴ are found increasingly in Tamil inscriptions from the 7th century onwards. Actually, this term is part of a set, the other members of the set being *ati-araiyaṇ*¹⁵ (*adhi-rajan* in Sanskrit), *pēr-araiyaṇ* and *mārāyaṇ* (Tamil form of *mahārāja*). Including all the combined forms, the *araiyaṇ* titles are found among about fourteen per cent of all the names found from the 6th to 13th centuries. Actually the proportion is not constant over time and space (Tab. 3).¹⁶ In the table the area is broadly divided into two, Toṇḍai-maṇḍalam (northern part of Tamil Nadu) and Cōḷa-maṇḍalam (central Tamil Nadu, comprising mainly the Kaveri delta). It may be noted that in the period between 600 and 900 CE, the proportion of *araiyaṇ* names to the total recorded population is about 8 to 9 per cent and it gradually increases thereafter and shows a much larger increase in the 12th and 13th centuries.

A few of the *araiyaṇ* titles are found to be titles of honour conferred by the kings on some accomplished artists (dance-master, musician), royal physician, astrologer, and the like. For example, Rājēntacōḷa-nāṭaka-mārāyaṇ given to a dance master.¹⁷ The majority of the titles are, however, what may be called chiefly or feudatory

¹³ p. 13.

plural or honorific plural).

¹⁴ These terms are sometimes written as *araiyar* or *araicar* ('r' being substituted for 'n' at the end to denote either

¹⁵ A variant of this term is *ataraiyan*.

¹⁶ p. 13.

¹⁷ SII, VIII, no. 644.

titles. There are nearly seventy such titles; half of them constitute nearly ninety per cent of the corpus (listed in Tab. 4¹⁸) and the others occur less frequently. A few of them which occur frequently may be considered more significant than others. Three such titles are *brahma*, *pallava* and *viḷuppu* which together number a little more than one fourth of the entire collection of chiefly titles. From their close correlation with official positions in the Cōḷa government (Tables 5 & 6¹⁹) these three may be considered as the most popular ‘official’ titles,²⁰ besides the dominant *mūvēntavēḷāṇ*²¹ title. As noted already *brahma-araiyaṇ* is held only by the *brāhmaṇa* members. The two titles *pallavaraiyaṇ* and *viḷupparaiyaṇ* start appearing even in the Pallava inscriptions (8th–9th centuries). But they become very prominent in the Cōḷa period, particularly during the 11th century. Pallava-araiyaṇ may have been used as a title by the Pallava kings themselves to honour their ‘officers.’²² The origin of *viḷupparaiyaṇ* is not clear.²³

Among the remaining titles, some of them may be recognised as relating to earlier lineage names like Ganga, Vāṇa (Bāṇa), Nuḷamba, Kāṭava, and so on. Many other names are new additions: Cēti, Viḷiṇa, Kalinga, Nishada, Singaḷa, etc., which seem to have been created in the name of some old, Purāṇic ruling families or in memory of the ruling families conquered by the Cōḷa kings. There is another striking thing about these persons. That is, though a few of them holding the names of the old lineages as titles are found in the same localities where those old lineages (like Vāṇakō, Malaiyakula) had their original roots, most others with such names are found settled in very different localities and possessing landed properties in the new places. They do not seem to have any historical connections with the old families, except the names. On the other hand,

¹⁸ p. 14.

¹⁹ p. 15.

²⁰ (Karashima, 1984), pp. 55–63; (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 223–5.

²¹ The *mūvēntavēḷāṇ* title was the honorific title given to the members of the Veḷḷāḷa, which was the traditional landholding group. During the imperial phase of the Cōḷa rule, persons with this title constituted a major component of the Cōḷa officialdom.

²² Sometimes the names of the Pallava kings also had the *araiyaṇ* ending, like Nandipott-araiyaṇ, though they preferred to use the *paruman* or *panman* (rarely *varman*) ending: Mahendra-paruman.

²³ The term *viḷu* or *viḷuppu* has the meaning of excellence (*Tamil Lexicon*, q.v.). Some such connotation may be attributed to this title.

they are found to be local notables, with landed possessions, patronising temples and actively participating in the local bodies at village and *nāḍu* levels. Of course a good number of them were part of the Cōḷa officialdom and military. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the *araiya* title-holders in the peripheral areas of the Cōḷa territory become more active and independent of the Cōḷa government, enjoying what is called the *pāṭikāval* or watchmanship right of the area.²⁴

Some ranking may be inferred among the title-holders from the use of the three compound forms, *ati-araiyaṇ*, *pēr-araiyaṇ* and *mārāyaṇ*. In the *araiyaṇ* corpus, with a total of about 1400 names, a hundred and forty names had *ati-araiyaṇ* title, seventy-eight *pēr-araiyaṇ*, a hundred and three *mārāyaṇ*. The remaining are just *araiyaṇ*. Both *ati-araiyaṇ* and *mārāyaṇ* were rather popular among *brāhmaṇas*. Nearly fifty per cent of the *mārāyaṇ* holders were *brāhmaṇas*, who occupied important official positions, similar to the *mūvēntavēḷāṇ* title holders. The *mārāyaṇ* title became an official title only during the reign of the great administrator-king Rājarāja I (985–1014). The compound term *pēr-araiyaṇ*, means ‘big or great *araiyaṇ*’ (the adjective *pēr* in Tamil means ‘big’). It is more or less equivalent to *ati-araiyaṇ* and *mārāyaṇ* in meaning. It was noted above that *ati-araiyaṇ* and *pēr-araiyaṇ* were lineage titles in the beginning. Now they are found in different contexts, without reference to any lineage.

There is no corresponding analysis of names and titles in Kannaḍa inscriptions. For Andhra there is a somewhat similar study of names of the Kākatiya period (ca. 1100–1325). Among about 800 of those names studied by Cynthia TALBOT, some 300 had one or other of three prominent titles, which are considered as status titles by the scholar. Of them the *nāyaka*-ending names constituted fourteen per cent, *rāju* / *mahārāju* names eighteen per cent and *reḍḍi* ten per cent.²⁵ The *rāju* / *mahārāju* titles are equivalent to the Tamil *araiyaṇ* / *mārāyaṇ* titles and to *arasu* titles in the Kannaḍa area. The *reḍḍi* names are peculiar to the Telugu area and they correspond somewhat to the *vēḷāṇ* titles in the Tamil area and the *gāmuṇḍa* or *gauḍa* titles in the Kannaḍa area as they all are related to the landholding groups.

²⁴ For an overview of the most important feudatory *araiya* families of this period, see (Sastri, 1955), pp. 400–7.

²⁵ (Talbot, 2001), pp. 55–65.

Finally, the social and political roles of the *araiyaṇs* may be summed as follows. In the early stage, that is, during the 6th–8th centuries, there is no problem in recognising them as the members of one or other of the lineages ruling over some small territories. Several of them were quite visible until the end of the 10th century, paying some semblance of submission to some king (like the Pallava or Cālukya king), taking part in the military ventures of their overlords, and having at times matrimonial alliances with them. During the reign of the Cōḷa king Rājarāja I these chiefly lineages were completely suppressed and their territories were incorporated into the Cōḷa territory, to create new territorial units like *vaḷanāḍu* and *maṇḍalam*.²⁶ The *araiyaṇs* of the old lineages almost disappear from the inscriptional record. It is possible that most of them became part of the king's officials and military. The large band of Pallavaraiyaṇs and Viḷupparaiyaṇs met with now might have included several of the earlier lineage members, thereby erasing their lineage identity. During the latter half of the Cōḷa rule, that is, in the 12th and 13th centuries, the old lineage names reappear again. But as noted above, these names are found in different localities not connected with the old lineage areas. Many of them were officials of the government. During the 11th century when the Cōḷa state had reached the pinnacle of its power, the number of officials with the *mūvēntavēḷāṇ*, *pallavaraiyaṇ* and *viḷupparaiyaṇ* titles was large compared to those with the other *araiyaṇ* titles, whereas subsequently the trend was completely reversed, with the 'other' *araiyaṇs* becoming the dominant players (Tab. 6²⁷).²⁸

This change in the official composition has to be attributed to the socio-economic changes that had been going on from the early 11th century. There took place considerable changes in the old landholding pattern with the increase of private landholding.²⁹ The earlier composition of landholders changed by the influx of new entrants, namely, military-turned-landholders, into the community of the *vellāḷa* landholders. There were several factors that caused these changes. Distribution of war spoils and tribute among the military leaders was an important contributing factor. Widespread life-time service tenures (*jīvitam*) given to officials and assignments

²⁶ (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 213–4.

²⁷ p. 15.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 223, Table 16.1

²⁹ (Karashima, 1984), pp. 21–31.

to military (called *paṭaippaṟru* or *vīrabhōgam*) in the Cōḷa government also introduced changes in the system. There is good evidence, explicit as well as circumstantial, to suggest that it is mostly the military men who were conferred with the *araiyaṇ* titles during the latter half of the Cōḷa rule. There are several records pointing to conflicts between the old (*veḷḷāḷa*) landholders and the military-turned-landholders in the Kaveri delta and the adjoining northern parts. These evoked royal attempts to pacify the situation. The military landholders were warned by the king not to interfere with the landholdings of the traditional landholders.³⁰ It is significant to note that military landholders are referred to here as *rājakulavar*, meaning ‘those of the *rāja-kulam*’ or ‘of ruling families.’ Obviously in this context the term refers to the *araiyaṇ* title-holders. There is another concentration of the military cantonments in the Pudukkottai area to the southwest of the Kaveri delta. There also the *araiyaṇ* members (*araiyakaḷ*) are found quite conspicuous in social gatherings.³¹ Some of the leading *araiyaṇs* continue in this area in the 14th and 15th centuries as the rulers of small localities which they referred to as their own *aracu* or chiefdom, paying nominal obedience to the Vijayanagar rulers of the day.³²

³⁰ For related discussion see (Karashima & Subbarayalu, 2007), pp. 1–17.

³¹ *Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State*, nos 141, 184, 198, 313, 340, 395. Also see (Karashima, 2009), pp. 161–2.

³² (Dirks, 1989), pp. 144–55; (Subbarayalu, 2001), pp. 235–50. Also for a discussion of the *pāḍikāval* institution, see (Karashima, 2009), pp. 136–54.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Chiefly titles (ca. 600–800)³³

1. Erikal-mutturāju (EI, xxvii, no. 42B)^a
2. Erikalla-muturāju Puṇyakumārunṛu (EI, xxvii, no. 42F)
3. Erigal-dugarāju (EI, xxvii, no. 42D)
4. Kaṅk(a)-araicar (Chn, no. 33, 34 of 1971)
5. Kaṅk(a)-atiyaraicar (Chn, no. 30 of 1971)
6. Koṅgaṇi-muttarasar (IWG, pp. 91, 138)
7. Koṅgaṇi-vriddha-rāja [*alias*] Avinīta (IWG, p. 91)
8. Perumpāṇa-araicar (Chn, no. 87 of 1971)
9. Perumpāṇa-muttaraicar (KDI, p. 234)
10. Perumpāṇa-iḷavaraicar (KDI, pp. 27–32)
11. Perumpāṇ-atiyaraicar (Chn, no. 73 of 1971)
12. Vāṇakō-araicar (Chn, no. 35 of 1971)
13. Vāṇakō-muttaraicar (Chn, no. 69 of 1971)
14. Vāṇakōn-atiaraicar (Chn, no. 54 of 1971)

^a Chn = *Chengam Nadukarkal* (Chengam Herostones); EI = *Epigraphia Indica*; IWG = *Inscriptions of the Western Gaṅgas*; KDI = *Inscriptions of Krishnagiri District*.

³³ The data for the Tables is mainly & Matsui, 1978). Tables 5 & 6 are based derived from (Karashima, Subbarayalu, on (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 223, 225.

Table 2: Format of Araiyan names

No.	Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3	Segment 4	Reference ^a
1	Ārkaḷūr-uṭaiya (Makatēchan)	Irārātēvan	Ponparappinān	Vāṇakō(v)- araiyān	SII, 7, no. 910
2	Karuppūr-uṭaiyān	Nakkan	Tiruvēkampan [a] ^b	Kēraḷāntaka- vilupp(u)- araiyaṇ	SII, 4, no. 544
3	Māṭilaṇ	Tiruchchirra mpalam- uṭaiyāṇ	Nakkaṇ [a]	Poṇmēntacōlap- pirama-mārāyaṇ	SII, 6, no. 34
4	Nērvāyil-uṭaiyāṇ	Tāḷi	Tiruppaṇaṅkāṭu- uṭaiyāṇ [a]	Vāṇavaṇ- pallav(a)- ataraiyaṇ	SII, 3, no. 21
5	Māttūr-uṭaiyāṇ	Nampan	Pakaiyaṭakkiyār [a]	Rājēndracōḷa- mūvēntavēḷār	ARE, 1932, p. 52

^a ARE = *Annual Report on Epigraphy*; SII = *South Indian Inscriptions*.

^b '[a]' stands for *āṇa* meaning 'alias.'

Table 3: Statistics of Araiyan names

Maṇḍalam	Total population	Percentage of Araiyan names by sub-period ^a				
		I	II	III	IV	V
Toṇḍai-maṇḍalam	2809	9	10	15	13	28
Cōḷa-maṇḍalam	7344 ^b	8	9	8	17	26

^a I = 600–900; II = 900–85; III = 986–1070; IV = 1071–1178; V = 1179–1279.

^b This number excludes the names of four hundred temple women with Nakkaṇ segment.

Table 4: Feudatory Araiyan titles

<i>Name of the Araiya title</i>	<i>No. of the title-holders</i>		<i>Name of the Araiya title cont.</i>	<i>No. of the title-holders cont.</i>
Pallava ^a	162		Kalinga	14
Brahma ^a	114		Vāṇakō	13
Viḷuppu ^a	82		Vayira	12
Ganga ^a	64		Singaḷa	12
Chēti	48		Mūvēnta	10
Muttu ^a	47		Kadamba	10
Vāṇa ^a	36		Anga	10
Champuva	35		Vallava	9
Yātava	32		Tamiḷa ^a	9
Kāṭava ^a	32		Nuḷamba	9
Ilāṭa	28		Pankaḷa	8
Villava	22		Chitta	8
Maḷava	20			
Malaiyakula	17			
Kaḷappāḷa	17			
Paḷuvēḍu	16			
Pottapi	16			
Viḷiṇa	14			
Pāṇḍiya	14			
Nishada	14			

^a Current from the Pallava period.

Table 5: Correlation of offices and titles of the Cōḷa government

<i>Name of office</i>	<i>No. of offices</i>	<i>Mūvēnta vēḷān</i>	<i>Brahma-rāyan</i>	<i>Araiyan group</i>
Adikāri	227	125	8	50
Sēnāpati	24	–	6	11
Taṇḍanāyagam	15	4	2	11
Ōlai	85	27	10	29
Naṭuvirukkai	29	–	27	–
Śrīkāriyam	56	9	8	7
Nāṭuvagai	25	1	2	4
Puravuvvari-1	159	55	1	10
Puravuvvari-2	126	17	1	7

Table 6: Period-wise count of official titles

<i>Title</i>	<i>Period</i>			
	900–85	986–1070	1071–1178	1179–1279
Mūvēntavēḷāṇ	14	205	33	6
Bhaṭṭa	6	35	3	1
Brahma-rājan, Brahma-mahārājan, etc.	4	36	7	1
Mārāyaṇ (excluding Brahma- mārāyaṇ)	1	13	3	–
Pallavarāyaṇ & Viḷupparaiyaṇ	6	74	23	15
Other <i>araiyaṇ</i> titles	2	42	49	53

ABBREVIATIONS

ARE = *Annual Report on Epigraphy*

Chn = *Chengam Nadukarkal (Chengam Herostones)* = Nagaswami, R. (1972) *Ceṅkam naṭukarkaḷ/patippācīriyar Irā. Nācacāmi. Ceṇṇai: Tamiḷnāṭu Aracu Tolporuḷ Āyvutturai.*

EI = *Epigraphia Indica*

IWG = Ramesh, K. V. (1984) *Inscriptions of the Western Ganges*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research.

KDI = *Inscriptions of Krishnagiri District* = Tamiḷnāṭu Aracu Tolliyaluturai (2007) *Kirūṣṇakiri Māvattak kalveṭṭukaḷ / potup patippācīriyar Citārām Kurumūrtti; patippācīriyarkaḷ Cu. Irācakōpāl, Ca. Kirūṣṇamūrtti. Ceṇṇai.*

SII = *South Indian Inscriptions*. Archaeological Survey of India.

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CH. II
VOICES OF PĀṇḌYA WOMEN: INSIGHTS FROM THE
REGION OF THE KĀVĒRI RIVER¹
VALÉRIE GILLET

ABSTRACT

Three Pāṇḍya queens of the first Pāṇḍya Empire have their donations recorded in inscriptions in temples of the Kāvēri region: an unnamed Pāṇḍya queen in Tillaisthānam at the end of the 9th century, then Kīḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ, assigned to the 10th century, in the temples of Tiruccātturai, Tillaisthānam and Tiruppaḷaṇam, and Atiyirāmaṇ Kuntappāvaiyār, in the early 11th century, in the Tiruvicalūr temple. This paper intends to explore patterns of endowments made by these queens. I shall discuss the identity of each of them, and place their donations in the network of gifts made by other royal figures in the very same places.

WHILE gathering a corpus of inscriptions located in temples of the Kāvēri Delta involving Pāṇḍya kings at the end of the first millennium,² I came across three inscriptions recording a donation of gold by the wife of a Pāṇḍya. This was unusual enough to prompt me to explore the presence of Pāṇḍya queens in the epigraphy of the region a little further. This article reflects only a preliminary stage

¹ My heartfelt thanks go first of all to Pr. G. VIJAYAVENUGOPAL who helped me decrypt hundreds of Tamil inscriptions, including many of those that I read for the present article. N. RAMASWAMY BABU was a tireless and enthusiastic assistant in the field, instrumental in gaining access to the monuments dealt with here, and I am therefore extremely grateful to him. I would like to thank also Pr. Y. SUBBARAYALU, Emmanuel FRANCIS and Uthaya VELUPPILAI for having taken the time to read

this article and to share their valuable suggestions.

² The corpus is related to the Pāṇḍya dynasty, either through the mention of the regnal years of a Pāṇḍya king at the beginning of an epigraph, or through the mention of a donation by the Pāṇḍya king. See (Gillet, 2017). Two of the inscriptions that I am dealing with here, in Tillaisthānam and in Tiruccātturai, are included in the corpus published in (Gillet, 2017), nos #29 & #30.

in the investigation of this topic because the material that I have managed to gather so far is rather thin. However, considering the spike of interest in recent scholarship regarding the involvement of queens in temple building and temple life, I thought that this short paper would contribute to the debate on the role of these women.

Cempiyaṇ Mahādevi, wife of the Cōḷa king Gaṇḍarāditya and mother of Uttamacōḷa, was the only female figure well known as a temple patron to pervade secondary literature since the beginning of the 20th century. She left ostentatious statements of her donations to and construction of temples in the epigraphy of the 10th century, embodying religious and political female involvement.³ But other women and their temple-related activities were not often focused on in secondary literature. Leslie ORR (2000) was perhaps the one who paved the way for a focus on female figures, although not queens, as temple patrons in the Tamil Country of the Cōḷa period with her *Donors, Devotees and Daughters of God*. Just a few years later, Padma KAIMAL (2003), in an article entitled *A Man's World? Gender, Family, and Architectural Patronage in Medieval India*, attempted to unveil an Irukkuvēḷ style in temples of the Kāvēri Delta region based on the analysis of a temple built by an Irukkuvēḷ queen married into the Cōḷa dynasty at the beginning of the 10th century. This marked the beginning of the idea of queens, patrons of temples, who embody the grandeur of their native families by claiming their natal identity and making donations in their native land, as well as that of the families they married into by claiming their status of queen and naming their husband. This is a concept that Emmanuel FRANCIS (2014, 2017) encapsulated into the expression 'reines du terroir' (Country Queens).⁴ And it is to one of those 'reines du terroir,' Maṛampāvai, queen of the Pallava Nandivarman III at the end of the 9th century, that Charlotte SCHMID (2014) devoted the entire Chapter 5 of her *La Bhakti d'une reine: Śiva à Tiruccenṇampūṇṇi*.⁵

³ For the fascinating historiography concerning this queen, see the Ph.D. dissertation of N. CANE, (Cane, 2017), pp. 39–56. See the entire work, unfortunately yet unpublished, for a thorough analysis of what he called an 'epigraphical figure of Cempiyaṇ Mahā-

dēvi.' This is probably the most detailed study of this queen and her activities to date.

⁴ (Francis, 2014), pp. 123–5; (Francis, 2017), pp. 670–2.

⁵ (Schmid, 2014), pp. 199–248.

Figure 1: Inscription (SII 5, no. 608) on the southern door-jamb at the entrance of the Neyyāṭi Appar temple, Tillaisthānam



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Of the three major dynasties of the Tamil Land at the end of the first millennium, Pallava and Cōḷa queens are active in temple donations. Some Pallava queens appear as donors from the 8th century onwards: in the Kailāsanātha temple where queens erect small shrines (SII 1, no. 29, and probably no. 30) and throughout the 9th century.⁶ Innumerable are the Cōḷa queens who make donations

⁶ I would like to mention here that there are different patterns of donations, ranging from founding shrines in

throughout the Tamil Land. We even find Cōḷa queens who bear a Pāṇḍya title, such as Teṇṇavaṇ Mahādeviyār, suggesting that these princesses are born in the Pāṇḍya dynasty.⁷ But we hardly hear of the Pāṇḍya queens.

Indeed, they are almost absent from Pāṇḍya epigraphy.⁸ Pāṇḍya queens appear in the genealogy of the dynasty in the copper plates, but do not assume any role apart from that of being a mother; and when a queen is mentioned it is only the mother of the ruling king.⁹

a royal temple to donations of gold for lamps in local temples, all of them occurring in the donations of the Pallava queens. But that question is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷ Teṇṇavaṇ, literally ‘the Southern one,’ is an old name for sovereigns of this dynasty. A Teṇṇavaṇ Mahādeviyār, or perhaps even a few, are active in the temples of the Kāvēri Delta region. I can add two references to those given by N. Cane, (Cane, 2017), pp. 79–81: SII 5, no. 599 in Tillaisthānam; ARE 1930–1, no. 150 in Tiruccātturai. I would like to add the reference to another queen who seems to have claimed her Pāṇḍya lineage. In Īśvaraṇṇārai (Karūr taluk & district), a certain Pāṇṭiperuntēvi, mother (*tāyār*) of Araṭṭavatam alias Pāṇṭimuttaraiyaṇ, built a Śiva temple on behalf (*cārṭti*) of Cōḷika Araiyaṇ alias Pāṇṭimuttaraiyaṇ (*Āvaṇam* 23 (2012), no. 5). The palaeography of the inscription, beautifully engraved on a rock on top of a hill where a later-period stone temple now stands, seems to suggest the 9th century. This is the only occurrence that I am aware of of a Pāṇṭi Muttaraiyaṇ, otherwise unknown.

⁸ I include under the generic expression ‘Pāṇḍya epigraphy’ inscriptions dated with the regnal year of a

Pāṇḍya king as well as inscriptions dated with another dynasty’s regnal year but recording the donation of a member of the Pāṇḍya royal family (king, prince or queen). See (Gillet, 2017), pp. 221–2.

⁹ The ḷaiyāṇputtūr copper plates, the first Pāṇḍya copper plates (7th century?; *Āvaṇam* 18 (2007), no. 1) do not mention any queen. Neither do the Śrīvaramaṅgalam copper plates (end of the 8th century; IEP 11) nor the incomplete Small Ciṇṇamaṇūr copper plates (same period; IEP 16). Only the Sanskrit part (verse 14) of the Vēlvikuṭi copper plates (end of the 8th century) refers to the mother of the ruling king Parāntaka I, but through her title only: she is presented as the daughter of the Maḷava king (IEP 7). Akkaḷani-mmaṭi, daughter of Śrīkaṇṭha, the Cōḷa of the Pottappi line, and mother of Parāntaka II (end of 9th century, beginning of the 10th), is mentioned in the Sanskrit part (verse 17) and Tamil part (lns 112–4) of the Talavāyapuram copper plates (IEP 61). Vāṇavaṇ Mahādevī is presented in the Larger Ciṇṇamaṇūr plates (10th century) as the queen of Parāntaka II and mother of the ruling king, Rājasimha (verses 15–16 of the

However, if Pāṇḍya queens hardly appear as donors in temples, unlike queens of other contemporaneous dynasties, it is noteworthy that the Pāṇḍya kings themselves do not often appear either as founders or as donors in lithic inscriptions. But one of the particularities of the corpus of inscriptions related to the Pāṇḍyas found in the Kāvēri region is that Pāṇḍya kings suddenly appear making lavish donations to temples, in contrast to the non-involvement of the sovereigns in their own region.¹⁰ I assumed that their claim of presence and the unusual amount of royal Pāṇḍya donations was related to the concept of Gift of Power developed by HEITZMAN: in a nutshell, donations to temples by a sovereign contribute to the legitimisation of his authority in the region.¹¹ The Kāvēri region was the country of the ancient Cōḷas, taken over by the Pallavas in the 6th century (see the Trichy inscription, SII 1, nos 33 & 34, and also BROCQUET in this volume¹²), which saw the rise of the new Cōḷa power at the end of the 9th century. But a religious level can be superimposed on the political one: the Kāvēri region is indeed the place where the majority of the temples sung in the *Tēvāram*, the body of Śaiva hymns composed between the 7th and the 9th centuries, are located, turning this region into an ebullient center for

Sanskrit part and line 123; IEP 79). And the Śivakāci copper plates (10th century) give us the title of the mother of Virapāṇḍya in verse 6 of the Sanskrit part, that is the daughter of Ravi of the Keraḷa family; and lines 52–3 of the Tamil part, besides mentioning that she is a Cēra princess, give her personal name: Maṇipayili (IEP 90). By the end of the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th, we can therefore see that the lineage through the mother of the Pāṇḍya ruling king seems to have acquired an importance that it did not have earlier.

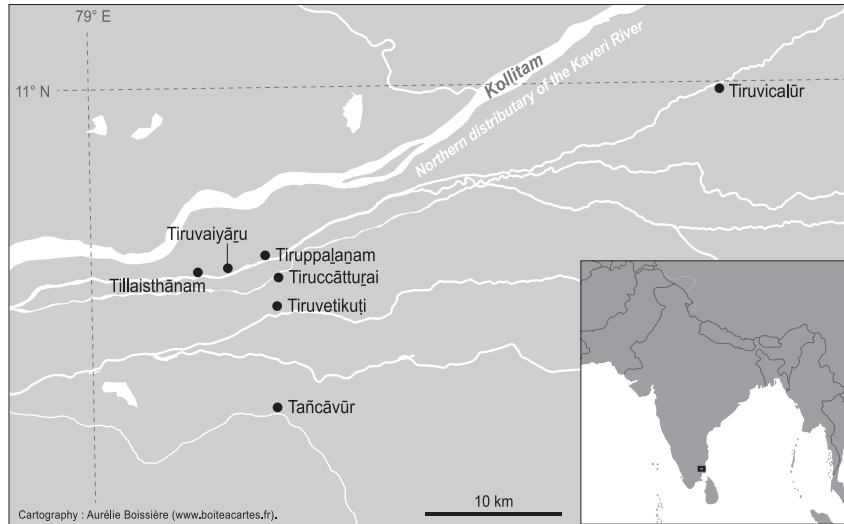
¹⁰ I recall here that the region of the Pāṇḍyas is located south of the Kāvēri River, with Madurai as the capital and Ambasamudram as an important nexus from the 9th century.

¹¹ ‘The driving force behind donations was the concept of the legitimisation of authority, whereby gifts to the gods or their representatives on earth resulted in a transfer of divine sanctity and merits to the givers. The primary purpose of eleemosynary grants was, then, to tap into the power of the divine, to enhance sanctity and then to demonstrate it to society. The inscriptions themselves are an integral part of the demonstrative aspect of donations, which provided proof of the wealth and authority wielded legitimately by donors. [...] Thus, on every level, the transactions petrified within South Indian temple inscriptions embody gifts of power.’ (Heitzman, 1997), p. 1.

¹² (Brocquet, 2021).

the development of the Tamil Bhakti movement in this period.¹³ It thus became a strongly coveted sort of nexus, political as well as religious, where Cōla, Pallava and Pāṇḍya powers —and many other minor dynasties— seem to have encountered each other.

Figure 2: Map of area where inscriptions by Pāṇḍya queens are found



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It is precisely in this peculiar region around the Kāvēri that I came across inscriptions recording donations by Pāṇḍya queens. The first one is engraved on the southern door-jamb at the entrance of the Neyyāṭi Appar temple in Tillaisthānam (Tiruvaiyāru taluk and Tanjavur district) and is dated to the 4th year of the king Mārañcaṭaiyaṇ (Fig. 1, p. 21). I identified this king with the Pāṇḍya Varaguṇa who reigned at the end of the 9th century, perhaps from 862 CE onwards.¹⁴ The epigraph records a donation of *kācu* (a currency unit) by the whole royal family to the Sabhā of Paṇaiyūr for

¹³ (Chevillard, 2000), pp. 730–1, notes that 70% of the *Tēvāram* hymns are attached to temples located in Cōla-nāṭu, around the Kāvēri River and especially in the Delta. I thank Uthaya VELUPPILLAI for having reminded me of this.

¹⁴ For the identification of this king,

the period of his reign and other questions concerning his name and rule, I refer the reader to (Gillet, 2017) where I discuss all this in detail. This inscription was noticed in ARE 1895, no. 51; and then published in SII 5, no. 608; it is published and translated in IEP 23 and (Gillet, 2017), no. #1.

Figure 3: North-western corner, Ōtaṇavaṇēśvara temple, Tiruccātturai



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ghee, to be provided to the temple for burning lamps: the unnamed queen, referred to as *nampirāṭṭiyār*, literally ‘our queen,’ gives the rather large sum of 200 *kācu*; she is followed by King / Prince (*kōṇ*) Parāntaka, who seems to be the younger brother of the ruling king, Varaguṇa, giving 100 *kācu*; this donation is followed by another of 120 *kācu*, handed over to a messenger by an unnamed person, but as this messenger is often one of Varaguṇa’s, I assume this third donor to be the king Varaguṇa. Although the queen is not named, she is the first to be mentioned as donor and she is the one who gives the largest sum. It may reflect the importance that queen’s donations to temples had gained at this end of the 9th century, although in this case, she is not mentioned by name, but as part of a royal gathering in which her function seems to matter more than her identity. This strengthens the appearance of this donation as a Gift of Power.

Pāṇḍya queens do not reappear as donors in epigraphs dated with the regnal years of a Pāṇḍya king. I encountered three inscriptions recording gifts of gold by a certain Kīḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ, queen of a Pāṇḍya Parāntaka Māṇābharaṇa, dated with the regnal years of a Cōḷa king bearing the title Kōpparakesarivarman.

I have located her donations in three Śiva temples of the district of Tanjavur: in Tiruccātturai, in Tillaisthānam and in Tiruppaḷaṇam, three temples to whom many hymns of the *Tēvāram* are dedicated¹⁵ (Fig. 2, p. 24).

I do not reproduce the text of these epigraphs here because I am not able to add anything to the publications already existing: the inscription on the northern wall of Tiruccātturai has suffered a lot of damage since the Epigraphical Survey team made an estampage in 1930–31, and the names Māṇābharaṇa and Tēcapukaḷ are no longer legible; the inscription which was on the southern wall of the *ardha-maṇḍapa* of the main shrine in Tillaisthānam has disappeared under a wall constructed sometime after it was noticed in 1895. Although I could not visit the temple of Tiruppaḷaṇam during my last fieldwork in India, N. RAMASWAMY BABU and Pr. G. VIJAYAVENUGOPAL went looking for this inscription. They found it on the base of the western façade. But, in the pictures they sent me, I noticed that the inscription had suffered some damage since it was

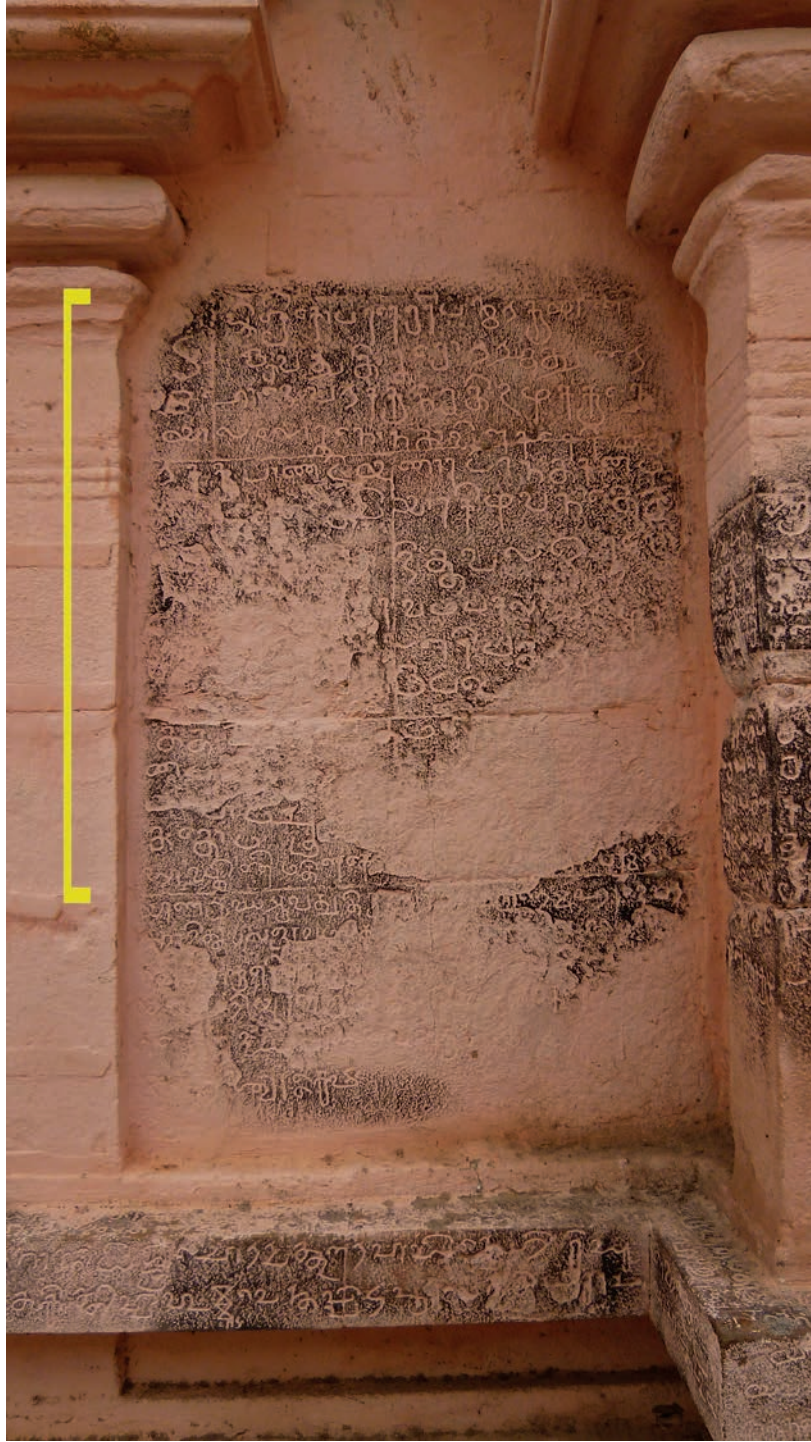
¹⁵ Tiruccātturai: 1.28; 4.41; 4.85; 5.33; 4.89; 5.34; 6.41; 6.42. Tiruppaḷaṇam: 6.44; 7.94. Tillaisthānam: 1.15; 4.37; 1.67; 4.12; 4.36; 4.87; 5.35; 6.36.

Figure 4: Southern part of the western façade, Ōṭaṇavaṇēśvara temple, Tiruccātturai



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Figure 5: Donation by Kīlavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ (SII 19, no. 149), northern façade of the Ōṭaṇavaṇēśvara temple, Tiruccātturai



published, and I am not able to improve on the existing publication. Here are the references for these three inscriptions:

1. Tiruccātturai (Tiruccōṛutturai), Tiruvaiyāru taluk, Tanjavur District (Fig. 3, p. 25, Fig. 4, p. 27, & Fig. 5, p. 28); on the northern wall of the main shrine of the Ōṭaṇavaṇēśvara temple; Regnal year 5 of Kōpparakesarivarman; ARE 1930–1, no. 133, SII 19, no. 149, (Gillet, 2017), no. #29.
2. Tillaisthānam (Tiruneyttānam), Tiruvaiyāru taluk, Tanjavur District (Fig. 6, p. 30, Fig. 7, p. 34, & Fig. 8, p. 35); on the southern façade, probably on the *ardha-maṇḍapa*, of the Neyyāṭi Appar temple; Regnal year 8 of Kōpparakesarivarman; ARE 1895, no. 26, SII 5, no. 583, (Gillet, 2017), no. #30.
3. Tiruppaḷaṇam, Tanjavur taluk and district (Fig. 9, p. 39, Fig. 10, p. 42, & Fig. 11, p. 43); on the base of the western façade of the central shrine of the Āpatsahāyēśvara temple; Regnal year 9 of Kōpparakesarivarman; ARE 1928, no. 152, SII 19, no. 239.

Before considering each of these shrines, geographically very close to each other (Fig. 2, p. 24), a few words should be said about the temples of the region, which extends all along the River Kāvēri. The concentration of shrines in this area is superior to that of any other area of the Tamil Country, and many of them are sung in the *Tēvāram*. The shrines are clustered around the sacred river, the Gaṅgā of the South, which exercised a sort of magnetic attraction for these divine abodes. The founders of these temples are often unknown and these monuments may therefore be called village temples, around which the local society crystallised. Many of them may have originally been made of brick and mortar. But around the 9th or 10th century, notables often rebuilt them in stones – sometimes ostentatiously. Inscriptions recording donations which were previously on the walls or on separate stones were copied on the new stone-walls of the monument. Some of these temples seem to have been particularly popular, attracting donors from many areas, even from distant regions. Many of those donors do not give to a single shrine but sometimes to several in the region, creating thus a sort of network which is particularly interesting to study. The three temples that I am considering here expose a part of this network, where important political figures join members of the local communities in their donations. Therefore, endowments to these shrines, if they appear as a gesture of piety, remain a public action which cannot be entirely dissociated from a political act. I present here only three

shrines, because these are the only places I found where our Pāṇḍya queen Kīḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ donates, but one must keep in mind that the network extends far beyond these three monuments.

Figure 6: North-western corner, Neyyāṭi Appar temple, Tillaisthānam



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A donation of land engraved in the Āpatsahāyēśvara temple in Tiruppaḷaṇam (SII 19, no. 329) is for the preparation of sacred food (*amutu*) to be distributed to six different temples: Tiruppaḷaṇam, Tiruvaīyāru, Tirunettāṇam (Tiruneyttāṇam / Tillaisthānam), one temple whose name is lost, Tiruvetikuṭi, and an unidentified

Āṛṛukunṛam.¹⁶ This suggests that these sacred places are somehow part of the same network (Fig. 2, p. 24). An epigraph of Tiruppaḷaṇam includes Tiruccātturai in the loop: a son of God¹⁷ of Tiruccōṛrutturai named Nakkaṇ Kaṇavatiyakkaṇ endows twenty-five *kaḷañcu* (a measure of weight) of gold for a perpetual lamp to Mahādeva of Tiruppaḷaṇam (SII 19, no. 174). Besides our Pāṇḍya queen Kiḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ, a few other female donors of a royal family endow the same three temples with gold for perpetual lamps. The most active is the already mentioned Teṇṇavaṇ Mahādevī, queen of Cōḷapperumāṇaṭikaḷ, who donated during the reigns of Rājakesarivarman, probably Āditya I, and his son Parāntaka I.¹⁸ Muḷḷūr Naṅkaiyār, the mother of a Cōḷa queen, also made donations in these three temples in the same 3rd regnal year of an unidentified Parakesarivarman (Tiruccātturai: SII 19, no. 77; Tillaisthānam:

¹⁶ The Patipātamūlattars (priests) of Āṛṛutaḷi are the ones who receive a part of the donation of Kiḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ (SII 19, no. 239) to provide a perpetual lamp for the God of Tiruppaḷaṇam. This is perhaps the same place, which must be nearby. The lord of Āṛṛūr, Korraṇ Aruṇmōḷi alias Vāṇavaṇ Peraraiyaṇ, also made a donation in the Tillaisthānam temple (SII 3, no. 127). There is no modern Āṛṛūr in the vicinity. However, there is one Attūr, in the Mayavaram taluk and therefore nearby, which may be a modern transformation of the ancient Āṛṛūr. The temple in this village bears some inscriptions (TLI Tj 957–971) but they remain unfortunately unpublished, as far as I am aware, and the summaries of the inscriptions do not give the ancient name of this village.

¹⁷ The term Tēvaṇār makaṇ, literally Son of God, is used. They are identified as temple men. See (Orr, 2000), pp. 58–60.

¹⁸ She gives mostly gold and goats to Tillaisthānam in the 17th regnal year of Kōrājakesarivarman (SII 5, no. 599) and in the 34th regnal year of Parāntaka I (SII 5, no. 601), to Tiruccātturai in the 30th regnal year of Parāntaka I (ARE 1930–1, no. 150), to Tiruppaḷaṇam in the 17th year of Rājakesarivarman (SII 5, no. 684) and in the 10th year of a Parakesarivarman (SII 5, no. 685; SII 19, no. 269). The dating of these inscriptions being extremely hazardous, we cannot be completely certain of the identity of the king whose reign is used to date the donation except when there is a *maturaikoṇṭa* in front of the title, suggesting that it is Parāntaka I. And we cannot completely rule out the possibility of more than one queen bearing the same name. We know in fact that, in the end of the 10th century, a queen of Uttamacōḷa is called by the same name (Cempiyaṇ Mahādevī temple, SII 19, no. 311; see (Cane, 2017), p. 80).

SII 5, no. 602; and Tiruppaḷaṇam: SII 5, no. 689). A few women from the Cōḷa royal circle, some named, some unnamed, endow one or two temples out of the three we are considering.¹⁹

But women of the Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa houses are not the only royal female donors. Queens of minor dynasties, too, participate in the network of donations. Cētimahādeviyār, queen of the chieftain (*uṭaiyār*) of Maḷāṭu (also called Miḷāṭu, located around Tirukkōyilūr), donated goats for a lamp to the temples of Tiruccātturāi (SII 19, no. 295) and Tiruppaḷaṇam (SII 19, no. 287) in the 11th regnal year of a Parakesarivarman.²⁰ In an undated inscription of Tillaisthānam, a Kaṭampa princess (Kaṭampa Mātēvi) gives 100 goats for a perpetual lamp. She is said to have become the wife of Vikkianṇaṇ (a Cāḷukya title) who took the name Cempiyaṇ Tamiḷavēḷ bestowed upon him, along with other regalia, by Rājakesaripānmar alias Palyāṇai Kōkkaṇṭaṇ, the Cōḷaṇ who engulfed Toṇṭaināṭu, and by Cēramāṇ Kō Tāṇu Ravi.²¹ Still in Tillaisthānam,

¹⁹ In Tiruccātturāi: SII 13, 351: Kāṭupaṭṭikaḷ Tamarmētti, [the mother of?] the queen (*tēviyār*) of Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ, the great queen (*mātēvi*) Tribhuvana, ... Vayiriyakkanār in a lost regnal year of a Rājakesarivarman; ARE 1930–1, no. 130: probably the same queen (Tribhūvanamahādeviyār) in the 11th regnal year of Parāntaka I; ARE 1930–1, no. 158: Naṅkuri Naṅkai of Mayilārpil, on behalf of her daughter Cōḷacikāmaṇiyār, a queen of the king in the 26th regnal year of Parāntaka I; ARE 1930–1, nos 135 & 141: perhaps a Cōḷa queen called Trailokyamahādevi in the 41st and 46th regnal year of Parāntaka I; SII 13, no. 280: the queen (*tēviyār*) of Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ in the 17th regnal year of a Rājakesarivarman. In Tillaisthānam: a concubine (*pōkiyār*) of the Cōḷa king identified with Āditya I, Naṅkai Cāttaperumāṇār, gifted thirty *kaḷaṇcu* of gold for a lamp. In Tiruppaḷaṇam: Kāṭupaṭṭikaḷ

Tamarmēttiṭyār, the mother of Vayir Akkaṇ alias Tribhuvana Mahādeviyār, the queen of Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ, in the 23rd regnal year of Rājakesarivarman (SII 13, no. 304); the queen of Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ called Śeyabhuvana Cintamaṇiyār of Kāviriṭṭuppaṭṭiṇam in the 28th regnal year of Parāntaka I; Pāṇṭaṇ Kāḷi, the nurse (*tāti*) of Cōḷaperumāṇ Śrīparāntakadevar in the 13th regnal year of Parāntaka I.

²⁰ In Tillaisthānam, in the same year, the lord of Maḷāṭu, Cittavaṭaṇ Alampaṭatēvan, probably her husband, gave ninety-six goats for a lamp (SII 5, no. 606; SII 32, pt 2, no. 94, assigns it to the period of Uttamacōḷa).

²¹ This very unusual inscription was noticed in ARE 1911, no. 286, and then published in SII 3, no. 89 (with a translation), SII 13, no. 337 and SII 32, pt 1, no. 12. It is assigned to the end of the 9th century, to the reign of Āditya, by

a joint donation, each of twenty-five *kaḷañcu* of gold, is made by relations of the Irukkuvēḷs of Koṭumpālūr: Tenṇavaṇ Piru-timārācaṇ alias Kaṭṭi Orriuraṇ and the queen (*tēviyār*) of Parāntaka Iḷaṅkōvēḷār, Varakuṇaperumāṇār (SII 3, no. 113; SII 13, no. 233; SII 32, pt 1, no. 65).²² The fact that Orriyuraṇ joins her in her endowment suggests that he is somehow related to her and therefore to the Irukkuvēḷ dynasty. He may be identified with Orriyuraṇ Puti Araiyaṇ, a donor of the Tiruccātturai temple in the 20th regnal year of Parāntaka I (ARE 1930–1, no. 134).

Surprisingly, female figures of the royal circles are not the only ones to become involved actively in donations to these temples. Thus, while kings rarely make personal donations to village temples, sovereigns claim here to have endowed Mahādeva: Pāṇḍya king Varaguṇa in Tillaisthānam (see n. 14, p. 24) and in Tiruccātturai (SII 14, no. 28 & (Gillet, 2017), no. #10); Pallava king Nandivarman III in Tillaisthānam (SII 5, no. 609); perhaps the Cōḷa king himself, called Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ Perunerkiḷliccōḷa, in Tiruppaḷaṇam (SII 13, no. 21); two Cōḷa princes, Ātittaṇ Kaṇṇaradevaṇ, son (*makaṇār*) of Cōḷapperumāṇaṭikaḷ, probably Āditya I (SII 5, no. 595) and Parāntaka Arikulakēcariyār, son (*makaṇār*) of Cōḷaperumāṇaṭikaḷ Śrī Parakesarivarman (SII 5, no. 582), in Tillaisthānam; Muttaraiyar king Iḷaṅkō in Tiruccātturai (SII 5, no. 618); Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar Kumaraṇ Maṇavaṇ in Tiruppaḷaṇam (SII 19, no. 172). Besides these kings, numerous unknown chieftains coming from various places also give gold and goats for lamps. This aggregation of illustrious donors confirms the popularity of these monuments between the end of the 9th and at least the end of the 10th centuries.

Having replaced our Pāṇḍya queen Kiḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ in the network of donors which comes to light in the three temples where she made endowments, I would like now to turn to her position in the Pāṇḍya dynasty. Kiḷavaṇ literally means ‘lord’ and Tēcapukaḷ

the editors of SII. It is on the southern façade of the *ardha-maṇḍapa* of the central shrine. Unfortunately, after it being noticed in 1911, and an estampage having been made, a wall was built over it. Today, only the left half of the inscrip-

tion is visible.

²² This Varaguṇaperumāṇār may be identified with the Varaguṇaperumāṇār, uterine sister of the Cōḷa king, who made a donation to the Śiva of Lālkuṭi (EI 20, no. 3C).

Figure 7: Western façade, Neyyāṭi Appar temple, Tillaisthānam



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Figure 8: Ghat on the Kāvēri River, opposite entrance of Neyyāṭi Appar temple, Tillaisthānam



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could be interpreted as ‘she who is the glory (*pukal*) of her country (*tēcam*).’ She does not appear in the corpus of inscriptions dated with a Pāṇḍya king’s regnal year, and she is known only from these three inscriptions. Thrice she is said to be the queen (*tēviyār* / *tēvi*) of Parāntaka Māṇābharaṇa (also written Māṇāparaṇa) who is specifically mentioned as a Pāṇḍya (*pāṇṭiyaṇār*) at least twice – the word is damaged in the Tiruppaḷaṇam epigraph and we cannot be sure that it was there, but the letter *pā* may be read, and there is enough space for the word *pāṇḍya* to have been engraved. The identification of this Pāṇḍya is a thorny issue. I would personally rule out the possibility of Pāṇḍya Māṇābharaṇa Parāntaka, husband of Tēcapukal, not being a king but simply bearing the titles of the Pāṇḍya rulers. Indeed, the fact that he is qualified to be a Pāṇḍya (*pāṇṭiyaṇār*) leads me to assume that he belonged to the royal family. Māṇābharaṇa, literally ‘the one who has honour (*māṇa* [Tam]) as his ornament (*ābharaṇa* [Skt]),’ may, in principle, be taken as a simple honorific title and not as a proper name, and, as pointed out to me by Emmanuel FRANCIS, the compound Māṇābharaṇa Parāntaka may thus be translated as ‘Parāntaka who is also Māṇābharaṇa.’ However, we shall see that Māṇābharaṇa corresponds in fact to specific figures, and this name does not seem to be bestowed randomly, at least not in the First Empire of the Pāṇḍya.²³

It is common that, when a name is made of two components, the first component is the name of the father while the second is the name of the person in question. If this is the case here, we would have a Parāntaka with Māṇābharaṇa as his father. However, no such figure in the Pāṇḍya genealogy is known to us. Let us explore first the possible identity of Parāntaka. There are two Pāṇḍya kings named Parāntaka: the first one in the last quarter of the 8th century and the second in the last quarter of the 9th.²⁴ Since the

²³ (Karashima *et al.*, 1978) mention another donor named Māṇābharaṇa in the Pāṭaliśvara temple in Tirupāppuliyūr (Cuddalore taluk and district). The inscription (SII 7, no. 739) is dated with the 14th regnal year of Rājarāja I. The full name of the donor is: vecālippāṭit tenkaraic ciṇupālaiyūruṭaiyāṇ maññāṇaiyākiya

irāciṅkapperayarkāka makaṇ māṇāparaṇaṇ. This donor does not seem to be a Pāṇḍya king.

²⁴ I have dealt extensively with this question in (Gillet, 2017), pp. 223–7. Parāntaka I began his reign between 767 and 769 CE. Parāntaka II is the younger brother of Varaguṇa, the

epigraphs are dated in a Cōla king's regnal year, the 8th century can be safely ruled out. There remains the Parāntaka of the end of the 9th century, younger brother of Varaguṇa. He contributes to the donation by the Pāṇḍya family at Tillaisthānam where he is simply called Kōṇ Parāntaka (see n. 14, p. 24). If Māṇābharaṇa is not a name borne by his father, Śrīvallabha, it is however a name whose first occurrence in the epigraphical corpus of the Pāṇḍya appears in a record of the time of this Parāntaka II²⁵ and is somehow related to him.

Indeed, it is in the Talavāyapuram copper plates engraved during his rule, in his 45th regnal year, falling perhaps in the first few years of the 10th century,²⁶ that the title Māṇābharaṇa appears for the first time in Pāṇḍya records. However, Māṇābharaṇa is not a Pāṇḍya king, but a Cōla of the Pottappi family and is related to Parāntaka II, the donor, through his mother:

Śrīparāntaka Mahārājaṇ who was brought to life as an embryo from the auspicious womb of Akkaḷanimmaṭi, the jewel-like-daughter of the conqueror of the mountain [resembling] a rutting elephant, Cīrikaṇṭarācaṇ who brings fame to the Cōla of the Pottapi lineage, king of Mayilaiyar, auspicious descendant of Māṇābharaṇa with sharp weapons, Tuḷakkilli, king of Toṇṭiyar, who bore with ease upon his shoulders with armlets the Goddess of Earth with high mountains sustained with great difficulty, by the eminent heads by the thousands, for a very long time, of the king of the snakes.²⁷

Pāṇḍya king who left substantial records of his donations in the temples of the Kāvēri Delta and whose reign began around 862 CE. Parāntaka II seems to have ruled in continuation of his elder brother or perhaps concomitantly, bearing the same title Mārañcaṭaiyaṇ.

²⁵ K. G. KRISHNAN, in his translation of the Vēlvikuṭi copper plates of Parāntaka I (IEP 7, p. 11), interprets *tāṇai māṇam pērtta* (lns 44–5) as '[he] who was the king with an army and had the name Māṇa (i.e. Māṇābharaṇa).' But it probably means that his army (*tāṇai*) destroyed (*pērtta*)

the pride (*māṇam*) [of his enemies]. A similar occurrence in the line 132 of the Talavāyapuram copper plates of Parāntaka II (IEP 61), that K. G. KRISHNAN, wrongly in my view, relates to the name Māṇābharaṇa (p. 81), may be interpreted in the same way.

²⁶ We do not know whether his reign began at the same time as his brother's, i.e. around 862 CE or later, during Varaguṇa's rule. Therefore, precisely placing in time his 45th regnal year is impossible.

²⁷ aravaraica(110)ṇ pallūḷi āyiram-āy irun-talaiyāl peritaritiṇ poruk-

We learn here that Śrīvallabha, the father of Parāntaka II, married Akkaḷanimmaṭi, the daughter of king (*rācaṇ*) Śrīkaṇṭan of the Cōḷa of the Pottappi line (*kula*), king of the Mayilaiyar, either son-in-law or nephew (*marukaṇ*) of Māṇābharaṇa. It is not clear though if the name Tuḷakilli,²⁸ king of the Toṇṭaiyar, is another name of Śrīkaṇṭan or of Māṇābharaṇa. These Cōḷas of the Pottappi line, king of Mayilaiyar and king of Toṇṭaiyar, may be identified with the Telugu Cōḷas, a dynasty claiming the same ancestor as the Cōḷa of the Kāvēri, Karikāla, but ruling from the south of the Andhra Country.²⁹ If the Pāṇḍyaṇār Māṇābharaṇa Parāntaka, husband of Tēcapukaḷ, is Parāntaka II, we are looking here at a rare case of the first part of the name referring to ancestors on the mother's side.³⁰ This emphasis on the lineage of his mother may have continued to be vested with considerable importance as it may be suggested in a later record, the Śivakāci copper plates (IEP 90), engraved during the 3rd regnal year of Vīrapāṇḍya, the last sovereign of the first Pāṇḍya Empire who ruled somewhere in the middle of the 10th century. Indeed, verse 5 of the Sanskrit part names Parāntaka II Mānakulācala (literally 'He who is a mountain in the lineage of Māna'), a name

kiṇṇa perum-poṛai maṇ(111)-makalait-taṇṭoti-tōḷil eḷitu tāṇkiya toṇṭaiyar-kōṇ tuḷakilliva(112)ṭip-paṭai māṇābharaṇaṇṭiru-marukaṇmayilaiyar-kōṇ pottappik kula-cōḷa(113)ṇ pukaḷ-taru cirikaṇṭarācaṇ matta mā-malai valavaṇ maṇi-makaḷ akkaḷanimmaṭi (114) tiruvayiru karu-v-uyirtta śrīparāntaka mahārājaṇ. The italics stand for the Grantha letters and the numbers in brackets for the line numbers. Edition and translation by the author.

²⁸ Tuḷakilli, as Y. SUBBARAYALU suggested to me, may not be a reference to an ancient Cōḷa king whose names end in Kiḷli, but would simply mean the 'One who does not shake,' or the 'One who does not bow' (from the verb *tuḷakku-tal*).

²⁹ See (Nilakanta Sastri, 2000), p. 387, and (Mahalingam, 1988), p. lxvii, who speaks more specifically about Śrīkaṇṭha. I thank here Emmanuel FRANCIS for having pointed out to me that Mayilai is the ancient name of Mylapore, now an area engulfed in an ever-growing Chennai. Toṇṭai is the name of the region ruled by the Pallavas, around Kāñcīpuram. According to (Nilakanta Sastri, 2000), p. 36, the legend of the ancient Cōḷa king Karikāla made him lord of Toṇṭaināṭu too.

³⁰ There may be another case in the Pāṇḍya corpus. In the Śivakāci copper plates (IEP 90), the name Vīrapāṇḍya is preceded by Virakēraḷaṇ (ln. 53), referring to the lineage of his mother who is a Cēra princess.

Figure 9: North-western corner, Āpatsahāyēśvara temple, Tiruppaḷaṇam



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that may refer to his mother's lineage. And, as a possible consequence of this filiation, his son, Rājasimha, father of Vīrapāṇḍya, in the same verse, is called Māṇābharaṇa (written Mānābharaṇa in Sanskrit). This leads us to a second possibility of identification of Māṇābharaṇa Parāntaka.

The Tamil part of the Śivakāci copper plates mentions only the name of the father of Vīrapāṇḍya, leaving aside the other ancestors listed in verse 5 of the Sanskrit part: Irācamallaṇ maṇi-muṭi-māṇāparaṇa teṇṇavar kōṇ (lns 51–2). Irācamallaṇ (for Rājamalla, probably a variant of the name Rājasimha usually given to him), the jewel-crowned Māṇāparaṇa (for Māṇābharaṇa), King (kōṇ) of the Pāṇḍyas (Teṇṇavan). The name Māṇābharaṇa for Rājasimha, the father of Vīrapāṇḍya, is thus attested twice in this record.³¹ If we consider that the more common formation of names in the Tamil country is followed here, Māṇābharaṇa Parāntaka would mean that Parāntaka has Māṇābharaṇa as a father. But, Parāntaka is not a name attested for Vīrapāṇḍya in these plates or in other lithic records. His elder brother, mentioned in the verse 7 of the Sanskrit part of the Śivakāci copper plates, is named Sundarapāṇḍya, and does not bear the name Parāntaka either.

Therefore, we are left with two possibilities of identification based on the names of the sovereigns we know: he may be Parāntaka II, emphasising his mother's lineage; he may be Vīrapāṇḍya, or one of his brothers, bearing the name Parāntaka which is not attested for them otherwise. The inscriptions recording the donations of Tēcapukaḷ are dated to the 5th, 8th and 9th regnal years of a Parakesarivarman, and their palaeography seems to suggest a period between the 9th and the 10th centuries.³² The title of Parakesari is bestowed upon a few Cōla kings during this period:

³¹ (Subramania & Srinivasan, 1969), pp. 38–9, mention a part of the *meykkīrtti* of Rājādhiraṇa which narrates that the Cōla king severed the head of Māṇābharaṇa, captured Vīrakēraḷaṇ (another name of Vīrapāṇḍya, see footnote above), and drove away Sundarapāṇḍya (the elder brother of Vīrapāṇḍya). See the inscription on the Rājagopalaperumāl temple at Manimangalam, published and translated in SII 3, no. 23 (lns 1–2, p. 54, for the text; & ln. 1, p. 56, for the translation). This passage of the *meykkīrtti* confirms the genealogy given in the Śivakāci copper

plates and the name of Māṇābharaṇa for Rājasimha. I also thank E. FRANCIS for having pointed out to me the mention of Māṇābharaṇa in this *meykkīrtti*.

³² I do not rely much on palaeography in this analysis because these temples may very well have been renovated and reconstructed in stone in the 10th century, and the inscriptions copied. Moreover, I am not sure that I can differentiate between a script from the 9th century and one from the first three quarters of the 10th, especially when the former is not carefully engraved while the latter is.

Parāntaka I, Ariñjaya Cōla, Aditya Cōla II and Uttama Cōla. Neither the palaeography nor the name of the king can thus help us decide the identity of Mānābharaṇa Parāntaka. But the invasions of the Pāṇḍya country by the Cōlas, which will eventually lead to the fall of the Pāṇḍya kingdom somewhere between the middle and the third quarter of the 10th century, began in the early 10th century in the 3rd regnal year of the Cōla Parāntaka I, who then adds Matiraikoṇṭa (literally ‘who has taken Madurai’) to his title Parakesarivarman.³³ Whether Tēcapukaḷ is the queen of Parāntaka II or that of Vīrapāṇḍya (or one of his brothers) her donations thus fall in an already conflictual period. Devotion, political agenda, accruing merits, etc. may be among the motivations for her endowments to these three temples; this is difficult to establish. But considering the trend which seems to develop at the end of the 9th century of Country Queens making donations to many temples of their native country, Kiḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ, a Pāṇḍya queen making donations in the Cōla country, appears to me as one of those; a Country Queen who seems to make endowments in spite of the political conflicts.

The only other record of a Pāṇḍya queen that I encountered was found in the same region, in the Śivayoganātha temple, in Tiruvicalūr (Tiruviṭaimarutūr taluk, Tanjavur district) (Fig. 2, p. 24 & Fig. 12, p. 45). The inscription, which was on the north wall of the *maṇḍapa* in front of the shrine has disappeared, sanded away by the sanding-machines of the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments, in charge of this temple. Fortunately, the inscription was noticed (ARE 1907, no. 46) and later published (SII 23, no. 46). It is assigned to the 3rd regnal year of Kōpparakesarivarman Rājendra-cōla, who has been identified by the editors of SII with Rājendra I, placing then this inscription at the beginning of the 11th century. But by this time, the Pāṇḍya kingdom had lost its sovereignty and had passed into the hands of the Cōlas. Pāṇḍya kings had become some sort of Viceroy —although we know very little about the way this was organised— until they rose to power again in the 13th century.

The donor is Atiyirāmaṇ Kuntappāvaiyār, daughter of the Lord of Paṅkaḷanāṭu (*paṅkaḷanāṭuṭaiyār makaḷār*), queen of the Pāṇḍya

³³ If the Parakesarivarman of the three inscriptions is Parāntaka I, she being a Pāṇḍya queen may be the reason for the suppression of the Madurai-koṇṭa in front of Parakesarivarman, assuming that she had a say in the form the inscription took on the stone.

Figure 10: Southern façade, Āpatsahāyēśvara temple, Tiruppalānam



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Figure 11: Donation by Kīlavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ (SII 19, no. 239), base of western façade, Āpatsahāyēśvara temple, Tiruppalaṇam



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Śrī Valluvar (*pāṇṭiyaṇ śrī valluvar tēviyār*). It was suggested in the introduction of SII 23, no. 46, that Śrī Valluvar stood for Śrī Val-labha, a name that we know Pāṇḍya kings bore. Unlike Kīlavan Tēcapukaḷ, this Pāṇḍya queen states her lineage: she is the daughter of the Lord of Paṅkaḷanāṭu. The Paṅkaḷa country, located to the west of Kāñcīpuram, was then governed by kings of the Gaṅga dynasty. They are mentioned in inscriptions in the temple of Tiruppaḷaṇam, although probably earlier than the 11th century: two sons of Mahādeva Lord of Paṅkaḷanāṭu (*paṅkaḷanāṭuṭaiyār mahādevar makaṇār / makaṇ*), a certain Cempiyaṇ Pṛthivikaṅkaraiyarin the 26th regnal year of a Rājakesarivarman assigned to the end of the 9th century (SII 13, no. 319) and Pirutikaṅkaraiyar in the 11th regnal year of a Parakesarivarman assigned to the early 10th century (SII 19, no. 286) donated to this shrine.³⁴ Pirutikaṅkaraiyar gave gold for the usual perpetual lamp for the god. However, Cempiyaṇ Pṛthivikaṅkaraiyar gave a series of items for jewellery for the deity, including *rudrākṣas*, precious stones (diamonds, rubies, etc.). This type of donation is much less common than donations of gold for lamps, or land or sacred food. Therefore, it is interesting to note that our Pāṇḍya queen daughter of Lord of Paṅkaḷanāṭu made the same type of donation perhaps more than a century later: she gives all the components to make a marriage necklace (*tāli*) for the deity, including gold, pearls, gems.³⁵ The inscription is damaged in some parts rendering the description of the elements sometimes quite obscure, but the list of items seems rather detailed, including even the nails (*āṇi*), the waxed-thread (*arakku nūl*), the small slats at the end (*kaṭai palakai*) of the necklace. This is an ostentatious gift, in continuity with that which her ancestors, other sons of the Lord of Paṅkaḷanāṭu, made in another temple of the same region.

It is also perhaps important to note that, like the temples of Tillaisthānam, Tiruccātturai and Tiruppaḷaṇam, Tiruvicalūr was a

³⁴ It is possible that those two are also temple men, sons (*makaṇār*) of a God (*mahādevar*) who is Lord (*uṭaiyār*) of Paṅkaḷanāṭu. This question would need to be explored further.

³⁵ The Cōḷa queen Cempiyaṇ Mahā-

devī also made several rich donations of jewels, including one precisely in this temple in Tiruvicalūr. See the table by N. Cane, (Cane, 2017), Annex 3, pp. 887–914, gathering and detailing all the donations by the queen.

Figure 12: The western façade of the Śivayoganātha temple in Tiruvicalūr



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popular shrine attracting innumerable donations.³⁶ Many local notables, men and women, made endowments. But besides these, a consequent number of sovereigns and their queens were person-

³⁶ Only one hymn of the *Tēvāram* ple. though, 1.13, is dedicated to this tem-

ally involved in donating to this temple.³⁷ Donations are mostly of lands, gold or goats for lamps and the procurement of other supplies for the ritual. We notice that the gift of the Cōla queen Cempiyaṇ Mahādevī consists of a jewelled-cover for the *liṅga*, set with precious stones, standing then as a sort of precursor of the gift made by our Pāṇḍya queen. We also note that, besides our queen Kuntappāvaiyār's gift, other Cōla queens donated around the same time: two in the same year, the 3rd regnal year of Rājendracōla, by two of his queens, one unnamed gifting a silver pot for the *abhiṣeka* (SII 23, no. 340) and one called Nakkaṇ Cempiyaṇ Mādeviyār gifting money, forty *kācu*, for land (SII 23, no. 348); two years later, Pṛthumahādeviyār, queen of the father of the ruling king gave 200 *kācu* (SII 23, no. 349). Somehow, the gift of the Pāṇḍya queen appears more prestigious, with the gold, the pearls, the precious stones, and stands out amongst this network of other gifts by illustrious women of the ruling dynasty. Perhaps, as a queen of a great, though temporarily subdued, dynasty, her voice had to be louder than the others.

As a brief conclusion to this exploratory work on Pāṇḍya queens, I would say that, like queens of other dynasties, some of them were active in temple donations. I have been able to locate only three so far: one, unnamed, at the end of the 9th century; one, Kīlavan Tēcapukaḷ, being active either at the beginning of the 10th century or in the middle of it; and one, Atiyirāmaṇ Kuntappāvaiyār,

³⁷ Paṇḍya Varguṇa Mahārāja, in an inscription dated with his own regnal year at the end of the 9th century (SII 14, no. 24); Cīriyavēḷār alias Pirāntaka Iruṅkoḷāṇ of Koṭumpaḷūr, probably belonging to the Irukkuvēḷ dynasty, perhaps in the course of the 10th century (SII 3, no. 119; SII 13, no. 84; SII 3, no. 120; & SII 3, no. 121); Pūrvatēviyār, the mother of a Cōla queen simply called Mātēvikaḷ (SII 13, no. 221; SII 13, no. 271); Cempiyaṇ Mahādevī (SII 3, no. 148); Cittavaṭavaṇ Cūṭṭiyār, queen of Uttamacōla and daughter of the Lord of Miḷāṭu (SII 13, no. 39; & SII 13, no. 40); Paṭṭaṇ Tāṇatoṅkiyār,

queen of Rājarāja (SII 23, no. 19); Tanticattiviṭaṅkiyār alias Lokamādeviyār, also queen of Rājarāja (SII 23, no. 42); a queen of Rājendracōla I (SII 23, no. 340); Nakkaṇ Cempiyaṇ Mādeviyār, a queen of Rājendracōla I (SII 23, no. 348); Pṛthumahādeviyār, queen of Rājarājadeva (SII 23, no. 349); queen Vānavaṇmādeviyār, the mother of Rājendracōla I (SII 23, no. 347); the Cōla king Kōpparakesarivarman alias Śrī Kaṇṭarātittaṇ Madhurantakaṇ himself (SII 32, pt 2, no. 8; & SII 32, pt 2, no. 43); Aṭikal Paḷuvēṭṭaraiyar Maṇavaṇ Kaṇṭaṇ (SII 32, pt 2, no. 31).

in the early 11th century. The information to be drawn from these epigraphs recording their endowments remains tenuous and highly tentative. If the filiation of *Kiḷavaṇ Tēcapukaḷ* is not given in the three epigraphs which recorded her donations of gold for lamps, she perhaps may be seen as a ‘reine du terroir,’ a Country Queen endowing the shrines of her native region, even if this region is the home of the *Cōlas* who have probably already started invading the capital of the dynasty she married into. Later, once the *Pāṇḍya* country has fallen into the hands of the *Cōla* dynasty, *Atiyirāmaṇ Kuntappāvaiyār*, who claims her filiation to the lord of *Paṅkaḷanāṭu*, and queen of an otherwise unknown *Pāṇḍya* king, made a lavish donation to a popular temple of the *Kāvēri* region. This inscription suggests that, if the *Cōla* conquest of the *Pāṇḍya* country subdued the *Pāṇḍya* kings for a while, the voice of the *Pāṇḍya* women continues to resonate.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARE = *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*

EI = *Epigraphia Indica*

IEP = *Inscriptions of the Early Pāṇḍyas: from c. 300 B.C. to 984 A.D.* = Krishnan, K. G. (2002)

SII = *South Indian Inscriptions*

TLI = *A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala States* = Mahalingam, T. V. (1984–95)

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Valérie GILLET joined the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in 2007 and was posted at the EFEO centre of Pondicherry, of which she became the Head in 2011. Since 2017, she is posted in Paris, where she teaches at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) besides her research activities. A specialist of South India, she works mainly with material culture and Tamil epigraphy of the first millennium found in the territories of the Pāṇḍya, Pallava and Cōḷa dynasties, covering almost the entire Tamil-speaking country. Her recent research has focussed on patronage patterns, on the role of Minor dynasties and on the history of selected sites. She is also working on the development of an important divine figure of the Tamil Land, Subrahmaṇya, which led her to begin the exploration of material of the Andhra Country in 2016.

CH. III
AN INTERESTING MEDIAEVAL CŌĻA INSCRIPTION
ABOUT A ŚAIVA ASCETIC
G. VIJAYAVENUGOPAL

ABSTRACT

There are several studies about the Śaiva Mutts and their activities in Tamil Nāṭu: some attempt to trace their origin; some explain their distribution; and some speak about the personnel in the Mutt and their activities. However an interesting inscription of the Mediaeval Cōḷa period, which missed the attention of the scholars who studied Mutts in Tamil Nāṭu, narrates how an ascetic of a Śaiva Mutt helped the King in driving away the enemies by simply performing *japa*, *homa* and *arcana* for which he was rewarded by a donation of a village completely tax free. This paper tries to trace out the nature of development of Śaiva Mutts in Tamil Nāṭu and their relationship with the temple and the kings with the help of some new inscriptions noticed by the present writer in Piranmalai and Thirunallar in Tamil Nāṭu.

A fragmentary inscription of the late 10th century CE found at Kadwaha, in the Guna district in Madhya Pradesh, narrates an incident between a king and an ascetic: a king named Gobhata came to the āśrama of a Guru, an ascetic, with an army of elephants. After listening to the story of the king, the ascetic shed tears for a while and afterwards his eyes became very red with anger, he was like a cloud (flashing and lightning). Then he, that Śiva on earth, blazing, having (conjured) a bow and arrows obtained by his might, appeared like (the God) Śiva in his form of destroyer of the three cities. Having conquered all his enemies, he was showered with flowers by the attendants of the lord of the gods.¹

Alexis SANDERSON mentions another inscription which relates that ‘when hostile forces had invaded the region and the king had been slain, the Śaiva ascetic Dharma-Śiva, abbot of Aranipada monastery, went into battle and routed the enemy through his skill as an archer at the cost of his own life.’² R. N. MISRA explains that

¹ (Sears, 2014), p. 25.

some sages were also well trained warrior saints and suggests that the monastery itself functioned as ‘an arsenal of weapons.’ T. SEARS however suggested that not all conquests were military and that these descriptions may have been meant to evoke a different kind of battle, one that was waged not through weapons but through spiritual power. SEARS points to the role of Śaiva gurus in performing rituals that were believed to have the potency to destroy armies from afar and provide royal patrons with assistance in achieving victory in battle.³ These descriptions reveal anyhow that the ascetics were believed to possess extraordinary powers with which they could help kings to win wars.

It is interesting to note that a more or less similar incident is narrated in a Tamil inscription belonging to the reign of the Cōḷa king Rājādhira II. Datable to 1168 CE, it was found at the Tiruvāliśvara temple at Ārppākkam, Mākaral Taluk, Kāñcīpuram district, in Tamil Nāṭu. K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI had quoted it for referring to the success of the Cōḷa king against the Ceylonese invaders but had not highlighted the role of the ascetics in helping the king during the war by their spiritual powers.⁴ SANDERSON has also referred to it in relation to ascetics becoming the *gurus* of kings and helping them.⁵

In the Pāṇḍya country during the period of Jaṭavarman Kulasēkara around 1162 CE Kulasēkara and Parākrama Pāṇṭiya entered into a succession dispute which led to a civil war. Kulasēkara was assisted by his uncle Kulōttuṅga Cōḷa, who was the Koṅgu king. In the ensuing battle Kulasēkara killed Parākrama and occupied the Madurai throne. Vīra Pāṇḍya, the son of the deceased king Parākrama Pāṇḍya, appealed for aid to the Ceylonese king Parākramabāhu. The Sinhala King sent a large army under the command of two generals (*Daṇḍanāyakas*) viz., Laṅkāpura Daṇḍanāyaka and Jagathraya. These generals along with their army landed at Rāmēswaram, seized the temple and marched towards Madurai, captured it, drove out Kulasēkara and installed Vīra Pāṇḍya on the Madurai throne. Then they proceeded towards the Cōḷa country. On the way they won a battle against the resisting Cōḷa army headed by the army chief Pallavarāya at Toṇḍi and Pāsi, two

² (Sanderson, 2009).

⁴ (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955), p. 368.

³ (Sears, 2014), p. 35.

⁵ (Sanderson, 2009).

coastal villages. This narration is also found in the *Mahāvamsa*. Interestingly this war is narrated in detail in the Ārppākkam inscription.

The Tamil inscription runs as follows. After the eulogy of the king Rājādhirāja II starting with the passage ‘kaṭal cūlnta pār mātarum,’ it states that in the 5th regnal year of Rājādhirāja II the Ceylonese army after:

- A ... having captured Pāṇṭi maṇṭalam, having driven away the King Kulasēkara who was in Madurai, having started skirmishes with the war generals of Mahārāja Rājādhirāja Dēvar, having led a war in the areas of Toṇḍi and Pāci, as the Īlam army won, having heard about the fear of the people in Cōla maṇṭalam and other nadus, I, Etirili Cōla -c-campuvarāyaṇ, having apprehension in my mind, having gone to the Holy Feet of Swāmi Dēvar (and said that) the Ceylonese army had come thus indulging in sinful acts (and that) if it entered into Cōla maṇṭalam, it would cause the total destruction of the temples of Sri Mahādēvar and others, of the Brahmins, of the country, and having hence made a request for a remedy by performing *japa*, *homa* and *arcana* and by all other means, the Dēvar graciously said: we came to know that the soldiers of the Ceylonese army are extreme sinners, bad people, that they have closed the premises of the Lord’s temple at Śrī Rāmēsvaram, made the *pūjā* ceremonies come to a stop and captured all the temple treasury, that they are traitors to Śiva. We will try secret methods so that they will be driven away in the battle. Having said this He graciously performed Aghōra Supūjā for twenty one days. After this a message was brought to me by the messengers from Pallavarāyar (the Cōla army chief); the army and the army chiefs including Jayadrata Daṇḍa Nāyaka and Laṅkāpura Daṇḍa Nāyaka were totally routed and made to run away. Hearing this, I went, with all pomp and grandeur to the Holy Feet of Devar ... I, having recognised that this was the result of the secret efforts of the Devar declared reverently that I would give (a gift / donation) as a token of gratitude for the Holy Feet. He (the Guru) graciously said: if you (feel) that you must give something then give this village Ārppākkam with due characters in stone and copper.
- B I, Etirili Cōla -c-campuvarāyaṇ, by pouring water, gave cultivable lands including wet and dry lands amounting to 167 vēlis in Ārppākkam in Mākaral country in Eyir Kōṭṭam in Jayaṅkoṇṭa cōla maṇṭalam including all that is between the four boundaries, i.e. erikol, residential area, small pools, wells, trees that look up, including all taxes, to Mahāmahēśvara,

one who always thinks about *Śruti* and *Smṛti*, follows the *Dharma*, one who is a *Grahasṭha* Umāpathi Dēvar alias Jñāṇaśiva Dēvar of Gangoly Savarnna Gōtra, who belongs to Dakṣiṇa Rāḍa in Gowda Dēśa.⁶

The two inscriptions more or less relate similar incidents: ascetics bringing victory over the enemies of their patrons, i.e. the kings, by their spiritual powers and getting in turn rewards from the kings. There are also some differences between the two records. In the former inscription the King himself pleads with the ascetic for help whereas in the latter, instead of the king the commander in chief of the Cōḷa monarch requests the ascetic's help in overcoming the enemy. The army chief announces himself the donation and not the king.

We know that during the Pallava period Brahmins were brought into Tamil country mainly to perform Vedic rituals and propagate the *Ithihāsa-Purāṇa* knowledge. Thus several Brahmin settlements were created in Tamil Nāṭu. Evidences in Pāṇḍya country show that activities like *Yajñas*, *Tulābhāras*, *Hiraṇya garbhas*, etc., were performed by the kings. In the Cōḷa country we see that at least from the period of Rājarāja I (985 CE) Rājagurus⁷ give *dīkshās* to kings and associate in temple management and other ritual activities. We also notice at least from the 9th century CE the existence of *mathas* functioning under the leadership of ascetics patronised by the kings. Another aspect of the activities of Brahminical ascetics, gurus, consists in assisting the king to get rid of the enemies by performing *japa*, *homa* and *arcana*. The ritual mentioned in the above cited inscription, called *Aghōra supūjā*, is quite different from that performed in temples. We also notice in several inscriptions in Tamil Nāṭu that certain rituals are performed for the health of the king (when he is suffering from disease, etc.), for the prosperity of the village or for individuals, for their recovery from illness, or to win a war by strengthening the shoulders and / or the swords of the king.⁸ The last kind of ritual that was performed by ascetics is now taken over by the priests in the temple.

The two examples cited here corroborate the view of SANDERSON, who, while tracing the causes of the dominance of Śaivism

⁶ For inscriptions A & B see SII VI, (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955), p. 452.
no. 456, pp. 188–90.

⁸ See (Vijayavenugopal, 2006), no. 102

⁷ On Rājagurus of the Cōḷa kings see Ins 5–6.

during the early mediæval period, observes, on the basis of the information available in inscriptions:

... that it [Śaivism] greatly increased its appeal to royal patrons by extending and adapting its repertoire to contain a body of rituals and theory that legitimated, empowered, or promoted key elements of the social, political and economic process that characterises the early mediæval period.⁹

SANDERSON lists the following key elements for his view point:

1. The spread of a monarchical model of government through the emergence of numerous new dynasties at sub-regional, regional and supra-regional levels.
2. The multiplication of landowning temples, both royal temples in central areas and lesser temples in peripheral zones, often established by subordinate local lords, thus promoting the rural economy and the progressive penetration of the authority of the Centre into new territories.
3. The proliferation of new urban centres, both commercial centres that grew from below through a process of agglomeration and planned settlements, founded by rulers.
4. The expansion of an agrarian base through the creation of villages and the construction of water resources, wells and other means of irrigation, with the steady growth in population that these developments imply.
5. The cultural and religious assimilation of the growing population of communities caught up in this expansion.
 - a. Śaiva Brahmin Gurus were holding the position of royal preceptor (Rājaguru) in numerous new kingdoms both in the Indian sub-continent and in South East Asia, and in this capacity empowering and legitimising the monarch's role by granting him Śaiva initiation (*Śivamaṇḍala dīkṣā*).
 - b. *Rājyābhiṣeka* bestowed both on the king and his chief consort and also given to the heir apparent at the time that he was consecrated to succeed to his father's throne (*Yuvārājābhiṣeka*).
 - c. The king was to be consecrated to take up his office as the 'head of (the Brahminical social order of) the caste-classes and religious disciplines (*Varṇāśrama guru*).'

⁹ (Sanderson, 2009), p. 253.

What SANDERSON calls the dominance of Śaivism can be easily understood as dominance of Brahmin gurus in the context of the Tamil country. We get numerous references in Tamil inscriptions about the points a., b., and c. cited above. *Rājagurus* are reverentially referred to as *Uṭaiyār*, a word which is used for the gods as well as the kings. Besides, they received substantial donations from the kings as well as other nobles. They were also involved in the management of one or several temples. For example *Sarva Śiva Paṇḍita* was not only the Guru of the Cōḷa king Rājēndra I but was also managing the Śiva temples at Tiruvorriyūr and Esālam.¹⁰

SANDERSON classifies the Śaiva works into two categories: lay Śaivism and initiatory Śaivism. Lay Śaivism includes in the Śaiva perspective all instructions for the propitiation of the Vedic deity Rudra found in the Vedas and their ancillary corpora. But the principal sources in this domain are the texts of what may be called the *Śiva dharma* corpus: *Śivadharmā*, *Śivadharmottara*, etc. They advocate the veneration of Śiva and the dedication of a third of one's wealth to the support of his followers, the creation and maintenance of temples and other Śaiva institutions and donations, thereto promising the devotee success and security in this life and, after death, the reward of ascension to the deity's paradise (*Śivalokah*, *Rudralokah*). Initiatory Śaivism sets itself far above lay Śaivism by offering the individual the attainment of liberation (*mokṣa*).

1. The initiatory Śaivism comprises:
 - a. Ati Mārga I: Pañcārthika Pāsupatas.
 - b. Ati Mārga II: Lākuḷas, also known as Kālāmukhas.
 - c. Ati Mārga III: Kāpālikas, also known as Mahāvratins or adherents of Soma siddhānta.
2. Mantra mārga or Tantric Śaivism that developed on the basis of the second and third Ati Mārgas, coexisted with all the three Mārgas and promised not only liberation but also, for the consecrated initiates, the ability to accomplish supernatural acts

¹⁰ For instance Rājēndra Cōḷa's reverential reference to his Guru in his inscription dated 1021 at Thanjavur: 'nam uṭaiyār Sarvaśiva paṇṭita caivācāryar ...' (Hultzsch, 1891), pp. 105–7.

(*siddhi*) such as averting or counteracting of calamities and the warding off or destruction of enemies (*abhicāra*).

3. The Śākta Kulamārga offered the same goals as the Mantramārga.¹¹

A quick survey of the inscriptions of the Cōlas and Pāṇḍyas would reveal examples pertaining to all these traditions. Suffice is to say that the supernatural powers acquired by Umāpathi Dēvar alias Jñāṇa Śiva mentioned in the Ārppākkam inscription cited above is the only one so far as I know mentioning the supernatural powers of an ascetic in the Tamil country. It would be interesting to trace the migration of Brahmin scholars and ascetics into the Tamil country and consequently the role of these in the development of religion, besides their role in guiding the king as *rājagurus* as well as in controlling temples and creating and heading *mathas*. It is interesting to note that the Ārppākkam ascetic is not associated with any *matha*. Nothing is said about his relationship with the king. Most probably he was the Guru of Rajādhirāja II. Nor is any mention made of his connection with common people. It is mentioned in the Grantha portion, i.e. the second part of the inscription, that he is a Grahastha. He was living with his brothers and their wives and children. This second part also reveals more details about his family. The last portion of the inscription is heavily damaged but one can make out from what is readable that though Jñāṇa Śiva was the prime donee, the gift was divided among his brothers and sisters and their children. Accordingly, one Sabbala Devar (may be his brother) got twenty shares. Vidyāpati (may be another brother) got fifteen shares, Sabbala Devar's wife Sabbalāmbā got ten shares, one Perumāḷ (whose relation with Jñāṇa Śiva is not clear) got ten shares, their daughter Manturulā Devī got two shares, Jñāṇa Śiva's two daughters — Rāmā Dēvī and Sāvitrī — got two shares each. Then one Dharaṇīdharan's grand-daughter through his son, Jaso Devī, got one share. His son-in-law, Viteswaran got two shares, like his uncle's son Medogan. Jñāṇa Śiva had also shared the gift to one of his elder brother's three sons. Accordingly Dēvaṇ got three shares; Jñāṇa Śiva also gave two shares to his elder brother's wife.

¹¹ (Sanderson, 2013–14), p. 2.

Accordingly, this inscription is unique in providing some new information regarding a Śaiva Guru and it leads us to further explore the political, religious and cultural role of ascetics and Gurus in the Tamil country during the mediæval period. Like the Swāmi dēvar of the Ārppākkam inscription, one Śrī Manōmaya Dēvar, probably a Guru of a Pāṇḍya king, is mentioned in an inscription newly discovered by the present writer.¹² He was not associated with any *matha*. But we get innumerable references to various kinds of *Mathas* in inscriptions which still have to be studied in further details.¹³

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¹² See Aruḷmiku Tarppāraṇyēcvarar mugam, 2010, 2011) reveal that there were more than 380 *mathas* in Tamil Nāṭu alone.

¹³ (Karashima, Subbarayalu & Shan-

- (2017) *Tirunaḷḷāru aruḷmiku Tarppāraṇyēcvarar tirukkōyil kalveṭṭukkaḷ / Kalveṭṭukkaḷai miṇṭum paṭiyeṭuttu vācittup paṭippittavar Kō. Vicayavēṇukōpāl. Tirunaḷḷāru, Karaikkāl: Tarppāraṇyēcvarar tirukkōyil tēvastāṇam. [Aruḷmiku Tarppāraṇyēcvarar tirukkōyil kalveṭṭukkaḷ no. 36.]*

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CH. IV
CŌĻA COPPER PLATES (10TH–13TH C.): LANGUAGES
AND ISSUERS
EMMANUEL FRANCIS

ABSTRACT

Indian copper-plate grants, initially issued by ruling kings (from the 3rd century CE onwards) and, increasingly, as time passed, by private individuals, are very specific documents, since they are kept by the grant beneficiaries as title-deeds. This paper is an overview of the copper plates of the Cōḷa period (10th to 13th century) issued in Tamil Nadu. The aim is to underline the variety of the documents in this corpus, with regard to the issuing agencies and the languages of redaction. We will review, on the one hand, bilingual Sanskrit and Tamil royal copper plates, issued by the Cōḷa chancellery and recording a royal order, and, on the other hand, copper plates, entirely written in Tamil and dated to the regnal years of Cōḷa kings, but issued by an agency other than royal. Copper plates issued by ‘magnates’ of the Cōḷa realm, ancient forgeries, and some epigraphical mentions will also be discussed.

IV.1 INTRODUCTION

In a recent publication I have argued that copper-plate inscriptions are at the hinge between inscriptions and archival records,¹ as three different mediums could receive the same text (that of a grant), but for different purposes: palm-leaf was used for state registers, copper plates for title-deeds,² and stone for public display and information. As artefacts, the early South Indian copper plates adopted the format of palm leaves, the usual medium for manuscripts in South India, and, as such, were a kind of durable manuscript.

I have also mentioned that the practice of issuing copper plates was in the course of time appropriated by other agencies than the royal chancelleries, which initially produced this type of document. Such a transfer of technology is already attested in the Cōḷa period

¹ (Francis, 2018).

Fig. 10, p. 73.

² See (Schmid, 2021), Fig. 8, p. 70, &

(10th–13th centuries). As a tribute to Noboru KARASHIMA, I would like to present a garland of copper plates of the Cōla period issued in Tamil Nadu.³ They are in the following pages numbered from #1 to #20. I will underline the variety of the documents in this corpus, with regard to the issuing agencies and the languages of redaction. On the one hand, we find royal copper plates (§ IV.2 “Royal grants” #1–13),⁴ issued by the Cōla chancellery and recording a royal order. We have at least ten such sets of royal Cōla copper plates (#1–10), bilingual Sanskrit and Tamil. Three other sets are further included in this group: one (#11) is a kind of supplement to a previous grant (#8) and the other two (#12–13) were found incomplete. On the other hand, we find copper plates, entirely written in Tamil, dated in the regnal years of Cōla, but issued by an agency other than royal, a temple authority as it happens (§ IV.3 “Temple plates”).⁵ In this category, we find five individual plates, that were found together (#14–18). I will then discuss other Cōla copper plates such as plates issued by ‘magnates’⁶ (§ IV.4 “Other grants” #19–20)⁷ and ancient forgeries (§ IV.5),⁸ that is forgeries made in the past in order to claim rights. Finally, I will examine some epigraphical mentions of copper plates (§ IV.6).⁹

Before I start discussing Cōla-period copper plates, let me add a few further general complements concerning this type of document. In 2010, along with bronze images and ritual utensils, buried under the floor of the *maṇḍapa* of the Kailāsanātha temple in Tiruvintālūr, the largest set of copper plates ever found in India was unearthed.¹⁰ The Tiruvintālūr plates contain more than 3000 lines on eighty-five plates engraved recto verso. Their weight, including ring and seal, is approximately 150 kg. It is evident from the artefact itself that when the king sent such plates to the recipients of his grant, this was meant to honour them. The recipients possibly exhibited

³ I have left out of my survey the plates issued: by the Telugu-Cōḍas, e.g. (Srinivasa Ayyangar, 1918), p. 14, Chōlas 2, and (Sridhar & Balasubramanian, 2011), p. 3, Chola 1; by the Cōla-Pāṇḍyas, see (Gai, 1986), p. 50, no. 284; and by the Cōla-Cāḷukyas, e.g. (Gai, 1986), pp. 49–50, nos 282–3, and (Sridhar & Balasubramanian, 2011), p. 3, Chola 3, see also (Cox, 2016), pp. 135ff.

⁴ pp. 63ff.

⁵ pp. 70ff.

⁶ I use here the term put forward by (Cox, 2016), p. 44, instead of ‘chief,’ or ‘feudatory.’

⁷ pp. 72ff.

⁸ pp. 73ff.

⁹ pp. 75ff.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 2.

the plates in order to display their privileged relationship with the king. If copper plates were thus often buried for safety, it is not clear whether this was the regular mode of safe-keeping or only that for troubled times.

As for the copies of the grant that are found on the walls of temples across Tamil Nadu, their *raison d'être*, beyond public information and display, might be also that of permanent archives, but not exactly like the copper plates, which are official title-deeds. Stone inscriptions were indeed mentioned as references in other stone inscriptions recording similar decisions.¹¹ Moreover, several inscriptions attest that, when renovating a temple, that is turning a brick structure into a 'glorious stone temple' (*tirukaṛṇṇali*), copies of earlier inscriptions were carefully re-engraved on the new structure.¹²

IV.2 ROYAL GRANTS

There are thirteen sets of copper-plate grants recording orders of Cōḷa sovereigns, which consisted in a gift to a single Brahmin or a group of Brahmins (that is, a *brahmadeya*, see #1–3, 6, 9–10), to a Brahmanical god (that is, a *devadāna*, see #4–5, 7, 13), Śiva as it happens, to the Buddha (that is, a *paḷḷiccantam*, see #8, 11), or to a Jain congregation (that is also, a *paḷḷiccantam*, see #12). The gift that a charter grants, often described in secondary literature as a gift of land, in fact consisted technically in redirecting royal dues on land produce towards the recipient(s). Such a grant in fact implied from the beginning or in the course of time larger rights of administration on the land given. Very often the gift was the outcome of the request (*viññapti*) of a named individual and supervised under the execution (*āññapti*) of a named individual.¹³ Tables 7–10 contain basic information on these thirteen royal Cōḷa copper-plate grants.¹⁴

The date in column 2 is that of the royal order as recorded in the plates, not that of the plates themselves, which could in fact have been issued several years later. Thus the first and italicised date provided for the larger Leiden plates (#8) is that of the initial royal order by Rājarāja I. The plates, however, were issued by his son and successor Madhurāntaka (Rājendra I), after his father's death, in an

¹¹ See (Orr, 2006), p. xiv.

happens that the requestor and executor are one and the same person.

¹² See *ibid.*, p. vii; (Cane, 2017), pp. 486–92, 545.

¹⁴ pp. 65ff.

¹³ See (Francis, 2013), pp. 136ff. It

unspecified year of his reign, as mentioned in the Sanskrit portion (verses 35–6). In consequence, the verse on the seal—which is the same as that found on the seals of the other three plates issued by Rājendra I (#5–7)—states that the grant is an order of Rājendracōḷa Parakesarivarman (Rājendra I). As for the dates provided for the Tiruvintaḷūr plates (#9), the first and italicised one is that of the initial grant by Rājādhirāja I, made at the request of Rājendra II, who was then a prince; the second and italicised date is that of an order of Rājendra II, who had then succeeded Rājādhirāja I, by which this previously created *brahmadeya* was enlarged; the third is that of an order of Virarājendra, Rājendra II's successor, which confirmed and enlarged the earlier grants.¹⁵ The seal, however, states that the order is that of Rājendrādeva Parakesarivarman (Rājendra II).

The Sanskrit *praśasti* that opens the Tiruvāḷaṅkāṭu plates (#5) mentions feats of Rājendra I (such as the conquest of Kaṭāha) that occurred later than his 6th year. VENKAYYA convincingly suggested that this Sanskrit portion was ‘subsequently composed and added to the original Tamil document,’ and that this also explains ‘why the two portions, though strung on the same ring, are numbered separately.’¹⁶

In the Uṭayēntiram plates (set I, #1), the *vijñapti* of the grant is the Bāṇa-Gaṅga king Pṛthivīpati II Hastimalla. The Sanskrit portion contains, besides the genealogy of the Cōḷas, that of the Bāṇas. A seal, evidently Bāṇa, has been found with the plates, but, as the ring was already cut at the time of discovery, it could have originally belonged to one of the other five sets found at Uṭayēntiram.¹⁷ As pointed out by NAGASWAMY, whereas HULTZSCH, when editing these plates, labelled them ‘Udayendiram Plates of Prithivipati II Hastimalla,’¹⁸ in fact ‘[i]n both the Sanskrit and Tamil portion the donor is Parāntaka Chola, Prithivipati clearly figuring as Vijñapti. (...) The plate should be properly labelled “Udayendram plates of Parāntaka” and is the earliest plate known of the Chola line.’¹⁹

In several sets, a similar procedure is described in the Tamil portion: the king in his palace utters an order, that is an order of gift, then the content of the redacted order is given (as a reported

¹⁵ See (Caṅkaranārāyaṇaṇ *et al.*, 2011), pp. 40, 42, & 49.

¹⁶ See (ARE 1905–6), p. 49.

¹⁷ See (SII 2), p. 376.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, no. 76.

¹⁹ (Nagaswamy, 1979), p. 29.

Table 7: Royal Cōla copper-plate grants – A

<i>Set name^a</i>	<i>Date^b</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language^c</i>
#1 Utayēntiram I 7 plates (SII 2, no. 76)	15th year of Parāntaka, Parake- sarin / <i>matirai koṇṭa</i> Kōpparakēsarivar- mmaṇ = 922 CE, Parāntaka I	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (enlarge- ment) in favour of the village of Udayendu- caturvedimaṅgala	Sanskrit (lns 1–71) Tamil (lns 71–101)
#2 Vēḷaṅcēri 5 plates (Nagaswamy, 1979)	25th year of Parāntaka / Kōnēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ = 932 CE, Parāntaka I	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (creation) in favour of the <i>sabhā</i> of Mēliruñceṟu	Sanskrit (lns 1–41) Tamil (lns 42–78) Sanskrit (lns 78–85)
#3 Aṇṇil 11 plates (EI 15, no. 15)	4th year of Sundaracoḷa / Kōvirācakēcari- parumar = 960 CE, Sundara Cōḷa Parāntaka II	<i>Brahmadeya</i> in favour of 1 recipient	Sanskrit (lns 1–123) Tamil (lns 123–99) Sanskrit (lns 199–200)

^a In this column, the number of plates is italicised when the set is incomplete.

^b In this column, is first given the internal date of the plates, i.e. the year and name of the king (as given in the Sanskrit portion of the plate and / or, separated by a dash, in the Tamil portion) under whose rule the order was issued. Then is given the corresponding year in our CE, followed by the name of the king as most commonly used in historiographical writing. On italicised dates in the boxes of the column date, see p. 63.

^c In this column, the line count is continuous when the portions in different languages follow directly one another. The Tamil text can, for instance, follow the *praśasti* directly in the same line, as in set #1. The line count is discontinuous, for instance in sets #5, #6 or #8, when portions are treated as discrete units in the set, e.g. each having its own independent numbering of plates. In the cases of discontinuity, it is probable, or possible, that different portions were composed and issued at different times.

Table 8: Royal Cōla copper-plate grants – B

<i>Set name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language</i>
#4 MGM Uttama Cōla 5 plates ^a (SII 3, no. 128)	16th year of Madhuronmathin / Kōpparakēcari- panmarāṇa Uta- macōladevar = 985 CE, Uttamacōla	<i>Devadāna</i> in favour of the god who gra- ciously remains in Ūrakam at Kac- cippēṭu (Kāñcīpu- ram)	Sanskrit (lns 1–11) Tamil (lns 11–121)
#5 Tiruvālaṅkāṭu 31 plates (SII 3, no. 205)	6th year of Madhurāntaka, Rājendracoḷa / Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ = 1018 CE, Rājendra I	<i>Devadāna</i> (i.e. trans- formation of a <i>brah- madeya</i> into a <i>de- vadāna</i>) in favour of Mahādeva (Śiva) of Paḷaiyaṇūr / Tiruvālaṅkāṭu	Sanskrit (lns 1–271, plates 1a–10a) Tamil (lns 1–21, plates 10a–10b) ^b Tamil (lns 1–517, plates 11a–31b) Sanskrit (lns 517–24, plate 31b)
#6 Karantai Tamil Caṅkam ^c 57 plates (Krishnan, 1984)	8th year of Madhurāntaka / Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ = 1020 CE, Rājendra I	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (cre- ation) in favour of 1083 recipients	Sanskrit (131 lns, 3 plates) Tamil (1041 lns, 22 plates) Tamil (1456 lns, 32 plates)
#7 Ecālam 15 plates (Nagaswamy, 1987)	24th year of Madhurāntaka, Rājendracoḷa / Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ = 1036 CE, Rājendra I	<i>Devadāna</i> (creation) in favour of the Śiva of the Rāmeśvara temple (in modern Ecālam)	Sanskrit (lns 1–80) Tamil (lns 80–424)

^a At least one plate is missing at the beginning and at least another at the end.

^b This portion, which comes in direct continuation with the Sanskrit portion on the recto of plate 10, records a further request by an individual for a *devadāna* in favour of Ammai Nācciyār in the temple of Tiruvālaṅkāṭuṭaiyar at Paḷaiyaṇūr. This is also dated in the 6th year of Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ, but was added at least one century later, as indicated by its script. See (SII 3), p. 384.

^c It has been suggested that two ‘stray plates’ of same provenance were parts of another grant by the same king, cf. (ARE 1949–50), Appendix I, A (1949–50), no. 58. KRISHNAN however convincingly argued that these were part of the same set, cf. (Krishnan, 1984), p. 2, n. 1.

Table 9: Royal Cōla copper-plate grants – C

<i>Set name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language</i>
#8 Larger Leiden 21 plates (EI 22, no. 34)	21st year of <i>Rājarāja Rājake- sarivarman / Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇṭāṇ</i> = 1006 CE, <i>Rājarāja I</i> The plates were is- sued by his son and successor <i>Rājendra I</i>	<i>Paḷḷiccantam</i> (cre- ation) in favour of the Buddha of the Cūḷāmaṇivar- mmavihāra in Nāgippaṭṭana	Sanskrit (111 lns, 5 plates) Tamil (332 lns, 16 plates)
#9 Tiruvintaḷūr 85 plates ^a (Caṅkaranārāyaṇaṇ <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	35th year of <i>Vijayarājendra</i> <i>Rājādhirāja</i> = 1053 CE, <i>Rājādhirāja I</i> 4th year of <i>Rājendradeva</i> = 1056 CE, <i>Rājendra II</i> 2nd year of <i>Vīrarājendra</i> , = 1065 CE, <i>Vīrarājendra</i>	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (cre- ation, then enlarge- ment) in favour of 656 or 730 recipients ^b	Sanskrit (lms 1–272) Tamil (lms 272–3170)
#10 Cārāla 7 plates (EI 25, no. 25)	7th year of <i>Rājendradeva</i> / <i>Rājakesarin</i> <i>Vīrarājendradevaṇ</i> , Śaka 991 = 1070 CE, <i>Vīrarājendra</i>	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (cre- ation) in favour of 3 named recipients and others	Sanskrit (lms 1–155) Tamil (lms 155–89) ^c Sanskrit (lms 189–92) Tamil (lms 192–201) Sanskrit (lms 201–8) Tamil (lms 208–11)

^a At least one plate is missing at the beginning.^b The first figure is that given in the Sanskrit portion, the second one in the Tamil portion. See (Caṅkaranārāyaṇaṇ *et al.*, 2011), p. 45.^c Lines 155–8 are in fact in Grantha and Sanskrit. They constitute a *birudāvalī* dependent on the name of the king and his year, which appear in line 159.

Table 10: Royal Cōla copper-plate grants – D

<i>Set name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language</i>
#11 Smaller Leiden 3 plates (EI 22, no. 35)	20th year of Kulōttuṅkacōlatēvar = 1090 CE, Ku- lottuṅga I	<i>Paḷḷiccantam</i> (cre- ation) in favour of the shrines in Rājen- dracōḷapperumpallī and Rājarājap- perumpallī (that is, the Śrīśailen- dracūḍāmaṇivar- mavihāra) in Paṭṭaṇakūrṛam	Tamil (52 lns)
#12 Paḷḷaṅ Kōvil 6 plates ^a (Subramaniam, 1959)	10th c. (?) (on palæ- ographical grounds)	<i>Paḷḷiccantam</i> (cre- ation) in favour of the Sundaracōḷappe- rumpallī	Tamil (22 + 22 + 22 + 22 + 22 + 22 = 132 lns)
#13 Utayēntiram II 2 plates ^b (EI 3, no. 14)	12th c. (?) (on palæ- ographical grounds)	<i>Brahmadeya</i> (cre- ation) in favour of 150 recipients	Sanskrit (13 + 12 = 25 lns)

^a Only the plates numbered 13, 15, 18, 19, 21 & 23 are available.

^b Only the plates numbered 2 and 5 are available. One further plate of this set was reported to have been found in Nāmakkaḷ (ARE 1905–6, Appendix I, A (1905), no. 29). As it seems that it was never published, we are not able to assess this statement.

speech of the king).²⁰ As the date of the order is supplied, it comes —when it applies, that is from the reign of Rājarāja I— with the embedded *meṃkkīrtti* (Tamil metrical eulogy) of the king whose year is mentioned.²¹ Further are provided the details about the recipients, which in the case of *brahmadeyas* consist in long lists of Brahmins.

Most of these copper-plate sets have been found with a seal (see Frontispiece, p. iv): bearing a Sanskrit *anuṣṭubh* it specifies whose order it is and it is ornamented with typical Tamil dynastic emblems (the tiger of the Cōlas, the double fish of the Pāṇḍyas, and the bow of

²⁰ See (Ali, 2000), pp. 172ff., for the details of procedure as mentioned in the Tiruvālaṅkāṭu plates (#5).

²¹ See (Orr, 2009), p. 102.

the Cēras) overhung by royal paraphernalia (an umbrella between two fly-whisks).²²

The seal of the Karantai Tamiḷ Caṅkam plates (#6) bears the following legend:

rājad-rājanya-makuṭa-śreṇi-ratneṣu śāsanam
etaḍ rājendracoḷasya parakesarivarmanmaṇaḥ

(Borne) on the jewels in rows on the crowns of the ruling kings,
This (is) the order of Rājendracoḷa Parakesarivarman (Rājendra I).

Typical is the mention of the other kings obeying the order of the Cōḷa sovereign and bearing it on their heads, in order to show respect, like the villagers do, according to epigraphical descriptions, when a royal order reaches their settlement.

The seal has several functions. It seals the ring into which each plate is strung, so that no plate could be added or removed. It authenticates the grant by identifying the issuer king. It takes part in the eulogy of the donor king in describing the Cōḷa sovereign as the supreme king of Tamil land, as he owns the emblems of three great traditional dynasties of this region, and beyond, as the order is bowed to by the other kings.

As for the language used in these royal Cōḷa grants, they are, in continuation with their early Pallava counterparts, bilingual Sanskrit and Tamil (#1–10) and they display a ‘linguistic division of labour.’²³ These grants thus are instances of extended diglossia – or hyperglossia in POLLOCK’s term: the opening Sanskrit portion eulogises the donor and his family, while the following Tamil portion provides the worldly details of the transaction.²⁴ Quite regularly further Sanskrit portions (most often versified) come at the end, after the Tamil portion, and provide the names of the poet of the Sanskrit *praśasti* and of the craftsmen responsible for manufacturing the plates.

The smaller Leiden plates (#11) make here an exception: as a grant complementary of that of the larger Leiden plates (#8), they

²² The Karantai Tamiḷ Caṅkam plates (#6) were found with two cut rings, only one being complete with its seal, cf. (Kishnan, 1984), p. 1.

²³ See (Pollock, 2006), pp. 117ff.

²⁴ By diglossia is meant the use, in the same text, of two different registers

of the same language in different capacities (e.g. praise versus transaction); there is extended diglossia when two different languages (e.g. Sanskrit versus Tamil), rather than two different registers of the same language, are so used.

do not start with a Sanskrit *praśasti*, but are entirely redacted in Tamil and start at once with the *meykkīrtti* of the issuing king. As for the Paḷḷaṅ Kōvil plates (#12), they are also entirely in Tamil for what we have got (the first extant plate bears the number 13), but the set is incomplete and very plausibly comprised a lost initial Sanskrit *praśasti*. Of the Uṭayēntiram plates (set II, #13) we have only two plates in Sanskrit, found without ring nor seal. In the plate numbered 2 we have an incomplete genealogy of the Cōḷas. In the plate numbered 5, Vīracōḷa, seemingly a title rather than a name indicating membership of the Cōḷa family, made a grant after having been requested by a Brahmin and having asked the permission from Parakesarivarman, a cognomen that applies to many Cōḷa sovereigns. There is no definitive identification for the Vīracōḷa of the record as this title is not specific enough.²⁵ On palaeographic grounds, the plates can be dated to the late Cōḷa period. The Sanskrit portion was probably followed by a Tamil portion now lost. We thus possibly have here a set similar to the royal diglossic grants, in fact very similar to the other Uṭayēntiram plates (set I, #1), that is, a royal Cōḷa order issued after the request made by a magnate of his realm.

IV.3 TEMPLE PLATES

Quite different from royal Cōḷa grants are five copper plates that were found in the Pārijātavaneśvara temple at Tirukkaḷar (ten miles from Mannārkuṭi, in the Tanjore district). All entirely written in Tamil and strung on a single ring without seal, they concern the Śiva temple at Tirukkaḷar over a period of almost two centuries under the rule of different Cōḷa kings. Table 11 “The Tirukkaḷar plates” contains basic information concerning them.²⁶

The set #14 consists mostly in the *meykkīrtti* of Rājendra I and his regnal year (lns 1–28). The last two and a half lines very succinctly states the extent of the *devadāna* land of the Mahādeva of Veṅkūrkkāḷa-Tirukkaḷar. The sets #15 and #16 record gifts of paddy made for cult provisions and services in the temple. The set #17 regulates the gift of #16, as far as the feeding of devotees is concerned,

²⁵ See (Foulkes, 1880), p. 49, for a list of occurrences of the title Vīracōḷa. A

Uṭayēntiram plates (set I, #1). ²⁶ p. 71.

Vīracōḷa is also mentioned in the other

Table 11: The Tirukkaḷar plates

<i>Set name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language</i>
#14 Tirukkaḷar I 1 plate (SII 3, no. 207)	18th year of Rājentiracōḷatēvar = 1030 CE, Rājendra I	Gives the extent of <i>de-vadāna</i> land of the Mahādeva of Veṅkūrkaḷa-Tirukkaḷar	Tamil (30 lns)
#15 Tirukkaḷar II 1 plate (SII 3, no. 208)	31st year of Rājādhirājadevar = 1049 CE, Rājādhirāja I	Gift of paddy by Tirumaṇappiccaṇ in favour of two Brahmins	Tamil (6 lns)
#16 Tirukkaḷar III 1 plate (SII 3, no. 209)	28th year of Kolōttuṅkacōḷatēvar ^a = 1098 CE, Kulottuṅga I	Gift of paddy by Civaṇ Tillai Nāyakaṇ in favour of the Mahādeva of Tirukkaḷar for various purposes (procession, offerings, and feeding of the devotees)	Tamil (19 lns)
#17 Tirukkaḷar IV 1 plate (SII 3, no. 210)	18th year of Irājarājatēvaṇ = 1164 CE, Rājarāja II (?)	Regulation of the previous gift (#16) by the Māheśvarars concerning the feeding of the devotees of the Mahādeva at Tirukkaḷar	Tamil (17 lns)
#18 Tirukkaḷar V 2 plates (SII 3, no. 211)	29th year of Kulōttuṅkacōḷatēvaṇ = 1207 CE, Kulottuṅga III	List of gold and silver ornaments of the Nāyaṇār (that is, Śiva) at Tirukkaḷar	Tamil (43 lns)

^a The plate reads *kelōttuṅkacōḷatēvar*, that is, *kulōttuṅkacōḷatēvar*.

as some recipient families were found without male descendants. As for the set #18, it provides a list of the ornaments of the god.

None of the transactions recorded in these five individual plates is presented as an order (*śāsana*). Cōḷa kings seem to appear in these records only for the date. The Cōḷa sovereign name is preceded by a *meykkīrtti* in the set #14, by a short epithet in the sets #15 and #18. The transactions recorded in these plates do not directly require royal sanction. There is no authenticating royal seal. The Tirukkaḷar plates thus are not documents issued by the royal

chancellery. They were probably issued by the Tirukkaḷar temple authority or, possibly, by the Māheśvaras. They are Cōḷa as far as their date is concerned, but not their issuer. They are all redacted in Tamil.

IV.4 OTHER GRANTS

Two other sets, dated to the year of a Cōḷa sovereign, appear to be copper plates issued by magnates of the Cōḷa realm. Table 12 “Cōḷa-period magnate plates” contains basic information concerning them.

Table 12: Cōḷa-period magnate plates

<i>Set name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Purpose / content</i>	<i>Language</i>
#19 Tirucceṅkōṭu I 3 plates (SII 3, no. 213)	5th year of Rājakēcaripaṇmaṛ = 961 CE, Sundara Cōḷa Parāntaka II (?) = 990 CE, Rājarāja I (?)	<i>Devadāna</i> to Parameśvarar of Tūciyūr	Tamil (44 lns)
#20 Tirucceṅkōṭu II 1 plate (SII 3, no. 212)	10th year of Rājakēcaripaṇmaṛ = 966 CE, Sundara Cōḷa Parāntaka II (?) = 995 CE, Rājarāja I (?)	Tax regulation & <i>Devadāna</i> to Parameśvarar of Tūciyūr	Tamil (7 + 5 = 12 lns)

The Rājakesarivarman of both Tirucceṅkōṭu sets (#19–20) has been identified with Rājarāja I by H. KRISHNA SASTRI,²⁷ with his father Sundaracōḷa (Sundara Cōḷa Parāntaka II) by NATARAJAN and KASINATHAN.²⁸ The first Tirucceṅkōṭu set (#19) records a gift of lands by Kollimaḷavaṇ Orriyūraṇ Piratikaṇṭa[va]rmaṇ to the Parameśvarar, Lord of the Tirumūlasthāṇam, of the stone temple at Tūciyūr. The second Tirucceṅkōṭu set (#20) consists in two parts: it first fixes (first text, of seven lines) a tax regulation at Tūciyūr by Maḷavaraiyaṇ Cuntaracōḷaṇ, and then records (second text, of five lines) a gift by Kollimaḷavaṇ Piratikaṇṭaṇ Cuntaracōḷaṇ to the

²⁷ (ARE 1913–14), p. 90, § 15. p. 73.

²⁸ (Natarajan & Kasinathan, 1992),

Parameśvarar of the stone temple at Tūciyūr. NATARAJAN and KASINATHAN suggest that Kollimalavaṇ Orriyūraṇ Piratikaṇṭavarman of the set #19 was the father of Maḷavaraiyaṇ Cuntaracōḷaṇ alias Kollimalavaṇ Piratikaṇṭaṇ Cuntaracōḷaṇ of the set #20.²⁹ As his title indicates, Cuntaracōḷaṇ has, or claims to have, some connection with the ruling Cōḷa family, as an official. Note that the word *śāsana* appears in none of these two sets, in contrast to the royal Cōḷa copper-plate grants, and that neither ring nor seal are reported to have been found with the plates. Both sets are redacted in Tamil.

IV.5 ANCIENT FORGERIES

Mention must also be made of so-called Cōḷa copper plates. These are plates considered, or suspected to be, ancient forgeries, which have, most probably because of their uncertain authenticity, generally remained unpublished. We have thus, in general, only short descriptions.

Two sets of plates, of the same content, one in Tamil and the other in Kannaḍa, were found at Pēraiyyūr (Madurai district).³⁰ They record, in favour of Kalyāṇatēcīkakēntirasvāmi of the Vīraśaivamaṭṭha, the right to collect fees from his disciples. Permission to do so is granted by Karikāḷa Cōḷa, a legendary Cōḷa king. Both plates are dated to the Kali year 3361 (ca. 259 CE), which clearly makes them spurious, considering that the earliest known royal Cōḷa copper-plate grants date to the 10th century.

A single plate from Vedāraṇyam (Thanjavur district) is mentioned by GAI.³¹ From the few details available, we know that the plate, in Tamil, was issued by Rājarājendra Śoharājargaḷ, in the Śaka year 1208 (ca. 1286 CE), the Kali year 4374 (?) (ca. 1272 CE) and in the year Jaya (?) of the Jovian cycle (ca. 1234 or 1294 CE). The date in Kali era corresponds to the reign of Rājendra III, but does not match the year of the Jovian cycle of uncertain reading.

Another set (of an unknown number of plates), in Tamil and dated to the Citrabhānu year of the Jovian cycle, was reported to

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 74.

³¹ (Gai, 1986), p. 48, no. 272. See (ARE

³⁰ See (ARE 1960–1), Appendix I, A 1904–5, p. 6, no. XI. (1960–1), nos 24–5.

be in the Madras Government Museum.³² The king mentioned is Rājendrasimha, possibly a Cōḷa according to the ARE. The ARE notes that the set is spurious, contains a eulogy of the king, records a gift of land to Paramānandayogi, and is in characters of about the 17th century.

Further spurious Cōḷa plates were already described by SEWELL in 1884.³³ This is actually a group of thirteen individual plates obtained from North Arcot and Chingleput districts, which were deposited in the then Madras Museum (today Chennai Government Museum). Most are made of copper and are redacted in Tamil (in Grantha characters!), but there are instances of leaden plates and of plates redacted in Telugu. They are dated in the Śaka years 1008 or 1011 (ca. 1086 or 1089 CE) and most record grants by a Cōḷa king named Vīracaṅkuṭaiyāṇ or Vīracaṅkuṭaiyavaṇ, ‘The possessor of the heroic conch’ or ‘The possessor of a large army of heroic warriors.’ No such king is known in the list of Cōḷa sovereigns and the plates cannot be ascribed to the 11th century on palaeographical grounds. SEWELL, however, observing that these plates bear a Persian seal —according to SRINIVASA AYYANGAR, reading *Rāhēlilla*, that is, *dharma* or ‘charity’³⁴— argued that ‘no forger would be so foolish as to annex [a] Persian seal’ and suggested that ‘they form a series of older authentic documents, recording grants confirmed by [a] Muhammadan chief at the time the copies were taken, and therefore bearing his seal.’³⁵ Nine of these plates, in fact ten as two plates are exactly similar, were edited and translated by BURGESS and NAṬĒŚA ŚĀSTRĪ, who were adamant in their opinion on their authenticity, introducing them with the heading ‘Nine spurious grants.’³⁶

³² See (ARE 1973–4), Appendix I, A (1973–4), no. 7. This set, however, does not seem to appear in any of the catalogues of copper plate grants of the Madras / Chennai Museum, that is, (Srinivasa Ayyangar, 1918) and (Sridhar & Balasubramanian, 2011).

³³ (Sewell, 1884), nos 4, 13–15, 139–40, 143–4, 147, 149–50, 177–8. See also (Srinivasa Ayyangar, 1918), pp. 14ff., Chōḷas 3–14, and (Ran-

gacharya, 1919), pp. 321–3, nos 1–3, 7–8, 10–11, 14–16.

³⁴ See (Srinivasa Ayyangar, 1918), p. 15. My Colleagues Corinne LEFÈVRE and Fabrizio SPEZIALE suggest that this unconventional Perso-Arabic expression is a compound that could be split as *rāh ilā Allāh*, that is ‘way to Allah.’

³⁵ (Sewell, 1884), p. 2.

³⁶ (Burgess & Naṭēśa Śāstrī, 1886), pp. 137–47.

These are just a few instances of spurious Cōla plates.³⁷ A closer examination of all these unpublished copper plates is required in order to settle the question of their status, but it seems that most of them are ancient forgeries made to claim rights on the authority of Cōla sovereigns and, as such, are examples of the appropriation of copper plate technology by non-royal agencies.

IV.6 EPIGRAPHICAL REFERENCES TO PLATES

Before I conclude, it should also be noted that the extant Cōla plates, whoever issued them, are just the remaining portion of what was most probably a larger corpus. From epigraphical reports we know of plates partly or entirely melted in order to ascertain whether they were made of gold or in order to make vessels.³⁸ Copper plates were also melted in order to make cannons.³⁹

Cōla-period inscriptions also frequently mention copper-plate grants. Stone inscriptions recording royal orders state that these should be engraved on stone and copper.⁴⁰

The set IV of Tirukkaḷar (#17) makes reference to an earlier grant recorded on copper and dated to the 28th year of Kulottuṅgacōla (line 7: *munpu veṭṭiṇa ceppēṭṭu paṭiyil*, ‘according to the copper plate earlier engraved’), which instituted a paddy-gift for feeding the devotees (*tēvaraṭiyār*) of the Māhadeva who rose at Tirukkaḷar (*tirukkaḷar muḷaitta mātēvaṇ*). This earlier grant, as we have seen,

³⁷ Other possible examples are two individual plates, also from the Chingleput district, and the Kolatūru plates from Karnataka. See respectively (Srinivasa Ayyangar, 1918), p. 19, Chōḷas 15–16, and (Rice, 1894), Tirumakūḍlu-Narasîpūr Taluq, no. 94.

³⁸ See (Ramesh, 1984), pp. 20, 23.

³⁹ Christophe VIELLE pointed out to me a late-18th century source attesting this practice. See (M.D.L.T. [Maistre de La Tour], 1783), p. 136, n. 1, about the Duc d’AYEN enquiring about ‘huge quantities of books made of copper plates, held by dozens with rings, which

were doomed to be melted down in order to make cannons’ (« des quantités immenses de livres composés de planches de cuivre, retenues par douzaines avec des anneaux, qui étoient destinés à être fondus pour faire des canons ») and learning that ‘all these books contained nothing but the accounts of the Pagodas’ expenses, and the names of the Brahmins and their children’ (« tous ces livres ne contenoient autre chose que les comptes des dépenses des Pagodes, & les noms des Bramines & de leurs enfans »).

⁴⁰ See (Francis, 2018), p. 23.

is the set III of Tirukkaḷar (#16), which required then some further regulation as some recipients' families were without male descendants. The Māheśvarars decided that the gift applies also to female descendants. In this instance the referred copper plate is extant and was found along with the referring plate, but this is not always the case.

At Tirukkaḷukkuṇṇam, a Tamil stone inscription dated to the 23rd year of the Cakravartin Kulōttuṅkacōḷadeva alias Kōrājakēcari-panmar (Kulottuṅga I alias Rājakesarivarman), found on the south wall of the second *prākāra* of the Vēdagirīśvara temple, right of the entrance,⁴¹ describes the boundaries of the village in accordance with, we are told, a copper plate. It appears that the plates were kept in the temple of Śrīrājendracōḷaviṇṇakarālvāṇ ('The glorious Lord of the Viṣṇu temple [founded by] Rājendracōḷa') in the middle of the Brahmin settlement named Vānavaṇmātēviccaturvedimaṅkalam ('The auspicious [settlement] of experts in four Vedas [founded by] Vānavaṇmātēvi'):

vānavaṇmātēviccaturvedimaṅkalattu naṭuvil śrīrājendracōḷaviṇṇaka-
rālvāṇ kōyilil ūrkaḷ ellai ceppiirunta ceppēṭṭu śāsanam (Ins 2–3)

order on copper (*ceppēṭṭu śāsanam*, the equivalent of Sanskrit *tāmra-śāsana*) which stipulated (*ceppi-y-irunta*) the boundaries of villages in the temple of Śrīrājendracōḷaviṇṇakarālvāṇ in the middle (*naṭuvil*) of the Vānavaṇmātēviccaturvedimaṅkalam

After the list of the names of several people who acted as supervisors (*kaṇkāṇi*) in this matter and a lengthy description of the boundaries of the concerned lands, the inscription concludes thus: '(made) according to the copper (plates)' (*[ceppēṭṭin pa]ṭi*, line 28). These original plates, seemingly issued by a Rājendracōḷa, have not been found as far as I know. One could even doubt that they ever existed, but it is plausible.

IV.7 CONCLUSIONS

The above catalogue shows that under the label 'Cōla copper plates' various types of documents are sorted. During the Cōla period, copper plates were issued by various agents: the royal chancellery

⁴¹ (ARE 1893–4), Appendix I, B (1894), 1989), p. 70, Cg. 305.
no. 180; (SII 5), no. 473; (Mahalingam,

(#1–13), temple authorities (#14–18), and magnates (#19–20). Different language strategies were adopted. The royal plates, with the exception of the smaller Leiden plates (#11), conform to the model of earlier Pallava plates, as they are examples of extended diglossia, where two different languages are used in different functions: Sanskrit for the eulogy, Tamil for the business part. As such they address in their praise function the Sanskrit Cosmopolis of POLLOCK. Some of these royal Cōla copper-plate grants also display another type of diglossia, though not extended in these instances, when we find a *meykkīrtti* in the Tamil portion: the metrical *meykkīrtti* represents one register of Tamil language fit for the eulogy of the king, while the rest of the text, dealing with the business part proper of the transaction, is in Tamil prose.

The plates issued by temple authorities (#14–18) and by magnates (#19–20) were redacted in Tamil. Among these, the only one in which a *meykkīrtti* is found (#14) constitutes an example of diglossia. The recourse to Tamil evinces the fact that the intended audience was more localised and restricted to the Tamil-speaking South.

The ancient forgeries of plates purportedly issued by Cōla kings attest the enduring authority of this glorious dynasty of the past and the backing of later-time claims by alleged association.

As for the epigraphical references to plates so far unfound, they mean that we can expect to enlarge the corpus of Cōla copper plates by further discoveries, such as that of the Tiruvintaḷūr plates (#9) in 2010.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great many thanks to R. BALASUBRAMANIAN at the Chennai Government Museum and Jan Just WITKAM at the Leiden University Library for facilitating my access to the original plates discussed in this article; to Christophe VIELLE for pointing out to me the fate of copper plates in the late 18th century, as mentioned in the *Histoire d'Ayder-Ali-Khan*; and to Corinne LEFÈVRE and Fabrizio SPEZIALE for their insights on the 'Persian seal' on the plates purportedly issued by the Cōla king Viracaṅkuṭaiyāṇ.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARE = *Annual Report on Epigraphy*

EI = *Epigraphia Indica*

SII = *South Indian Inscriptions*

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collections of manuscripts and their paratexts (Paris BnF and Hamburg Stabi) while *The Domestication of 'Hindu' Asceticism and the Making of South and Southeast Asia* 2019–25 (DHARMA, ERC Synergy Grant 2018) is about the religious, political and social history of South and Southeast Asia between the 6th and the 13th centuries, based mainly on epigraphical sources, but investigating also manuscripts, literature, material culture.

CH. V
SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF BRAHMADĒYAS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM
N. ATHIYAMAN

ABSTRACT

In Tamil Nadu, *brahmadēya* settlements started from about the 6th century CE, though grants to individual *Brāhmaṇas* are referred to already from the early Pallava Period (about the 4th century CE). These settlements were made in two ways: i. by converting some existing (non-*Brāhmaṇa*) settlements into *brahmadēyas*; and ii. by creating new settlements by reclaiming forest and uninhabited land for cultivation with new irrigation facilities. In either case, it seems that the irrigation system of these *brahmadēyas* was well designed to form a grid pattern to supply water to the lands. This could be understood from the descriptions of the fields and canals in the inscriptions. It is interesting to note that the boundaries of the land donated were marked in cardinal directions by some irrigation channels denoted by the terms *vāykkāl*, *kaṇṇāru* and *vati*. The *vāykkāl* and *kaṇṇāru* are generally found to flow perpendicular to *vati*, creating a sort of grid pattern. This grid pattern was necessary and useful to allot equal shares of land to each of the *Brāhmaṇa* settlers. An analysis of the irrigation system as gleaned from mediæval inscriptions will throw light on the spatial organisation of the *brahmadēya* settlements over the period. In this paper an attempt is made by a sample survey through collating all the inscriptional data in the Kaveri delta, namely the Pāpanācam region. Inscriptions of this region are found in the publications of the State Department of Archaeology. All the inscriptions containing data on irrigation systems are thoroughly scrutinised and an analysis is made on the spatial dynamics of *Brāhmaṇa* settlements, and a proposition is made that wherever an organised grid pattern of irrigation system is found, that settlement was newly created. A clear description of the typical irrigation pattern in the *brahmadēya* is also attempted.

V.1 INTRODUCTION

THE inscriptional terminology and the irrigation drainage system of the Cōla regime have been dealt with by many scholars. The drainage and distribution canals and their related terms have been ably studied by SUBBARAYALU.¹ He has attempted to visualise the settlement and irrigation drainage pattern of Uttiramērūr alias Uttiramallūr using the corpus of ninety inscriptions² coupled with field work. Such inscriptions related to irrigation occur in other sites, if not as abundant as in Uttiramērūr, and are mostly found in the river irrigation regions. The lands donated to *Brāhmaṇa* families by royal order seem to follow a particular pattern, a fact which implies that they were created newly. This paper discusses this topic by thoroughly scrutinising all the inscriptions regarding the irrigation pattern found in the Pāpanācam Taluk of Tañcāvūr District. On the basis of the chronology of the inscriptions and their contents, the data are analysed in order to examine whether the settlements were newly created or were former settlements converted in to *brahmadēyas*.

V.2 IRRIGATION SYSTEM DURING THE CŌLA PERIOD

Even before the mediæval Cōla period, river and tank irrigation was widespread in the Tamil region.³ The taming of water through canal and sluice systems was not unknown. As the Brahmanical settlements (*brahmadēyams*) quickly spread during the Cōla period we find more information in inscriptions regarding the irrigation channels, accounted as the boundaries of the lands granted to the temples. From those inscriptions we understand the nature of the irrigation system. Here, the terms canal and channel are used interchangeably. When *brahmadēyams* were established, it seems that a regular pattern of canal systems was created newly, so that the share allotted to an individual is exactly known. This view is already expressed by SUBBARAYALU.⁴ The main canals which ran West to East were the major water supply system and they follow the natural course of the river in Tamil Nadu. From this major channel was formed a grid pattern to distribute the water to the

¹ (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 59–60.

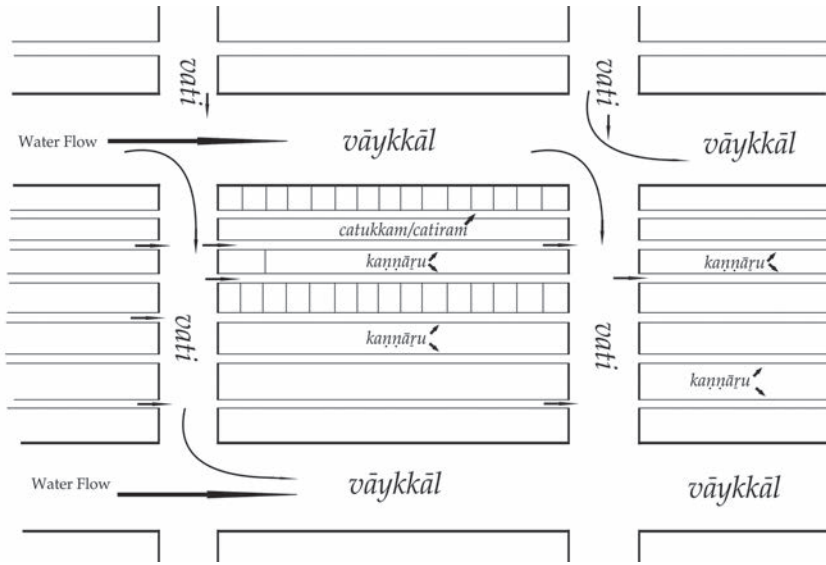
² (Subbarayalu, 2016), pp. 47–57.

³ (Srinivasan, 1991).

⁴ (Subbarayalu, 2016), p. 61.

lands. From the inscriptions, a regular framework composed of *vati*, *vāykkāl*, *kaṇṇāru* and *catiram* could be identified.⁵ *Brāhmaṇa* settlements provided equal shares to each *Brāhmaṇa* household that settled there.⁶ The land granted is denoted by *catiram* (literally a square) with an ordinal number as prefix. The boundaries of those *catiram* are indicated by the *vati*, *vāykkāl*, and *kaṇṇāru* system and its shape could be a square or rectangle (Fig. 13). In order to understand the irrigation pattern during the Cōla period, the direction and the function of each canal are described here.

Figure 13: Typical irrigation network in *brahmadēya* villages of Cōla regime



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vāykkāl

This is the main distributing channel in an irrigation system for a village. The water for this channel is diverted from a major river or a tributary of a river. So it can be said that *vāykkāls* functioned as feeder channels for a village. They generally run West-East as this is the gradient of the land in the Kaveri delta. The *vāykkāls* were generally named after a king or queen or God. The number of *vāykkāls* in each village varied according to the size of the settlement. That is, if the village had a larger irrigation system a greater number of *vāykkāl* is found.

⁵ (Subramaniam, 1983), p. 109.

⁶ (Subbarayalu, 2012), p. 61.

vati

The *vati* diverts from the *vāykkāl* perpendicularly and runs North-South. From these channels small distributing channels called *kaṇṇāru* carried the water directly to the field blocks, mostly in East-West direction. The excess water from *kaṇṇāru* is drained in the downstream side of another *vati*. The excess water from the *vati* is drained in the *vāykkāl* situated in the downstream side. The *vatis* also were named after a king or queen or God. The number of *vatis* in each *brahmadēyam* varied according to the size of irrigated lands.

kaṇṇāru

The *kaṇṇāru* is the small distributor channel directly oriented to the fields. It diverts from *vati* and runs parallel to *vāykkāl*, i.e. in West-East direction. Several *kaṇṇārus* will branch from a *vati* at appropriate places, depending upon the water needed by the designated field. The spacing between the *kaṇṇārus* and their number depended on the size of the field, namely the *caturam* / *catukkam*. The number of *kaṇṇārus* varied depending on the distance between two *vāykkāls*. The surplus water from *kaṇṇāru* drains into the downstream *vati*. According to the inscriptions one could find a maximum of ten *kaṇṇārus* between two *vāykkāls* at Accālpuram of Cīrkālī Taluk.⁷

caturam / catukkam / tuṇṭam

The square or rectangular fields granted to the temples / *brahmadēyas* are generally mentioned as *caturam* / *catukkam*, that is a particular extent share of the grant. They were sometimes referred as *tuṇṭam* also. They are bounded by two *kaṇṇārus* North-South, and they were serially numbered.⁸ The exact area of a *caturam* could not be established from the inscriptions and it varied according to the space between *kaṇṇārus*.

⁷ (Vijayavenugopal & Ravindran, 2013), p. 97. gular piece of land is ideally bounded by two *kaṇṇārus* on the North and South,

⁸ In the sense, the square or rectangular piece of land is ideally bounded by two *kaṇṇārus* on the North and South, and *vatis* on the West and East.

From the above, it is clear that *vāykkāl* functioned as a feeder channel to entire villages and *vatis* and *kaṇṇārus* functioned as distributing channels. The excess water from *kaṇṇāru* was drained into the succeeding downstream *vati* and the excess water from *vati* was drained in the downstream *vāykkāl*. The surplus water from the *vāykkāl* formed the new feeder channel for the succeeding villages.

V.3 DATA

The inscriptions of Pāpanācam Taluk were published by the State Department of Archaeology of the Government of Tamil Nadu.⁹ This publication includes all the inscriptions published by the Government of India and newly discovered ones.

Limitations and hypothesis

The data used for this study are limited to a particular small core region of the Cōḷa Empire that we chose as a sample study. A thorough analysis of all the inscriptions pertaining to land details should enable us to understand the settlement pattern of *brahmadēyas*. Besides, it is assumed that the formation of settlements corresponded to the period of the earliest occurrence of the inscriptions, while they could have existed earlier also. With the caveat on the assumption that the settlement is formed newly from the date of the earliest occurrence of the inscriptions, the data are analysed on the hypothesis that whenever new settlements for *brahmadēyas* were allocated there was a planned irrigation system (*vati*, *vāykkāl*, *kaṇṇāru* and *catiram*; hereafter VVKC). And whenever earlier settlements were changed into *brahmadēyas* there was no systematic plan of the irrigated lands.

V.4 ANALYSIS

Out of 226 inscriptions found in Pāpanācam region, 137 inscriptions provide information related to the donation of the land to temples. As mentioned earlier the land setting is marked by the boundaries

⁹ (Marxia Gandhi & Ramachandran, 2004–5).

Table 13: Details of places and inscriptions under study

Sl. no.	Place	Number	Land details	First occurrence CE	Last occurrence CE	Settlement type
1	Ātanūr	2	2	1186	1186	ūr
2	Uṭaiyār Kōil	19	17	1042	1345	brahmadēyam
3	Tiruvaikāvūr	13	8	850?	1429	ūr
4	Cakkarappaḷli	7	4	988	1475	brahmadēyam
5	Tirumaṇṭaṅkuṭi	2	1	1241	1350?	brahmadēyam
6	Melaṭṭūr	6	2	1180	1250?	ūr
7	Puḷlapūtaṅkuṭi	5	2	1160	1450?	ūr
8	Paṭṭavirutti	2	1	12th c.	12th c.	brahmadēyam?
9	Tirukkarukāvūr	29	17	924	1128	dēvadāṇam- brahmadēyam
10	Pāpanācam	35	21	980?	1646	brahmadēyam
11	Puḷlamaṅkai	17	12	913	1127	brahmadēyam
12	Nallūr	32	22	985-1014?	1273	brahmadēyam
13	Kōildēvarāyaṅ- pēṭṭai alias Tiruccēlūr	57	28	888	1266	brahmadēyam
Total		226	137			

of the adjacent property or by the irrigation channels. The inscriptions are analysed in relation to the settlements and all the terms pertaining to land donation are highlighted. On the basis of the contents of the inscriptions, the settlements are classified between *ūr*, *brahmadēyam* and *dēvadāṇam* and their earliest and latest mentions in inscriptions are taken into account.¹⁰ The *ūr* was the settlement of cultivating people, the *brahmadēyam* was the settlement of *Brāhmaṇas* and the *dēvadāṇam* was the settlement where the lands

¹⁰ For detailed information on the settlements see (Subbarayalu, 1973), pp. 89–95.

were owned by the temple. A short description of those settlements with the land details is given below.

Ātanūr

This was an *ūr* kind of village which has only two inscriptions of 1186 CE mentioning the land donated to the temple. They seem to be the duplicate of each other.

Uṭaiyār Kōil

This was a *brahmadēya* type of settlement for which inscriptions are available between 1042 and 1345 CE. The lands under transactions were well marked by VVKC boundaries up to the Cōla empire. During the Pāṇḍya invasion the VVKC system seems to decline, probably due to maladministration, and the possessor of the lands began to enjoy autonomy. In fact an inscription probably dated from king Rājendra III (ca. 1260–79 CE) mentions that the tax evaded by Kōyil Dāṇattār (possessors of Temple lands) was restored by the local chieftain.¹¹

Tiruvaikāvūr

This was an *ūr* kind of village for which inscriptions are available between 1110 and 1429 CE. During the year 1110 the temple was rebuilt with stones and it continued to be an *ūr* throughout the period. An interesting inscription of the Pallava king Nandivarman of the 9th century CE is re-engraved on the temple wall. The palæographical analysis suggests that the inscription is of the 12th century CE.

Cakkarappalli

This was a *brahmadēya* type of settlement for which the inscriptions concerning land details are available between 988 and 1021 CE. These lands are bound by other lands, implying that the earlier *ūr* kind of settlement was converted into a *brahmadēya* later.

¹¹ (Marxia Gandhi & Ramachandran, 2004–5), pp. 4–8.

Tirumaṇṭaṅkuṭi

This settlement seems to be a *brahmadēya* type, but only two fragmentary inscriptions are found in the temple and they do not give any information regarding the land details.

Melaṭṭūr

This was an *ūr* kind of village. The temple has six inscriptions of which only one mentions land details. An inscription dated 1180 CE gives the account of VVKC. As the reference to the VVKC system is the only one, it is quite possible that the *ūr* might have been converted into *brahmadēya*.

Pullapūtaṅkuṭi

This could be a *ūr* kind of village for which a lone inscription of 1348 CE gives the account of land marked with boundaries by adjacent lands.

Paṭṭavirutti

Of two fragmentary inscriptions of the 12th century CE, one mentions *vati*, *vāykkāl* with prefix containing personal names from which no information could be obtained. The occurrence of names of canals suggests that this was probably a *brahmadēya* type of settlement.

Tirukkarukāvūr

This was a *dēvadāṇam* type of settlement, where the lands were possessed by the temple. The inscription dates between 921 and 1048 CE. Most of the inscriptions give the details of the land referring to other neighbouring land. However, the inscriptions of 1044 and 1048 CE mention lands with VVKC boundaries. This shows that the lands and canals were reorganised and the village was converted into a *brahmadēya* during the period of Rājendra I.

Pāpanācam

This was a *brahmadēya* type of settlement for which inscriptions are available between 980 and 1646 CE. The lands under transactions were well marked by boundaries by VVKC up to the period of Kulotunga III (1201 CE). Like Uṭaiyār Kōil it seems that during the Pāṇḍya invasion and at the end of the period the VVKC system deteriorated due to maladministration and decline of the empire.

Puḷḷamaṅkai

This is a typical *brahmadēya* type of settlement of the early Cōḷa period. The inscriptions date between 913 and 1216 CE. The existing *ūr* could have been converted into a *brahmadēya* as there are no VVKC details in the inscriptions.

Nallūr

This was a newly created *brahmadēyam*. The inscriptions range between 1175 and the 13th century CE. All the inscriptions on land details mention the VVKC system.

Kōildēvarāyanpēṭṭai alias Tiruccēlūr

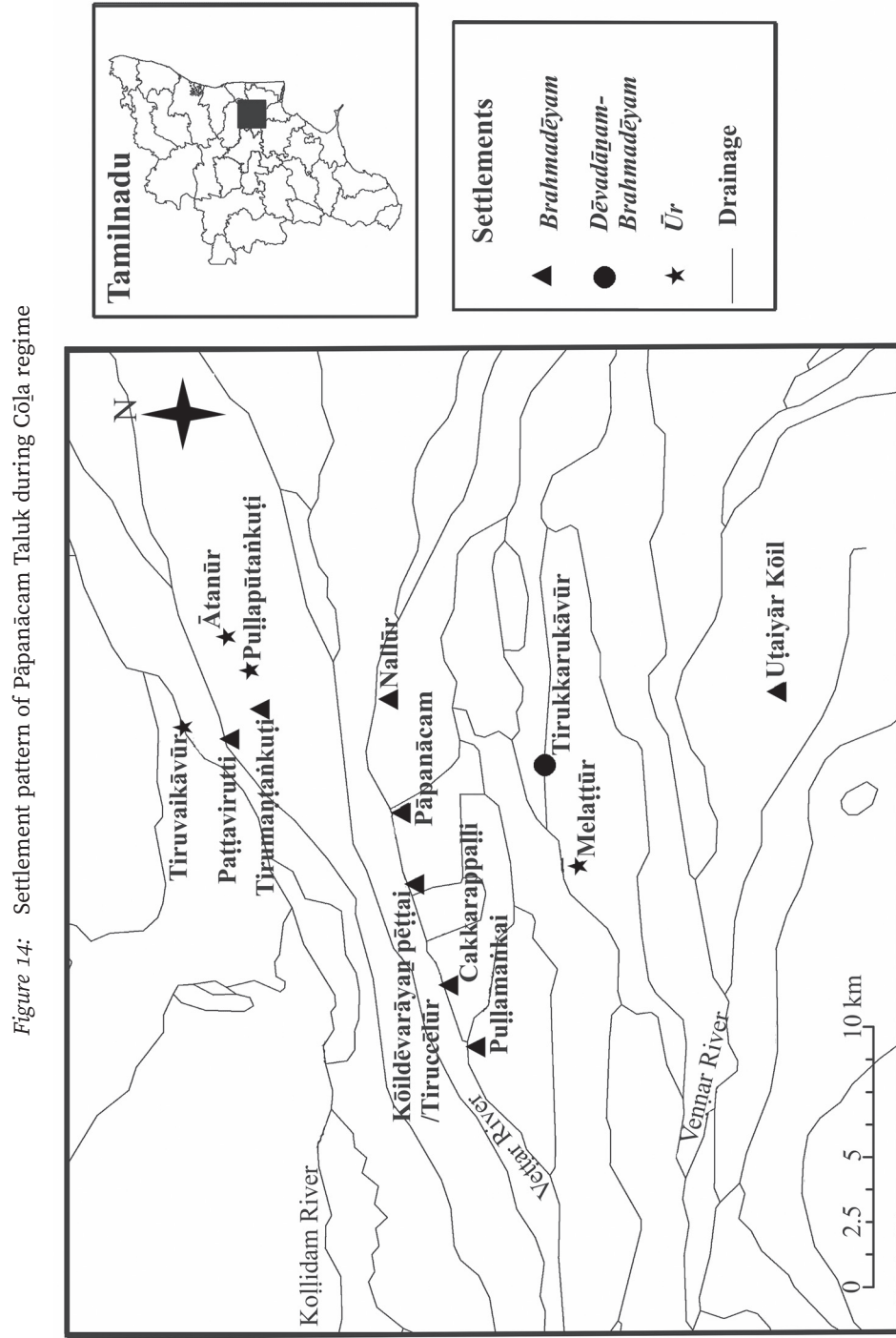
This was a *brahmadēya* type of settlement with inscriptions ranging between 943 and 1251 CE. The lands were accounted with the VVKC system, implying the formation of a new settlement.

V.5 DISCUSSION

The settlement pattern is studied on the basis of the geographical distribution, the activity intensity, the chronological formation and the irrigation system that are described below.

V.5.1 Geographical distribution

All the settlements under study are given in the map. Out of thirteen settlements it can be clearly inferred that eight are of the *brahmadēyam* type; among them the settlement Paṭṭavirutti does not provide any information other than the terms *vati* and



vāykkāl. The *ūr* type of settlement is found four times. A lone site, Tirukkarukāvūr, was a *devadāṇam* type, later converted into a *brahmadēyam*. According to the inscription regarding the land details, when it was a *devadāṇa* there was no VVKC system, and later, when it was converted to a *brahmadēya*, the VVKC system demarcated the land. From the map it can be understood that the spatial distribution of *brahmadēyas* is organised around the perennial water sources, while the *ūr* type settlements were far away from the main canals.

V.5.2 Activity intensity

The activity of a region may be measured in terms of the number of inscriptions found in the temple. The number of inscriptions in nine *brahmadēya* type settlements including Tirukkarukāvūr is 200, among which 123 inscriptions provide the land details. This comes to the total average of 22.22 inscriptions per settlement, with an average of 13.66 inscriptions per settlement with land details for the *brahmadēya* settlements. Four *ūr* type settlements have a total number of twenty-six inscriptions, among which fourteen inscriptions provide land details. For *ūr* type settlements the total average of inscriptions is 6.5 per settlement, of which 3.5 inscriptions per settlement provide land details. This shows that the *brahmadēyas* were more active than the *ūr*.

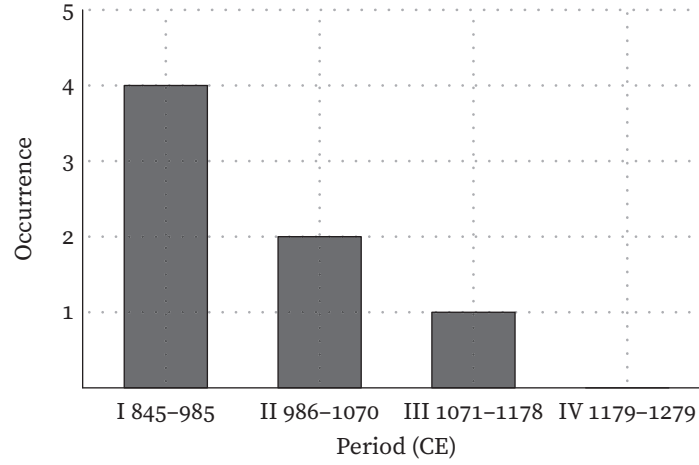
V.5.3 Brahmadēya formations

The settlements have been presented according to the periodisation of Noboru KARASHIMA and are given in Figure 15.¹² The settlement Tirumaṇṭaṅkuṭi is not taken into consideration as the data concerning it are insufficient.

Assuming that the existence of the settlement can be dated from the earliest inscriptions, four *brahmadēyas* appeared in the first phase, two in the second phase, one in the third phase, and none in the fourth phase, which implies that the number of *brahmadēyas* was gradually reduced over the period. The reason can be best attributed to the massive donation of vast areas of land to large groups of Brahmins, as shown in the large scale charters evidenced by

¹² p. 94. See (Karashima, 1984), p. 71.

Figure 15: Occurrence of *brahmadēyams*
as per KARASHIMA's periodisation



the copper plates of Karantai and Tiruvintalūr dated from the later phases.¹³ It can be inferred that when a large scale settlement was intended several villages were granted. When the group was small, villages were donated for *brahmadēya* settlements. The large scale charters are found in all the phases.

V.5.4 Grid pattern

From the above discussion and the views of the earlier scholars, we see that there was a clear demarcation by means of the VVKC system of the lands given to individual Brahmins in *brahmadēya* villages. This proves that the settlements were newly created, or that the irrigation canals of old settlements were altered so as to fit to the Grid pattern. A typical example can be seen at Tirukkarukāvūr; a *devadāṇam* type settlement where the land details were not originally marked by the VVKC system, but only after it was converted to *brahmadēyam*. A good example of the creation of a new *brahmadēya* village is Cempiyaṇ māṭēvi of Nākappaṭṭiṇam Taluk where the waters from the main canals were brought after crossing many villages.¹⁴

¹³ (Krishnan, 1984); (Marxia Gandhi, Padmavathi & Sivanandam, 2011). ¹⁴ (Kathiravan & Athiyaman, 2017).

In the case of Puḷḷamaṅkai and Cakkarappalli, though, they are *brahmadēya* type settlements belonging to the first phase of the period under study, the land details are not given through VVKC but through the details of adjacent lands owned by other Brahmins. This implies that when old settlements with well-formed irrigated lands were donated, the canal system was unaltered and the benefits would have been shared by individuals in terms of *paṅgu* (share) rather than through a set of measured land. The mode of sharing is yet unclear. Interestingly, at Melatṭūr, an *ūr* settlement, the VVKC system existed, which implies that either that village was converted from *brahmadēya* to *ūr* or that during the later Cōḷa period later settlements were created with a clear-cut VVKC system. In other words, the presence of the VVKC system in *brahmadēya* settlements may result from their new creation, but also from the adaptation of an older system of irrigation.

The above analysis relies only on a sample survey in the core region of the Cōḷa kingdom. Extending this study to other areas with reference to the irrigation system would provide more insight into the settlement pattern of *brahmadēyas*.

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CH. VI
MEASUREMENT RODS AND LINEAR AND AREA
MEASUREMENTS IN MEDIÆVAL TAMIL NADU
V. SELVAKUMAR

ABSTRACT

Measurement formed an important component of mediæval administration in South India. Measurement of land areas was possible with the use of a kind of a yard stick, namely, *daṇḍa* or *kōls*, for which the dimensions were marked at many sites and temples. Weight and volume measures were used for various economic activities. They were essential for taxation and various economic transactions, including sale and purchase. The weight and volume measures had several names and they are often mentioned in the inscriptions. Some of the linear measurement rods that were used for land measurement in the mediæval period are marked on the temples and rocks at several sites in Tamil Nadu. These rods were documented and measured to understand the nature of measurement rods used during the Cōḷa period. Mediæval inscriptions mention the area of land in terms of traditional measurement units. The data from inscriptions on the linear measurement units was collected. Measurement of mediæval temple structures and contemporary rice fields was undertaken at a few locations. Based on the analysis of the dataset, this paper presents a descriptive and analytical account of the measurement rods of the Cōḷa period.

VI.1 INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MEASUREMENT and calculation were used to establish order in town planning, land management, administration and assessment and taxation and in commercial transactions from the early times. Linear and area measurements were used for designing, ordering and organising the landscapes for cultural spaces such as houses, cultivable fields, irrigation systems and gardens. Weight measurements were used for metal, coins and ornaments and volume measurements were related to liquids and grains for a proper organisation of transactions. The inscriptions of the mediæval period in India offer a great deal of information on the measurement systems

and they have not yet been completely analysed. These inscriptions show how ordinary and learned people and accountants of the mediæval villages undertook simple mathematical operations and how they used, applied and conveyed them in written texts. This paper presents an overview and analysis of the linear and area measurements of Mediæval Tamil Nadu, based on the study of inscriptions, as well as on the measurement scales / rods marked at various sites and on traditional knowledge.

VI.1.1 Research on measurement system

Information on the traditional measurement systems of India is available in various ancient Indian texts such as the *Śulbasūtra*, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and architectural treatises, and the Tamil text of the *Kaṇakkatikāram*, and in many inscriptions.¹ The *Śulbasūtra* mentions planning fire altars for Vedic sacrifices according to specific designs and symmetry.² The *Arthaśāstra* lists the various units and sub-units of measurement that were prevalent in ancient India.³ Several schemes of measurement are found in various architectural treatises such as the *Vāstuśāstra*, *Mayamata* and *Mānasāra*,⁴ which have been used in designing temples, structures, palaces and images. The Late Mediæval Tamil text the *Kaṇakkatikāram*, composed by Karinayanar, deals with various aspects of the measurement system prevalent in the Tamil country.⁵ These texts could be considered documentary in nature, explaining what was prevalent, and also prescriptive, since they suggest certain standards for planning.

The measurement systems of Precolonial India were diverse, as revealed by the inscriptions, and British administrators sought to document and standardise the measurement units used across India, as part of their administrative reforms.⁶ Regarding the measurement system prevalent around Chennai, Francis Whyte ELLIS⁷ observes:

One cuzhi is a square foot English Measure, with which, whether fortuitously or by assimilation this Indian measure agrees: at Madras 2400

¹ (Ramakrishnan, 1998).

⁵ (Kari Nayanar, 1909).

² (Sen & Bag, 1983); (Bag, 1997).

⁶ (Ellis, 1818); (Martin, 1843); (Thomas, 1874).

³ (Shamasastri, 1956).

⁴ (Bag, 1997); (Gyllenbok, 2018), p.

⁷ (Ellis, 1818), p. 64.

cuzhi are 1 Manei, the proper form of which is an oblong 60 foot by 40 and 24 maneis are 1 Cani, being 57600 Cuzhi or square feet. The Cani and its subdivisions differ in different parts of the country; this is called Mayilapur cani and was established by Rayaji as the standard measure throughout the Arcot Subah; it is measured by a rod of 24 feet, 100 square rods being a cani.

Several such records and documents of the colonial period are available to understand the diverse measurement schemes that were prevalent before colonial times in India.⁸ Investigations on the measurement systems of India, using texts and historical sources, have been undertaken by researchers including RAJU and MAINKAR (1964a, 1964b), SARADA SRINIVASAN (1979), Michel DANINO (2005, 2008), BALASUBRAMANIAN (2008, 2009) and BALASUBRAMANIAN and JOSHI (2008). The research on the traditional measurement system and surviving knowledge on measurements have revealed that one type of traditional *angulam* measurement of India is between 1.75 cm and 1.76 cm. In many parts of India, studies have been carried out on the measurement system: Gupta period,⁹ Karnataka,¹⁰ Bengal¹¹ and Orissa.¹²

In the context of the Mediæval Cōlas of South India, the measurement system of linear units has been briefly discussed by KRISHANASWAMI AIYANGAR (1911)¹³ and NILAKANTA SASTRI (1955) and other researchers.¹⁴ Kodumudy SHANMUGAN (2006) discusses a few aspects of the measurement system of the mediæval period in Tamil Nadu. P. SHANMUGAM (1987) in his work on the *Revenue System of the Cholas* has collected the data from inscriptions and studied the different types of measurement rods and their significance in the taxation and revenue systems of the Cōlas. Y. SUBBARAYALU (1981, 2001a, 2001b, 2012) has studied the land measurement system in detail and discusses the various units of measurement and taxation, measurement units, *virivu* (expansion) and *maḍakku* (reduction) and the related issues. He correctly pinpoints the diversity in the measurement rods of the Cōla times, and their complicated nature.

⁸ (Buchanan, 1807).

¹² (Acharya, 2001).

⁹ (Maity & Basham, 1957); (Prasad, 1987).

¹³ (Krishanaswami Aiyangar, 2004), pp. 175–6.

¹⁰ (Jagdish, 2005); (Jagdish & Rajaram, 2012).

¹⁴ (Tripathi, 1942), p. 476; (Sundararajan, 1989).

¹¹ (Ray, 1994).

BOHLE (1987) discusses the modules of measurement in landscape and planning based on his study in the Kaveri delta. ARUNACHALAM (2006) discusses some aspects of land measurement and survey in the precolonial period. HEITZMAN and RAJAGOPAL (2004) have surveyed the land areas near Kāñcīpuram to understand the nature of measurement rods, and they too highlight the complex nature of the measurement system. Noboru KARASHIMA (2006) discusses the value of minute fractions and their significance under the Cōlas' measurement system. Several researchers have documented measurement rods across Tamil Nadu. KALAIKKOVAN, NALINI and AKILA (2015) have identified many such measurement rods in the central parts of Tamil Nadu. The author's survey has revealed various measurement rods and different aspects of rods in Mediæval Tamil Nadu.¹⁵

VI.1.2 Early history of measurement in Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, the earliest evidence for the use of measurement extends to the early historic period, as evidenced by references in the Sangam Tamil texts.¹⁶ The iron age-early historic megalithic burials of South India do have some evidence for the use of body-part based measurement units; for example, for the design of the port-holes; but the metrics of these monuments is not very convincing to suggest the use of a standard measurement system behind the megaliths across South India, and further research is needed on the measurement system of this period.¹⁷ The Sangam text *Puṛaṇānūṟu*—poems 184 and 391— mentions the land units of *mā*, *kuzhi* and *vēli*, which are discussed in later inscriptions and are in use even today in the Kaveri delta. The Sangam text of the *Porunarārruppaṭai* mentions the ideal rice yield of 1000 *kalams* (a traditional volume measure) from one *vēli* area of land. This reference is obviously in the context of the riverine or *marutam* lands. The text of the *Cilappatikāram* refers to the measurement units of *kōl* and *aṅgulam*.¹⁸ It mentions 24 *viral* units of a measurement rod. In the early historic sites, mainly in the urban centres, a category of bricks fired in the kilns is of 38 cm–42 cm in length and width is about 20 cm–21 cm, although there are many varieties. This particular measurement

¹⁵ (Selvakumar, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018).

¹⁷ (Selvakumar, 2014).

¹⁶ (Bhagavathi, 2003).

¹⁸ (Bhagavathi, 2003).

range matches the size of one *muzham* or cubit. In fact, they match the measurement rod discussed in the *Cilappatikāram*. The grid pattern layout of the early historic settlements reveals the idea of planning and organisation of structures, streets and the surrounding space, according to a specific measurement system.¹⁹ However, these systems are not very clearly noticeable in the excavated sites, since the sites and structures have been modified extensively, and also, in practice, people do not strictly follow the scheme prescribed in texts on measurements. The artisans used their own unique scheme of measurement. The temple structures and rock-cut caves of the Pallava and Pāṇḍya periods were designed according to a definite measurement system, but again, precision is lacking in some of these contexts, perhaps because of errors in the execution of the outline marked on the rocks before carving the caves, the local features of the rock, and other restrictive factors, such as the time available, resources, and the nature of the rock.²⁰

The inscriptions of the Pallava period clearly reveal the use of land measurement units, at least in some contexts. The measurement units of *nivartanā*, *paṭṭikā* or *paṭṭi*, *pāḍagam*, and *kuzhi* appear in the Pallava inscriptions.²¹ *Nivartanā* of the Pallava period finds mention in the *Arthaśāstra*. The Hirahadagalli copper plate of the Pallava king Śivaskandhavarman refers to *Halasada sagasrā*, which consisted of one hundred thousand plough marks within an area,²² and it refers to *Nivartanā*. *Nivartanā* referred to 20 rods or 200 cubit squares or 40,000 *hasta* squares. The Uttaramerur inscription of Kampavarman refers to one *pāḍagam* as equal to 240 *kuzhi* area.²³ An inscription of 989 CE refers to 1000 *kuzhi* units of area as equal to one *paṭṭi*,²⁴ and *paṭṭi* as a unit of land measurement was common in the Pallava territory. Perhaps the *pāḍagam* unit of this period consisted of 12 × 20 square rod area. Four-span rod (7 of 1898) and 12-span rod²⁵ are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Pallavas. In contrast, in the Cōḷa period, numerous references occur for the land measurements, which are discussed below.

¹⁹ (Selvakumar, 2018).

²⁰ (Selvakumar, 2014).

²¹ (Meenakshi, 1938).

²² (Minakshi, 1938), p. 73.

²³ (SII 4, 365).

²⁴ (SII 8, 521).

²⁵ (Nripatungavarman, SII 7, 3).

VI.2 LAND MEASUREMENT SYSTEM IN MEDIÆVAL TAMIL NADU

The land measurement system of the mediæval period is discussed in this section, on the basis of the analysis of the data from the inscriptions. The linear and area units, the measurement rods and their length and category are analysed here on the basis of the references in the inscriptions, markings of measurement rods, field measurements and architectural measurements.

Various area measurement units are referred to in the mediæval Tamil inscriptions. The nomenclature of the measurement rods, their length, area units and sub-units of the land sold or donated, are mentioned.

VI.2.1 Linear units

Linear measurement units are described in the texts as well as inscriptions. *Tōrai* or *nel*, *viral*, *piṭi*, *cān*, *aṭi*, *muzham* and *kōl* are referred to in the inscriptions. Many of these terms also occur in the Sangam Tamil texts. The scheme of measurement used in the Tamil traditions to a certain extent matches those mentioned in Sanskrit texts and used in other parts of India.

Tōrai or nel

Tōrai refers to a type of paddy (*nel* in Tamil), and is also a measurement unit of length. In the traditional measurement system, eight *tōrai* length equaled an *aṅgulam* or *viral*. *Tōrai* unit is used in the description of images of the Bṛhadīśvara temple, Tanjavur. For example, a description reads ‘One solid image of Candēśvara-Prasadadeva, having four divine arms (and measuring) twenty *viral* and four *tōrai* in height from the feet to the hair.’²⁶ Since *tōrai* is a very small unit of measurement, it is not referred to in the description of land area, which is conveyed often in terms of the area units of *vēli* and its minute fractions.²⁷

²⁶ (SII 2, 29).

²⁷ (Karashima, 2006).

Viral or aṅgulam

Viral is the Tamil name for *aṅgulam* and it is used in the description of the bronze images and objects donated to the temples.²⁸ Like *tōrai*, the *aṅgulam* unit is also not actually used in the description of land areas, as discussed above. *Aṅgulam* was not a fixed or absolute unit of measurement with a specific dimension, and it was not standardised. The length of *aṅgulam* varied from 1.66 cm to 3 cm depending upon the length of the cubit and span. One type of standard *aṅgulam* measured around 1.75 cm–1.76 cm.²⁹ However, most of the derived *aṅgulams* measured more than or less than the 1.75 cm–1.76 cm range.

Cān or span

Span, known as *cān* in Tamil, is the distance between the tip of the little finger and the tip of thumb in a stretched-out position. It consists of 12 *aṅgulams*. According to the *Tamil Lexicon*, the traditional *cān* is 9 *aṅgulams* (British) \times 2.52 cm = 22.68 cm. The length of the span was actually modified and derived according to the length of the cubit, and perhaps it was based on the size of the body-parts of individuals, who could be kings or ministers or administrative officers, or simply ordinary persons, whose body-part dimensions served as standards. In practice, the term span seems to have been used interchangeably with foot, although in theory, there existed some distinction between foot and span.

Foot or aṭi

Aṭi (foot) is a linear measurement unit and is equal to the *pāda* of the *Arthaśāstra*. Foot was probably two *aṅgulams* more than a span (12 + 2 = 14 *aṅgulams*). Such an *aṅgulam* is discussed in the *Arthaśāstra*. However, in practice it seems to have been used interchangeably with span. *Aṭi* is considered to have 10 *aṅgulams* (British) \times 2.52 = 25.2 cm, according to the *Tamil Lexicon*, and it is one modern (British) *aṅgulam* more than the length of a *cān*.

²⁸ (Selvakumar, 2018).

²⁹ (Balasubramanian, 2008, 2009).

Muzham or cubit

A *muzham* is made of two spans or *aṭi*. A *muzham* consists of 24 *aṅgulams* normally, but it might have been devised by using 24 or more *aṅgulam* units. Several types of *muzhams* are discussed in the architectural treatises.³⁰

Table 14: Different types of *muzham* and derived *aṅgulam* measurements

	<i>Viral aṅgulam</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Muzham cm</i>	<i>Derived aṅgulam muzham / 24 cm</i>
1	24	<i>Kiṣku</i>	42.312	1.763
2	25	<i>Prajāpatyam</i>	44.075	1.836458
3	26	<i>Dhanurmushṭi</i>	45.838	1.909917
4	27	<i>Dhanurgriha</i>	47.601	1.983375
5	28	<i>Prāchyam</i>	49.364	2.056833
6	29	<i>Vaidēham</i>	51.127	2.130292
7	30	<i>Vaipulyam</i>	52.89	2.20375
8	31	<i>Pirakīranam</i>	54.653	2.277208
9	32	–	56.416	2.350667

Piṭi or fist

Piṭi refers to fist or *musṭi* and as a unit of measure it is equivalent to four *aṅgulams*. In the database used for this paper *piṭi* has been used for measurement in the mediæval inscriptions in only two instances; there is a reference to a measurement rod of 8 *piṭis*. Among the measurement rods, span and *aṭi* are more frequently used in the inscriptions for land measurement.

Palm length

The length of a palm is used in the *Tālamānā* system, prescribed by the Śilpa Śāstras, which was adopted for the production of im-

³⁰ (Tirugnanam, 2001a, 2001b); (Ganapathi, 2002) see Table 1.

ages and sculptures in the architectural traditions of India. This system was not used in the measurement of land. It appears that this measurement tradition is used by traditional sculptors of the contemporary period, who make images according to the Āgamic prescriptions.

VI.2.2 Measurement rods in the inscriptions

Measurement rods are mentioned in mediæval inscriptions frequently. Since the measurement rods were not standardised across the areas, when land areas were mentioned in inscriptions, it was compulsory to mention the measurement rods used, so that the area of land could be estimated accurately. The naming of land measurement rods was according to various criteria, such as the name of individuals, kings or their titles, or the village, territory or the land types in which they were used. The measurement rods were determined based on the function of the land, such as their use for houses, palaces and fields. The Tamil mathematical text of the *Kaṇakatikāram* (22) mentions that different length units were employed for various uses. The measurement rod of the *manai* was based on 24 *aṅgulams* unit (*Manaimuzhakkōl*). The text mentions measurement rods of 25 *aṅgulams* for the construction of temples, and those of 26 *aṅgulams* for the temples built by kings, and those of 27 *aṅgulams* for the highways. Thus, it is clear that the measurement rods used for temples built by kings, plots of land, and those used for highways, were different in the prescriptive literature; although this scheme might not have been adopted strictly in all the instances.

From the inscriptions scrutinised by the author in Tamil Nadu, including a few inscriptions from Karnataka and Tirupati, datable from the 9th century to 17th century, 310 references related to measurement rods were documented.³¹ Among these, 269 could be dated to a specific time, and their chronological distribution is given in Table 15³² and Figure 16.³³ Their frequency is more in the period between 1201 and 1300, followed by the period 1101–1200 and 1001–1000 and 901–1000. This proportion might be related to the

³¹ This figure is not complete and represents the majority of the occurrences. For the Cōḷa period the data-

base is nearly complete.

³² p. 108.

³³ p. 110.

*Table 15: Chronological distribution
of measurement rods in the inscriptions – I*

<i>Sl. no.</i>	<i>Period (CE)</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
1	800–900	8
2	901–1000	18
3	1001–1100	43
4	1101–1200	73
5	1201–1300	108
6	1300–1400	6
7	1401–1500	8
8	1501–1600	4
9	1601–1700	1
10	uncertain	41
Total		310

frequency of inscriptions found in these periods. They suggest the very complicated nature of the measurement system, which had developed diverse characteristics by the 13th century. The decline in the occurrences after the 13th century could be attributed to the decrease in the inscriptions, and also to the limited focus of the current database on the period after the 13th century.

Among the 310 occurrences, 162 refer to dimension in terms of span or foot, and others have distinct names, such as village or generic names. Their distribution is given in the Table 16.³⁴

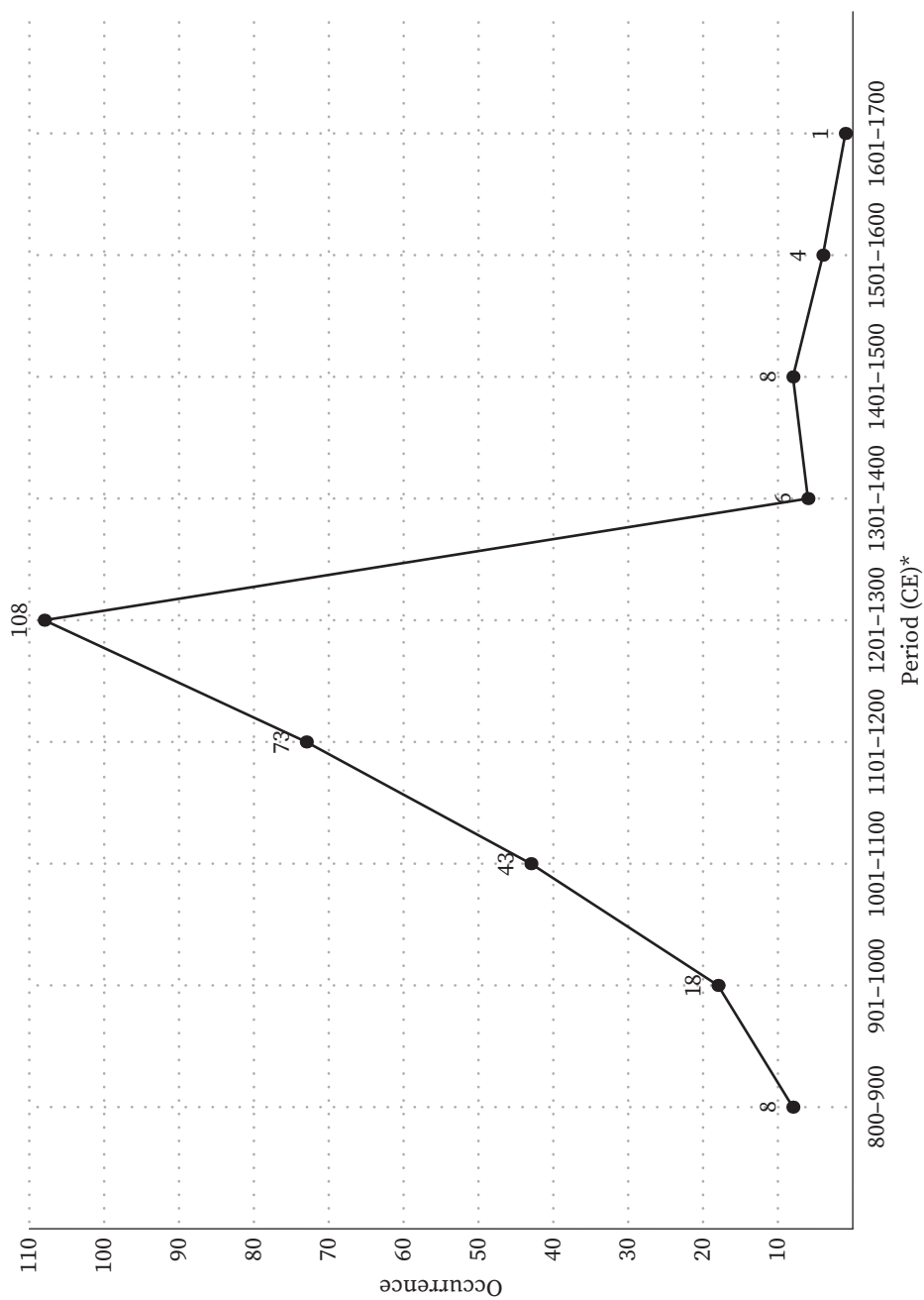
Table 16 reveals that based on the dataset, at least twenty-four types of measurement rod were in use and they reveal the diverse nature of the rods in Mediæval Tamil Nadu. The distribution of the measurement rods in terms of size reveals that 16-span and 16-foot rods were more commonly used, followed by 12 foot and

³⁴ p. 109.

Table 16: Distribution of measurement rods according the length in traditional measurement units

<i>Sl. no.</i>	<i>Name of rod</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
1	span rod	2
2	4-span rod	2
3	8-bow-grip	1
4	9-foot	1
5	10-span + 1 bow-grip (<i>piṭi</i>)	1
6	12-foot	32
7	12-span	5
8	12- <i>piṭi</i>	1
9	14-foot	8
10	14 $\frac{1}{2}$ -foot	1
11	16-foot	17
12	16-span	44
13	18-foot	12
14	18-span	11
15	20-foot	1
16	20- <i>kāṇikkōl</i>	1
17	21-foot	2
18	22-foot	2
19	24-foot	12
20	24-span	2
21	27-foot	1
22	30-foot	1
23	32-foot	1
24	36-span	1
Total		162

Figure 16: Chronological distribution of measurement rods in the inscriptions – II



* Forty-one are of uncertain date.

span and 24-foot rods. Other measurement rods are limited in frequency. Again, we cannot argue that a measurement rod of a particular size measured the same length across Mediæval Tamil Nadu, as discussed above, due to the factor of derived *aṅgulams*.

Categories of measurement rods

We looked at the types of measurement rods based on their length in the above section. Based on the land type and context of use, six major categories could be identified among the land measurement rods of Mediæval Tamil Nadu. They are:

- a. *Nañjaikkōl* used for wet lands.
- b. *Puñjaikkōl* used for dry lands.
- c. *Manaikkōl* used for house plots.
- d. *Muzhakkōl* or *Taccamuzham* used in architecture and buildings.
- e. Measurement rods used for making the images and icons meant for worship.
- f. The land measurement rods of generic nature, without any specific category mentioned above.

Measurement rods of land categories

The measurement rods mentioned in the Tamil inscriptions could be divided into *manaikkōl*, *mālikaikkōl*, *nandavanakkōl*, *nañjaikkōl* and *puñjaikkōl*, based on the land in which they were used.

Manaikkōl

Manai means ‘plot’ or the area where people live and houses are built for residence. It is an area which is not generally cultivated; but the backyards of the houses may have had horticultural crops. *Manaikkōl*, the measurement rod for *manai*, was used for the residential plots. Since the plots were not used for cultivation, they were taxed and transacted at a rate less than that of the cultivable lands. A *muzhakkōl* of *manai* or building could be 38 cm–42 cm in length, and this could be the reason for the brick size of Sangam Age structures, in the range of 38 cm–42 cm. This measurement rod is described in the *Cilappatikāram*. *Mālikaikkōl* may have been used for laying out of buildings and architectural edifices. *Manaikkōl* has been documented in four instances and *mālikaikkōl* in one instance.

Nañjaikkōl (Wet land rod)

The term *nañjai* refers to the wet lands in which mainly rice is cultivated. Since rice crops yield higher calories and had a higher social value in the mediæval period, most often rice is mentioned in the transactions of the inscriptions, which suggests its dominant stature among crops. The rice growing fields were taxed higher than the dry lands. The length of this measurement rod is less than that of the *puñjaikkōl*, indicating a higher rate of tax. In the current database, it occurs in five instances.

Puñjaikkōl (Dry land rod)

Puñjai refers to an area in which various crops such as turmeric, banana and millets are planted. Because of the variation in production in this category of land, a specific measurement rod was used. The *puñjaikkōl* was longer than the *nañjaikkōl*, and this could be attributed to the lower crop yield in the *puñjai* land. Five occurrences of this measurement rod have been documented so far. While the villages in the deltaic and riverine tracts, which predominantly have the wet lands, do not have both the rods (dry land and wet land), only some villages have reference to both the measurement rods. Instead of fixing the tax according to the land area and a specific rate, they used altogether different measurement rods for these types of lands. Perhaps it was less confusing for application, when compared to the use of a scheme using the same measurement rod and fixing different rates.

Nandavanakkōl

Nandavanam refers to the flower garden attached to the temple. Lands were specifically allotted to the temple for maintaining the flower garden to supply flowers for performing *pūjā* in the mediæval period. There existed a category of people called *Nandavanakkudikal* who took care of these lands. *Nandavanakkōl* refers to the measurement rod used for the purpose of *Nandavanam*. Its variations and relation with other measurement rods are not known. *Tirunandavanakkōl* has been documented in two instances. Since these land areas were used for the purpose of temple worship, they had a different measurement rod.

Measurement rods based on territorial names

Some of the measurement rods have been named after a specific village, or territory, or settlements, in which they were devised or used. For example, *Cirriyārūrkkōl*,³⁵ *Vilandaikkōl*, and *Cirrambalatukōl*, and they may refer to the village names of Cirriyarrur, Vilandai, and Chidambaram. For example, *Kuḍitāṅgikōl* occurs in thirteen instances, and Kuḍitāṅgi perhaps referred to a village. Certain measurement rods were devised and used in certain villages; it appears that many of the villages and territories had their own measurement rods. There are numerous references to *ivvūrkkōl*, *ivvūr nilamaḷanta kōl*, *ivvūr Kaḍamaiyirukkumkōl*, *ivvūr Iraiyirukkumkōl*, and *nāṭṭaḷavukōlāl*, which means the measurement rod used in this village or territory. *Nāṭu* means territory or a smaller administrative unit, and we do find references to *nāṭṭaḷavukōl*, which was probably used in a specific territory.

Malaikkūḍikkōl

Malaikkūḍikkōl is mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiruparankunram and a few other places in Madurai district. *Malaikkūḍi* means settlement of the hills. Perhaps it is a measurement rod used in hill areas, or perhaps Malaikkūḍi was a name of the village.

Land measurement rods

Nilamaḷanta kōl and *nilamaḷakkum kōl* means rod used in land measurement. This is another generic name of the land measurement rods. This reference occurs in many instances; in some cases, they appear with the length of the measurement rod, and in many cases, they do not refer to the length of the rod.

Tax-based names

Certain names of the measurement rods were based on the tax remitted to the state. *Iraiyirukkumkōl* and *Kaḍamaiyirukkumkōl* appear

³⁵ (SII 3, 198).

in the inscriptions. *Irai* and *Kaḍamai* mean the different types of taxes paid to the government and king.³⁶

Names based on dimensions

The measurement rods are more often mentioned according to their length and this type of appellation was perhaps considered straight and simple.

Figure 17: Cross-mark denoting the end or beginning of the rod marking



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Enṇiṭikkōl or 8 bow-grip rod: An inscription refers to *enṇiṭikkōl*.³⁷ In Tamil, *piṭi* means grip / fist and *eṇ* means eight; this measurement is equal to *dhanurgrahā* ('bow-grip') in the *Arthaśāstra*. This unit was not as frequently found, as most of the measurement rods were based on *cān* or cubit. *Enṇiṭi* is equal to 8 bow-grip; $8 \times 4 = 32$ *aṅgulams*. Here, the area of *kuzhi* is measured as 4×4 *kōl* area of *enṇiṭikōl*, i.e. 32×32 *piṭis* constituting the area of a *kuzhi*. This rod measured 128 *aṅgulams*, was equivalent to $10\frac{3}{4}$ span, and was

³⁶ (Shanmugam, 1987); (Subbarayalu, 2012). ³⁷ (SII 13, 74).

perhaps around 225 cm, based on one scheme of *aṅgula* measurement.

Figure 18: Half-mark of a measurement rod



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Nārcāṅkōl or 4-span rod: It is referred to in an inscription.³⁸ This comes to $4 \times 12 = 48$ *aṅgulas*, and around 84 cm by the 1.75 cm *aṅgula* standard. The above inscription from Siyamangalam refers to the 16-span rod for land measurement, and the 4-span rod for the measurement of an irrigation canal. Since a 16-span measurement rod of 392 cm is marked, the 4-span rod of this village was perhaps $\frac{392}{4} = 98$ cm.

12-span rod: 12-span rod is found in several inscriptions. It occurs next only to the 16-span rod in frequency.

16-span rod: The 16-span rod or foot rod was popular during the time of Rājarāja I. It measured around 392 cm,³⁹ which can be deduced from the marking found on a rock at Siyamangalam, and the reference to the 16-span rod in the nearby inscription. This rod seems to have been widely used during the peak of the Cōla period in the 10th and 11th centuries. This dimension of this rod was used

³⁸ (SII 7, 440).

³⁹ *ibid.*.

in architectural structures too, as evidenced at the spacing around Tanjavur Bṛhadiśvara temple.⁴⁰

Several other measurement rods were also used in the mediæval period: *onpatirraḍkkōl* (9-foot rod), 12-foot rod,⁴¹ 14-foot rod,⁴² 15-foot rod (*aṭikkōl*), and 18-span rods are found in many of the inscriptions.

Rods named after the kings

Some of the measurement rods were named after the king or their titles. There are references to *Rājarājankōl*,⁴³ *Virapāṇḍiyaṅkōl*, and *Sundarapāṇḍiyaṅkōl*. *Ulaḡalandān* was the title of Rājarāja and a few types of measurement rods were known as *Ulaḡalandakōl* and *Ulaḡandaśripādakkōl*. *Sōkacciyan* was the title of the Kadava chief Kopperunjingan and there is reference to *Sōkacciyaṅkōl* in the Chidambaram inscriptions. Some of the measurement rods have the name *śripādakkōl* and they might have been based on the foot of the king. The *Sundarapāṇḍiyaṅkōl* is referred to as 24-foot rod and it has been documented in seven instances. The naming of the measurement was in tune with the practice of the naming the landscape and all the components and administrative officers after the king in the mediæval period. This was a method adopted to assert the power and legitimacy of the king over everything under his control.

Names of individuals

Certain rods were probably named after individuals, for example *Amaittanārāyaṇan nilavaḷavukōl*. These measurement rods could have been devised by a particular person, or perhaps based on the body-part measurements of this individual.

Measurement rods used in countrywide survey

Inscriptions refer to *Ulaḡalandakōl* and *Tirulagaḷandapaḍikōl*,⁴⁴ and perhaps this indicates the use of one type of measurement rod for a country-wide survey (or merely a calculation and conversion) by

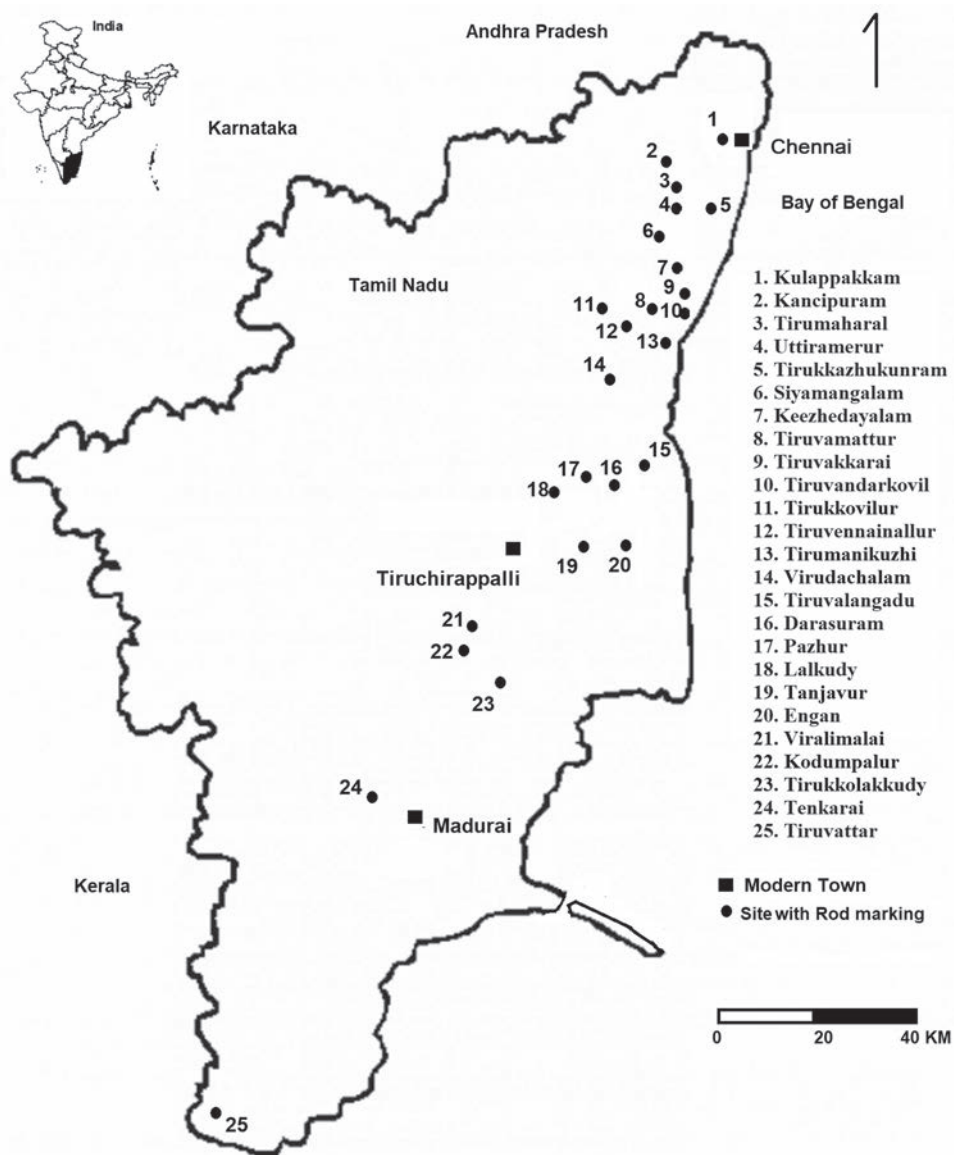
⁴⁰ (Pichard, 1995); (Selvakumar, 2017). ⁴² (SII 8, 304).

⁴³ (ARE 400 of 1916).

⁴¹ (SII 7, 863, 6, 435).

⁴⁴ (SII 7, 444).

Figure 19: Sites with measurement rods marked on the temples



a king across the territory. It may be assumed that this practice was widely used during the Cōla times, when the empire expanded and standardisation was required.

Other types of measurement rods

In addition to the measurement rods mentioned above, several other types existed as their names indicated. For example, the *Kaṭikaikaḷattukōl* and *Vilandaikōl* were perhaps developed based on the specific villages or areas or institutions. Their precise nature and dimension are not known and we are left with no choice other than deducing from the meaning of their names.

Comments

Among the measurement rods, 16-span rods are more frequently used from the time of Rājarāja. The reference to *Tiruulakaḷantakōl* suggests an attempt to measure, and standardise land measurements, across the Cōla territory.

Markings of measurement rods

We have looked at the measurement rods mentioned in the inscriptions. There are also several measurement rods inscribed on rocks and temple walls with +, | marks so that they could be used as standard templates for measurements by the administrators, surveyors, village workers and people in the mediæval period (Figures 17–20⁴⁵). In Tamil Nadu, measurement rods have been documented by various researchers and their measurements are given in Tables 17–19.⁴⁶ In many cases it is difficult to ascertain their name and period, since no inscriptions are found nearby.

Tables 17–19 and Figure 21⁴⁷ indicate the measurement rods and their frequency of occurrence. At least three modes can be seen: between 51 cm–100 cm, 151 cm–200 cm, and 351 cm–400 cm. The maximum occurrence of 11 is documented for 351 cm–400 cm, which is the closest length for the different varieties of 16-span rods.

⁴⁵ pp. 114ff.

⁴⁶ pp. 119ff.

⁴⁷ p. 124.

Table 17: Measurement rods / scales marked at various sites of Tamil Nadu – A

<i>Sl. no.</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Length cm</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1	Kodumpalur	25.5	Selvakumar 2015
2	Tiruppulivanam	30	ibid.
3	Tirukkovilur – Rod I	35	ibid.
4	Tirukkovilur – Rod II	48	ibid.
5	Tirumanikuzhi 3	52	ibid.
6	Tenkarai 5	60	ibid.
7	Tanjavur 1	73	ibid.
8	Viralimalai	74	ibid.
9	Kodumpalur 2	78	ibid.
10	Nocciparai	79.5	ibid.
11	Alundur	84	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
12	Tiruvanaikkaval	88	Selvakumar 2015
13	Keezhakuruchi	89	ibid.
14	Tirucendurai	90	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015 Selvakumar 2015
15	Virudachalam	129	Selvakumar 2015
16	Tirumazhavadi	130.5	ibid.
17	Ennayiram	136	ibid.
18	Avaniswaram Gopurap- atti	150	ibid.
19	Kāñcīpuram 2	152	Selvakumar 2014
20	Tiruvamattur 3	167 (82 + 85)	ibid.
21	Tiruvamattur	167 (82 + 85)	ibid.
22	Engan	167.5	Selvakumar 2015
23	Tiruccotruturai	182.5	ibid.
24	Kāñcīpuram 1	189	ibid.
25	Tiruvennainallur 1	200 (50 + 50 + 100)	Selvakumar 2014

Table 18: Measurement rods / scales marked at various sites of Tamil Nadu – B

<i>Sl. no.</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Length cm</i>	<i>Reference</i>
26	Uttiramerur	207	Selvakumar 2015
27	Tiruvattar	220	ibid.
28	Tirumanikuzhi 1	230 (110 + 120)	ibid.
29	Darasuram 2	260	ibid.
30	Tiruvalanchuzhi	260	ibid.
31	Tanjavur 2	276.7	ibid.
32	Alampakkam	288	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
33	Tiruppainnili	300	ibid.
34	Tenkarai 4	300	Selvakumar 2015
35	Tirumaharal	312	ibid.
36	Tiruvidaimarutur	312.48	SII V, 702
37	Tiruvamattur 4	327	Selvakumar 2015
38	Srinivasanallur	335	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
39	Valikandapuram	337	Selvakumar 2015
40	Tiruvalangadu	340	ibid.
41	Lalgudi	347	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
42	Kulappakkam	358	Selvakumar 2015
43	Tirumanikuzhi 2	359	ibid.
44	Tiruvennainallur 2	359	ibid.
45	Tiruvakkarai	362.5	ibid.
46	Tiruppugalur	370	ibid.
47	Tenkarai 1	372	ibid.
48	Keezhedayalam	374	ibid.
49	Tenkarai 2	376	ibid.
50	Siyamangalam	392	ibid.
51	Tiruchendurai	400	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
52	Tiruppainnili	400	ibid.

Table 19: Measurement rods / scales marked at various sites of Tamil Nadu – C

<i>Sl. no.</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Length cm</i>	<i>Reference</i>
53	Tirukkazhukundram	404	Selvakumar 2015
54	Tiruttiyamalai	406	Majeed 2001; Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
55	Tiruvamattur 1	419.5	Selvakumar 2015
56	Tiruvamattur 2	423	ibid.
57	Periyakurukkai Akaram	468	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
58	Kottur	488	206 of 1934–35
59	Tiruppattur	489	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
60	Tiruttiyamalai	510	Majeed 2001; Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
61	Tirukkolakkudi 1	510	Selvakumar 2015
62	Tirukkolakkudi 2	517	ibid.
63	Darasuram 1	520	ibid.
64	Tiruppattur	564	Kalaikkovan <i>et al.</i> 2015
65	Periyakurukkai Akaram	569 (564 + 5)	ibid.
66	Kāñcīpuram 3 Tirupputkuzhi Gandarkan- dan Kōl	569	Heitzman & Rajagopal 2004
67	Tirukandeswaram	576	Selvakumar 2014
68	Tiruvennainallur 3	640	Selvakumar 2015
69	Tirukkazhukundram	694	ibid.
70	Tiruvandarkovil	694	ibid.
71	Uttiramerur	710 (672 + 38) ‘Virupparayan’	Rajavelu 2009
72	Tirupputkuzhi Rayavib- hadan kōl	724	Heitzman and Rajagopal 2004
73	Tiruvennainallur 4	752	Selvakumar 2015
74	Tirukkovalur	821	ibid.

Figure 20: Measurement rod marked on a rock at Siyamangalam



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These measurement rods belong to different time periods and it could not be argued that they were based on the dimension of the *aṅgulam*. Some of these measurement rods could be clearly correlated to the measurement rods mentioned in the inscriptions. The one found at Siyamangalam is definitely datable to period of Rājarāja and was a 16-span rod.⁴⁸ The rod of *Rāsavibhāṭan* occurs at Uttamasili near Trichy, and also at Kāñcīpuram and a few other sites. Similarly the *Mūvāyiravan kōl* occurs at Pennadam.⁴⁹ Except the few instances where there is an accompanying name, other sites have only the marking of measurement rods and their correlation with a specific dimension requires more detailed research. In the later context, an inscription from Kugaiyur in Kallidaikkurchi dated in 1447 CE mentions the appeal to the Nāyakas about the hardship caused by the use of 18-feet rod for taxation, and the order issued for increasing the size of the rod by two feet.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ (SII 7, 440).⁴⁹ (ARE 249 of 1928–9).⁵⁰ (Palat, 1986), p. 132; (ARE 97 of 1918).

VI.2.3 Area units

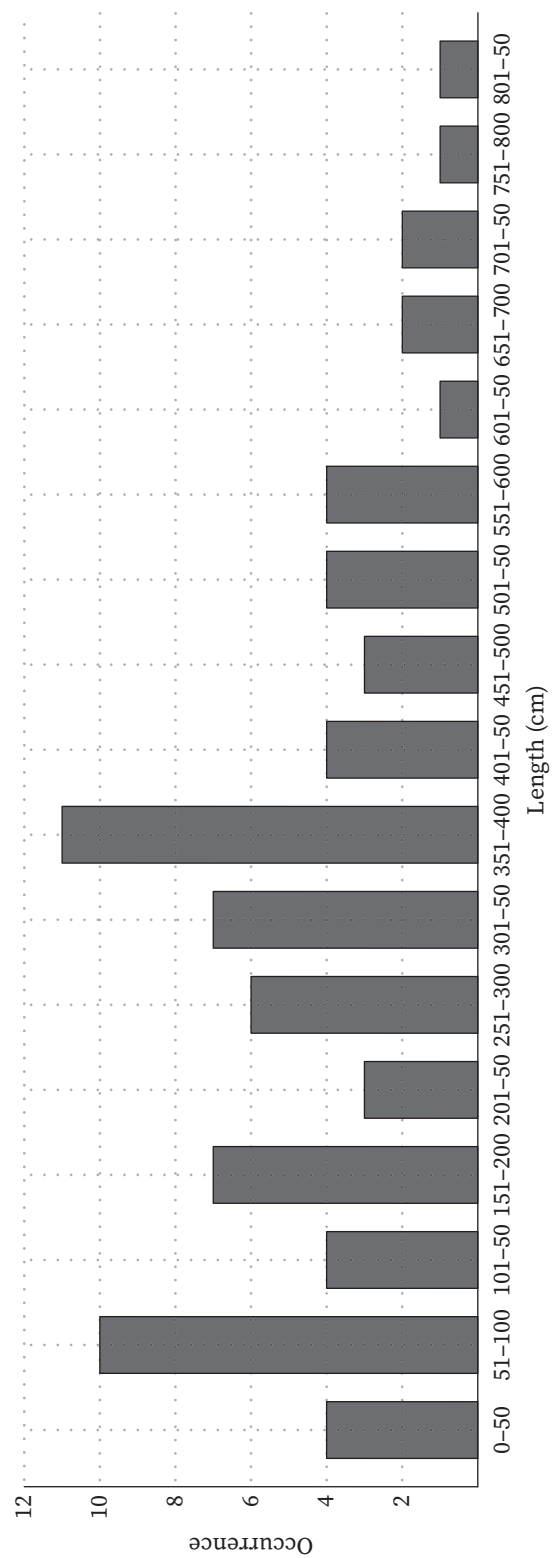
So far, our discussion has been mainly confined to the linear units, which formed the basis for the land area units. The area units are more complicated as they are conveyed in terms of a major unit and its fractions. The area units of fields and plots are based on the linear units such as 12-span rod, 12-feet rod and 16-span rod. The basic, i.e. the smallest measurable unit of area of the Cōla period was known as *kuzhi* (square), which was measured by one rod by one rod. The units of *mā*, *kāṇi*, *mundirikai* and *vēli* were larger area units. The area units of *pāḍakam* and *paṭṭi* were used in the Pallava period and they continued to be used in the territories of northern Tamil Nadu in the Cōla period.

The area unit based on *kuzhi* is more geometrical than the others and it is not clear when it was first applied in Tamil Nadu. The method of measuring land according to the volume of grains (*Vidaippāḍu*) was prevalent mainly in the western part of Tamil Nadu in the Kongu region, and this knowledge survives even to-day. This paper does not include a discussion on this type of land measurement scheme referred to in the mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu. Calculation based on ploughshare was another method of measuring land prevalent in India. These two methods were perhaps older and involved an intermediary approach where the plough and the grains are used for understanding the extent of an area. The *kuzhi* or *caturam* area measured with the aid of a measuring tool is more mathematical and abstract in approach than those based on plough share or grain volume. The use of a measurement rod is an advanced and accurate approach to measurement.

Kuzhi, the basic unit

Kuzhi originally means a pit in Tamil, and refers to one square unit or *caturam*. This basic unit of measurement is defined as an area covered by one *kōl* (rod) by one *kōl*. The other units of land areas are the multiples of the basic unit of *kuzhi*. While *kuzhi* is the basic unit, the areas smaller than a *vēli* are always conveyed in terms of *vēli* and its fractions such as of *mā* ($\frac{1}{20}$ of a *vēli*), *kāṇi* ($\frac{1}{80}$ of a *vēli*) and *mundirikai* ($\frac{1}{320}$ of a *vēli*), which are discussed below.

Figure 21: Distribution of measurement rods / scales by length



The actual area of a *kuzhi* unit is determined by the length of the measurement rod and its multiplication used. A *kuzhi* measurement by an 8-span rod would be different from the *kuzhi* measured based on a 10-span rod or a 16-span rod. Thus, some of the inscriptions mention the length or name of the measurement rod used, while referring to areas such as *kuzhi*, *mā* and *vēli*. The unit of *vēli* is considered the largest whole unit for areas, and the sub-units were conveyed as parts of the whole unit of *vēli*. The inscriptions from Lalgudi mention that an area of ‘*eṇṇiṭi kolāl nārṇkōl by nārṇkōl*’ (four rods by four rods of eight bow-grip rod) is one *kuzhi* and 200 such *kuzhis* form one *mā*, i.e. $4 \times 8 \text{ } \pi\dot{i}\dot{t}i \text{ } k\ddot{o}l \times 4 \times 8 \text{ } \pi\dot{i}\dot{t}i \text{ } k\ddot{o}l = 1 \text{ } kuzhi$, and 200 such *kuzhis* form one *mā*.⁵¹ The term *ṇṇiṭi* is the width of the fist and it is about four *aṅgulam*, and therefore 32 *aṅgulams* constitute *eṇṇiṭikkōl*. Four *eṇṇiṭikkōl* length is equal to 128 *aṅgulams*; 12 *aṅgulams* forms a *cān* or *aṭi* and therefore, it is $10\frac{3}{4}$ *cāns* in length. Here a *kuzhi* will have $10.75 \times 10.75 = 115.5625$ square *cān*. Thus, if a rod of 4-span is used, a *kuzhi* would be 16 square *cān*, and, if a 16-span rod is used, a *kuzhi* would be 256 square *cān*. Hence, the area of *kuzhi* was not uniform across a region; it varied in size depending upon the size of the rod and scheme of its application.

Paṭṭi

Paṭṭi is an area measurement. It perhaps referred to an area required for a specific flock of goats. According to the Kuram copper plate inscription of the Pallava king Paramesvaravarman I, 670–91 CE, one *paṭṭi* was equal to 1200 *kuzhi*.⁵² *Paṭṭi* and *nivartanā* are considered to be of the same size. MEENAKSHI observes that *paṭṭi* and *nivartanā* are synonymous terms and the ‘*Sāmānya nivartanadvayarnaryadāyā*’ occurring in the Sanskrit portion of the Kasakkudi plates is a literal translation of ‘*Sāmānya iraṇḍupaṭṭipaḍiyāl*’ of the Tamil portion of the same grant.⁵³ It appears that a *nivartanā* was equal to a *paṭṭi* of land. However, an inscription of 989 CE refers to one *paṭṭi* as consisting of 1000 *kuzhi* of land. Since the size of the measurement rod is not known, it is very difficult to determine the modern equivalent land area for such measurement units.

⁵¹ (SII 13, 74).

⁵³ (Meenakshi, 1938), p. 850.

⁵² (SII 1, 151).

This leads us to an important observation that these land measurement references should be used very cautiously for comparative studies on economic history across a region, just because of the simple fact that *kuzhi* and *vēli* may not be similar, even in the neighbourhood, since each village or larger area had its own measurement rods.

Pāḍagam

Pāḍagam is a land measurement unit used in northern Tamil Nadu. It was introduced during Pallava times. The Uttaramerur inscription of Kampavarman refers to 240 *kuzhi* as one *pāḍagam*.⁵⁴ Perhaps in one scheme five *pāḍagams* formed one *paṭṭi*. An inscription of *Parthivendrādhipativarman* who took the head of Vīrapāṇḍya mentions that 720 *kuzhi* units make three *pāḍagams*.⁵⁵ This measurement unit is equated with the *Pāṭaka* of the Bengal inscriptions.⁵⁶ A similar measure called *patha* also occurs in Bengal inscriptions.⁵⁷ This unit of land continued to be used in Cōḷa times in the northern part of Tamil Nadu.⁵⁸ This suggests that regional and community level traditions were not completely modified by administrative systems of the precolonial period. There is a reference to *pāḍakakkōl*, a rod used for measuring *pāḍakams*, from the temple of Tenkarai near Madurai district. *Pāḍakam* is also used in the meaning of a plot of field or *caturam*⁵⁹ and the usage of *Pazahmpāḍagappaḍi*, which means that *pāḍakam* was an age old measure, occurs in a later Pāṇḍya inscription.⁶⁰

Mā

Mā is the next largest area unit after *vēli*. As mentioned earlier, *mā* is defined not in relation to *kuzhi*, but in relation to the larger unit of *vēli*, as the name *mā* itself means in Tamil the fraction of $\frac{1}{20}$. It is $\frac{1}{20}$ th of a *vēli*. The size of *mā* varies according to the measurement rod and the size of the *vēli* composed using the measurement rods. A *mā* could consist of 100, 128, 256 or even 512 *kuzhis*, perhaps

⁵⁴ (SII 6, 347).

⁵⁵ (SII 3, 171).

⁵⁶ (Saradha Srinivasan, 1974), p. 448.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 448.

⁵⁸ (SII 6, 349).

⁵⁹ (SII 5, 294).

⁶⁰ (SII 5, 302).

determined by the size of the *vēli* and the measurement rods used. Based on one scheme 200 *kuzhis* formed one *mā*.⁶¹ According to a Pudukkottai inscription, using an 18-span rod, 522 *kuzhi* constituted a *mā*,⁶² and therefore it is not necessary that a *mā* was conceived as a square unit, it also included rectangular areas. In this case, the area could have measured 18 rods \times 29 rods leading to 522 *kuzhi* units for one *mā*.⁶³ What is the need for making these *mā* consist of different *kuzhi* units? It is probable that it was undertaken as part of standardisation of the unit of *vēli*. However, this contention needs to be tested using further field measurements and the comparative study of inscriptions. Table 20 lists the different schemes in the composition of a *mā*, as revealed by the mediæval inscriptions.

Table 20: Different type of *kuzhi* equations for one *mā*

Village	Number of <i>kuzhi</i> per <i>mā</i> and the measurement rod	Reference
Tiruvavadudurai	100	150 of 1925
Tirukadaiyur	138	243 of 1925
Tiruvavaduturai	128	155 of 1925
Kilur (1018 CE)	256, 16 <i>cānkōl</i>	SII VII 889
Tirukkoyilur	256, <i>Vilandaikkōl</i>	SII VII 142
Kilur (1012 CE)	160, 12 <i>cānkōl</i>	SII VII 863
Kilur (1004 CE)	410, <i>Vilantaikkōl</i>	SII VII 864
Tiruvennainallur	500, 16 <i>cānkōl</i>	SII 12, 170
Valuvur	513	428 of 1912
Tirumangalakkudi	512 <i>kuzhi</i> , <i>catirakkōl</i>	SII 12, 228

Kāṇi

Kāṇi is the fraction of $\frac{1}{80}$ and refers to $\frac{1}{80}$ th of a *vēli* unit, or 80 *kāṇis* make a *vēli*, and 4 *kāṇis* make one *mā*.⁶⁴ There is one measurement

⁶¹ (SII 13, 74).

⁶² (Raju & Mainkar, 1964c).

⁶³ The inscriptions of Pudukkottai re-

fer to several types of *mā* units. See (IPS,

359 & 544).

⁶⁴ (SII, V XII, no. 63).

rod called *irupatinkāṇikkōl* and its length is not known. It is not clear if this referred to $20 \times \frac{1}{80} = \frac{1}{4}$ of a standard measurement rod of 16-span.

Mundiri

Mundiri is the smaller unit and it is $\frac{1}{320}$ of a *vēli*. Four *mundiri* units make a *kāṇi*, and 16 *mundiri* units make a *mā* ($16 \times \frac{1}{320} = \frac{1}{20}$).

Vēli

Vēli is the largest unit of land area, in the sense that many smaller units are conveyed as fractions of this particular unit. It consisted of 20 *mā* units of land. There existed different types of *vēli* measurements,⁶⁵ depending upon the length of the measurement rod used. According to modern usage, it is estimated to contain about 6.25 to 6.667 acres of land in the Tanjavur region. The fractions of a *vēli* unit, as used in the land area calculations, proceed by the multiples of *mā*, i.e. $\frac{1}{20}$, $\frac{1}{40}$, $\frac{1}{80}$, $\frac{1}{160}$ and $\frac{1}{320}$. The reason for such a division appears to be the use of 8-based numerical (octimal) units in measuring areas, and the fractions proceed from 20, 40, 80 and its multiples. One type of *vēli* of Karnataka was equated with 5120 square *kōls* based on a 4-span rod and it is equated with 4.48 acres by SARADHA SRINIVASAN.⁶⁶ Thus, *vēli* area was not uniform in all regions. However, as mentioned earlier, the equations of various smaller *kuzhi* units constituting a *mā* could be part of standardisation undertaken during the time of the Cōḷas. This needs to be researched further.

Comments

The land units and their sub-units are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Cōḷas to minutest details, and they clearly reveal the diverse composition of *kuzhi* and *vēli* units. An analysis of these inscriptions has been undertaken by SUBBARAYALU.⁶⁷ Tables 21–25⁶⁸ present the different types of *kuzhi* and *vēli* equations.

⁶⁵ (Subbarayalu, 2001a).

⁶⁷ (Subbarayalu, 2001b).

⁶⁶ (Srinivasan, 1974), p. 448.

⁶⁸ pp. 129ff.

Table 21: References to *kuzhi* and *vēli* and measurement equations in mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu – A

Sl. no.	Village	Location / temple	District	Year	Name of rod	<i>Kuzhi per vēli</i>	<i>Kuzhi = cān units</i>	<i>Kuzhi per mā</i> $\frac{1}{20}$ of <i>vēli</i>	In square <i>cān</i>	Reference
1	Nangavaram	Sundareshwara Temple	Trichy	917		4000		200		SII 8: 646
2	Lalgudi	Saptarishisvara temple	Trichy	952	8 <i>piṭi kōl</i> . 4 <i>kōl</i> × 4 <i>kōl</i> = 1 <i>kuzhi</i> . 1 <i>piṭi</i> = 4 <i>angulam</i> . 32 <i>angulam</i> × 4 = 128 <i>angulam</i> = 10 span + 8 <i>angulam</i> = $10\frac{3}{4}$ span.	4000	10.75 span × 10.75 span	200	462250	SII 13: 74
3	Kilur	Virattaneswarar shrine	Villupuram	1012	12-span (160 <i>kuzhi</i> 1 <i>mā</i>)	3200	12 × 12 = 144 <i>kuzhi</i>	160	460800	SII 7: 863
4	Kilur	Virattaneswarar shrine	Villupuram	1018	16-span	5120		256	1310720	SII 7: 889

Table 22: References to *kuzhi* and *vēli* and measurement equations in mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu – B

Sl. no.	Village	Location / temple	District	Year	Name of rod	<i>Kuzhi per vēli</i>	<i>Kuzhi</i> = <i>cān</i> units	<i>Kuzhi per mā</i> $\frac{1}{20}$ of <i>vēli</i>	In square <i>cān</i>	Reference
5	Tiruvatigai	Virattanes-wara temple	Villupuram	1035	16-span	2000	256	100	512000	SII 8: 316
6	Karuntattangudi	Vashistes-wara	Tanjavur	1044	(128 <i>kuzhi</i> 1 <i>mā</i>)	2560		128		SII 5: 1408
7	Kilur	Virattanes-warar shrine	Villupuram	1058	Tiruvulagal-antapaḍi <i>kōlāl</i> (160 <i>kuzhi</i> 1 <i>mā</i>)	2000				SII 7: 886
8	Tirukkoyilur	Trivikrama temple	Villupuram	1058	16-span 16 <i>cān kōlāl</i> 512 <i>kuzhi</i> = 1 <i>mā</i>	10240		512	2621440	SII 7: 947
9	Govindapur-tur	Kripapuris-warar temple	Ariyalur	1100	12 feet	2000				SII 19: 214
10	Tiruvalan-gadu	Vataranyes-warar	Tiruvallur	1106	16-span	2000		100	51200	SII 5: 1381

Table 23: References to *kuzhi* and *vēli* and measurement equations in mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu – C

Sl. no.	Village	Location / temple	District	Year	Name of rod	<i>Kuzhi per vēli</i>	<i>Kuzhi</i> = <i>cān</i> units	<i>Kuzhi per mā</i> $\frac{1}{20}$ of <i>vēli</i>	In square <i>cān</i>	Reference
11	Tiruvarur	Tiyagarajas-wami	Tiruvarur	1114		2000		100		SII 17: 586
12	Tiruvidaimarutur	Mahalinga	Tanjavur	1122	12 feet (<i>Tiruulagala-ntarulinapaḍi</i>)	2000		100	288000	SII 5: 702
13	Turuvidaimarutur	Mahalinga	Tanjavur	1122		2560		128		SII 5: 702
14	Turuvidaimarutur	Mahalinga	Tanjavur	1123		2000				SII 5: 694
15	Tiruvarur	Tiyagaraja	Tiruvarur	1123		2000				SII 5: 457
16	Kilur	Virat-taneswarar shrine	Villupuram	1138		2000				SII 7: 913
17	Alangudi			1152	16 feet (<i>Ūrkkōl</i>)	2560		128 <i>kuzhi</i> = 1 <i>mā</i>	655360	SII 6: 440

Table 24: References to *kuzhi* and *vēli* and measurement equations in mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu – D

Sl. no.	Village	Location / temple	District	Year	Name of rod	<i>Kuzhi</i> per <i>vēli</i>	<i>Kuzhi</i> = <i>cān</i> units	<i>Kuzhi</i> per $mā \frac{1}{20}$ of <i>vēli</i>	In square <i>cān</i>	Reference
18	Muniyur	Agastiswara temple	Tanjavur	1169		10240		512 <i>kuzhi</i>		SII 8: 204
19	Vedaranyam	Vedranyeswarar	Tanjavur	1177		2000				SII 17: 540
21	Tirukkoyilur	Trivikrama	Villupuram	1195	12 <i>aṭikkōl</i>	10000		500		SII 7: 942
22	Siyamangalam	Stambeswara	Tiruvannamalai	1202		2000		100		SII 7: 66
23	Saluvankuppam	Rock North of the cave	Kāñcīpuram	1215		2000		100		SII 4: 381
24	Kunnandar-kovil		Pudukkottai	1217	$1\frac{1}{2} mā = 250 kuzhi$ <i>Onpatit-ṛaḍikkōl</i> (9 feet rod)	5120		256		IPS 175
25	Tiruvidadamarutur	Mahalingaswamy	Tanjavur	1218		2000		100		SII 5: 707

Table 25: References to *kuzhi* and *vēli* and measurement equations in mediæval inscriptions of Tamil Nadu – E

Sl. no.	Village	Location / temple	District	Year	Name of rod	<i>Kuzhi per vēli</i>	<i>Kuzhi = cān units</i>	<i>Kuzhi per mā $\frac{1}{20}$ of vēli</i>	In square <i>cān</i>	Reference
26	Muniyur (762 $\frac{1}{2}$)	Agastiswara	Tanjavur	1220		2000		100		SII 8: 207
27	Chidambaram	Nataraja	Cuddalore	1248		2000		100		SII 8: 52
28	Chidambaram	Nataraja	Cuddalore	1248		2560		128 <i>kuzhi</i>	Virivu	SII 8: 52
29	Tiruvennai-nallur	Vaigundapperumal	Villupuram	1254	16-span	10000		500	2560000	SII 12: 170
30	Tiruvavur	Tiyagaraja	Tiruvavur	1257		2000		100		SII 5: 459
33	Tiruchunai	Agastiswara temple	Madurai	1265	18 feet	5120		256		SII 8: 411
35	Vedaranyam	Vedaranyeswara	Tanjavur	1272		2000		100		SII 17: 539
36	Tirunelveli	Nellaiyappar	Tirunelveli	1321	18 feet 16 × 16 <i>Vembanat-tukōl</i>	5120		256	1658880	SII 5: 411

VI.2.4 Correlating the traditional measurement rods with metric measures

Correlation of the traditional linear measures with the metric measurement is highly complicated, since the length of the *aṅgulams* was perhaps determined based on individual body measurements that went into the creation of a measurement rod. Based on the literary evidences, several types of *aṅgulam* measurement are traceable. In Tables 26 and 27⁶⁹ the length of the measurement rods are compared with five types of inches, and in fact there could be more varieties of such measurement rods; here for a comparative understanding five types of measurements are used.

Tables 26 and 27 suggest that the diverse combination of *aṅgulams*, *cān*, *aṭi* and *piṭi* used in the mediæval period resulted in varied dimensions of measurement rods, leading to diversity and complexity in land measurements. These Tables can be compared with the Tables 17–19⁷⁰ to understand the diverse patterns noticed in the marking of measurement rods. Perhaps individual body-parts dimensions were used for developing the measurement rods by innumerable people, which is reflected in Table 20.⁷¹

VI.2.5 Differences between the rods of dry and wet lands

Land categorisation plays an important role in production, price and revenue assessment. Based on the nature of the land and its cultivation two types of measurement rods were used, *nañjaikkōl* and *puñjaikkōl*. Evidence for the two different types of measurement rods come from Tirutiyamalai Ekapushpapriyanayagi temple. The dry land rod measured 510 cm and the wet land rod measured 406 cm.

- Dry land rod length 510 cm = wet land rod length 406 cm
- It is roughly 5:4 in length. In terms of length the variation is 104 cm.
- The dry land area unit of one square = 5.1 m × 5.1 m = wet land one square unit = 4.06 m × 4.06 m
- 26.01 m² = 16.48 m²
- The ratio for area is: 1:1.57

⁶⁹ pp. 135ff.

⁷¹ p. 127.

⁷⁰ pp. 119ff.

Table 26: Possible length of various span / foot rods – A

		<i>Āṅgula</i> 1 cm	<i>Āṅgula</i> 2 cm	<i>Āṅgula</i> 3 cm	<i>Āṅgula</i> 4 cm	<i>Āṅgula</i> 5 cm
Length of a Cān / aṭi	Cubit	40	42	45	49	56
	Āṅgula	1.66	1.75	1.875	2.041	2.33
1	12	19.92	21	22.5	24.492	27.96
2	24	39.84	42	45	48.984	55.92
3	36	59.76	63	67.5	73.476	83.88
4	48	79.68	84	90	97.968	111.84
5	60	99.6	105	112.5	122.46	139.8
6	72	119.52	126	135	146.952	167.76
7	84	139.44	147	157.5	171.444	195.72
8	96	159.36	168	180	195.936	223.68
9	108	179.28	189	202.5	220.428	251.64
10	120	199.2	210	225	244.92	279.6
11	132	219.12	231	247.5	269.412	307.56
12	144	239.04	252	270	293.904	335.52
13	156	258.96	273	292.5	318.396	363.48
14	168	278.88	294	315	342.888	391.44
15	180	298.8	315	337.5	367.38	419.4
16	192	318.72	336	360	391.872	447.36
17	204	338.64	357	382.5	416.364	475.32
18	216	358.56	378	405	440.856	503.28
19	228	378.48	399	427.5	465.348	531.24
20	240	398.4	420	450	489.84	559.2
21	252	418.32	441	472.5	514.332	587.16
22	264	438.24	462	495	538.824	615.12
23	276	458.16	483	517.5	563.316	643.08

Table 27: Possible length of various span / foot rods – B

		<i>Aṅgulam</i> 1 cm	<i>Aṅgulam</i> 2 cm	<i>Aṅgulam</i> 3 cm	<i>Aṅgulam</i> 4 cm	<i>Aṅgulam</i> 5 cm
Length of a Cân / aṭi	Cubit	40	42	45	49	56
	Aṅgulam	1.66	1.75	1.875	2.041	2.33
24	288	478.08	504	540	587.808	671.04
25	300	498	525	562.5	612.3	699
26	312	517.92	546	585	636.792	726.96
27	324	537.84	567	607.5	661.284	754.92
28	336	557.76	588	630	685.776	782.88
29	348	577.68	609	652.5	710.268	810.84
30	360	597.6	630	675	734.76	838.8
31	372	617.52	651	697.5	759.252	866.76
33	396	657.36	693	742.5	808.236	922.68
34	408	677.28	714	765	832.728	950.64
35	420	697.2	735	787.5	857.22	978.6
36	432	717.12	756	810	881.712	1006.56
37	444	737.04	777	832.5	906.204	1034.52
38	456	756.96	798	855	930.696	1062.48
39	468	776.88	819	877.5	955.188	1090.44
40	480	796.8	840	900	979.68	1118.4

Based on the above analysis, one unit of wet land equals to 1.57 units of area and 100 units of wet land is equal to 157 units of area.

VI.2.6 Analysis of measurement rods

The survey suggests that different types of rods were used in different regions and villages. In some contexts, the standard measurements prescribed in the *Arthaśāstra* seem to have been used. An

inscription from Melpadi refers to a plot of land donated to a temple and to its boundaries as 4 *kōl* wide rod and another 2 *kōl* wide rod. The 4 *kōl* wide road matched with the width of the sanctum of the Br̥hadiśvara temple, which is 792 cm. It appeared that this could be a 16-span rod⁷²; but the text of the inscription mentions an 18-span rod, and hence, it is possible that 18 span rod was used in this village and the distance arrived at the site survey, comparable to the measurement rod of 16-span, could be a coincidence. However, considering the diverse range of *aṅgulam* measurements used, it could be argued that the measurement of a 16-span rod and an 18-span rod could become equal in certain contexts, if a different combination of *aṅgulams* were used.

VI.2.7 Arithmetic calculation in inscriptions

The inscriptions have several descriptions of land area measurements and conversions. They use a few terms related to the calculation and conversion.

Maḍakku (reduction)

Maḍakku is a method of reduction of the area from one unit to another unit.⁷³ Most probably, when an area measured by a smaller scale unit was converted on the basis of a larger scale, the process was called *maḍakku*. It was a kind of reduction process, in which a large area can be reduced to a small area.

Virivu (expansion)

Virivu refers to expansion of a smaller area into a larger area on the basis of smaller measurement rod.

Taram

Taram refers to the quality of the land. Perhaps it was determined based on the quantity of yield in the land. *Taram* was a factor that determined the quantity of taxes from the lands.

⁷² See (Selvakumar, 2017). 01c); (Karashima, 2006).

⁷³ (Subbarayalu, 2001a, 2001b, 20-

Conversions

The inscriptions mention the lands that had to be taxed and the area that had to be exempted from tax, such as temple lands, settlement areas, and cremation grounds. Here two calculations from the inscriptions are analysed.

Figure 22: Passage through which corpses are carried to the cremation ground, Nallur, near Papanasam



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Nallur Inscription 1

Nallur in Papanasam taluk of Tanjavur district has a Śiva shrine called Kalyanasundareswarar temple. An inscription, issued during the 3rd regnal year of Rājarāja III (1218 CE) found in this temple⁷⁴ mentions the area of the land that was exchanged for another piece of land meant for the passage for carrying the dead body, which created a dispute in the village. The village still has this pathway and it is called *piṇam pōgum vazhi*, the pathway for the corpse (Fig. 22).

⁷⁴ (Marxiya Gandhi & Ramachandran, 2004), p. 138, TNAD No. 32 / 1995.

The area is mentioned as 2 *kōl*, in north-south, by $15\frac{3}{4} + \frac{3}{20}$ (*patinañjé mukkālē mūnru mā*) on the east-west, and the total area was $31\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{20}$ *perunkuzhi* or square *kuzhi*, in the inscription.

When we multiply the above numbers, we get:

- $(15 \times 2) = 30 + (2 \times \frac{3}{4}) = 1\frac{1}{2} + (2 \times \frac{3}{20}) = \frac{6}{20} = 31\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{20}$ or
- $2 \times (\frac{63}{4} + \frac{3}{20})$
- $2 \times 315 + \frac{3}{20}$
- $2 \times \frac{318}{20} = \frac{636}{20} = 31 + \frac{16}{20} = 31 + \frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{20}$

The term *perunkuzhi* mentioned here perhaps meant that a larger measurement rod was employed.

For the above mentioned piece of land another was given in exchange, and its size was:

- $8\frac{1}{4}$ *kōl* by $3\frac{3}{4} + \frac{2}{20}$ *kōl* = $\frac{33}{4} \times (\frac{15}{4} + \frac{2}{20}) = 75 + \frac{2}{20} = \frac{77}{20}$
- $\frac{33}{4} \times \frac{77}{20} = \frac{2541}{80} = 31 + \frac{61}{80} = 31 + \frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{80}$

Actually the land given in exchange for the original piece of land was slightly less and is only 31 *mukkāle kāṇi*; however, it is mentioned as $31\frac{3}{4} + 1$ *mā* ($\frac{1}{20}$). Perhaps they intentionally ignored the small variation.

Nallur Inscription 2

Another inscription from the same temple issued in the 30th year of Rājarāja III talks about the same issue and mentions another land area.⁷⁵

Here a piece of land is said to be $2 \text{ kōl} \times 28 \text{ kōl} = 56 \text{ kuzhi}$.

- $28 \times 2 = 56$

Here another term *uriya kuzhi* (equivalent area unit) is mentioned.

The area of 87.5 *kuzhi* is mentioned as *uriya kuzhi* for 56 *kuzhi*, which means an equivalent unit in another scheme of measurement. We can deduce the approximate variation in the expansion

⁷⁵ (ARE 31/1995).

of the measurement rod here. The unit of 2 *kōl* in one scheme becomes 2.5 *kōl* in the new scheme, and therefore, 28 *kōl* units become 35 *kōl* units, a 25 percent increase per unit.

- $2.5 \text{ } kōl \times 35 \text{ } kōl = 87.5 \text{ } kuzhi$

If the original measurement rod measured 16 spans, the new one would be 20 spans, or if the original specimen was 8 spans or feet in length, the new rod would be 10 spans or feet. This inscription suggests that different rods were used for land measurement, and that the conversion of area was undertaken when a new measurement rod was introduced.

VI.2.8 Designing the landscapes: cities, towns, plots, canal and the fields

In the mediæval period, extensive landscape modification was undertaken in many parts of India and this is evidenced from the references in the inscriptions. The landscape that we witness in many of the satellite imageries, including the settlements, temples, streets, lakes, tanks, canals and cultivable fields were actually measured and reoriented, and some of the lands were developed at some point of time in history. This process might have begun in the Iron Age, and land / landscape modification should be seen as a continuous process, and in the mediæval period, when more lands were brought under agriculture and extensive irrigation networks were built, an accurate designing of lands would have been required to maximise production and also to increase the tax income to the government. Even in the contemporary period, the farmers sometimes use the sediments deposited in the boundary of the field for making bricks, and then extend their area of cultivation for higher yield.

We do not know much about the planning and laying out of the settlements in the Neolithic period and Iron Age. Different shapes and dimensions are noticed in the megalithic burials, and some were designed according to body-part measurements. However, from the early historic period, properly laid out towns were constructed. People used definite measurements for designing settlements and towns in the early historic period, as observed at the sites of Arikamedu, Kaveripumpattinam and Pattanam. The brick structures at Arikamedu display uniform design. The bricks are in the range of 39 cm–42 cm × 19 cm–21 cm × 4 cm–7 cm. The 42 cm length is not arbitrary as it is one type of *muzham* (cubit) or two

spans in length. The width of these bricks is almost half of the length. The Kuram copper plate inscription of the Pallava period mentions *manaiyum manai paḍappaiyum vaguttu*, which means that the residential plots and garden lands were laid out. The inscription from Melpadi refers *eṅgalūr alandu kūriṭṭa 18-cān kōl*, which means 'the 18-span rod that was used for measuring and dividing our village.' Such references definitely suggest the layout and reorganisation of streets, as revealed by the research of SUBBARAYALU (2017) at Uttiramerur, and new Brahmin settlements were measured and laid out as many of the inscriptions refer to a specific area of land and specific shares, according to definite units. The references in the inscriptions include units in the range of 240, 400, 500, 800, 1000, 2000, 3000 and 27000 *kuzhi*, suggesting the measurement-based organisation of cultivable fields. They also indicate a preference for 'round' numbers based on decimal and octimal systems, as the whole units.

Another piece of evidence related to mediæval measurement comes from the Tanjavur temple; the spacing around the main shrine which is around 39.4 m on the three sides of the main *sole*. This is 10 times the length of the 16-span rod. Since the temple was designed around the time of Rājarāja I, it could be argued that 395 cm approximately referred to one type of measurement rod of 16-span. Interestingly, it matches with the 392 cm length of the Siyamangalam rod which is datable to the Cōla period, as discussed above.

The towns of the mediæval period, or at least some parts, were laid out according to a definite plan and design. The temples of Kāñcīpuram, including Vaikuṇṭha Perumal, Kailāsanātha, and many others, display perfect rectangular designs. Since the rectangular design was created in mediæval times, it was natural that the streets were oriented around the temple according to a pattern. This was part of creating order in town planning; the streets and highways were also planned or modified to a specific size and dimension, in conformity. The fields were also designed, so that their size could be conveyed in whole or half or quarter units. Even today in the Kaveri delta it is preferred that the fields are kept straight so that ploughs with bullocks can be worked without difficulty.

Octimal and decimal multiples are easy to remember and simple for cognition and comprehension, and hence, they were used in Mediæval Tamil Nadu. We do notice the predominance of decimal system over the octimal system in the mediæval period itself. It appears that the units of 128, 256 and 512 *kuzhi* was based on the

multiples of the octimal system and the units of 100 and 200 were based on the multiples of decimal system.

Table 28: The area of land donated or sold or transacted in the inscriptions

<i>Village</i>	<i>Area of land</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Tiruvaigavur	$1\frac{1}{2}$ <i>vēli</i>	48 of 1914, SII 12, 58
Arakandanallur	2000 <i>kuzhi</i>	112 of 1934–35, SII 12, 226
Brahmadesam	20 <i>mā</i>	SII 12, 228
Tiruvayppadi	2 <i>vēli</i>	170 of 1918, SII 12, 233, 85 of 1931–32
Tiruvenkadu	1 <i>vēli</i>	466 of 1918, SII 13, no. 16
Tiruvorriyur	20,00 <i>kuzhi</i>	372 of 1911, SII 12, 105
Tirunaraiyur	2,000 <i>kāsu</i> per <i>mā</i> of land	545 of 1921, SII 12, 153
Chidambaram	4 [<i>vēli</i>] and 6 <i>mā</i>	308 of 1913, SII 12, 154
Tirttanagari	$5\frac{3}{4}$ <i>vēli</i>	117 of 1904, SII 12, 156
Munnur	750 <i>kuzhi</i>	80 of 1919, SII 12, 176
Jambai	150 <i>kuzhi</i>	119 of 1906, SII 12, 178
Kattumannarkovil	60 <i>mā</i>	530 of 1920, SII 12, 179
Tiruvennainallur	$9\frac{1}{2}$ <i>mā</i>	447 of 1921, SII 12, 189
Tirupparkadal	700 <i>kuzhi</i>	700 of 1904, SII 12, 190
Virapandi	2000 <i>kuzhi</i>	241 of 1934–35, SII 12, 200
Kattumannarkoyil	34 <i>mā</i>	543 of 1920, SII 12, 254

Thus, in the discussion of land units, we do get more frequently round units either as multiples 100, 128. Also, they used the fractions of $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ more frequently. These multiple units reveal that there was a tendency to have lands as whole units and that the lands on the ground were measured and divided as square or rectangular units, in many cases. This is also revealed by the dimensions of the land donated or sold as mentioned in the inscriptions (Tab. 28).

The canals, and lakes and other areas were allotted land according to a definite measurement, and this was part of land resource

management, so that only limited and essential land was allotted for irrigation and movement, and other areas were put into cultivation. An inscription from Uttiramerur mentions leaving out one *kōl* of land around a lake after purchasing and $\frac{1}{2}$ *kōl* of land for *mañjikam*,⁷⁶ perhaps it was common land that could be used by all people of the village.

VI.2.9 Layout and measurement of fields

Any close scrutiny of the Google Earth Maps would reveal that the fields and plots and temples in the historical villages and settlements were laid out according to a specific measurement scheme. This was due to functional factors and the geometry that helped to establish and secure order. The measurement of fields undertaken as part of the study also reveals that a certain type of measured scheme was used in the layout of the fields and plots. Although the surveyors of the mediæval period followed a straight line, sometimes these boundaries seem to have shifted. The references in the inscriptions clearly suggest that the lands were laid out according to the linear measurement rods. People generally tend to think of round numbers as major units and hence they followed a scheme which could be easy to remember. Three fields were measured in the village of Manavalampettai in Nannilam Taluk of Tanjavur and they produced the measurement listed in Table 29.

Table 29: Field measurement at
Manavalampettai, Village no. 75, Nannilam Taluk

<i>East-West (m)</i>	<i>North-South (m)</i>
74.60	37.40
74.60	45.40
74.60	38.80

The measurement of 74.60 m comes to 19 rods of 16-span at 392 cm. If we consider this to be of 20 rods, then the dimension of the rod could be around 373 cm. The measurement of lands using Google Earth confirms that a particular scheme was used in the

⁷⁶ (SII 6, 370).

laying out of agricultural plots in the Kaveri delta. Field measurements were also checked using the Google Earth Feature for a few villages⁷⁷ and this reveals that the fields were measured according to certain accepted measurement rods.

VI.2.10 Measurement rods and taxation

The measurement rods were mainly used for accurate quantification of land for taxation and other transactions. It appears that there existed some issues in the use of measurement rods and probably there were attempts to change the rods which affected the people. For standardisation, the length of the rods was marked in temples and on rocks. In some cases, the measurement rods were copied from one location to other; an inscription at Tiruvalangadu near Kuttalam close to Mayiladuturai mentions that the measurement rod in this village was copied from Tanjavur Bṛhadīśvara temple. A Pennadam inscription mentions that there would be punishment if someone sought to erase the measurement rod or use any other rod than the *Mūvāyiravaṅkōl*.⁷⁸ The measurement rods were sometimes increased in length to reduce the tax burden, as revealed by the inscriptions of the Vijayanagara period.

VI.3 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study of inscriptions and the revenue system of the mediæval period and the survey of the layout of the towns and landscapes observed on modern maps and satellite imagery suggest that in Mediæval Tamil Nadu the layout of the residential plots, streets, roads, settlements, temples and agrarian fields was designed according to a definite measurement scheme, at least in the context of many of the agrarian and settled territories that were politically and economically important. Temples, streets, canals, settlements, highways and fields and cultivable lands were measured and an accurate documentation was maintained as revealed by the inscriptions of Bṛhadīśvara temple and the copper plates of Tiruvindalur.

⁷⁷ Data is not reproduced here for want of space. ⁷⁸ (Palat, 2015).

It is possible that the fields and settlements, in the case of *brahmadēyas* and other settlements, were re-laid out in certain areas using a system of measurement. In such layout and reorganisation of lands and landscape, they adopted numerical schemes in the multiple units of 8 or 10 or 100 or 1000, which were perceived as whole units and convenient numbers in their dealings and transactions. The data presented above reveal that the mediæval land administration was well organised and that an account of the lands was maintained in minute detail for the purpose of taxation.

The inscriptions reveal that diverse measurement rods were used in various regions. Since a standardisation of the measurement rod was not possible, the local people might have devised measurement rods according to their convenience using their own body-parts. Several villages, territories and regions had their own measurement rods. Therefore, the measurement units such as *vēli*, *mā* and *kuzhi*, and their costs, yield and tax rates, as mentioned in the inscriptions, cannot be directly correlated as part of economic history, even within a specific region, without critically analysing the measurement rods used and the scheme of measurement units and sub-units. Therefore, cross regional comparisons based on yield per *vēli* and *mā* and their price have to be undertaken carefully after due consideration of these variables.

Rather than keeping a measurement scheme as a standard and changing the rates of tax according to the types of land, different types of measurement rods were devised for different types of lands. This led to the development of distinct measurement rods for dry lands and wet lands.

Perhaps some degree of standardisation was attempted during the peak of the Cōḷa empire; during the time of Rājarāja I, the 16-span rod was perhaps used as the most accepted measurement rod in certain regions. Certain types of measurement rods were used for country-wide surveys during Cōḷa times; they were named *Ulagalandakōl* and are frequently mentioned in the inscriptions. It is clear that the prevalence of a multitude of measurement rods and schemes forced administrators to undertake standardised land survey measurements during the peak of the Cōḷa empire. For example, under Rājarāja I, when several territories of South India were united, and many regions were assigned for the income of the servants of the Tanjavur Br̥hadiśvara temple, they had to standardise the lands spread out in various villages of the Cōḷa empire, and thus, they had to adopt a common scheme for the measurement of lands.

In addition, the land areas had to be measured accurately, so that the proper amount of tax was collected. Thus, the *vēli* or *mā* units, with diverse *kuzhi* units, suggest an attempt to standardise based on the size of the measurement rod and the volume of yield. Thus, it is certain that an effort was made for standardisation, based on the calculation of the area to measure.

A hypothesis proposed here, based on the analysis of the data, is that the diverse *kuzhi* units for the composition of a *vēli* was an attempt at standardisation. The reason for devising diverse *vēli* areas was probably the yield of the land, and also the size of the measurement rod used in a particular village. This hypothesis has to be tested through field survey and the analysis of the volume of production.

The linear measurement rods of the mediæval period varied in length, although the name they bore suggests identical units of length in traditional measurements. For example, one type of linear measurement rod of 16-spans could have measured from 320 cm to 396 cm according to the size of the span used in the various regions.

There has been a tendency for the use of longer measurement rods from the end of the Cōla period, mainly in the Vijayanagara and Nāyaka periods. This might have been done to measure the land at a faster pace and it was also adopted to reduce the tax burden, as demanded by the people. Since the people required clear, direct proof, it appears that they preferred different types of measurement rod rather than reduction through calculation, which would not have probably been clear to the people.

Although mediæval architectural treatises and other texts speak about various measurement schemes and the mode of devising the measurement rods, in reality these principles might not have been followed by all the people. People perhaps adopted their own measurement scheme based on traditional knowledge, which might have caused a variation of measurement on the ground. This could also be attributed to the lack of direct access to the original texts for most of the people, and the practical requirements and the immediate solutions for measurement needs. We could reconstruct the actual length of the measurement rods, according to the markings on the temples and other places, and also on the basis of the measurements of land and plot areas, in addition to the references in the inscriptions.

This study leads us to an important observation: the land measurement references should be used very cautiously for comparative studies on economic history across a region; just because of the simple fact that *kuzhi* and *vēli* may not be similar, even in the same neighbourhood and in an identical temporal context. This may have led to a standardisation based both on calculation and actual measurement during the Cōla times. Perhaps the real standardisation of land measurement could be undertaken only during the colonial period, after the 18th century. The state in precolonial times did not seek to modify and standardise everything, as was the case with the colonial system of the modern period. This implies that the village communities continued to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy until the colonial period, and even during a large part of the 20th century, when the modern state took measures towards the centralisation of the administration. Sometimes such uniformities and ideas of centralisation are overemphasised by the perceptions of the researchers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, for funding the research.

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CH. VII
STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VAṬṬĒLUṬṬU AND
TAMIL PALÆOGRAPHY
S. RAJAVELU

ABSTRACT

Several new inscriptions of the early centuries of the Common Era that have been discovered in the Tamil Country in the last few decades help us to understand the gradual development of the major scripts of Tamil Nadu. It is generally accepted that the *Vaṭṭēluttu* and Tamil scripts evolved from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script and attained their distinct forms around the 6th century CE to suit the Tamil Language. There are several pioneering researches on South Indian palæography by A. C. BURNELL, T. A. GOPINATHA RAO, T. N. SUBRAHMANIAN and C. SIVARAMAMURTI. In 1990 R. GOVINDARAJ reviewed the earlier works in the light of new discoveries and brought out a good monograph on the first stage of development of the palæography of Tamil and *Vaṭṭēluttu* scripts with elaborate charts. Some other attempts have also been made by scholars like Iravatham MAHADEVAN, RAGHAVA VARIER, Natana KASINATHAN and RAJAGOPAL to study the palæographical features of *Vaṭṭēluttu* and Tamil scripts. However, there still remain a few stages to be explored in the chronological development of scripts in Tamil Nadu in general and particularly of *Vaṭṭēluttu*. In this paper, in the light of several recently discovered inscriptions belonging to the 6th–8th centuries CE, we are trying to fill some of the gaps in the palæographical charts of both the *Vaṭṭēluttu* and Tamil scripts, and to present more evidence for an understanding of the origin and development of these scripts.

VII.1 INTRODUCTION

TWO of the earliest writing systems in India, excluding the Indus system, are: i. the Aśōkan *Brāhmī* or North Indian *Brāhmī* that was used in the Mauryan territory to write Prākṛit language records; and ii. the *Tamil-Brāhmī* prevalent in the Tamil country or *Tamiḻakam*, which was used for writing Tamil records. There are close similarities between the two in the shapes of the individual letters common to both. But while the North Indian *Brāhmī* had the *catur varga*

system of *ka*, *ca*, *ṭa*, *ta*, and *pa* groups, with voiced and aspirated variants of consonants, *Tamil-Brāhmī* lacked them. Similarly, the sibilants and some other letters are found only in the North Indian *Brāhmī*, whereas the *Tamil-Brāhmī* has four special letters, namely *ḷ*, *ḻ*, *ṛ*, and *ṇ* necessary for the Tamil language. In orthography too there are some differences: the Northern *Brāhmī* used compound forms to denote pure consonants (vowelless consonants), while the *Tamil-Brāhmī* used separate consonants for the same purpose. Because of these basic differences, there are two schools of thought regarding the origin of the two systems and their inter-relations. The earlier, traditional school of scholars (K. V. SUBRAHMANYA AIYER, Iravatham MAHADEVAN) thinks that the *Tamil-Brāhmī* is just an adaptation of the Northern *Brāhmī* to suit the sound system and orthography of the Tamil language. The other, recent school (RAJAN¹), thinks that the *Tamil-Brāhmī* originated in the south (including Sri Lanka) to write the Tamil language, that it preceded the North Indian *Brāhmī* by a couple of centuries, and that it was modified later to suit the Prākṛit language in the Mauryan area. It is difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion regarding these differences at the present stage of research. But one thing is clear: the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script and its later forms (*Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and Tamil) remained comparatively simple, with a consonantal system adequate for writing the Tamil language.

With the above background, let us discuss the stages of development of the two scripts, namely *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and Tamil from the 2nd to the 8th century CE. From the beginning of the 2nd century, Aśōkan *Brāhmī* underwent many changes in its forms. Its writing styles changed due to the swift flow of handwriting. The æsthetic tendency of the scribe also influenced the gradual evolution of many regional scripts with cursive, floral or stylistic forms. Similarly, the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script has also changed into cursive, as well as angular forms. The cursive form is called *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu*, and the angular variety is known as Tamil. The analysis of both the scripts indicates that the evolution of the *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and Tamil scripts must have been parallel to each other and that both originated from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script. But the usage of the Tamil script was not so prominent when compared to *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* in the first few centuries. Both forms can be seen simultaneously in a few inscriptions of the transition period, that is, prior to the 5th century CE.

¹ See (Rajan, 2015).

To understand the stages of the development of both the scripts in Tamil Nadu, a table of distribution of all the inscriptions available from the 2nd to the 8th century CE has been prepared showing their chronological and spatial distribution. It is significant that quite a number of these inscriptions have been discovered after GOVINDARAJ's monograph.² There is a total number of 312 inscriptions from about 165 villages useful for this study (see Tab. 30, p. 156). The single-line (label) inscriptions (*birudhus*) in Sanskrit and *Grantha* characters of the Pallavas have not been considered here.

VII.2 TRANSITION PERIOD

The transition period of *Vaṭṭeluttu* as well as Tamil scripts extends approximately from 300 to 500 CE. The emergence of the dot mark (*puḷḷi*), and the occurrence of both scripts in the same inscriptions suggest, that the *Vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil scripts evolved simultaneously from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script. One can see some changes in the formation of scripts in Tamil Nadu. The influence of individual writing style mannerisms and habits played a major role in the changes. The following changes and features can be seen in the inscriptions of this period.

- a. Perfection of letters. Equalisation in the length and breadth of the letters. The vertical lines of the letter become parallel to each other [Fig-1, p. 159].
- b. The serif or head mark on the top of the vertical lines as in Arachchalūr and Negaṇūr paṭṭi inscriptions [Fig-2, p. 159].
- c. The vertical lines of *ka* and *ra* are elongated and slightly turned towards left; Ammaṇkōvil paṭṭi and Pillaiyār paṭṭi. The curvature form of letters *ka*, *ra*, and the symbol for *ta* in these inscriptions are akin to Sātavāhana's inscriptions of the 3rd century CE.³ But MAHADEVAN assigned these two inscriptions to the 4–5th century CE.
- d. The rounded shape of the letter *va* in Ammaṇkōvil paṭṭi is found shortened in the upper vertical line whereas at Arachchalūr the round shape became a triangular form.

² (Govindaraj, 2016).

³ See (Sarkar, 1970), pp. 273–4.

Table 30: Chronological and regional distribution of the *Vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil inscriptions

Period	Scripts ^a	Tamil Nadu regions ^b					Total
		Kerala	North	Centre	South	West	
201–300	TB		2	1	1		4
	Vtr				3	1	4
Total			2	1	4	1	8
301–400	Vtr	6	3			1	10
Total		6	3			1	10
401–500	Vtr		2		8	20	30
	V					2	2
Total			2		8	22	32
501–600	T		7				7
	V		14	1		20	36
	VT			1	8		9
Total			21	2	8	20	52
601–700	T		13		2		15
	TG		3		2		5
	V		32		4	29	66
	VG		2				2
	VT		7				7
Total			57		8	29	95
701–800	T		22	1	17	1	41
	TG		2	1	2		5
	V	1	9		19	29	58
	VG				6		6
	VT		2				2
Total		1	35	2	44	30	112

^a T = Tamil, TB = *Tamil-Brāhmī*; Vtr = *Vaṭṭeluttu* transition; VT = *Vaṭṭeluttu*-Tamil (mixed); TG = Tamil & *Grantha*; VG = *Vaṭṭeluttu* & *Grantha*.

^b North = the area north of Kāvēri delta, more or less same as *Toṇḍai-nāḍu*; West = *Dharmapuri* and *Koṅgu* regions; Centre = the Kāvēri delta (the *Cōḷa* country); South = the *Pāṇḍya* country.

- e. The style of medial *i* was changed during this period. It turns towards left at the top or is slightly bent towards the left and turned up; Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi and Arachchalūr.
- f. The other change is noticeable in the letters of *pa*, *ya* and *la*. In this case, the earlier round base takes a flattened form in *pa* and *ya*, and in the letter *la*, the top round shape is opened and widened; Arachchalūr and Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi. Both Vaṭṭeluttu and Tamil forms are noticed in the letter *ta* at Arachchalūr. In Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi, the Tamil form of *ta* is noticed along with the transitional form.

The inscriptions in Tamil script alone during the period from 500 to 600 CE total seven. The number of mixed variety is nine. However, the Vaṭṭeluttu inscriptions are many, numbering thirty-six. The number increases to sixty-six in the succeeding period (600–700 CE). Interestingly they avoid completely the use of *Grantha* letters. The association of *Grantha* with Tamil as well as Vaṭṭeluttu is seen for the first time in this period. The mixed variety of Vaṭṭeluttu and Tamil scripts continues in this period also. The total number is seven. During the period from 700 to 800 CE, the Vaṭṭeluttu inscriptions number fifty-eight. When compared to the previous period the usage of this script is less. Furthermore, the Tamil script inscriptions considerably increase in this period. Anyhow, Vaṭṭeluttu is still dominant in the western part of Tamil Nadu. Tamil script is prominent in the core region of the Pallava territory and in the South.

VII.3 THE PŪLĀṆKUṚICHCHI INSCRIPTIONS

In this regard, the group of three inscriptions at Pūlāṅkuṛichchi helps us to fix the date and palaeographical developments of scripts for other undated inscriptions. The Pūlāṅkuṛichchi inscriptions seem to refer to some era running to the year 192. R. NAGASWAMY took this era as the Śaka era and hence dated it to 270 CE.⁴ This

⁴ (Nagaswamy, 1981). N. SETHURAMAN also thought that it could be the Śaka era according to the associated astronomical details. (Sethuraman, 1983), N. 19, pp. 285–92.

inscription is unique and reveals several sociological and administrative terms which were unknown earlier in the Tamil Country.⁵ The term *brahmadēyam* and other administrative terms indicate the influence of northerners. However no single term is recorded in *Grantha* characters in these inscriptions, suggesting that the *Grantha* script was not yet known during this period. Thus, the Pūlāṅkurichchi inscription may be safely placed to the 3rd century CE. On the basis of the orthographic and palæographic features of the Pūlāṅkurichchi inscription, the evolution of both *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and Tamil scripts have been studied here from the 3rd to the 8th centuries CE.

VII.4 DISTRIBUTION OF VAṬṬĒLUṬṬU

In the 19th century, there were quite a number of theories on the evolution of *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* script, tracing it to Phœnician and Aramaic alphabets⁶ or to the *Brāhmī* variety of Aśōka's alphabet.⁷ In recent years, NAGASWAMY, Iravatham MAHADEVAN, K. G. KRISHNAN, and a few others, have asserted unanimously that the *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* script emerged from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* on the basis of accumulated evidences.⁸

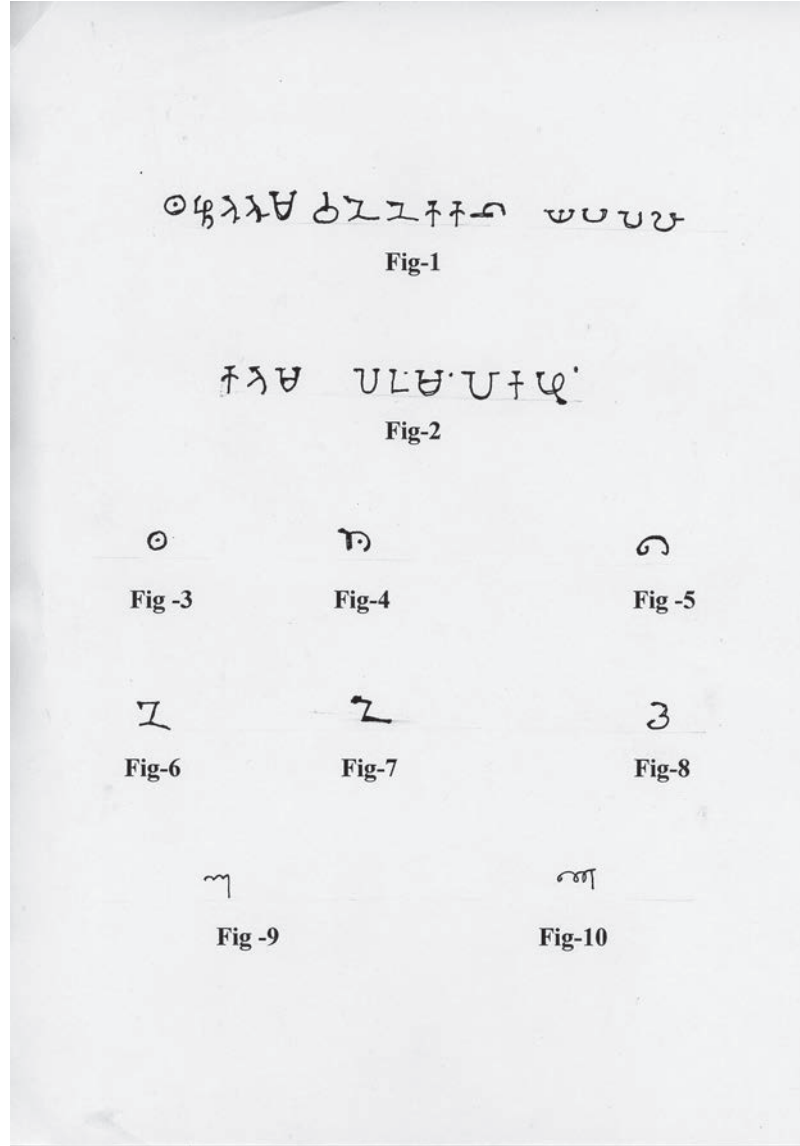
The prevalence of *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and its continuous usage for a long time in the various parts of South India is remarkable. The early *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* inscriptions, ranging from the 3rd to the 7th century CE, are found in the Hero stone inscriptions of the pastoral regions of north and northwestern parts of Tamil Nadu. A large number of *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* inscriptions were noticed in Chengam, Dharmapuri and their neighboring regions. A few early inscriptions of the transitional period have also been noticed in the Pudukkottai, Tiruchchirappalli, Karur and Villupuram Districts. These are of mixed variety. Both Tamil and *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* scripts were employed in these inscriptions. It shows that both *Vaṭṭēluṭṭu* and Tamil letters were originally developed from *Tamil-Brāhmī* script, and that both were employed in the same inscriptions at one stage, and that later on they acquired individual identities.

⁵ (Subbarayalu, 2001), pp. 1–6. p. 84.

⁶ (Burnell, 1994), pp. 5–6; 38–42. ⁸ (Nagaswamy, 1971); (Mahadevan, 2003); (Krishnan, 1983); (Kasinathan, 2000); (Govindaraj, 2016).
BUHLER thought that it was used by the merchants. (Buhler, 1980), p. 95.

⁷ (Rao, 1908); (Subrahmanian, 1996),

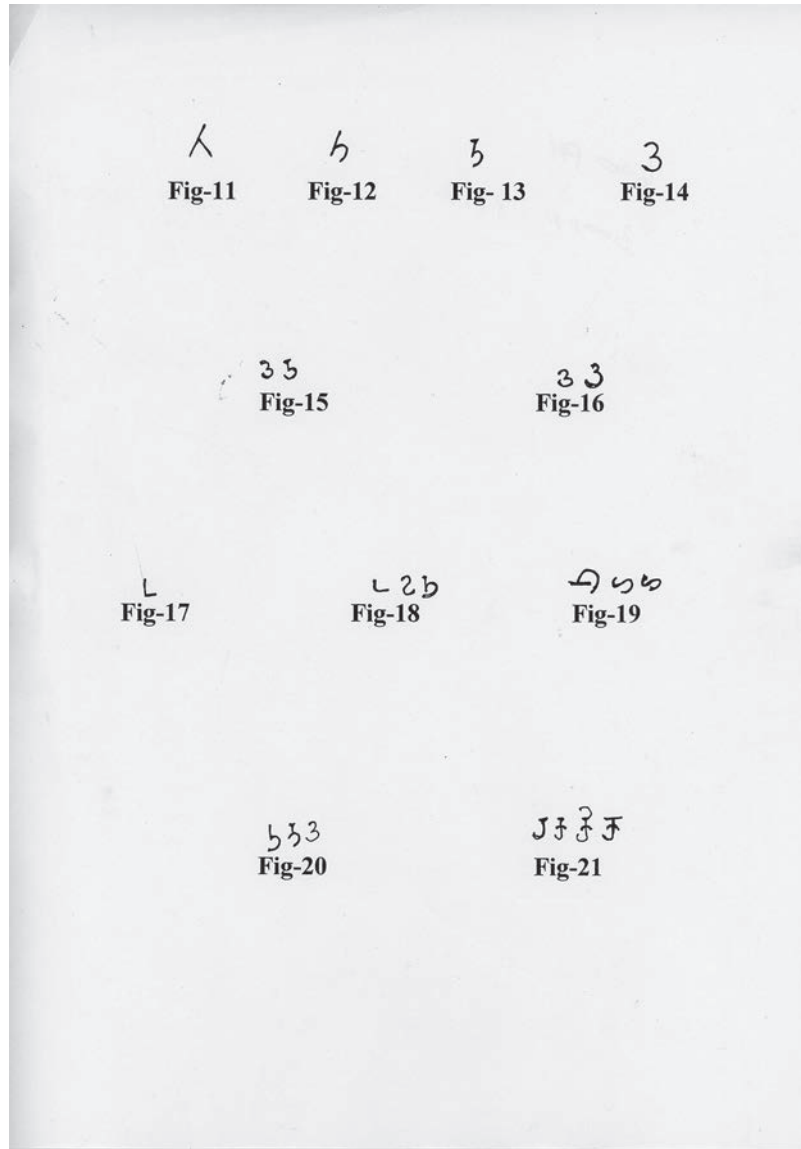
Figure 23: Letters – A



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The mixed variety of both scripts can be noticed in the later stage too. Quite a number of Hero stones from the Dharmapuri and Chengam, Vellore and Villupuram regions were written in both *Vatṭeluttu* and Tamil scripts. The Irulappatti, Kōṭṭaiyūr, Agaram Chēri, Kīlmutṭugūr, Villupuram inscriptions are examples of this variety. These two scripts were employed by the common folk, and the Pallavas, in their core region, used the Tamil script as their official script.

Figure 24: Letters – B



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It is also interesting to note here that the Sanskrit words —the auspicious words and kings' Sanskritised names— were totally ignored by the common folk. The Tamilised forms of proper names of the kings were used in the Hero stone inscriptions of the Pallava period. The people of the peripheral region neither employed the *Grantha* letters, nor adopted the Sanskrit language in the Hero stones.

For instance, the names of the Pallava kings Siṃhavarman, Mahendravarman and Narasiṃhavarman were written in their adapted Tamil forms as Ciṅkaviṇṇa parumaru, Mayēntira pōttarasaru and Naraciṅga parumaru, etc. It shows that the people of the Tamil country had not yet come completely under the influence of the Sanskritic culture or language.

Around the 8th century CE, the *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* script became the royal script of the Pāṇḍyas. During this time it gradually disappeared in the northern part of Tamil Nadu. Whether the script was in usage in the Kāvēri delta region cannot be answered due to the paucity of stone or copper-plate inscriptions in this area during this period. In Kerala, there are several *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscriptions from the middle of the 9th century, with a sprinkling of *Grantha* letters. Though an early *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscription is found on a Hero stone at Tamaṭukkallu in Karnataka, there is no other evidence to trace out the continuous existence of this script in the Karnataka region. *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscriptions in the Dharmapuri region also influenced the neighboring Kolar region around the 9th century.

VII.5 PALÆOGRAPHY OF EARLY VAṬṬEḶUTTU INSCRIPTIONS

Iravatham MAHADEVAN has given a list of early *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscriptions from the 5th century CE onwards.⁹ He includes Aṛachchalūr, Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi and Nekaṇūrpaṭṭi inscriptions in the late *Brāhmī* period and fixes the date to the 4th century CE. But these three inscriptions can be dated on palæographical grounds to the transition period of *Vaṭṭeḷuttu*.

From the close study of *Tamil-Brāhmī* inscriptions and early *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* inscriptions, it is observed that the evolution of cursive form has commenced from the cave inscriptions of the late period. The cursive form of the vowel *a* is frequently found in the inscriptions of Pugalūr and Tirupparaṅkuṇram. Besides, the letter *a* in some of the pottery from Arikamēḍu is very similar to that found in Pugalūr inscriptions. Again, in the bilingual coin of the Sātavāhanas, the cursive form is seen in almost all of the letters. The vowel *a* is more cursive on these coins. At Pūlāṅkuṛichchi, the letter *a* is similar to the one in Pugalūr inscriptions, as well as in a seal of *atina*. The next stage of the vowel *a*'s evolution can be seen in the Iruḷappaṭṭi inscription. From the evidence of *Tamil-Brāhmī*

⁹ (Mahadevan, 2007).

potsherds, and from the coin legend, we can safely fix the date of the evolution of cursive form to the 1st and 2nd century CE.

The Vowel *e* has also emerged from the cave inscriptions. The Aṛachchalūr and Pūlāṅkuṛichchi *e* [Fig-3, p. 159] are akin to each other. It has a dot inside the circle. The Kanampāṭi inscription of Simhavishnu has a similar kind of *e* in the word *eṛindu*. Furthermore, the development of the vowel *e* can be seen from the Piḷḷaiyāṛpaṭṭi and Nāmakkal rock inscriptions [Fig-4, p. 159]. In the Tamattukkallu inscription [Fig-5, p. 159] the letter *e* became cursive and opened on the bottom; the two loops have been added on either side of the half circle.

The early form of Vaṭṭeluttu *ṇa* [Fig-6, p. 159] is met with in the Aṛachchalūr inscription. The *Tamil-Brāhmī* lost its upper right horizontal line and left bottom line at Aṛachchalūr. It looks like the Roman letter Z in this inscription [Fig-7, p. 159]. But in the Pūlāṅkuṛichchi inscription, this letter is like the Arabic numeral three [Fig-8, p. 159]. This form existed for a long time in the Vaṭṭeluttu inscriptions of the later period. The Aṛachchalūr *na* in the latter stage developed into the Tamil *na*. The Tamil form of *ṇa* [Fig-9, p. 159] is seen in the Kadirāmpaṭṭi transition period Vaṭṭeluttu variety of 4th–5th century CE in the Dharmapuri region. This is the early form of Tamil *ṇa* which was very frequent in the early Pallava period charters [Fig-10, p. 159] and inscriptions.

The letter *ta* [Fig-11, p. 160] of *Tamil-Brāhmī*, in the beginning, has an angular form, and later on, the cursive form evolved on the top of the right slanting line. The cursive form is seen in the Pugalūr and Koṅgar Puliyāṅkuḷam of *Tamil-Brāhmī* inscriptions [Fig-12, p. 160]. The same form continued in the Pūlāṅkuṛichchi, Sittaṇṇavāsal-B, Aṛachchalūr, Paṛaiyaṇpaṭṭu and Nāmakkal inscriptions. This letter, later on developed into the Tamil form [Fig-13, p. 160]. It is changed to a more cursive form in Irulappaṭṭi [Fig-14, p. 160]. This *ta* is similar to the letter *na* in the same inscription. In the Irulappaṭṭi inscription, one can see both the Vaṭṭeluttu and Tamil form of the letter *ta* [Fig-15, p. 160]. The curvature form of the letter *ta* [Fig-16, p. 160] is seen from the Sittaṇṇavāsal-B inscriptions of the 5th century CE, and the Veḷḷiyaṇai inscription of the 6th century.

The early Vaṭṭeluttu *na* [Fig-17, p. 160] resembles the Roman *L* in all the inscriptions of the transition period until the 6th century CE. In the Negaṇūrpaṭṭi inscription the letter *na* in *cekkantaṇṇi* and *cekkantitāyiyaru* is akin to the early Vaṭṭeluttu *na* [Fig-18, p. 160].

However, the remaining letters are similar to *Tamil-Brāhmī* scripts. In the Vaigai bed inscription, the form resembling the Roman *L* became cursive, and looks like a Roman inverted *S*.

The letter *ṇa*, specific to Tamil, has also undergone many changes. The vertical looped line went further downward, and it can be seen from the Pugalūr inscription, as well as on the Kuṭṭuvan Kōtai coin. A similar form of *ṇa* is also met with in the gold testing stone from Thailand.¹⁰ The initial cursive form of this letter commenced from the Aṛachchalūr inscription and its further development can be seen from the inscriptions of Pūlāṅkuṛichchi, Sittaṇṇavāsai, Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi, Pillayārpāṭṭi, Tirunātharkuṇṇu and Tamaṭṭukkallu and Veḷḷiyaṇai. Both Tamil and *Vaṭṭeluttu* *ṇa* developed from this letter [Fig-19, p. 160].

VII.6 DEVELOPMENT OF TAMIL SCRIPT

From the analysis of the available evidence, the Tamil script, as stated earlier, also evolved from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script, simultaneously, along with the *Vaṭṭeluttu* script. Early occurrences of some of the signs of the Tamil script are met with in the *Tamil-Brāhmī* inscriptions, as well as in the transition period. The Pugalūr and Negaṇūrpaṭṭi *Tamil-Brāhmī* inscriptions are examples for the development of the letter *ta*. Its development can be seen in the subsequent periods at Aṛachchalūr,¹¹ Tirunātharkuṇṇu, Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi, Paṛaiyaṇpaṭṭu, Pūlāṅkuṛichchi, Iruḷappaṭṭi, Sittaṇṇavāsai, Eḍakkal, Nāmakkaḷ, etc. The next stage in the development of *ta* can be seen in Sittaṇṇavāsai-B.

The Tamil letter *ta* is witnessed in most of the early *Vaṭṭeluttu* inscriptions of the western and northern regions except in the Tamaṭṭukkallu in Karnataka and Veḷḷiyaṇai inscriptions near Karur [Fig-20, p. 160].¹² The curvature form —as in *Vaṭṭeluttu*— of the letter *ta* looks like the number ‘3’ in the Tamaṭṭukkallu stone inscription, which is the earliest specimen of this kind, 5th–6th centuries CE. The curvature form appeared in the Veḷḷiyaṇai inscription of the transition period and the label inscriptions of Sittaṇṇavāsai

¹⁰ (Mahadevan, 2003), p. 59.

¹² As in the words *cāttan* and *akani-*

¹¹ In *cāttan*, and in the musical notations *ta*, *tai*, *ta*, etc.

in the southern region. In the cave inscription at Eakkal, both the Tamil and early *Vaṭṭeluttu* forms of letter *ta* are noticed side by side.

In this connection, the Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi inscription is significant. Although the serif mark appeared in the Negaṇūrpaṭṭi, and Aṛachchalūr and Eḍakkal inscriptions, the serif mark is clearly seen in all the letters except the letter *ka* at Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi. In this inscription, the letters are broad and square, with a serif mark at the top. The lower part of the letters *ra*, *ka*, *ki*, *ko* [Fig-21, p. 160] have been shown with a curvature, which runs to the left. This curvature form generally occurs in the Ikshuvāku inscriptions of the 3rd century CE.

The mixture of both *Vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil script is witnessed in the Hero stone inscriptions of Iruḷappaṭṭi, Kuḷidikki, Kīlmutṭṭukkūr and Agaram chēri villages in the northern region of Tamil Nadu. The Agaram chēri inscription of Simhavishnu is noteworthy. In this inscription both *Vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil forms can be noticed; the letter *ta* is similar to the *ta* of Ammaṅkōvil paṭṭi of the transition period.

Around the 5th–6th centuries CE, the Tamil script came into existence independently. Some Tamil inscriptions in the northern part of Tamil Nadu could be dated to the pre-Mahendravarman period. The Tāmal Hero stone inscription near Kanchipuram, the Villupuram sluice stone inscription, and the Olakkūr inscription near Tindivanam, are of this variety. These inscriptions could be assigned on palæographical grounds to the pre-Mahendravarman period. In the Vallam inscriptions of Mahendravarman one can see two variant forms of the vowel *a*; this shows some chronological gap or variant forms within the reign period of Mahendravarman.

In the south, the Tamil script is noticed in the label inscriptions of Sittaṇṇavāsai. The Malaiyaḍikkuricci Tamil inscription belongs to the period of Pāṇḍya king Sēndan Māran in the far south of Tamil Nadu. This inscription attests to the prevalence of Tamil script in the southernmost area of Tamil Nadu around 700 CE. Like the *Vaṭṭeluttu* script, the Tamil script also witnessed the dot mark (*puḷḷi*) in consonants until the 8th century CE. The Vallam, Māmalla-puram, Sittaṇṇavāsai-2, Sendalai and Paḷḷankōvil copper plates are fine examples for the occurrence of *puḷḷi* on the consonant signs.

Although the Tamil script is found along with the *Grantha* script during the Pallava period, it is not possible to ascertain its origin from the Pallava *Grantha* script on the following grounds.

The Pallava *Grantha* evolved from the southern variety of *Brāhmī* which was in use in the Andhra-Karnataka region. This script originated from the Aśōkan *Brāhmī*. As stated earlier, the basic forms of the Aśōkan *Brāhmī* and the *Tamil-Brāhmī* are the same. Around the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, one can witness that the forms of the script are similar to each other. The developed form of basic letters in the Sātavāhaṇa and Ikshuvāku inscriptions is more or less identical with the signs of those letters in the transition period of *Vaṭṭeḷuttu* in the Tamil country, for instance the letters *ta*, *na*, *pa*, *va*. When the Pallavas introduced the *Grantha* script in Tamil country, they retained the basic Tamil script which had already evolved in the Tamil inscriptions of the transition period, and used the *Grantha* letters for the *varga* system, which were developed from the southern variety of *Brāhmī*.

The basic Tamil forms, as well as the double ornamented variety form of the basic letters, were noticed in their inscriptions of the same period. Wherever the Sanskrit inscriptions were employed, the Pallavas used the *Grantha* signs for common letters. The Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, Dhaḷavānūr, Tiruccirāpaḷḷi, Māmaṇḍūr inscriptions, and several label inscriptions of Mahendravarman, are examples of this type. In these inscriptions, one can witness the *Grantha* forms of *ka*, *na*, *ra* and *ta* with ornamental or double lines with serif marks. But in the Tamil inscriptions of the same period, they used the common Tamil forms without any ornamentation, double lines, curvature at the bottom and serif marks on the top of the letters. These are the features of *Grantha* letters. Tamil script during this period has a separate identity. The letters were written mostly in simple form.

It shows that the two scripts are distinct from each other, for instance in the Vallam Cave inscriptions, and the Siruvākkam inscription of the Pallava king Mahendravarman, and some fragmentary inscriptions of that period. One can see the Tamil and *Grantha* forms of letters in the Tiruchirappalli inscriptions of Mahendravarman. The Tamil inscriptions were written in Tamil script, whereas the Sanskrit inscriptions were written in *Grantha* letters. The absence of conjuncts is also another factor which suggests that the Tamil script had a separate origin. The *puḷḷi* is seen in the Tamil script, but in the *Grantha* letters the conjuncts were used, avoiding the dot for pure (vowelless) consonants.

The *Grantha* letters *ma* and *ra* are different from their Tamil forms. The *Grantha ma* developed from the Aśōkan *Brāhmī*. The

letter *ra* is also written with a double line in *Grantha*, whereas a single horizontal line is seen in Tamil script. All this indicates that the Tamil script developed from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script.

VII.7 CONCLUSION

We presented in this paper some additional and new palæographical evidence from the recently discovered inscriptions in Tamil Nadu. From the above discussion, it is clear that the *Vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil scripts developed in Tamil country from the *Tamil-Brāhmī* script of the period around the 2nd century CE, and attained their independent developments after the 5th century CE. About the 6th century CE, the *Grantha* script must have been introduced by the Pallavas, when they faced difficulties in writing their bilingual records in Sanskrit and Tamil. The usage of the Tamil script increased in the later Pallava period (8th–9th centuries CE) with the admixture of *Grantha* letters for Sanskrit words. We have reason to support the idea that the *Grantha* (Pallava-*Grantha*) script evolved from the southern variety of *Brāhmī*, however, this subject needs to be studied in the light of more palæographical data.

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CH. VIII
PRONOMINALISED NOUNS IN TAMIL INSCRIPTIONS:
POLYFUNCTIONALITY AND INNOVATION
APPASAMY MURUGAIYAN

ABSTRACT¹

This paper has two objectives: firstly, to adduce a selection of further Tamil epigraphic data in support of assertions made in Pilot-Raichoor (2012); and secondly, to analyse the use of *kurippu viṇai*, pronominalised nouns,² in Tamil inscriptions.³ In Tamil traditional grammar and in later Western and / or modern grammars, *kurippu viṇai* is known under several exclusive terms, including pronominalised noun, appellative verb, conjugated noun, personal noun, and more. Viewed from a historical perspective, this form is very significant in the sense that it exhibits a process of simplification, a turning point in the way that the Tamil language developed in the modern period. This pronominalised noun (hereafter PNN) is formed by affixing the Person Number and Gender

¹ I am thankful to Zlatka GUENTCHÉVA and Samia NAIM for their useful suggestions. I would like to express my thanks to Clair MOYSE-FAURIE for her comments and valuable suggestions on a final draft of this paper. David GIL, Jan RIJKHOFF and Bernhard WÄLCHLI of the Linguistic Typology group extended their expertise by providing me with useful bibliographical and data sources and I am thankful to them. I would also like to thank R. POONGUNDRAN with whom I have discussed many of the problems related to the Tamil epigraphic data and finally B. K. RAVINDRANATH and S. SWAMI-

NATHAN for their help related to Kannada epigraphic data.

² Cf. § VIII.4.2, pp. 196ff.

³ Christiane PILOT-RAICHOOR and I planned to work on a substantial corpus of literary and epigraphic historical data of Dravidian languages and to explore the archaic features found in Tamil and in the other Dravidian languages to shed new light on the historical evolution of Dravidian languages. But destiny decided otherwise! After PILOT-RAICHOOR's premature demise in 2018, I continue our project. I will do my best not to distort or trample on her theoretical and intellectual approach.

(PNG) marker to a nominal stem. PNN forms in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons are attested in many Classical Tamil verses with distinctive grammatical functions as argument or predicate. In Modern Tamil, by comparison, the PNN forms occurring in 1st and 2nd person nouns have almost fallen into disuse, although those in the 3rd person are in use. The 3rd person Modern Tamil use, however, tends to be generalised, and to have lost its Person distinction. In marked contrast to Modern Tamil, Tamil inscriptions seem to have frequently used the PNN. A detailed analysis of the data from inscriptional Tamil reveals not only that PNN occur in wider grammatical contexts and preserve their multifunctionality, but also that they are found to exhibit a unique feature where the proper names are pronominalised. Based on this preliminary survey, we will hypothesise that pronominalisation of proper names is a grammatical stratagem proper to the inscriptional Tamil. We will show that the PNNs are multifunctional, and that their grammatical structure closely correlates with the information structure (information packaging). The study of the PNN in inscriptional Tamil bridges a gap between Classical and Modern Tamil, and sheds more light on the diachronic development from Classical Tamil to Mediæval Tamil, and finally, to Modern Tamil.

VIII.1 INTRODUCTION

THE Tamil language provides us with the oldest written data spanning from ca. 3rd century BCE. This includes two major sources: a vast corpus of epigraphic texts (ca. 3rd century BCE–19th century CE); and a collection of literary anthologies known as the Sangam literature (ca. 200 BCE–ca. 600 CE). The reconstruction of Dravidian linguistics is mainly based on data of the Tamil literary texts, but the epigraphic sources of Tamil and the other major Dravidian languages —Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu— are not given due importance. However, a study of Tamil inscriptional data shows, on the one hand, important typological shifts from isolated type to agglutinative,⁴ and, on the other, the presence of some archaic linguistic features, despite morphological and syntactic stabilisations attested in Mediæval Tamil.⁵ Another typological feature, important but somewhat neglected by scholars, is the pronominalised form, a micro predication construction that was used widely in Old

⁴ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

⁵ (Murugaiyan, 1998, 2012).

Tamil.⁶ ⁷ This construction reveals that, at an earlier stage, the Dravidian languages showed features of omnipredicative typology.⁸ In Modern Dravidian languages, the PNN construction is reduced to a minimal usage. This article is an attempt to examine the PNN constructions in Tamil epigraphic data. This paper is a continuation of the analysis in Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor (2004) and Pilot-Raichoor (2012). It tries to give a more substantial overview of the diverse types of formation and function of the PNN. The Tamil epigraphical data seem to fill a gap between Old Tamil and Modern Tamil. Our aim in this paper is not to reexamine questions related to the periodisation of the Dravidian family of languages and the antiquity of the Tamil grammatical tradition proposed by scholars like ZVELEBIL.⁹ The present article is organised as follows: in § VIII.2 we will review some reconstructed Proto-Dravidian typological features that do not correlate with, nor reflect at all, some salient features of the Old Tamil data; § VIII.3¹⁰ will give examples from Tamil epigraphic data relevant to a few selected Proto-Dravidian features; and in § VIII.4¹¹ we will adduce further evidence for the pronominalised noun constructions and their innovative or extended use in the Tamil epigraphic corpus.

VIII.2 OLD TAMIL AND DRAVIDIAN

PILOT-RAICHOOR has presented a list of reconstructed Dravidian typological features based on previous works.¹² As will be clear, we need to reconsider the Proto-Dravidian typological frame and integrate more historical data from Old Tamil and other Dravidian languages. Since CALDWELL's (1856) pioneering work,¹³ we notice a considerable number of important publications on Dravidian syntax; thanks to scholars like ANDRONOV, KRISHNAMURTHI,

⁶ (Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor, 2004).

⁷ We use the term 'Old Tamil' in a wider sense, covering periods between ca. 3rd century BCE to the mediæval period ca. 13th century CE, and which includes different stages like 'Classical Tamil,' 'Early Old Tamil,' and so on.

⁸ (Launay, 1994, 2014).

⁹ For further details see (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

¹⁰ pp. 179ff.

¹¹ pp. 193ff.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 298; (Krishnamurthi, 2003), pp. 27–30; (Steever, 1998), pp. 1–40; (Subrahmanyam, 2008), pp. 317–334.

¹³ (Caldwell, 1913).

STEEVER, and SUBRAHMANYAM,¹⁴ just to name a few, for their most recent and important contributions to the syntax and the reconstruction of the Proto-Dravidian. We will see in this section only some of these features that are directly relevant to the Tamil epigraphic data.

1. 'Dravidian morphology is agglutinating in structure.'
2. 'Proto-Dravidian has just two parts of speech, noun and verb, which are identified by their characteristic inflectional morphology.'
3. 'All Proto-Dravidian verbs are finite or non-finite.'
4. 'The basic word order of Proto-Dravidian is SOV.'

In the light of earlier and recent publications on Old Tamil data,¹⁵ we may say that the Proto-Dravidian reconstructed features listed above do not satisfactorily reflect some salient features characterising Pre-Sangam Tamil. However, the above reconstruction is based on the data from Sangam anthologies, ca. 150 BCE–ca. 600 CE, and from other Dravidian languages, for which written evidence is not available before ca. 6th century CE. It is important to note that the morphological distinction between noun and verb has been attested, in the oldest Tamil grammar *tolkāppiyam*, as early as ca. 1st century BCE and 2nd century CE. For instance, verbs are marked for tense, person, number, and, in some forms, gender, whereas nouns are marked for one of eight cases, as well as by one of two numbers. Nevertheless, this does not reflect the grammatical structure of Pre-Sangam Tamil.

Let us quote below some results of the above works on the Old Tamil data, merely in order to call attention to the need to work on a large historical corpus of the four major and the other minor non-literary Dravidian languages.

¹⁴ (Andronov, 2001); (Krishnamurthi, 2003); (Steever, 1998); (Subrahmanyam, 2008).

¹⁵ (Andronov, 2001); (Bloch, 1946); (Meenakshisundaran, 1965); (Rajam, 1992); (Zvelebil, 1967).

VIII.2.1 'Proto-Dravidian morphology is agglutinating'¹⁶

Proto-Dravidian morphology is not agglutinating as there is evidence in Old Tamil data showing a typological shift from isolating type to agglutinating type.

As early as 1957, VARADARAJAN, based on the morphology of verbal forms, drew our attention to the analytical tendency in Tamil:

In these forms, old and modern alike, we find the analytic tendency in the verbs in not expressing the personal relationship by their termination. Separate words are used to express them.¹⁷

In 1967, on the other hand, ZVELEBIL put forward a solid hypothesis of typological shift:

It can be supposed that the period preceding the EOT [Early Old Tamil] stage was in a state similar to 'isolation' while the EOT period [the first historically attested stage of development] had a transient character with disappearing traces of isolation, typical features of agglutination and nascent features of inflection.¹⁸

PILOT-RAICHOOR in a recent work,¹⁹ based on a study of Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions, confirmed the hypothesis advanced by ZVELEBIL,²⁰ and showed clearly that the Proto-Dravidian morphology was isolating and that agglutination was a later innovation in Dravidian languages.

VIII.2.2 'Proto-Dravidian has just two parts of speech, noun and verb'²¹

The Old Tamil data are far from being in agreement with this general statement. The distinction between noun and verb is again a later development. CALDWELL wrote:

It would appear that originally there was no difference in any instance between the verbal and the nominal form of the root.²²

¹⁶ (Krishnamurthi, 2003), p. 28.

clarified in many ways.

¹⁷ (Varadarajan, 1957), p. 21. Later scholars did not pursue VARADARAJAN's suggestion. In fact, his orientation was not really historical linguistics, and, in our opinion, his approach needed to be

¹⁸ (Zvelebil *et al.*, 1967), p. 37.

¹⁹ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

²⁰ (Zvelebil, 1967).

²¹ (Steever, 1998), p. 19.

The same view has been confirmed by the French linguists VINSON and BLOCH. According to Julien VINSON:

[...] la distinction du nom et du verbe n'existe pas à proprement parler dans ces idiomes dont la conjugaison primitive était excessivement simple.²³

BLOCH says:

La distinction du nom et du verbe ne suffit d'ailleurs pas à rendre compte des différentes sortes de mots, [...] [c]ependant l'analyse permet d'entrevoir à la base un système où la différenciation n'existait pas.²⁴

Dans le verbe, les éléments flexionnels forment un système incomplètement équilibré, où transparaît encore l'ancienne indistinction du verbe et du nom.²⁵

ZVELEBIL, at a stage when Dravidian syntactic studies were more developed, proposed that '[n]ouns, adjectives and verbs form a single major NAV class [...]'²⁶

Finally, RAJAM states:

Many bare stems function as nouns and verbs in classical Tamil: e.g., *malar* 'to unfold (as a flower)' (*pura./03:3*) or 'flower(s)' (*narr.398:10*). The literary context and the suffixes added to the stem indicate whether the latter is to be interpreted as a noun or a verb.²⁷

Little more than a century, and a great deal of advancement in linguistic theory, separates CALDWELL and RAJAM. Nonetheless, we notice that, although they vary in their degree of assertion, and

²² (Caldwell, 1913), p. 193.

²³ (Vinson, 1878), p. 56: '[...] the distinction between the noun and the verb does not exist in these languages, of which the primitive conjugation was extremely simple.' (Our translation of VINSON.)

²⁴ (Bloch, 1946), p. 1: 'The distinction between the noun and the verb is not sufficient to account for the different kinds of words ... However, the analysis permits us to catch a glimpse of a system at the base in which differentiation did not exist.'

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 100: 'In the verb, the flexional elements form an inadequately balanced system, in which the ancient indistinction of the verb and the noun is still visible.' (Translation p. 126.)

²⁶ 'Nouns, adjectives and verbs form one NAV class based on similar behaviour in constructions like Ta. *nān aṭiyēn* "I am a slave" (subst.): *nān nallēn*. "I am good" (adj.): *nān pōvēn*. "I shall go" (verb).' (Zvelebil, 1967), p. 15. (Zvelebil, 1977), p. 52, n. 11.

²⁷ (Rajam, 1992), p. 54.

also in their approach, they do not differ basically in their conclusion about the distinction between noun and verb in Old Tamil. PILOT-RAICHOOR, based on her analysis of Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions, demonstrated that the Dravidian was a-categorial, and states that:

[...] all the categorial and relational grammatical features expressed through morphological constructions in the modern Dravidian languages are the result of relatively late developments, parallel to what occurred in Tamil.²⁸

VIII.2.3 'All Proto-Dravidian verbs are finite or non-finite'²⁹

Inferences relating to finite verbs in Proto-Dravidian raise important theoretical and methodological questions. The theoretical question concerns the very notion of the 'finite verb' and whether it is based on form or function. KRISHNAMURTHI,³⁰ STEEVER,³¹ and SUBRAHMANYAM³² define the finite verb as 'verb stem+tense+PNG.' According to CALDWELL,³³ VINSON,³⁴ BLOCH,³⁵ and MEENAKSHISUNDARAN,³⁶ this structure with personal endings might be a later development.³⁷ Another questionable inference relates to the predicative function of the finite verbs. In Old Tamil, participial nouns and verbal nouns have also played the role of

²⁸ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012), p. 286.

²⁹ (Krishnamurthi, 2003), p. 28, & (Steever, 1998), p. 24.

³⁰ (Krishnamurthi, 2003), p. 29.

³¹ (Steever, 1998), p. 24.

³² (Subrahmaniam, 2008), p. 304.

³³ (Caldwell, 1913), pp. 376–7.

³⁴ (Vinson, 1878).

³⁵ (Bloch, 1946), p. 45.

³⁶ (Meenakshisundaran, 1965).

³⁷ For instance 'There are traces in ancient Tamil and Canarese of the existence of a very primitive system of conjugation. [...] It would appear, therefore, that the Dravidian verb was originally uninflected; [...]' (Cald-

well, 1913), pp. 376–7. BLOCH: « Il semble donc finalement que le système flexionnel se soit développé secondairement. Il succède à l'usage de noms verbaux capables de sujet pronominal au nominatif, » (Bloch, 1946), p. 45. MEENAKSHISUNDARAN has also raised question based on the diachronic development of 'finite' forms, 'the Tamil Finite Verb structure reveals two strata, the earlier one which does not possess the pronominal suffixes and the later one which has the fully developed pronominal suffixes,' (Meenakshisundaran, 1965), p. 27.

predicates. The finite verbs occur very rarely in the Tamil epigraphic corpus, both Tamil-Brāhmī and later mediæval inscriptions (*cf.* § VIII.3.4³⁸). In later Tamil inscriptions, we notice a mixed use of adjectival participles, adverbial participles, participial nouns and finite verbs, where the later are rarely used.³⁹ ZVELEBIL noted this state of affairs:

[...] we may say that the predicate in Early Old Tamil was expressed —along with predicates in finite verbal forms and nominal predicates— by verbal and participial nouns.⁴⁰

The use of different verbal forms witnesses, in our opinion, the several phases of the historical changes which ultimately led to finite verbs stabilised in the predicate role. Methodologically, the misunderstanding arises from the generalisation made on the typological reconstruction mentioned above, where they present a generalised homogenous picture, but unfortunately did not consider the chronology spread over 2,000 years, nor the heterogeneous nature of the Tamil corpus and the historical states of the Dravidian languages. In attempting to generalise and contain the linguistic features within a well-defined Proto-Dravidian typological framework, some rare and interesting linguistic traits have gone unnoticed. We would like to emphasise here, that before going for a ‘general typology’ of Dravidian languages, it would be more challenging to come up with separate grammatical descriptions corresponding to each type of historical data (literary anthologies, epigraphy, etc.) and to each Dravidian language in general. HERRING reached a similar conclusion in her work on word order.⁴¹

The few features discussed above show a completely different picture of the Proto-Dravidian. Some grammatical properties, such as the developing stage of agglutinating morphology, the multicategoriality or flexibility of lexemes, the quasi-absence of personal

³⁸ pp. 187ff.

³⁹ (Murugaiyan, 1998).

⁴⁰ (Zvelebil, 1998b), p. 149.

⁴¹ ‘In addition to shedding empirical light on a central question in historical Tamil syntax, these findings il-

lustrate the necessity of distinguishing among genres and between ordinary and poetic language more generally in analysing the word order of older languages.’ (Herring, 2000), p. 198.

verbs in predicative function, word order variation, and the topic-comment structure, are some characteristic features of Tamil inscriptions. We hope these features will: i. set the basis to understand the structure of the Tamil epigraphic texts in their historical context; and ii. reveal the structural and functional heterogeneity of different types of the Tamil corpus and the Dravidian languages in general, despite many features common to all of them.

VIII.3 SPECIFIC FEATURES OF TAMIL EPIGRAPHIC TEXTS

VIII.3.1 Introduction

PILOT-RAICHOOR made two assertions: i. Proto-Dravidian morphology was isolating and agglutination was a later innovation; and ii. in the earlier phase the categorial distinction (noun-verb distinction) did not exist and the categorisation is a later development.⁴² In a recent publication, KOLICHALA commented on these insights:

While these radically new proposals raise interesting questions, there has not been any detailed reaction by other scholars. Further research and discussion is needed.⁴³

In this section, we respond to this observation by adducing more data from the Tamil inscriptions in support of the claim made in PILOT-RAICHOOR.⁴⁴ We will present evidence from the Tamil epigraphic data to show that there are signs in the transient phase of: i. both the previous isolating tendency and the development of agglutination; and ii. polycategoriality of lexemes.

The linguistic study of Tamil inscriptions is in a nascent stage. Information in epigraphic texts is linguistically coded and structured in a specific way that makes the grammatical structure of epigraphic Tamil different from other varieties of Tamil.⁴⁵ A number of features characterise epigraphic Tamil and we may briefly indicate the following. In the Tamil epigraphic texts the morphological case morphemes genitive, locative, and ablative are not systematically used. The dative is the only exception. In inscriptions relating

⁴² (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

⁴³ (Kolichala, 2016), p. 89.

⁴⁴ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

⁴⁵ For a detailed analysis of the structure of Tamil inscriptions see (Murugaiyan, 1998, 2012, 2019).

to donations, the accusative case is used only to mark the grammatical object, while the donated objects are never marked in the accusative case. Many body-part nouns are used as postpositions. As to the verbal forms, the personal (finite) forms are very rarely used. On the other hand, participles are most commonly used. This gives a completely different picture of the predicate structure.⁴⁶ The commonly recognised SOV word order is not relevant in inscriptional Tamil. On the contrary, grammatical features do not trigger the word order, which is mostly controlled by pragmatic features. It is beyond this paper's scope to present all these features. In this section, I will try to present a few selected features of the syntactic structure of inscriptional Tamil.

Reading and understanding epigraphic texts is based on '*presupposition* and *assertions*' (i.e., known / yet to be known information).⁴⁷ The shared knowledge of the world and of society, in particular, is an essential prerequisite for interpreting a text's core meaning. As we have shown in a previous article, the syntactic structure of Tamil epigraphic texts, ca. 3rd century BCE to 19th century CE, is governed, in general, by the principle of information structure. Information structure includes concepts such as given and new information, topic, comment, focus, theme, and rheme.⁴⁸

The factors affecting the choice of constructions are importantly related to the information structure. This makes the grammatical structure of the Tamil epigraphic texts distinct in comparison with the classical Sangam anthologies, later Tamil literature and Modern Tamil. This is equally true for other Dravidian languages, like Kannada or Malayalam, and the Indo-Aryan languages.⁴⁹ This is clearly reflected in the observations of pioneering scholars like MEENAKSHISUNDARAN, CHANDRA SEKHAR and ZVELEBIL.

For instance, CHANDRA SEKHAR has proposed an 'actor-action' dichotomy instead of subject predicate structure: 'The normal sentence-type in the inscriptions is actor-action ...'⁵⁰ For MEENAKSHISUNDARAN:

⁴⁶ Cf. (Murugaiyan, 1998).

⁴⁷ (Lambrecht, 1994), pp. 51–65; & (Lehmann, 2008).

⁴⁸ (Murugaiyan, 2012).

⁴⁹ For instance, regarding Sanskrit: 'In other words, epigraphic usage in

Sanskrit has a grammar of its own, [...]; a more detailed study of the subject remains to be done.' (Salomon, 1998), p. 96.

⁵⁰ (Chandra Sekhar, 1953), p. 154.

The sentences here [i.e. in the cave inscriptions], are substantive sentences with a topic and comment. [...] Sometimes, the predication becomes itself the topic when the name of the person occurs as a comment.⁵¹

ZVELEBIL, on the structure of Tamil in general, has very cautiously mentioned that neither the traditional syntactic analysis in terms of subject, predicate, object, attributes, etc., nor the immediate constituent (IC) analysis proved to be satisfactory.⁵² Recent developments in typological linguistics have confirmed, beyond doubt, the importance of the information structure in the study of language analysis. KIBRIK, for instance, in his work on alternative typology has demonstrated clearly that the communicative status—topic / comment, theme / rheme, given / new, focus, empathy and viewpoint—play a crucial role in the grammatical structure.⁵³ All of these previous observations support our assumption that Tamil epigraphical texts employ different grammatical tools, morphology and syntax, as a means of encoding information packaging. The information structure or information packaging, generally speaking, refers to various ways in which information, including propositional information and real-world knowledge, is linguistically encoded.⁵⁴ The traditional approach in terms subject–object–predicate has its limitations while describing the structure of inscriptional Tamil. But, the broad functional linguistics framework, within which syntax, semantics and pragmatics are essential parameters, allows to better account for the specific features of inscriptional Tamil. In what follows, we will analyse separately the Tamil Brāhmī and a few later Hero stone and temple inscriptions to highlight some features of Tamil inscriptions salient to the Proto-Dravidian elements listed in § VIII.2.1.⁵⁵ This section will examine the distinctive features of clause structure of the epigraphic texts and the formal correlates in terms of word order, main syntactic constituents and information structure.

⁵¹ (Meenakshisundaran, 1965), p. 48. tional sentence perspectives' elaborated by the Prague school linguists

⁵² (Zvelebil, 1998a), p. 151.

⁵³ (Kibrik, 1997).

⁵⁴ Discussions of the distribution of information in clauses and sentences can be traced out in the works 'Functional sentence perspectives' elaborated by the Prague school linguists in the 1920's, and in more recent works such as (Halliday, 1967–8, 1970) and (Lambrecht, 1994).

⁵⁵ pp. 175ff.

VIII.3.2 Absence of morphological components, topic and comment

An inscription, the earliest record in Tamil-Brāhmī, ca. 3rd century BCE, was discovered in 2006 and originally published by RAJAN.⁵⁶ This inscription is also included in the revised and enlarged second edition of MAHADEVAN's major work on early Tamil epigraphy.⁵⁷ There is no consensus among scholars on the date, reading and interpretation of this inscription. However, until the scholars reach a consensus, we follow RAJAN's reading, as it has no consequence for our intended analysis. It is common knowledge that, in the Indian context, inscriptions are subject to linguistic prejudice, and are not considered as texts worthy of consideration as the traditional literature.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ (Rajan & Yathiskumar, 2006).

⁵⁷ (Mahadevan, 2014), p. 545.

⁵⁸ In discussing Tamil inscriptions, SUBBARAYALU comments: 'This passage reflects the exact attitude of the majority of Tamil scholars towards inscriptions which have been approached by them with some scorn.' (Subbarayalu, 2006), pp. 49–50. On Sanskrit inscriptions, SALOMON wrote: 'It has traditionally been the practice in epigraphic studies to regard orthographic and grammatical peculiarities of the type noted previously as mere errors, and to correct them either in the text itself (usually by adding the "correct" form in parentheses) or in the notes. This often leads to a situation where inscriptional texts, particularly those written in the less formal modes, are burdened with an inconvenient number of notes correcting often trivial variants.' (Salomon, 1998), p. 121. Further,

he cites a rather interesting quotation from (Ramesh, 1984), p. 45: '[...] departures from Pāninian rules of grammar, which are dubbed as inaccuracies by the epigraphists, need not necessarily have appeared ungrammatical to the composers and contemporaneous readers of those inscriptions and, on the other hand, may have been accepted as legitimate usages.' (Salomon, 1998), p. 98. In a similar way, Tamil scholars, including epigraphists, use the *tolkāppiyam*, the earliest grammatical treatise in Tamil, to evaluate the grammaticality and acceptability of the epigraphic records: 'I am, however, of the opinion that it may not be quite safe to use this grammar [*tolkāppiyam*] as an absolute yardstick for measuring or estimating the chronology and the historical evolution of forms [of the śaṅgam texts].' (Ramaswami Aiyar, 1938), p. 749.

Table 31: Pulimāṇ kōmpai (Rajan & Yathiskumar, 2006)

1. <i>kal</i>	2. <i>pēṭutīyaṇ antavaṇ</i>	3. <i>kūṭal ūr</i>	<i>ākōḷ</i>
stone	PN.M	PLN	cow-lift
‘This is the memorial stone (erected in honour) of Pēṭu Tīyaṇ Antavan during cow-lifting at Kūṭalūr.’			

The word-for-word translation of this inscription is: stone + Pēṭu Tīyaṇ Antavaṇ (proper name) + Kūṭalūr (place name) + cow-lift. This gives: ‘stone- Pēṭu Tīyaṇ Antavaṇ - Kūṭal ūr- cow-lift.’

This inscription is engraved vertically in three lines as indicated by the numbers in the example. RAJAN and YATHISKUMAR have given a detailed description of this Tamil-Brāhmī inscription.⁵⁹

A quick examination of this inscription shows linear ordering of bare lexemes, absence of morphological elements, case markers and copula or other verbal forms.⁶⁰ The word order is completely inverse to that of Modern Tamil. This type of inscription can be interpreted successfully mainly by the semantic features of the lexical items and by the context.

This inscription does not fit into a ‘subject-predicate’ structure but the information is packaged into a ‘topic-comment’ structure.⁶¹ In this paper, we use the term *topic* to mean ‘what the utterance is about,’ and the term *comment* to mean ‘what the utterance has to say about the topic.’⁶² As we have mentioned above, reading and

⁵⁹ (Rajan *et al.*, 2006), pp. 1–5.

⁶⁰ The comment of BLOCH on Aśokan inscriptions is worth noting: « Pauvre et peu variée, elle appelle peu d’observation. » (Bloch, 2007), p. 81.

⁶¹ Most scholars working on Tamil inscriptions, although, noticed that the epigraphic language is somewhat strange compared to that of the other genres of the Tamil corpus, and attributed this strangeness to stylistic variation, but have rarely paid attention to explore the strangeness of the Tamil epigraphic texts. Let us quote SANMUGADAS: ‘The object and the verb (i.e.

the predicative phrase) are placed after the subject in (29). But this order is reversed in (30) where the object-verb appears before the subject. Apart from considerations of style, it may perhaps also be suggested that a motive for this [*sic*, these] versions arises from a need to establish a topic-comment distinction.’ (Sanmugadas, 1975), p. 7.

⁶² The terms *topic* and *comment* are used with varying meanings by different authors and they have a long history in theories like pragmatics, information structure etc. We come

understanding epigraphic texts is based on ‘*presuppositions* and *assertions*’ (i.e., known / yet to be known information). Prior knowledge of the world and of the society in particular is required for the interpretation of the intended meaning of the text. By prior knowledge we mean the reader’s shared knowledge (state of knowledge) of the world and society, and in particular of the world and society the inscription is talking about.⁶³

In this inscription, the topic is *kal*, which means simply ‘stone.’ In this particular context this lexical item refers to the ‘memorial stone.’ To acquire this interpretation the reader is expected to possess some ‘prior knowledge’ that ‘hero stones are generally erected to commemorate the death of a warrior who died during a quarrel of cow-lifting.’

The remaining part of the inscription {‘2. *pēṭu tīyaṇ antavaṇ* 3. *kūṭal ūr ākōḷ*,} Pēṭu Tīyaṇ Antavaṇ (was killed during) cow-lifting at (a place called) Kūṭalūr, is the comment, that is what the inscription has to say about *kal* the ‘memorial stone.’

The interpretation of this inscription depends entirely on: i. the semantics of the lexemes; ii. the shared knowledge of the reader; and iii. the context. There is not any morphological element to indicate the grammatical function of the lexemes: absence of the genitive case on the ‘proper name’ (PN) and the locative case on the ‘place name’ (PLN). The term *ākōḷ*⁶⁴ ‘cow-lift’ is used as a bare stem; devoid of any morphological element it might be a noun or a verb. All the lexemes are used as ‘basic-bare stem-form,’⁶⁵ and, as explained above, the grammatical relations are understood by the semantics of the lexical elements. This, and many other early Tamil-

across also other binomial concepts like ‘topic-focus,’ ‘theme-rheme,’ ‘old information-new information,’ ‘given-new,’ etc. Although all these concepts are related, in this paper we use the two concepts topic and comment as defined above as they seem adequate to describe the grammatical structure of our Tamil epigraphic corpus selected for this present study.

⁶³ The concepts of presupposition

and shared knowledge, and their implications while reading Tamil epigraphic texts, are explained in detail in (Murgaiyan, 2012).

⁶⁴ The term *ākōḷ* is composed of two stems *ā+kōḷ* (cow + seize / seizing), generally translated as ‘cow-lifting.’ This term is found in the *tolkāppiyam* (*poruḷatikāram - veṭci-3*).

⁶⁵ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

Brāhmī inscriptions,⁶⁶ depict a pre-Sangam analytic structure as explained clearly by PILOT-RAICHOOR.⁶⁷

It is important to mention here that MAHADEVAN has changed the order of the lexemes, and has, unfortunately, published his own distorted version⁶⁸:

- 1. *kūṭal ūr ākōḷ* 2. *peṭu tīyaṇ antavaṇ* 3. *kal*

He has commented that ‘the word order is confusing,’ and, according to him, a verb is needed to complete the sentence, and hence, has suggested that *pēṭu* should be replaced by the verb *peṭu* / *paṭu*, ‘be deceased.’⁶⁹

MAHADEVAN’s interpretation is based exclusively on rules prescribed by traditional grammars, and, on the other hand, his intuition of the normative ‘Modern Tamil’ grammatical structure. But his analysis is not doing any justice to the historical evolution of the Tamil language during the past two thousand years and more.⁷⁰

In what follows we will give a little more evidence supporting the existence, in later epigraphic texts, of both the pre-Old Tamil and Modern Tamil features. We notice in the Tamil Hero stone inscriptions the categorical ambiguity of bare stem. These examples represent what PILOT-RAICHOOR has called ‘the transient grammar of Old Tamil,’ which she characterises as follows:

In this evolutionary sketch we treat the transitory phase as a whole leading from the pre-Tamil typology (phase I) to the modern Tamil typology (phase III).⁷¹

VIII.3.3 Multifunctional stem

We will examine a few examples of the multifunctionality of ‘bare stems’ and the verbal participial forms. This was another feature pointed out in PILOT-RAICHOOR in the transient phase of the development of Tamil.⁷² In Examples 1–4, Tables 32–35,⁷³ the lexeme *āl* is ambiguous with regard to the precise grammatical function.

⁶⁶ (Mahadevan, 2014).

⁶⁷ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012).

⁶⁸ (Mahadevan, 2014), p. 545.

⁶⁹ (*Āvaṇam* 2006), pp. 6–8.

⁷⁰ Cf. p. 182, n. 58.

⁷¹ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012), p. 292.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ p. 186.

Table 32: Example 1

(1) Dhar.1973–3.84 (0575 CE)			
<i>puṛamalaiṇā.ṭṭu</i>	<i>mokkappāṭi.y</i>	<i>āl</i>	<i>toru[ko]ḷa</i>
PLN.OBL	PLN	rule	cattle-lift.INF
‘as / while (the) chief of Mokkaipāṭi in Puṛamalai lifted the cattle’			

Table 33: Example 2

(2) Chhs.1971–113 (0594 CE)			
<i>mī vēṇṇā.ṭṭu</i>	<i>karuṅkālipāṭi</i>	<i>āl</i>	<i>koṛṛavācīṛkarucāṭṭaṇāru;...</i>
PLN.OBL	PLN	rule	PN
‘Koṛṛavāsir karusāṭṭaṇār the ruler / chief of Karuṅkālipāṭi’			

Table 34: Example 3

(3) Chhs.1971–33 (0595 CE)			
<i>... rārāṛṛū</i>	<i>āṇ.ṭ.a</i>	<i>kuṇṛak kaṇṇiyār</i>	<i>kal</i>
... PLN	rule.RPP	PN	stone
‘This is the memorial stone of Kuṇṛakkaṇṇiyār ruling Rārāṛṛu ...’			

Table 35: Example 4

(4) Dhar.1972–21.82 (0609 CE)			
<i>mīveṇṇā.ṭṭuk-kippaiūr</i>	<i>āl.um</i>	<i>vāṇikaru ...</i>	
PLN.OBL PLN	rule.RP	merchant ...	
‘the merchant, the chief of Kippai ūr of Mīveṇṇāṭu ...’			

In Examples 1–4, the lexeme *āl* is contextually translated as ‘chief’ or ‘ruler’ despite their different morphological (participial) forms. In DEDR, the stem *āl* is found under two entries as two different categories noun and verb: (DEDR-399) ‘man,’ ‘husband,’ ‘servant,’ etc; and (DEDR-5157) ‘to rule,’ ‘reign over,’ etc. However, even if they are entered under two different categories (noun and verb) their semantic relation is obvious. In Example 1, Table 32, the stem *āl* ‘the chief’ is functioning as the subject of *toru[ko]ḷa* ‘cattle-lift.’

But, alternatively, *āl* as a bare stem in Example 2, Table 33,⁷⁴ can be interpreted as an uninflected verbal modifier, ‘ruling / who was ruling,’ functioning like a modifier or determinant. This adjectival function of bare (verbal) stem is attested in Classical and later Tamil as well in other Dravidian languages.⁷⁵ In Examples 3 and 4, Tables 34 and 35,⁷⁶ the verbal forms *āṇṭa* and *ālum*—past relative participle and non-past relative participle respectively—witness the morphological development or the diversity prevalent in that period. But in Example 4, an inscription describing a past event, the use of non-past relative participle, raises the question of functional distinction.

VIII.3.4 Participial noun and personal verb

Let us consider the following examples, which may shed more light on the morphological development of verbal paradigms. PILOT-RAICHOOR mentions:

Among the changes which could signal the transition from phase II [Sangam period] to phase III [Modern Tamil], we can mention the loss of person variation on the participial nouns and the setup of distinct finite verb paradigms.⁷⁷

In the same vein, according to RAJAM:

Technically, any finite verb can function as a participial noun and therefore in classical Tamil, many such verb forms provide two interpretations, one as a finite verb and the other as a participial noun. Context alone determines the meaning in such cases.⁷⁸

In the Hero stone inscriptions, we notice the presence of different distinct morphological forms of the verb *paṭu* ‘die,’ but their respective functions remain ambiguous. In this corpus, there are two personal forms:

- *paṭu* + past tense + 3 M.S.: *paṭṭāṇ*
- *paṭu* + past tense + 3 M.S. (honorific): *paṭṭāru*
- *paṭṭa*: a past relative participial form

⁷⁴ p. 186.

⁷⁵ (Andronov, 2000); & (Subrahmanyam, 2006).

⁷⁶ p. 186.

⁷⁷ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012), pp. 296–7.

⁷⁸ (Rajam, 1992), p. 644.

In Example 5, Table 36, the personal form of the verb *paṭṭāṇ* is placed at the end of the utterance, a position normally reserved for the predicate, and hence may be considered as a finite form.

Table 36: Example 5

(5) Chhs.1971–62 (0550 CE)			
<i>maṛu atiraicarū</i>	<i>cēvakaṇ</i>	<i>katavacāṭṭa</i>	<i>pa.ṭṭ.āṇ</i>
PN	servant	PN	die.PAST.3.M.S
‘Katavacāṭṭa, the servant of Maruatiraicar is (the one who is) dead’			

Table 37: Example 6

(6) Dhar.1972–20–81 (0588 CE)			
<i>kāvatiṭṭaṇ</i>	<i>toru.iṭuvi.ttu.p</i>	<i>pa.ṭṭ.āṇ</i>	<i>kal</i>
PN	cattle-liberate.ADVP	die.PAST.3.M.S	stone
‘This is the memorial stone of Kāvatiṭṭaṇ, (the one) who was dead (while he) liberated cattle.’			

In Example 6, Table 37, the focused term *kal* ‘memorial stone’ is placed at the predicate position. The personal verb *paṭṭāṇ* precedes the focused nominal and functions as the determiner of the memorial stone. In this particular context, this form should be considered a participial noun, as mentioned in RAJAM: ‘More specifically, when a finite verb form is used like a noun, it is referred to as a “participial noun.”’⁷⁹

Table 38: Example 7

(7) Chhs.1971–86 (0564 CE)				
...	<i>pāvaṇ</i>	<i>pūcal.uṭ</i>	<i>pa.ṭṭ.a</i>	<i>kal</i>
	PN	dispute.LOC	die.RPP	memorial stone
‘... this is the memorial stone of Pāvaṇ who died in the dispute’				

⁷⁹ (Rajam, 1992), p. 644.

In Example 7, Table 38,⁸⁰ the verbal form in past relative participle does not function as the determiner of the memorial stone, as in Example 6. If the reading of *paṭṭa* as past relative participle is accepted, then that gives a completely different meaning: ‘this is the memorial stone killed during the dispute.’ There are two possible explanations to account for this verbal form: the first, and most plausible, is that this inscription belongs to the period where the morphological differentiation between finite form, participial noun and the relative participle form of the verbs was not yet completely realised or established (see Example 25, Table 55, p. 208); the second, would be to consider this as an error by the scribe.⁸¹

In Examples 5 and 6, Tables 36 and 37,⁸² personal verb forms are used, but in Example 5 it functions, structurally, as a ‘finite verb,’ whereas in Example 6 it is functioning as a determiner, and is interpreted as a participial noun. In Example 7, we have *paṭṭa*, a morphologically well-formed past relative participle form, but it does not qualify the following noun *kal*. However, functionally, this form cannot be the determiner of the following noun. On the one hand, between Example 5 and 6 there is no morphological distinction, and on the other hand, between Example 6 and 7 we notice a functional conflict. In all of these cases, context alone can determine the meaning.

VIII.3.5 Non-finite forms, word order and object marking

In this section, we will examine data from later donative inscriptions —also sometimes called temple inscriptions— different in content and structure from the Tamil-Brāhmī and Hero stone inscriptions. In this section, we study inscriptions starting from the 8th century CE. In general, the use of finite verbal forms in inscrip-tional Tamil is not very frequent. In early and later Tamil, however, we should note, as mentioned in § VIII.2.1,⁸³ that the personal verbs developed at a later stage. In Tamil-Brāhmī, MAHADEVAN observes:

⁸⁰ p. 188.

⁸¹ « Toutes les données linguistiques du vieux tamoul semblent en effet indiquer qu’on est dans une période où la morphologie de la langue est en train

de se construire. » (Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor, 2004), p. 172.

⁸² p. 188.

⁸³ pp. 175ff.

[a] remarkable feature of the inscriptions in the Corpus is the absence of finite verb forms. Their place is taken by participial nouns and adjectival participles.⁸⁴

In the revised version of *Early Tamil Epigraphy*, MAHADEVAN modified his description by a somewhat surprising, if not confusing explanation.⁸⁵ Surprising and confusing because all the scholars who worked on the earliest Tamil data have made it clear that in this period the morphological distinction of different parts of speech was still to be established. In other words, based on the data, we may say that any stem could function as predicate, and that only in a later period did the *finite verb* start to exist in a separate form as a privileged predicate. In Classical Tamil, RAJAM notes: ‘in this poem which is 26 lines long, there is only one sentence with the finite verb.’⁸⁶ ZVELEBIL further indicates that:

[...] the predicate in early old Tamil was expressed —along with predicates in finite verbal forms and nominal predicates— by verbal and participial nouns.⁸⁷

In an inscription of Rājarājā I (1014 CE), in the functional part, we have counted a total of ninety-five non-finite verbal forms —relative participle, adverbial participle, and participial nouns— but not a single finite verbal form.⁸⁸

There are at least two different reasons for the predominant use of ‘non-personal’ forms in the epigraphic texts. First, as indicated in (§ VIII.2.3⁸⁹), ‘there was no formal difference between personal verbs and participial nouns.’⁹⁰ PILOT-RAICHOOR observed that: ‘the distinction did not exist in Tamil-Brāhmī and developed during the Sangam period.’⁹¹ And in later Hero stone inscriptions, between ca. the 6th and 8th centuries CE, depending on the structural position in the utterance:

[...] when it occurs at the right end of the clause it is likely to be interpreted as a finite verb predicate [...] but in these memorial stone inscriptions [...] the interpretation of these forms as participial nouns [...] seems to better fit the context.⁹²

⁸⁴ (Mahadevan, 2003), p. 107.

⁸⁵ (Mahadevan, 2014), p. 330.

⁸⁶ (Rajam, 1992), p. 25.

⁸⁷ (Zvelebil, 1959), p. 181.

⁸⁸ SII, vol. 2, pt 1, no. 1, pp. 1–14.

⁸⁹ pp. 177ff.

⁹⁰ (Rajam, 1992), p. 644.

⁹¹ (Pilot-Raichoor, 2012), p. 297.

⁹² (Murugaiyan, 2012), p. 346.

The second consideration is in regard to the predominant use of ‘non-personal’ forms in the epigraphic texts, even when the distinction had been established both morphologically and functionally—as is the case in later mediæval inscriptions—the choice of verbal forms between finite and non-finite was determined by principles of information structure.⁹³

Table 39: Example 8

(8) SII.2.61. (1008 CE)						
... nām	[...]	[...]	patiṇoru	vēli	nilam	īraiylī.y.āka [...]
... 1.PL			11	veli	land	tax-free. as
						give.PAST.1.PL
‘we gave 11 velis of land tax free ...’						

Table 40: Example 9

(9) SII.2.31. (1014 CE)						
i.ttiruccuṟṟumālḱai	eṭu.ppi.tt.āṇ		sēnāpati	[...]	śṛikriṣṇaṇ	rāmaṇ ...
DEIC.sacred enclosure	construct.caus.PAST.3.M.S		general	[...]	PN ...	
‘the general (...) Śṛikriṣṇaṇ Rāmaṇ (caused to) construct this sacred enclosure’						

In Example 8, Table 39, we have a perfect structure as defined in Modern Tamil and Dravidian. The order of the constituent is SOV. The verb is a morphologically well-formed finite verb: stem+tense+png marker. The donated object is not marked in accusative, as Tamil language is typologically a differential object marking language, in which non-human, indefinite, non-referential objects are not generally marked in accusative.

In Example 9, Table 40, the inscription states that the sacred enclosure was built by the general, Śṛikriṣṇaṇ Rāmaṇ. The direct object, which is also the object of donation, ‘the sacred enclosure,’ is interesting on both pragmatic and syntactic grounds. Syntactically, by its position preceding the verb, it is the direct object, but it is not marked in accusative case. This object is referential, and is definite as it is prefixed with the deictic marker *i-*. But pragmatically, this is not the piece of new information, as it is in anaphoric status because of the deictic morpheme. The anaphoric status of the

⁹³ Cf. Example 9, Table 40.

definite direct object requires it to be [–Focus]. While examining carefully the context of the inscription, the new information is ‘the subject,’ the constructor of the ‘sacred enclosure.’ In this pragmatically motivated sentence, ‘the subject’ argument, the new information, is in focus relation and is placed to the right of the predicate, a finite verb *eṭuppittāṇ* in this example. However, this example raises a question of the category of the verb, which is morphologically a personal (finite) verb [stem+tense+PNG], but, by its syntactic position preceding the subject noun, should this be considered a ‘participial noun’ (cf. Example 6, p. 188), or just a result of pragmatically motivated word order variation? In this example, the order of constituents OVS is pragmatically motivated. Neither variation in word order, nor the pragmatically motivated word order, is an isolated phenomenon. It is noticed in Sangam literature, and equally, in the epigraphic texts of many Indian languages.⁹⁴

Table 41: Example 10

(10) SIH.13.63. (0988 CE)

cōla milāṭuṭaiyāṇ vai.tt.a nuntāviḷakku oṇru.kku vai.tt.a āṭu tonṇūrrāru ...

PN give.RPP perpetual lamp one.DAT give.RPP sheep 96

‘Cōla milāṭuṭaiyāṇ had given 96 sheep for (lighting) a perpetual lamp he had bestowed’

⁹⁴ Word order variation in epigraphic text is noticed in all Indian languages. But very rarely is any attention given to this important aspect of the grammar of epigraphic languages. For Kan-nada GAI writes: ‘[g]enerally the word-order of the sentences is Subject Object Verb. There are many sentences met with in the inscriptions studied which deviate from this general word order. These deviations might have been possibly due to the importance or stress the speaker wanted to place on a particular idea or thing in the course of his speech.’ (Gai, 1946), p. 99. As for

Aśokan inscriptions, ANDERSON —arguing in favour of the ‘topic-comment’ dichotomy— states that ‘verb medial position can be explained as marked through the process of commentization or end-weight which have moved an element to a post-verbal position,’ and concludes that ‘[t]he word order typology of the Aśokan inscriptions (i.e. early Middle Indic) is OV with expectations arising from the interaction of the parameters given by Enkvist ... In other words, the exceptions to the OV typology are to be regarded as the result of “marking.”’ (Anderson, 1980), p. 14.

In Example 10, Table 41,⁹⁵ the inscription records a gift of ninety-six sheep for lighting a perpetual lamp. The sentence contains two clauses, which are arranged in sequential order: first, Cōla Milātuṭaiyāṇ endowed a perpetual lamp; second, for this perpetual lamp he offered ninety-six sheep. Neither object is marked in the accusative. The perpetual lamp is part of the two clauses. In the first event, an object of donation, is in focus relation. In the second event, a beneficiary, as the numeral quantifier *onru*, ‘one,’ is marked in the dative case, the noun phrase *nuntāviḷakku onru*, ‘one lamp,’ is in topic relation, and, in this context, the perpetual lamp is the old information. In the second clause, the object of donation ‘96 sheep’ constitutes the new information, and is the focus of the clause. Right dislocation of the donated object goes in symmetry with the floating of the quantifier. The numeral quantifier is to the right of the noun it qualifies instead of preceding it. It is important to note that in the two clauses, the verb is in past relative participle form. In both instances, the past relative participle precedes the donated objects (one perpetual lamp and ninety-six sheep), thus the donated objects, without being marked in accusative, are treated as definite objects.

In § VIII.2⁹⁶ and § VIII.3⁹⁷ we presented evidence from Tamil epigraphic data to show that in the transient phase there are signs of: i. both the previously noted isolating tendency and the development of agglutination; and ii. polycategoriality of lexemes. In § VIII.4 we will examine another feature, the pronominalised nouns (PNN) prevalent in Sangam literature, that continued to be used in the epigraphic corpus until ca. 11th century CE, before falling into morphological and functional simplification in Modern Tamil.

VIII.4 PRONOMINALISED NOUNS, POLYFUNCTIONALITY AND INNOVATION

VIII.4.1 General remarks (*kuṛippu viṇai*)

This present study, as mentioned earlier, is a continuation of the preliminary analysis presented in Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor

⁹⁵ p. 192.

⁹⁷ pp. 179ff.

⁹⁶ pp. 173ff.

(2004). In this section, we will present evidence from Tamil epigraphic data on an interesting construction known as *kuṛippu viṇai* in the Tamil grammatical tradition, which we refer to in this study as *pronominalised noun* (hereafter PNN) (see § VIII.4.2⁹⁸ for details).⁹⁹ It is constructed by affixing the Person Number and Gender (PNG) marker to any stem (noun, verb, adjective) and, in some instances, we notice a medial particle between stem and PNG marker [*STEM* - (\pm MP) - *PNG*]. This construction occurred so often in Classical Tamil anthologies that it received a special terminology and description in the earliest Tamil grammar, the *tolkāppiyam*, ca. 1st century BCE to 2nd century CE. This strange construction, known as *kuṛippu viṇai* in Tamil, has aroused a lot of interest since the 18th century, both among native and Western Tamil scholars.¹⁰⁰ This construction has been identified using different terms such as appellative verbs, conjugated nouns, pronominalised nouns, verbs by implication, tenseless predicatives, adjectival nouns, *verbes signaux*, and so on.¹⁰¹ In Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor (2004), we called this construction ‘undifferentiated predication’ (« prédication indifférenciée ») as it could be constructed on any stem (noun, verb and adjective). In this present study, we prefer to use the term *pronominalised noun* (PNN) as we examine only those involving common nouns and personal names.

Although some scholarship has been dedicated to *kuṛippu viṇai* constructions, we still lack studies of the various functions and circumstances of the simplification of this construction in Modern Tamil. Most modern scholars have concentrated on form, and were generally trying to identify *kuṛippu viṇai* constructions as either a noun or a verb. Besides this, we also notice works that pay attention to the syntactic role, and seem to have highlighted the predicate function. Following, are some earlier scholars’ remarks on this construction.

⁹⁸ pp. 196ff.

⁹⁹ We cannot repeat here all aspects of this construction’s theoretical frame and formation mechanism. We are presenting here only those descriptions pertinent to the Tamil epigraphic data. Those who are interested may kindly go through (Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor,

2004).

¹⁰⁰ (Chevillard, 1992); (Israel, 1975); & (Balasubramanian, 1980).

¹⁰¹ CHEVILLARD, writing on *kuṛippu viṇai*, presents a detailed history of the terminology, and also different interpretations by different scholars. (Chevillard, 1992).

BLOCH: « Ces noms pronominalisés sont susceptibles de flexion [...] Une conséquence bien plus importante résulte du double fait déjà indiqué que les noms pronominaux peuvent se construire comme prédicats, et qu'ils sont susceptibles d'avoir sujet et régime; ils équivalent dès lors exactement à des verbes. »¹⁰²

KRISHNAMURTHI: 'Nouns and adjectives (descriptive and verb derived) can be used as predicates in equative sentences. They carry gender-number-person suffixes in agreement with the subject noun phrase just like the finite verbs.'¹⁰³

STEEVER: 'Importantly, Proto-Dravidian appears to have had agreement between a subject and a predicate nominal, with the predicate nominal bearing personal endings to mark the person, number and gender of the subject.'¹⁰⁴

LEHMANN: 'While it would thus seem that Old Tamil nouns inflect for person as well as number and gender class, this is a matter of incorporation rather than inflection.'¹⁰⁵

In a later publication LEHMANN writes:

Hereby I will caution against the assumption that the category of *kurippu viṇai* has to be understood as a class of verbs in the sense of a syntactic category.¹⁰⁶

RAJAM calls them 'adjectival nouns' and states:

Nominal stems (i.e., adjectival stems, verbal noun stems, participial noun stems, substantive noun stems, and oblique stems) take a PNG and the nouns thus formed are here called adjectival nouns. They signify a 'complete' quality or 'totality' of the state of their respective nouns. There is no particular time indicated by an adjectival noun.¹⁰⁷

ZVELEBIL, in an early publication, stated:

[...] can be termed personal nouns and personal adjectives, belonging to a single NAV class and behaving very much like nouns [they are declinable for case and number].¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² (Bloch, 1946), pp. 42–3. 'A much more important consequence results from the double fact already indicated that the pronominal nouns can be constructed as predicates and that they admit of having both subject and object; so that they are exactly equivalent to verbs since then.' (Bloch, 1954), p. 43.

¹⁰³ (Krishnamurthi, 2003), p. 267.

¹⁰⁴ (Steever, 1998), p. 30.

¹⁰⁵ (Lehmann, 1998), p. 80.

¹⁰⁶ (Lehmann, 2004), p. 308.

¹⁰⁷ (Rajam, 1992), p. 472.

¹⁰⁸ (Zvelebil, 1967), p. 15.

Later, he wrote: ‘Appellatives may function as predicates or as pre-forms [...]’¹⁰⁹ He seems to have explicitly recognised the polyfunctional nature of this construction.

Given this terminological and descriptive diversity, and considering the syntactic and structural properties of this construction, MURUGAIYAN and PILOT-RAICHOOR chose to use the term *undifferentiated predication*.¹¹⁰ This could be constructed on any stem (noun, verb, adjective) and can function as complete utterance, as argument (subject, object) and as predicate. Given the polyfunctionality of this construction, the authors had highlighted an omnipredicative tendency in Sangam and pre-Sangam Tamil.¹¹¹ In their 2004 publication, which dealt mainly with the Sangam anthologies, the authors discussed the different approaches, and insisted on a need to examine the different functions in addition to the morphological form to understand the importance of this construction in the Tamil and Dravidian grammatical structure.¹¹²

VIII.4.2 Evolution of *kuṛippu viṇai*

From a historical perspective, *kuṛippu viṇai* is a very significant form in that it exhibits a process of simplification, which is a turning point in the process of development leading to Tamil of the modern period. These constructions in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person are present in many Classical Tamil verses with distinctive grammatical functions as argument or predicate. In Tamil inscriptions too, the pronominalised construction seems to be frequently used. However, this pronominalised construction in the 1st and 2nd person have almost fallen into disuse in Modern Tamil, while those in the 3rd person, although in use, tend to be generalised and to have lost their Person distinction.

¹⁰⁹ (Zvelebil, 1990), p. 26.

¹¹⁰ (Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor, 2004).

¹¹¹ LAUNEY, in his work on Classical Nahuatl, (Launey, 1994, 2004), has proposed the concept of omnipredicativity for languages in which members of all word classes can function without derivation as predicates, and in which the

predicative use is primary, and referential use is derived syntactically. In Classical Nahuatl, nouns and verbs are clearly distinguished by their morphological properties; but on the syntactic level, nouns and verbs can both be used predicatively and referentially.

¹¹² For further details please see (Murugaiyan & Pilot-Raichoor, 2004).

In Sangam Tamil we come across a complete paradigm of the micro predication forming a locative predicate:

- *ūr* ‘town’ *ūr+ar* ‘town+3.PL’ ‘they are of / from / in the town’
- *ūr+aṇ* ‘town+3.M.S’ ‘he is of / from / in the town’
- *ūr+aḷ* ‘town+3.F.S’ ‘she is of / from / in the town’
- *ūr+ēm* ‘town+1.PL’ ‘we are of / from / in the town’
- *ūr+īr* ‘town+2.PL’ ‘you are of / from / in the town’

In Modern Tamil, the micro predication occurring in the 1st and 2nd person have (almost) fallen into disuse, and only those in the 3rd person are in use. The form in the 3rd person, however, tends to be generalised, and to have lost its Person distinction.

- *tamiḷ* ‘Tamil’: *tamiḷ+aṇ* ‘I am, you are, he is Tamil’
- *tamiḷ+ar* ‘we, you, they are Tamils’

This process can be understood as one manifestation of a lengthy series of changes affecting the Tamil grammatical system in its transition from a classical to a mediæval, and finally, to a modern language, resulting in the simplification in Modern Tamil grammar. In marked contrast, this construction frequently occurs in Tamil inscriptions. We have noticed this form in Cōḷa, Pallava and Pāṇḍya inscriptions. At the present stage of our analysis, it will not be possible to specify the initial and final periods of the appearance of this construction. However, roughly speaking, we may say that the earliest occurrence of this form is noticed ca. 8th CE, but only a detailed analysis of the feature would lead us to fix the end of the usage of this form. The data is taken principally from *South Indian Inscriptions*, volumes 12, 13 and 14.

Further, chronologically, by the mediæval period, the distinction between noun and verb has been morphologically well attested. A detailed analysis of the data from inscriptional Tamil reveals not only that PNN are used in wider grammatical contexts and preserve their multifunctionality, but also that they are found to exhibit a unique feature where the proper names are pronominalised. The study of the PNN in inscriptional Tamil bridges a gap, of around eight centuries, between Classical and Modern Tamil, and sheds more light on the diachronic development from Classical Tamil to Modern Tamil. Based on this preliminary survey, we will hypothesise that pronominalisation of proper names is a grammatical stratagem proper to the inscriptional Tamil.

As mentioned above, this construction is so peculiar that it has not failed to attract the attention of early European missionaries and later grammarians. In the context of Dravidian historical linguistics let us refer to a few remarks directly relevant to the evolution and importance of this micro predication. BLOCH not only questioned the real distinction between noun and verb and went on to suggest that these « noms pronominalisés » are in a transitional stage in between substantives and verbs:

[Les substantifs] sont susceptibles d'une sorte de flexion pronominale: or un nom caractérisant la personne, et susceptible à la fois d'un sujet et de compléments, se distingue-t-il vraiment d'un verbe? La syntaxe avertit donc de faire une place à part aux noms pronominalisés, qui font le pont entre les substantifs et les verbes.¹¹³

He says, further:

De toute façon le procédé de dérivation est commun à la famille entière et à a une double importance: il donne une base morphologique du genre nominal, et il fournit une transition entre le nom et le verbe.¹¹⁴

For ZVELEBIL, the 'pronominalised noun' is not only an isolated structure and could be reconstructed for Proto-Dravidian:

[a]ccording to our conviction, pronominalized nouns (*cum* pronominalized adjectives) belong to a *major hyper-class* of nouns+adjectives+verbs (the NAV hyper-class), this classification being based on identical patterns of behaviour in syntax and morphology (including identical patterns of derivation).¹¹⁵

A few pages later ZVELEBIL writes:

¹¹³ (Bloch, 1946), pp. 1–2. 'The substantives are even to-day [*sic*] capable of verbal value; and this, not by direct government only, [...], but at the same time by the possibility of being accompanied by subjects in the nominative. On the other hand, they admit of a sort of pronominal flexion; now, a noun denoting person, and at the same time capable of admitting a subject and objects, is it truly different from a verb?

Syntax indeed warns us to give a

separate place to the pronominalised nouns, which are a bridge between the substantives and the verbs.' (Bloch, 1954), p. 2.

¹¹⁴ (Bloch, 1946), p. 36. 'Anyhow the method of derivation is common to the entire family and has a double importance: it gives a morphological base to the nominal gender and it furnishes a transition between the noun and the verb.' (Bloch, 1954), p. 47.

¹¹⁵ (Zvelebil 1977), p. 48.

Thus even from a fragmentary and sketchy account like the foregoing, one is bound to conclude that the type of derivation called personal alias pronominalized nouns is widely distributed in SDr, CDr and NDr, and hence *should obviously be reconstructed for PDr* as one of the very typical grammatical, structural features of the family. The details, however, remain to be worked out; at present, an exact statement is probably impossible.¹¹⁶

Based on the appellatives in Dravidian and Elamite, MCALPIN suggested a close typological relation between these two families and wrote:

A possible subtitle to this work is 'A Diachronic Study of Appellatives.' Since they are so crucial in this work and since reference to them (at least by this name) is restricted to Dravidian studies, it is best to give a general introduction to the concept.¹¹⁷

MCALPIN goes on to define appellatives, which, however, suit the Dravidian situation:

Simply stated, an appellative is a noun, pronoun, or any other part of speech, except a finite verb: with a personal ending attached. These personal endings are usually related to the personal pronouns and the personal endings used for finite verbs, but they need not be. This combination of a substantive with a set of personal endings is unusual and opens up new possibilities in syntax.¹¹⁸

But his proposal has not convinced Dravidian scholars¹¹⁹ and was not followed up.

VIII.4.3 Pronominalised nouns in Mediæval Tamil inscriptions

Against the background of the previous studies, with diverse interpretations, each certainly justifiable in its own approach and type of analysis, let us examine some examples from the Mediæval Tamil inscriptions. This structure [*STEM* - (\pm MP) - *PNG*] is used in Tamil and Kannada inscriptions as well. AGESTHIALINGOM and SHANMUGAM treat this structure as *appellative verb* and define:

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹⁷ (McAlpin 1981), p. 15.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ (Krishnamurti, 2001), pp. 258–9;

(Zvelebil, 1990), pp. 104–15.

[a]ppellative verbs [as] those which can not take tense suffixes but take person-number suffixes [...]¹²⁰

They seem not to have included the numerals and proper names as appellative bases.¹²¹

In Kannada inscriptions this structure is termed ‘appellative noun,’ but neither NARASIMHIA nor GAI has defined the term. These constructions are used with numerals and place names.¹²²

- *or.vv.am* ‘one person,’ (7th century CE)
- *pannir.v.aru* ‘12 persons’ (8th century CE)
- *Amali.a.yar* ‘the people of the Amali’ (685 CE)¹²³
- *Navalli.y.ar* (5-10; 6-10) ‘the people of Navalli’ (685 CE)¹²⁴

In what follows we will add further data from the Mediæval Tamil inscriptions and examine the function of the PNN of numerals, place names and proper names. We will show that, as in the previous historical stage, *viz.* the Sangam period, this construction in Mediæval Tamil inscriptions depicts polyfunctionality; a complete utterance, or constituents as predicate or as argument.

Let us recall that the choice of constructions is mainly related to the information structure. In general, information structure includes concepts such as given and new information, topic, focus, theme, and rheme. In Mediæval Tamil donative inscriptions, the functional part is informative in nature and resembles an informative notice.

The reading and the coherent interpretation of inscriptions involve mainly the identification of the action and the participants described in the inscription, for instance, the ‘donor,’ ‘donee,’ ‘donated object,’ etc. Depending on the context in the text, any of these could be considered as ‘more salient’ than the other.¹²⁵

For the sake of clarity, our analysis is based on the clause being ‘the minimal complete information unit,’ assuming that information structure, syntax and semantics¹²⁶ interact with each other.

¹²⁰ (Agesthalingom & Shanmugam, 1970), p. 204. in Kannada inscriptions.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 206.

¹²² (Narasimhia, 1941); & (Gai, 1946).

We are thankful to R. SWAMINATHAN and B. K. RAVINDRANATH for personal communications on this constructions

¹²³ (Narasimhia, 1941), p. 276.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 311.

¹²⁵ The saliency parameter, or newsworthiness concept, is borrowed from (Mithun, 1992).

This takes into account the core or nucleus, and the arguments governed by the nucleus.¹²⁷

For instance, Example 11:

(11) *śabhai* ‘assembly,’ *śabhai* + *ōm* (assembly + 1.PL) = *sabayōm* as a minimum meaningful utterance may be translated as: ‘we are the members of the assembly / we members of the assembly.’ This micro predication construction can function as a predicate or argument (cf. examples below).

Table 42: Example 12

(12) SIL.IV.549 (0955 CE)					
sabhai+ōm > sabhaiyōm, main argument					
[...]	<i>vyavasthai</i>	<i>cētu</i>	<i>koṭu.tt.ōm</i>	<i>peruṅkuṛi</i>	<i>sabhaiy.ōm</i>
	agreement	do.ADVP	give.PAST.1.PL	brahmanas	assembly.1.PL
‘We the assembly of Brahmanas made this agreement’					

In Example 12, Table 42, the PNN functions as the principal argument (subject) of the verb *kuṭu* ‘give’ and agrees with it. In most of the utterances the (subject) argument is always at the focal position. As mentioned above, the importance or saliency of the constituent depends on the context of the utterance and the most salient piece of information is placed at the right end, the focal position, normally reserved for the predicate.

In Example 13, Table 43,¹²⁸ the PNN *śabhai* in plural form, takes the dative case and functions as the dative adjunct of recipient of the money.

In Example 14, Table 44,¹²⁹ the PNN takes the locative / ablative postposition and functions as ablative adjunct of source. In the

¹²⁶ (Croft, 1993), p. 33.

¹²⁷ Notions such as ‘subject’ and ‘object’ are complex and their validity is not accepted equally. We use the term ‘subject’ in its traditional sense as the first argument of the verb, instantiated as an independent nominative noun

and / or in the person ending of the verb. Instead of ‘object,’ we use the term ‘complement,’ marked directly or indirectly, to designate the non-subject core arguments of an action verb.

¹²⁸ p. 202.

¹²⁹ p. 202.

Table 43: Example 13

(13) SII.XIV.161. (1038 CE)				
śabhai+ār+kku śabhai.3pl.Dat ‘recipient’				
[...]	rājarājac caruppēti maṅkala.ttu	śabhaiy.ār.kkuk	kācu	kuṭu.ttu
	PLN.OBL	assembly.1.PL.DAT	money	give.ADVP
	vilaiko.ṇṭ.a	i.vvūr	nila.tt.il [...]	
	purchase.RPP	DEIC.town	land.OBL.LOC	
‘[...] Of the land, of this village, purchased by paying money to the members of the assembly [...]’				

Table 44: Example 14

(14) SII.XIV.191. (1046 CE)				
śabhai+ār pakkaḷ > śabhaiyār pakkaḷ śabhai.3pl.locative (ablative adjunct)				
[...]	śrī rājādirājac caruppētimāṅkala.ttu	śabhaiy.ār	pakkaḷ	ko.ṇṭ.a nilam [...]
	PLN.OBL	assembly.3.PL	LOC / ABL	purchase.RPP land
‘... the land acquired from the assembly of the śrī rājādirājac caruppētimāṅkalam ...’				

above examples, the nominal lexeme *sabhai* ‘assembly’ forms a micro predication. This PNN can be construed as an utterance of identification (cf. Example 11, p. 201), and functions as main argument, Example 12, as dative recipient, Example 13, as ablative adjunct of source, Example 14. The PNN occurs also at the extreme right, the focal position, normally the predicate position of the utterance.

The PNN can have as base a variety of names like numeral, professional, kinship terms and proper names.¹³⁰

In Example 15, Table 45,¹³¹ an identificational utterance, a kinship term occurs with the 1st person singular in a genitive relation, although the head noun is not marked in the genitive case.

In Example 16, Table 46,¹³² a professional term, a compound noun, is inflected for the 1st person plural and agrees with the verbs.

¹³⁰ (Butterworth & Chetty, 2006), pp. 401–2.

¹³¹ p. 203.

¹³² p. 203.

Table 45: Example 15

(15) Kinship term (1256–57 CE) (Butterworth & Chetty, 2006), pp. 401–2.

<i>Cakkamiraṭṭi</i>	<i>Kumārar.ēṇ</i>
PN	son.1.S
‘I, (the) son of Cakkamiraṭṭi’	

Table 46: Example 16

(16) SII.14.12 (0824 CE)

mūlaparuṭai+ōm: professional term

<i>iru</i>	<i>nāḷi</i>	<i>ney</i>	<i>eri.pp.ōm</i>	<i>āy.iṇ.ōm</i>	<i>mūlaparuṭai.y.ōm</i>
two	measure	ghee	burn.FUT.1.PL	OBLIG.PAST.1.PL	administrator.1.PL
‘We the administrators (of the temple) are obliged to burn two measures of ghee’					

In Example 17, Table 47,¹³³ the numeral base *iru* ‘two’ is inflected for 1st person plural and agrees with the verbal predicate. As in most of the examples, the inflected nominal at the end of the utterance functions as comment.

In Example 18, Table 48,¹³⁴ there are two PNNs: i. *ūr+(v)+ar* ‘village + 3.plural,’ ‘villagers,’ constructed by affixing directly the PNG marker to *ūr* ‘villagers’; and ii. *i+vv+anai.v.ōm*, constructed equally by affixing the PNG marker 1.PL to *anai*, ‘we all (including the villagers)’ and is part of the comment part of the utterance and agrees with the verbal predicate, in topic position.

Proper names

In what follows, we will examine a noteworthy and an uncommon construction where the proper names are inflected for person. This construction is certainly an innovation as a grammatical device in Tamil epigraphic texts. To the best of our knowledge this construction is noticed neither in the Sangam anthologies, nor in the other mediæval literatures, nor in other Dravidian languages. As we have mentioned in § VIII.2,¹³⁵ a broader investigation of this construction

¹³³ p. 204.

¹³⁴ p. 204.

Table 47: Example 17

(17) SII.IV.550. (1258 CE)

Numeral + *ōm*[...] *i.nnāyaṇṇār.kku tēvatāṇam.āka vi.ṭṭ.ōm* *Kāḷiyāṇa Mutticura Nampi.y.um*

DEIC.god.DAT divine donation-as give.PAST.1.PL PN.COORD

ivaṇ *tampi* *Tirumāṇikka Tēvaṇ.um* *ivv.iruv.ōm [...]*

his younger brother PN.COORD DEIC.two.1.PL

‘We (these) two, Kāḷiyāṇa Mutticura Nampi and his younger brother Tirumāṇikka Tēvaṇ bestowed (the land) as divine-donation to the deity’

Table 48: Example 18

(18) (1256–57 CE) (Butterworth & Chetty, 2006), pp. 411–3.

aṇai > *aṇai-v-+ōm* ‘we all’*cammati.tt.ōm* *ūrvar.um* *samasta.paradesikaḷ.um* *ivv.aṇai.v.ōm*

agree.PAST.1.PL village.3.PL.COORD inherent.outsiders.COORD DEIC.all.1.PL

‘We all of us (here-mentioned), the villagers and the outsiders, agreed ...’

would be of great importance in Dravidian comparative studies. In our corpus, this construction occurs only in the 1st person singular [*Proper Name+ēṇ*]. The pronominalised noun forms, as mentioned above, occur in Kannada inscriptions. But we have no information on this form of pronominalised proper names in other major Dravidian languages, or in other, non-literary Dravidian languages. This construction, with proper names inflected for person, is important typologically.¹³⁶ This question needs further wider investigation.

¹³⁵ pp. 173ff.

¹³⁶ Person marked (or pronominalised) proper names seem to occur, for instance, in Papuan Malay (West Papua), Classical Nahuatl (Mexico), Nama (Southern Africa), Aalamblak (Papua New Guinea). We are thank-

ful to David and Jan RIJKHOFF for personal communication. Currently, we need to investigate the functions of the personal names inflected for person and number and find out the parallels, if any, between these languages and Tamil.

In Mediæval Tamil inscriptions, proper names are morphologically and syntactically complex expressions, and consist of several components. Each constituent in a proper name may occur with a determinative and appositional relation. SUBBARAYALU has shown that a proper name in a Tamil epigraphic text may be composed of up to six constituents; it consists of place name, official title, caste and clan names, individual's name and father's name.¹³⁷ In this study we consider the whole string of constituents as a (single noun phrase) proper name, contextually referring to a participant in a given event described in the inscription. In Tamil, the bare form of proper names, without any marker added, are definite and 3rd person singular names.

Table 49: Example 19

(19) SII.2.31.p139.8-20 (1014 CE)			
<i>ittiruccurṛumāḷkai</i>	<i>eṭu.ppi.tt.āṇ</i>	<i>sēnāpati [...]</i>	<i>śrikriṣṇaṇ rāmaṇ ...</i>
DEIC.sacred enclosure	construct.CAUS.PAST.3.M.S	general [...]	PN ...
'the general (...) Śrikriṣṇaṇ Rāmaṇ (caused to) construct this sacred enclosure'			

Example 9, Table 40,¹³⁸ is revisited here as Example 19 in Table 49. The proper name, Śrikriṣṇaṇ Rāmaṇ, occurring at the focal position at the right end of the utterance, in nominative case (zero case-marked), is the subject argument. This proper name is referential, inherently definite and in the 3rd person masculine singular. The proper name refers to the subject argument, and the verbal predicate *eṭuppittāṇ* carries the person-number-gender suffix *-āṇ* at the end, showing agreement between verbal predicate and the subject argument. It is important to note that this utterance is about Śrikriṣṇaṇ Rāmaṇ, but he is not the utterer. In a sense, Example 19 may be considered an indirect discourse. In contrast to this, we will examine below some of the micro predicate constructions with proper names inflected for person, the 1st person singular.

In Example 20, Table 50,¹³⁹ the proper name *Porṛinaṅkai* inflected for the 1st person singular is in an equative identification utterance. In this utterance, the proper name inflected for the 1st

¹³⁷ (Subbarayalu, 2012), pp. 48–58.¹³⁹ p. 206.¹³⁸ p. 191.

person singular is the comment, and it is clear that *Porṛinaṅkai* identifies herself as the wife of *Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ*.

Table 50: Example 20

(20) SII.XII.89. (0899 CE)			
[...]	{ <i>Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ</i>	<i>maṇavāṭṭi</i> }	{ <i>Porṛinaṅkaiy.ēṇ</i> [...]}
	PN	wife	PN.1.S
{(It is) I, <i>Porṛinaṅkai</i> , am} {the wife of <i>Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ</i> }			

Table 51: Example 21

(21)				
{ <i>Porṛinaṅkai</i>	<i>ākiya</i>	<i>nāṇ</i> }	<i>Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ.iṇ</i>	<i>maṇavāṭṭi</i>
PN	be.RP	I	PN.GEN	wife
'{I who am <i>Porṛinaṅkai</i> }{am the wife of <i>Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ</i> }'				

In Modern Tamil, the pronominalised proper name construction is not known, instead a periphrastic construction is used (Example 21, Table 51). This periphrastic construction in Modern Tamil needs some explanation. The order of the constituent—topic-comment—is totally inversed. It requires a copular verb *āka* ‘to be’ in non-past relative participle form, and the possessor relation is indicated by an explicit genitive case marker. But in Example 20 the genitive / possessive relation is marked by simple word order.

In Example 22, Table 52,¹⁴⁰ equative identificational utterance (I, *Porṛinaṅkai*, the wife of *Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ*) is the topic and is functioning as the (subject) argument of the following two verbal forms: the first one, *vaiṭṭa* ‘give’ in past relative participle, but without carrying an agreement marker; and the second, a personal verb (*vai*+PAST+1S), showing agreement between the verb and the (subject) argument. This complex utterance can be analysed into three information units: i. I, *Porṛinaṅkai*, am the wife of *Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ*; ii. I, *Porṛinaṅkai* gifted hundred goats; and iii. I, *Porṛinaṅkai* gifted these hundred goats as ever productive (un-ageing and undying) goats.

¹⁴⁰ p. 207.

Table 52: Example 22

(22) SIL.XII.89. (0899 CE)

[...]	<i>Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ</i>	<i>maṇavāṭṭi</i>	<i>Porṛinaṅkaiy.ēṇ</i>	[...][...]	<i>vai.tt.a</i>	<i>āṭu</i>	<i>nūru</i>
PN	wife	PN.1.S			give.RPP	goat	100
<i>ivai</i>	<i>cāvā</i>	<i>mūvāp</i>			<i>pērāṭ.āka</i>	<i>vai.tt.ēṇ</i>	...
these	die.NEG	age.NEG			mature.goat.as	give.PAST.1.S	

‘I, Porṛinaṅkai, the wife of Kāṭupaṭṭip pēraraiyaṇ the hundred goats that I gave, I gave them as un-dying and un-ageing (ever productive) mature goats.’

Table 53: Example 23

(23) SIL.IV.558. (1234 CE)

[...]	<i>cilālēkai</i>	<i>paṇṇī.k.kuṭu.tt.ēṇ</i>	[...]	<i>Vayirātrāyaṇ.ēṇ</i>
	stone engraving	do.ADVP-give.PAST.1.S		PN.1.S

‘I, Vayirātrāyaṇ engraved on stone and gave’

In Example 23, Table 53, the proper name with personal marker, the subject argument, occurs at the focal position. In this example, we get a meaningful complete utterance, ‘I engraved on stone and gave,’ even without the final element, the proper name inflected for person. By adding this proper name, the identity of the subject argument is made explicit.

Table 54: Example 24

(24) SIL.XIV.72.5-6 (0925-0926 CE)

[...]	<i>vēmpaṇ pullaṇ.ēṇ</i>	<i>cantirātittaval</i>	<i>nicatam</i>	<i>uḷakku</i>
PN.1.S	as long as the sun and the moon	daily		one measure
	endure			
<i>ney</i>	<i>muṭṭ.āmal</i>	<i>aṭṭuvat.āṇ.ēṇ</i>	[...]	
ghee	hinder.NEG	pour.OBLIG.1.S		

‘I, Vēmpaṇ Pullaṇ of Veṭṭikkuṭi am obliged to pour daily, as long as the sun and the moon endure (shine), one uḷakku of ghee without hindrance’

In Example 24, Table 54,¹⁴¹ contrary to the structure in Example 23, the proper name is in topic position and the predicate is moved to the focal position. This structure is less frequent and we need a more detailed analysis of the structure of the inscriptions to account for the positional variation of topic and focus elements.

Table 55: Example 25

(25) SII.14.17. (0780 CE)

nilam [...] tirunantviḷakku erikka vai.tt.a pañcavaṇ pallavaraiyaṇ.āyiṇa

land perpetual lamp light.INF give.RPP PN.alias

veḷcentil.ēṇ maṇōmayaīccura.ttup parumāṇaṭikaḷukku

PN.1.S PLN.OBL god.DAT

‘I, Pañcavaṇ Pallavaraiyaṇ alias Vēḷcentil, gave (some) land to light a perpetual lamp to the god of / at Maṇōmayaīccuram.’

This inscription records the gift of land towards lighting a perpetual lamp. On comparing this utterance with the others examined up until now, this utterance does not contain a personal verb. Instead, the verbal form is in past relative form, and consequently does not carry the PNG marker. This verbal form should be a personal verb and should show agreement with the subject argument.¹⁴² However, it is not excluded that this may be another instance or relic of an old feature, where any verbal lexeme —whatever the morphological form— could function as predicate (see Example 7, Table 38, p. 188). Again, we need to work on a vast corpus, both literary and epigraphic, in order to make clear statements on the chronological evolution of the function of the different verbal forms.

¹⁴¹ p. 207.

¹⁴² The editor of this inscription considers the use of the past relative verbal form an error, as, according to Tamil grammatical rules, the verb should carry the PNG marker and should agree

with the ‘subject.’ The editor, indeed, has added ‘Read *vaittēṇ*,’ SII. 14. p. 18, n. 1, the finite verbal form, carrying the 1st person singular PNG marker, which agrees with the ‘subject.’ For similar editorial corrections cf. p. 182, n. 58.

Table 56: Example 26

(26) SII.13.283 (0889 CE)			
<i>nampaṇ kecuvaṇ nontāviḷakk.oṇṇu.kku vai.tt.a nilam [...]</i>			
PN	perpetual lamp one.DAT	give.RP	land [...]
<i>aṟumā [...]</i>	<i>in.nontāviḷaku.kku</i>	<i>vaittēn</i>	<i>(na)mpaṇ kēcuvaṇ.ēṇ [...]</i>
six.mā	DEIC.perpetual lamp.DAT	give.PAST.1.S	Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ.1.S
‘Six mā of land was given by Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ to provide for one perpetual lamp [...] I, Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ gave (this land) for this perpetual lamp’			

Table 57: Example 27

(27) (1256–57 CE) (Butterworth & Chetty, 2006), pp. 401–2.				
<i>ippaṭi</i>	<i>aṟi.v.om</i>	<i>Tiruppaṇi Vayirākiyāṇṭār.ēṇ</i>	<i>Cakkamiraṭṭi</i>	<i>Kumārar.ēṇ</i>
this manner	know.FUT.1.PL	PN.1.S	PN	son.1.S
<i>Vācireṭṭiy.ēṇ</i>	<i>Cēlatankiputerāṭṭiy.ēṇ</i>	<i>Tikkamareṭṭiy.ēṇ</i>	<i>Paṭukamarāṭṭiy.ēṇ</i>	
PN.1.S	PN.1.S	PN.1.S	PN.1.S	
‘I, Tiruppaṇi Vayirākiyāṇṭār; I, Vācireṭṭi the son of Cakkamiraṭṭi; I, Cēlatankiputerāṭṭi; I, Tikka-mareṭṭi and I, Paṭukamarāṭṭi we all thus bear witness’				

Example 26, Table 56, is in line with our hypothesis that pronominalisation of proper names allows, among other things, disambiguation of the identity of the subject argument. The inscription records the gift of six *mā* of land to provide for a perpetual lamp by (some) Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ. This information is engraved in the beginning of the inscription. {Six *mā* of land was given by Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ}: the verb is in past relative participle form and does not show agreement with the subject argument; the proper noun is in its usual uninflected form. The same information is repeated at the end of the inscription, where the donor, Nampaṇ Kēcuvaṇ, is inflected for person and agrees with the verbal predicate. The utterer himself makes the statement and brings additional grammatical information on the subject of the verbal predicate. This type of repetition is not rare.

Example 27, Table 57,¹⁴³ is very interesting as it contains five proper names, each inflected for the 1st person singular. All five participants are subject arguments of the same verbal predicate, and the verbal predicate carries the 1st person plural marker, and totally agrees with its five participants. There seems to be no restriction on the number of proper names inflected for person in an utterance. This grammatical means serves as a device to precisely disambiguate the identity of each participant, the subject argument, of the events described in the epigraphic texts.

VIII.5 CONCLUSION

This paper is a preliminary attempt to adduce more evidence from epigraphical sources on two major salient features of ‘Old Tamil,’ namely, the shift from analytic to agglutinative structure, and the importance of the pronominalised noun construction. We want to insist on the fact that the study of epigraphic data is essential in any approach towards a comprehensive description and understanding of the historical evolution of Tamil and other Dravidian languages. We sought to show traces of some old features like the absence of morphological components (§ VIII.3.2¹⁴⁴), the multifunctionality of bare stems (§ VIII.3.3¹⁴⁵), the morphological stabilisation of verbal paradigms (§ VIII.3.4¹⁴⁶ & § VIII.3.5¹⁴⁷) and, in particular, we tried to show the use of pronominalised noun constructions and their poly-functionality and to examine an uncommon construction where the proper names are inflected for person in the later mediæval inscriptions (§ VIII.4¹⁴⁸). This construction seems to be an innovation in Mediæval Tamil inscriptions. This construction, among other things, seems to be pragmatically motivated and typically fulfils the pragmatic function of disambiguation of the identity of the subject argument. We need further investigation into the other possible functions of pronominalised proper names. This construction, like other aspects discussed in this paper, is of great interest in the area of comparative Dravidian, Dravidian historical linguistics, and certainly, in linguistic typology. We need to work on a vast corpus of both literary and epigraphic sources of major Dravidian languages,

¹⁴³ p. 209.

¹⁴⁴ pp. 182ff.

¹⁴⁵ pp. 185ff.

¹⁴⁶ pp. 187ff.

¹⁴⁷ pp. 189ff.

¹⁴⁸ pp. 193ff.

and also on the non-literary Dravidian languages, in order to make clear statements on the chronological evolution of the Dravidian typological features.

ABBREVIATIONS

1: first person, 3: third person, ADVP: Adverbial participle, CAUS: causative, COOR: coordinator, DAT: dative, DEIC: deictic, F: feminine, GEN: genitive, INF: infinitive, LOC: locative, M: masculine, OBL: oblique, PAST: past tense, PL: plural, PLN: place name, PN: personal name, RP: non-past relative participle, RPP: past relative participle, S: singular.

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CH. IX
MAHENDRAVARMAN'S INSCRIPTION IN THE SO-CALLED
'ROCK-FORT' OF TIRUCCIRĀPPAḷḷI: THE KING IN THE
TEMPLE
SYLVAIN BROCQUET

ABSTRACT

This article proposes a new analysis of Mahendravarman's poetical epigraph engraved on the two pilasters by which the Gaṅgādhara relief is flanked, in the 'rock-cut' temple situated on the slope of the Tiruccirāppaḷḷi hill. It focuses on its eighth and last stanza, that proves to be particularly enigmatic. This inscription, which has been repeatedly studied over time, raises many difficulties, mainly in the sixth and eighth stanzas, that contain double entendre, based not only on polysemy, but also on the referential indeterminacy of a few syntagms: *anena liṅgena* (6th stanza), *bhautikī mūrtiḥ* (8th). The lack of knowledge of the referential context makes interpretation even more difficult, especially when it comes to the potential presence of sculptures other than the Gaṅgādhara relief – one must keep in mind that in the interpretative process of any statement, the main role is played by the referent, which governs the construction of meaning.

The present study, after a few general remarks about the functions of royal inscriptions engraved in temples, provides a full translation of the text, followed by a line-by-line commentary, intended to support the interpretations that are assumed. It has recourse to a few simple methodological principles: i. not taking into account hypothetical referents, allegedly inferred from the text, in order to avoid tautology; ii. having recourse to an interpretative approach, rather than to traditional semantics based on lexicology; iii. considering the epigraphical poem as a whole, duly patterned according to a rhetoric design, in which each and every part signifies in the light of its entirety; and iv. relying on the treatises on poetics, in order to delineate as precisely as possible the range of ambiguity wherever it arises. Applying these few rules leads to the anthropologically acceptable hypothesis that the inscription is nothing but the founder-king's *mūrti*-, just as the relief is that of the god, his physical manifestation and his glorious body (since it is qualified as *kīrtimayī*) – while the temple, which is the central point of the ritual that unites the

sacrificing devotee and the deity, may be considered the *mūrti*- of both. In the same way, the word *liṅga*- designates both the relief, which, after it has been duly consecrated, ensures the god's lasting presence in his temple, and the epigraph, as the token by which the king is sustainably identified. Correlatively, the hypothesis of a Śivaliṅga should be rejected as anachronistic and not empirically evidenced. The hollowing out of the temple, the relief's consecration, and the engraving of the inscription, which all make appeal to the stone's power of perpetuation, must be considered the three sides of one and the same process.

IX.1 INTRODUCTION

THIS short study will deal with a very famous inscription (or a set of two inscriptions): the epigraph engraved on two pilasters on the western wall of the so-called 'Rock-Fort' temple built by Mahendravarman in the beginning of the 7th century CE, the true name of which is given by the dedicatory inscription on its architrave, *Laliṭāṅkurapallaveśvaragr̥ham*. Mahendravarman was the first Pallava king who dedicated stone temples, and all his temples are of the 'rock-cut' or 'cave-temple' category. Correlatively, he also was the first who issued epigraphs engraved on stone, that serve as the dedicatory inscriptions of those temples and —at least in that case— of the sculptures they contain. The particular inscription at issue was first deciphered and translated by HULTZSCH in *South Indian Inscriptions* and *Epigraphia Indica*,¹ then many scholars dealt with it, not only because of its importance for the history of South India, but also because of its extraordinary literary quality: it proves to be a masterpiece of the most refined Kāvya, abounding in various meters and *alaṃkāra*, the most remarkable of which are the two splendid *utprekṣā* of stanzas 3 and 5. Its accurate use of words is another feature which deserves notice. It also contains *śleṣa* (double entendre), which is the topic I will focus on.²

¹ (Hultzsch, 1890), pp. 28–30; (Hultzsch, 1892), pp. 58–60. Strangely, a note in *South Indian Inscriptions* states: 'Reprinted from the *Epigraphia Indica*' (which suggests that the volume of *Epigraphia Indica*, released in 1892, was intended to be published before that of *South Indian Inscriptions*, released in 1890).

² I will not discuss all the issues related to such a rich epigraph, which have been so often and so accurately discussed by scholars, for instance P.-S. FILLIOZAT in 1984, Michael LOCK-

My purpose is mainly to analyse the very last stanza of the inscription engraved on the pilaster situated on the left side of the Gaṅgādhara relief, which is the eighth stanza of the poem, provided that the two texts engraved on both sides make only one poem, as was suggested by many, and not two independent poems.³ I am going to support the hypothesis that it contains a *śleṣa* —at least a double meaning, but probably, as I put it, a quadruple meaning— which provides valuable evidence about the very nature and function of that dedicatory inscription and probably, beyond it, of all dedicatory inscriptions of Indian temples. The interpretation rests on an analysis of the rhetoric of the whole epigraphic poem and on a few references to other Pallava inscriptions. Such an analysis implies that poetics —i.e. the treatises on poetics and the way Kāvya literature makes use of the rhetoric devices they describe— be taken into account. It also involves an approach of the political and ritual conceptions of the period, in such a way that both anthropology and epigraphy might shed light on each other.

WOOD and others from 1976 up to 2001. (Filliozat, 1984), pp. 106–16; (Lockwood & Bhat, 1976), pp. 91–102; (Lockwood, Bhat, Siromoney, Dayanandan, 2001), pp. 47–52, 129–42. Other studies, such as SRINIVASAN's *Cave Temples of the Pallavas*, (Srinivasan, 1964), also deserves notice. Emmanuel FRANCIS recently published a comprehensive study on the ideology of the Pallavas, a whole chapter of which deals with Mahendravarman I, with a focus on the inscriptions of Tiruccirāppaḷli: (Francis, 2017), vol. II, chapter 17, pp. 509–33, and more specifically, 17.4, pp. 516–30. In this chapter are given a full account of the state-of-the-art, a discussion of the various interpretations, an edition and a translation of the inscriptions of the cave-temple. As will be seen, I agree with the major part of the author's assumptions, but with one diver-

gence about the interpretation of the word *liṅga*- (and, consequently, *liṅgin*-), which I will consider as referring not only to the relief and / or the temple, but also to the epigraph.

³ I will not discuss the question of whether the two pilasters contain one or two poems, since everything seems to have been said about it (see references above, p. 220, n. 2). I will follow the current *doxa* and consider established that it is one and the same inscription, starting from the right pilaster and continued on the left one, since the second stanza of the right pilaster's poem ends with a symbol which seems to note the number 'two.' For a discussion, see (Francis, 2017), p. 526, n. 66. The inscription engraved on the architrave (see *infra*, p. 224), which is strictly dedicatory, must be related to it.

Figure 25: *Laliñāṅkurapallaveśvaragṛham* – Entrance of the cave-temple (south)



The second part of this study, § IX.2, will consist of a short presentation of the inscription in its context. The third, § IX.3,⁴ will provide some general considerations concerning dedicatory inscriptions and their functions, with reference to what is known about temple dedication during the time of the Pallavas. In the fourth part, § IX.4,⁵ a translation of the text will be proposed, which will be commented on in the fifth, § IX.5.⁶ Special attention will be paid to the way that particular epigraph operates, through an investigation of its rhetorical pattern, which requires a close analysis of each and every stanza. But it will be mainly focused on the last one and its potential double entendre.

IX.2 PRESENTATION OF THE INSCRIPTION

The temple which contains the inscription in question is a cave-temple of relatively small size. It is situated along the stairs that lead to the top of the Cirāmalai hill on the foot and slope of which the city of Tiruccirāppaḷḷi lies (Fig. 25, p. 222). It opens on its southern side, where the roof is supported by four square pillars. It was dedicated to Śiva, most probably Śiva Gaṅgādhara, as can be inferred from the Gaṅgādhara relief on its western wall (Fig. 26, p. 226), and probably from the inscription on the pilasters situated on the north and on the south of the latter. In front of the relief, on the eastern wall, an empty niche might hypothetically have contained a *liṅga*, the presence of which in the temple might be suggested, through *śleṣa*, by the sixth stanza of the inscription at issue – at least according to one of its possible and much discussed interpretations (see § IX.5.6, pp. 245ff.). My purpose is not to discuss that topic at length, but a few words will be said about it, since the correct interpretation of that stanza is of considerable importance for the understanding of the whole inscription, especially if connected with the eighth one.

The inscription, which is partly damaged, is engraved on the two pilasters by which the Gaṅgādhara relief is flanked, on the western wall. The right pilaster, situated on the north of the relief, contains sixteen lines and four Sanskrit verses in Pallava-Grantha characters (Fig. 27, p. 231): two *vasantatilaka* (first and fourth stanza), one *āryā* (second stanza) and one *śikhariṇī* (third stanza). At the end of the second stanza, line 7, the number two indicates that if one and the

⁴ pp. 227ff.

⁶ pp. 236ff.

⁵ pp. 232ff.

same inscription is engraved on the two pilasters, it starts from the right one and is continued on the left one. The left pilaster, situated on the south of the relief, contains thirteen lines and four other Sanskrit verses in the same characters (Fig. 28, p. 240), plus a few Sanskrit words⁷: one *śārdūlavikrīḍita* (fifth stanza), two *ārya* (sixth and seventh stanzas), one *anuṣṭubh* (eighth stanza). As already stated (*supra*, p. 221, n. 3), I will not discuss the question whether the two pilasters contain one or two epigraphs, which is a problem nobody can solve because of the lack of evidence. It is sufficient to ascertain that from the point of view of its literary content and structure, the whole might be considered one poem; the numbering of the stanzas, from one to eight, is based on that postulate.

Apart from that inscription, there are other epigraphs in the temple. A short inscription on the architrave reads:

iti jagati viditanāmnā laṭitaṃ laṭitāṃkureṇa pallavapatinā |
kṛtinā kārītaṃ etal laṭitāṃkurapallaveśvaragrham mahitam ||

Ainsi celui dont le nom est célèbre dans le monde, le seigneur Pallava
Laṭitāṃkura,

Vertueux, fit construire cette demeure <nommée> Laṭitāṃkura-pallaveśvara, charmante et objet de louange.

Thus, the one whose name is famous in the world, the Pallava ruler
Lalitāṃkura,

Being virtuous, had this charming and celebrated house <named>
Lalitāṃkura-Pallaveśvara made.⁸

That short epigraph conforms to the pattern of all the temple dedicatory inscriptions of Mahendravarman⁹: it gives the name of the

⁷ These few words are quite difficult to read and interpret: for a comprehensive discussion see (Francis, 2017), pp. 524–5.

⁸ Two translations of the Sanskrit quotations, the first in French and the second in English, will be given in each case.

⁹ The other Sanskrit dedicatory inscriptions of Mahendravarman are engraved in the following rock-cut temples: Taḷavāṇūr (in Sanskrit and in Tamil), Makēntiravāṭi, Maṇṭagapaṭṭu, Cīyamaṅkalam (Stambheśvara). See « À propos des inscriptions enregistrant des fondations de temples en Inde classique: l'exemple des temples Pallava (Inde du Sud) » (Brocquet, 2019). The dedicatory inscription of the temple of Vallam, built by a servant of Mahendravarman, is in Tamil.

royal donor and that of the temple, which is fashioned after the former. However, it slightly deviates from that usual pattern because of its very first word, *iti*. Through its deictic function, that word might refer either to the temple as a whole, or, more probably, to the inscription engraved on the two pilasters of the western wall, which, being nothing but a prayer, is to be considered a kind of discourse. In that case, the dedicatory epigraph of the architrave should be taken as a sort of conclusion, since the temple's dedication is also dealt with in the inscriptions engraved on the pilasters, along with that of the Gaṅgādhara relief.

Three short and seriously mutilated inscriptions are on the front part of the cella¹⁰: on the lintel, a word which ends with (...) *h[e]śvara[g]r[ha]* (plus one character) and must be a name of the temple; on the bedrock to the left of the door, a couple of words ending with (...) *[pr]ābhākariṇā l[i]kh[ita]m*, 'engraved by (...) Prābhākārin' or 'by (...), the son of Prabhākārin'; and on the one to the right, one syllable hardly readable among a few others which are not, (...) *[mol]* (...).

On the front pillars, some seventy Sanskrit and Tamil *birudas* (honorific surnames) of King Mahendravarman are engraved (Fig. 29, p. 250).¹¹ Three of these reflect *birudas* which are employed not only in the inscription at issue but also in those of other temples of Mahendravarman: *guṇabhara-*, 'bearer of virtues' or 'endowed with a multitude of virtues' (1b, 3d, 6a, after 8)¹²; *śatrumalla-*, 'wrestler <fighting> with enemies' (2a)¹³; and *satyasandha-*, 'whose promises are true,' 'true to his promises' (8b). Another is also found in the dedicatory epigraph engraved on the architrave: *laṭitāṃkura-*, literally 'charming sprout,' which gives its name to the temple and is echoed by the qualifier *laṭita-* applied to it. There is no doubt that

¹⁰ For the edition of these three inscriptions, partly unnoticed before, see (Francis, 2017), p. 516.

¹¹ The habit of engraving long lists of *birudas*, generally without case-endings, starts with Mahendravarman—there is another list of that kind in the Pallāvaram temple, see (Brocquet, 1997), p. 479— and continues with his successors, in particular Narasiṃhavarman II.

¹² *guṇabhara-* is to be considered the king's main *biruda*. Strangely, it is different from the one which is employed in the architrave inscription and after which the temple was named, i.e. *laṭitāṃkura-*.

¹³ The word *malla-*, 'wrestler,' refers to somebody who fights hand-to-hand, like Bhīma at the court of Virāṭa in the *Mahābhārata*.

Figure 26: *Laliñāṅkurapallaveśvaragṛham* – Gaṅgādhara relief (western wall)



these *birudas* weave an explicit link between the different epigraphs of the temple, making the whole of them act as the complementary elements of a complex literary and ritual setting, and, ultimately, shedding light on the way each of them should be interpreted.

It must be noticed that the other *birudas* or simple qualifiers of the king employed in the inscription on the pilasters are *hapax legomena*: *sthāṇu-*, ‘immovable’ (1d); *arthapati-*, ‘master of wealth’ and ‘master on meanings,’ i.e. ‘poet’ (2d)¹⁴; *vibhu-*, ‘powerful’ or ‘sovereign’ (3c). One *biruda* is attested in other inscriptions but applied to later Pallava rulers: *puruṣottama-*, ‘best of men’ (4a).¹⁵ Table 58¹⁶ displays all the *birudas* or qualifiers applied to Mahendravarman in the inscription engraved on the two pilasters.

Out of these *birudas*, at least one also belongs to the huge series of Śiva’s surnames: *sthāṇu-*, and another one is likely to apply to the god as well as to the king: *satyasandha* – that issue will be discussed later.

IX.3 FUNCTIONS OF DEDICATORY INSCRIPTIONS

Temple foundation is part of the religious activity and is equivalent to an offering. By erecting temples, the king complies with his role as the quintessential *yajamāna-* in the kingdom. Consequently, the temple, which at the same time is the ‘manifested body of the deity’ – as Bruno DAGENS puts it¹⁷ – and a manifestation of the king’s devotion to the latter, in some way, also proves to be an equivalent to the king himself; from the Vedic times, it is admitted that an offering of whatever nature is nothing but a substitute for the *yajamāna-*. Madeleine BIARDEAU gave a very clear demonstration of that basic equivalence,¹⁸ which is not invalidated by the changes undergone by religious ideas, since in India any new ideology is superimposed on the old one rather than obliterating it. The temple, as an offering, just becomes, in addition, the mark which proclaims the king’s devotion and makes it efficient. And the king, as a devotee, makes

¹⁴ As P.-S. FILLIOZAT made it out, and to Aparājītapotavarman in Velañ-
this word has two meanings: see *infra*, cēri copper-plates: see (Brocquet,
p. 241, for discussion and reference. 1997), pp. 548ff. & 758ff.

¹⁵ It is applied to Narasiṃharman II
in the dedicatory inscription of the
Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcīpuram

¹⁶ p. 228.

¹⁷ (Dagens, 2009), pp. 187ff.

¹⁸ (Biardeau, 1976), for instance p. 19.

Table 58: Mahendravarman's birudas in the *Laliṭāṅkurapallaveśvaragṛham*

	<i>epigraph on the pilasters</i>	<i>epigraph on the architrave</i>	<i>list of birudas in the same temple</i>	<i>Mahendra- vaman's epigraphs in other temples</i>	<i>biruda ap- plied to other Pallava kings</i>
<i>laṭitāṅkura-</i>	–	1x	1x	Pallāvaram Cīyamañ- kalam	–
<i>guṇabhara-</i>	1b, 3d, 6a, after 8	–	1x	Makēnti- ravāḍi Pallāvaram	–
<i>satyasandha-</i>	8b	–	1x	Pallāvaram	–
<i>puruṣottama-</i>	4a	–	–	–	Narasimha- varman II (Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcī- puram) Aparājita- pottavarman (Velañceri copper- plates)
<i>sthāṇu-</i>	1d	–	–	–	–
<i>arthapati-</i>	2d	–	–	–	–
<i>vibhu-</i>	3c	–	–	–	–
<i>śatrumalla-</i>	2a	–	–	Taḷavāṇūr ^a , Māmaṇṭūr, Vallam	–

^a The *biruda* is found in both dedicatory inscriptions (Sanskrit and Tamil) of the same temple, which is named *Śatrumalleśvarālaya*.

his own person the abode of the deity; the ritual equivalence which unites the king and the temple is simply reinforced.

It follows that the inscription he has engraved on it must play a specific role in this process. Four complementary functions may be distinguished:

1. Naming the god the temple is dedicated to, the donor and the temple itself. That function is essential, and not very different from one of the functions of Vedic hymns, for instance, which insist on the name of the god (see, for example, *Rgveda* I, with its polyptoton highlighting the name of Agni) and on the donor's, most often in the *dānastuti*. In that sense, it could be assumed that founding is naming.
2. Making the god come and settle in the temple offered to him, which is the basic requirement of its efficiency as a religious act.
3. It will be assumed, on the basis of the present study, that inscriptions are a kind of physical manifestation of the king, which could be named *mūrti*- (8c), just as the statue of the deity is a *mūrti*- of the latter. It results that the temple becomes the very place where the god and his royal devotee meet and are closely and publicly associated with each other. In other words, the inscriptions engraved on the temple's walls, pillars or pilasters, achieve the network of ritual equivalences that make the royal devotion efficient.
4. In addition, through the power of scriptural characters, inscriptions make eternal the results of these different processes – presence of the deity, association with the king. That could be named the 'perpetuation process,' or, more accurately, the 'reiteration process.'

These operations that one can expect from dedicatory inscriptions imply that they function as speech acts, and that they should be approached not as merely poetical and descriptive texts, but in their performative character, through the light of pragmatics. Dedicatory inscriptions serve as ritual statements, and must be considered as such.

Another important issue is the function of writing: the specific feature of inscriptions is that they are engraved, in spite of the relative suspicion of the Indian about what is written, compared to what is simply uttered.¹⁹ But writing achieves a particular function:

that of perpetuating, or eternally reiterating what is uttered. In a sense, inscriptions are nothing but eternally reiterated utterances, utterances the efficiency of which is expected to last 'as long as the sun and the moon,' or, at least, as long as the temple on the walls of which they have been engraved. That is the role of the stone: staying there, and not only being a witness for the future, but replicating forever the message engraved on it, along with its performative power. Taking this into account, one may assume that temples, by the means of their epigraphs, act as the vectors of a perpetuated ritual discourse.

This accounts for the numerous mentions of the same wish of perpetuation throughout the inscription at issue —1bc: *sthāṇu-*; 5d: *nityan tiṣṭhati*; 6c: *prathatāñ cirāya*; 8d: *kṛtā ... śāśvatī*— as well as through many others, for example, that of Śāluvaṅkuppam, attributed to Rājasimhavarman II.

It does not escape notice that there is a close relation between the king, who is the donor, and the inscriptions engraved in the temple. It is not inappropriate to say that the king literally invades the temple by the means of his inscriptions, which, as far as the Pallavas are concerned, contain a huge number of mentions of the king, through different *birudas*. Still more: Mahendravarman is the king who initiated the habit of engraving simple *birudas* everywhere in and out of the temple: as has been said in the preceding part of the present article, not less than seventy in the relatively small 'Rock-Fort' of Tiruccirāpaḷḷi.²⁰

Another fact should be added: the writing was ornamented, just as the architecture, the sculpture, and, of course, the text, richly provided with *alaṃkāra*. It is particularly true of Pallava writing, which was a special kind of Grantha called 'Pallava-Grantha.' It looks like a sort of signature of the king.

From all these remarks, one may infer that, in a sense, the inscriptions were intended to make the king present in the temple, which means physically present. That they were, more or less, the recognisable and efficient materiality of the king—that is to say, his

¹⁹ On this reluctance towards writing, the shrine of the Kailāsanātha temple of Kāñcīpuram, had more than 250 of his *birudas* engraved. (Hultzs, 1890), pp. 14–22. (Brocquet, 1997), pp. 556–74.

²⁰ He was followed, among others, by Rājasimhavarman II, who, around

Figure 27: Right pilaster (first four stanzas)



manifestation, just as the image of the god is the manifestation of the latter— his *śailī tanuḥ* (1b, 4b), his *bhautikī mūrtiḥ* (8bc). Or, in other words, his stone body.

Assuming that the inscription is a manifestation of the king is not contradictory with the preceding statement, according to which the temple performs the same function: in a way, the inscription reduplicates the temple itself as an efficient manifestation, or, more accurately, ensures that it actually performs that function.

This conception entails a new approach of the rhetorical pattern at work in the inscription. The recourse to *śliṣṭa* words (words with several meanings) of the sixth and eighth stanzas are crucial elements of this rhetoric, and their meaning should be reconsidered: while *līṅga-* might be interpreted as referring simultaneously to the image, the inscription, and the temple (and *līṅgin-* to the king thus marked), which is a typical case of use of a word with several designata (*arthaśleṣa*), *śilākṣareṇa* could be considered polysemic (and not only polyreferential), aiming at conveying the same plurality.

IX.4 READING THE TEXT

The inscription engraved on the two pilasters by which the Gaṅgādhara relief is flanked may be considered a dedicatory epigraph of the sculpture and also of the temple (replicating or complementing the one engraved on the architrave). It is also a prayer, inviting Śiva to come and settle in the temple. The text is given below, starting with the right pilaster, and each stanza separately, followed by translations into French and English.²¹

IX.4.1 Right pilaster

śailendramūrdhani śilābhavane vicitre
 śailīn tanuṃ guṇabharo nṛpatir nnidhāya |
 sthāṇuṃ vyadhata vidhir eṣa yathārthasamjñam
 sthāṇuḥ svayaṅ ca saha tena jagatsu jātaḥ || 1 ||

- 1 Au sommet de la reine des montagnes, en un merveilleux palais de pierre

²¹ The numbers of the stanzas are added, from 1 to 8.

Plaçant un corps de pierre, le roi Guṇabhara,
Ce créateur, de l'Immuable rendit le nom conforme à la réalité,
Et immuable devint lui-même, avec lui, à travers les mondes.

On the top of the best of rocks, in a resplendent stone palace
Installing a stone body, King Guṇabhara,
Being a creator, made the Immovable's name consistent with its reality
And himself became immovable along with him through the worlds.

gṛham akṛta śatrumallo girīndrakanyāpater girāv asmin |
giriśasya giriśasaṃjñām anvarththīkartum artthapatih || 2 ||

2 Śatrumalla construisit sur cette montagne une maison pour l'Époux de
la Fille du Roi des Montagnes,
Le Montagnard: le souverain-poète avait pour dessein de rendre le nom
du Montagnard conforme à la réalité.

On that mountain Śatrumalla built a house for the Consort of the Mountain King's Daughter,
The Mountaineer: the poet-king intended to make the Mountaineer's
name consistent with its reality.

vibhūtiṃ colānām katham aham avekṣeya vipulām
nadiṃ vā kāvīrīm avanibhavanāvasthita iti |
hareṇoktaḥ prītyā vibhur adīśad abhramliham idam
manuprakhya rājye giribhavanam asmai guṇabharaḥ || 3 ||

3 « Comment pourrais-je veiller sur l'immense prospérité des Cōla, ou sur
la rivière Kāvērī, si je suis installé dans un palais sur la terre? » :

Quand Hara lui posa affectueusement cette question, le roi Guṇabhara,
semblable à Manu dans l'exercice de la royauté, lui assigna ce palais
sur la montagne, qui touche le ciel.

'How could I be watching over the Cōla's huge prosperity, or over the
Kāvīrī river, if I am staying in a palace on earth?':

When Hara affectionately asked him that question, King Guṇabhara,
equal to Manu in the field of regality, allotted to him this mountain
palace which touches the sky.

nirmāpitām atimudā puruṣottamena
śailīm harasya tanum apratimām anena |
kṛtvā śivam śīrasi dhārayatātmasaṃstham

uccaiḥ śīrastvam acalasya kṛtaṃ kṛtārtham || 4 ||

4 Après avoir, au comble de la joie, fait exécuter de Hara un incomparable
corps de pierre, cet homme exceptionnel

Le plaça bien haut sur une éminence, lui qui porte Śiva établi en son
cœur: du caractère éminent de la montagne il accomplit le sens.

Once he had made an unrivalled stone body of Hara to be shaped, that
excellent man, overwhelmed with joy,

Installed it on a prominent place —he who keeps Śiva residing in his
heart— and made the meaning of the mountain's eminence real.

IX.4.2 Left pilaster

kāvīrīn nayanābhirāmasalilām ārāmamālādharaṃ

devo vīkṣya nadīpriyaḥ priyaguṇām apy eṣa rajyed iti |

sāśaṃkā girikanyakā piṭṛkulaṃ hitveha manye girau

nityan tiṣṭhati pallavasya dayitām etāṃ bruvāṇā nadīm || 5 ||

5 « S'il aperçoit la Kāvērī, dont les flots charment les yeux, qu'orne une
guirlande de jardins

Et qui possède d'aimables vertus, le dieu amant des rivières pourrait s'en
éprendre! » :

Effrayée par cette idée, la Fille de la montagne [Gaṅgā] abandonne la ré-
sidence de son père et sur cette montagne, me semble-t-il,

Pour toujours établit sa demeure, en disant: « cette rivière est la bien-
aimée du Pallava. »

'If he sees the Kāvērī, whose waters charm the eyes, who wears a garland
of gardens

And who is endowed with pleasant qualities, the divine lover of rivers
might fall in love with her!':

Being scared, the mountain's Daughter [Gaṅgā] leaves her father's abode
and on that very mountain, it seems to me,

Once and for all dwells, saying: 'This river is the Pallava's beloved!'

guṇabharanāmani rājany anena liṅgena liṅgini jñānam |

prathatāñ cirāya loke vipakṣavṛtteḥ parāvṛttam || 6 ||

6A' Le roi nommé Guṇabhara étant par ce signe marqué d'un signe, puisse
la connaissance

S'en répandre pour longtemps dans le monde et ne point être rapportée
à un adversaire!

King named Guṇabhara, being marked by this mark, may knowledge
Spread over the world for a long time and not be assigned to any oppo-
nent!

6B' (?) Le roi nommé Guṇabhara portant une marque, puisse grâce à ce sym-
bole la foi

Se répandre pour longtemps dans le monde, détournant <les hommes>
d'une croyance adverse!

King named Guṇabhara, bearing a mark, may the faith, thanks to that
symbol,

Spread over the world for a long time and turn <mankind> away from
any opposite belief!

coḷaviṣayasya śailo maulir ivāyaṃ mahāmaṇir ivāsyā |
haragrāham etaj jyotiḥ tadīyam iva śāṃkaraṃ jyotiḥ || 7 ||

7 De la province Coḷa ce rocher est comme le diadème ; comme son maître
joyau

Est cette demeure de Hara ; comme son éclat est l'éclat de Śaṃkara.

Of the Coḷa dominion this rock is like the diadem; like its great jewel
Is this house of Hara; like its splendour is Śaṃkara's splendour.

śilākṣareṇa janitā satyasandhasya bhautikī |
mūrttiḥ kīrtimayī cāsyā kṛtā tenaiva śāśvatī || 8 ||

8A' Ce corps de pierre donna naissance à une forme matérielle de ce Satya-
sandha [Śiva]

Et, la pétrissant de gloire, la rendit éternelle.

This stone-body gave birth to a material form of this Satyasandha [Śiva]
And, shaping it with glory, made it eternal.

8B' Ces caractères <gravés> dans la pierre donnèrent naissance à une forme
matérielle de ce Satyasandha [Mahendravarman],

Et, la pétrissant de gloire, la rendirent éternelle.

These characters <engraved> in the stone gave birth to a material form
of this Satyasandha [Mahendravarman],

And, shaping it with glory, made it eternal.

8C'D'	<p>L'évidement du rocher donna naissance à une image matérielle de ce Satyasandha [Śiva / Mahendravarman], Et, la pétrissant de gloire, la rendit éternelle. The hollowing out of the stone gave birth to a material form of this Satyasandha [Śiva / Mahendravarman] And, shaping it with glory, made it eternal.</p> <p>ni[ś]kṛ[ś]ya calān[one syllable]m adhāyi g[unābha]re bhaktiḥ [one or two syllables]</p> <p>Après extraction (...) la dévotion fut placée en Guṇabhara (...) After hollowing (...) the devotion was settled in Guṇabhara (...)²²</p>
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IX.5 DISCUSSION ON THE TEXT

In order to discuss the interpretation of the two stanzas that contain *śleṣa*, i.e. the sixth and eighth stanzas, it is necessary to get a clear understanding of their rhetorical context, which compels one to make a close study of the whole poem. Before commenting on it, stanza by stanza, it might be helpful to notice that this poem conveys various entwined topics, the most important of which are:

1. The topic of *yajña*-, 'offering,' which encompasses the gift of the temple and of the image it contains, and also the attempt to obtain the god's agreement, i.e. to make him come and settle in this new abode given to him. Such is the goal of the prayer of which the epigraph is made. It pervades the whole epigraph, the structure of which corresponds to the two sides of that *yajña*-process: the first four stanzas (i.e. the right pilaster) exhibit the offerings, while the last four (i.e. the left pilaster) the expected result, and its benefit for the donor and his kingdom.
2. The topic of parallelism: parallelism of the Cīrāmalai hill, on which the temple was hollowed out, with the Kailāsa mountain; of the Kāvērī river with the Gaṅgā; and of Mahendravarman with Śiva. Those parallelisms suggest that the king, by the means of the temple foundation, the image dedication, and the epigraph,

²² For an attempt to decipher this pp. 524–5.
 mutilated portion, see (Francis, 2017),

attempts to transfer the symbolic geography of the north to his own southern kingdom.²³

3. The topic of the sovereignty (due to conquest) of the Pallava king over the Cōḷa realm, which is correlated to the preceding topic, since the Kāvērī river was considered the Cōḷa king's wife in Caṅkam literature.
4. The topic of immutability and perpetuation performed by the stone: immutability of the mountain, of the rock-cut temple, of the stone image and of the epigraph engraved in the stone – that immutability is expected to be transferred to the king, who is the main actor of the *yajña*-process. It presumably constitutes the main purpose of the whole process and might cast some light on one important function of epigraphs.
5. The topic of pragmatics: a few statements (first, second, fourth and probably eighth stanzas) show how the king, in his role of a poet (*arthapati*-), acts on words in order to act on reality. That topic is a corollary of the prayer and its ultimate goal is obtaining immutability, since the stone ensures that these statements, engraved in it, be eternally reiterated. The epigraph is thus placed at the centre of the *yajña*-process.

IX.5.1 1st stanza

The first stanza contains all the topics of the text, and, as will be seen, helps interpret the last stanza. The two offerings are referred to: the temple, which is made of stone, and thus, of the same nature as the mountain, and the image, which is also of stone. That is highlighted by the etymological figure of *pāda* a (*śailendramūrdhani śilābhavane*) and by the quasi-anaphora of the first word of *pāda* a and b (*śaila*- is first employed as a substantive meaning 'mountain,' and then as an adjective meaning 'made of stone'). The parallelism of Cīrāmalai with Kailāsanātha is suggested by the compound *śailendramūrdhani* (since *śailendra*-, which in that case designates the former, is a common appellation of the latter), and that

²³ That attempt will be recurring: puram was expected to receive the sacred river's waters. See, for instance, later, Rājendracoḷa I's copper-plates refer to the 'import' of the Gaṅgā into his dominion, after his conquest of Bengal. The temple of Kaṅkaikkontacōlap-
Tīruvālaṅkāṭu copper-plates of Rājendracoḷa I, stanza 117, (Krishna Sastri, 1920), pp. 400 & 424.

of Guṇabhara with Śiva by the anaphora of *pāda* c and d: in *pāda* c, *sthāṇu-* is employed as a substantive meaning 'the Immovable' and designating Śiva, while in *pāda* d, it is employed as an adjective meaning 'immovable' and qualifying Guṇabhara (that figure is, in terms of *alaṅkāraśāstra*, a typical *yamaka*).²⁴ Besides, taken as a substantive in its second occurrence also,²⁵ it means that by installing an image of Śiva the Immovable in the temple he had erected, the king himself becomes the god – which is the expected result of his devotion. It goes without saying that the same word *sthāṇu-*, a derivative of $\sqrt{\text{sthā-}}$, which is echoed by *avasthita-* in 3b, and (*nityaṃ*) *tiṣṭhati* in 5d, brings in the topic of immutability: on the one hand, making the god 'immovable' means making him dwell forever in the temple; on the other hand, conferring to oneself the same quality means, for the king, obtaining a lasting fame by means of the foundation and the dedication which are thus recorded. The importance of *sthāṇu-* in the rhetorical design of the poem is strengthened by its being a *hapax legomenon* as a *biruda*, the attribution of which to the king seems a result of the Gaṅgādhara's dedication. Lastly, the topic of pragmatics occurs for the first time in *pāda* c, through the idea that making the god settle in the newly cut temple, thanks to the image dedicated to him (the function of godly images or symbols is making the god present), will actualise the feature of his which is conveyed by one of his surnames, and thus, make that very surname true. Furthermore, the fact that the king is *doing things with*

²⁴ As a substantive designating Śiva, *sthāṇu-* also means 'pillar,' in the sense that the god, who is standing between the earth and the celestial Gaṅgā, plays the role of a pillar which connects these two worlds and thus maintains the structure of the cosmos. That meaning can also be applied to Guṇabhara, who, as a king, plays the role of an intermediary between heavens and earth, while, as a devotee, he becomes Śiva himself. According to still another interpretation, the substantive *sthāṇu-*

could designate a *niṣkalaliṅga* – but, as will be seen, there is no archæological evidence of the presence of that kind of *liṅga* in the temple (see n. 27, p. 239, and the commentary on the sixth stanza, § IX.5.6, p. 245).

²⁵ It is a sort of double-meaning based on the possibility of interpreting one and the same word as a substantive and as an adjective simultaneously. The translation, in that particular case, does not need to be double, since this kind of ambiguity operates in all languages.

words²⁶ is pointed out by the etymological figure of *pāda* b and c, where $\sqrt{dhā}$ - occurs thrice: in *nīdhāya*, ‘installing,’ which refers to the setting of the image; in *vyadhata*, ‘made,’ which correlates the attribute word *yathārthasaṃjñam*, ‘whose name is consistent with its reality,’ to the direct object *sthānum*, and thus refers to the act of actualising the god’s surname *sthānu*-; and in *vidhi*-, ‘creator,’ which means that doing so the king acts on reality (that word will be echoed by *arthapatiḥ* in 2d, where it conveys by double entendre the meaning ‘poet’).

It remains to say a word about the *śailī-tanu*-, the ‘body of stone,’ of *pāda* b: the text does not identify its referent and many assumptions have been hazarded about it, many images have been supposedly located in the temple, such as another image of Śiva, an image of Pārvatī, a Śivaliṅga, that is to say, a *niṣkalaliṅga* (in connection with the sixth stanza), and even a portrait of Mahendravarman.²⁷ There is no need, in this study, to review all the masterpieces of that imaginary museum of Pallava art, and it seems better to focus on the only empirical data to hand, which is the Gaṅgādhara relief flanked by the two pilasters on which the inscription is engraved: this *śailī-tanu*- must be the relief representing Śiva receiving Gaṅgā on his hair and passing it on earth – and nothing else! Michael LOCKWOOD *et al.*²⁸ perfectly sorted out that point which is of great relevance for the interpretation of the whole inscription, except that they supposed a sort of iconic double entendre. According to them, the relief was also a portrait of Mahendravarman and represented him as *kāvīrīdhara*. Though that view is consistent with the ideology conveyed by the rest of the text, it is difficult to accept for two reasons: firstly, the relief at issue is highly idealised; and secondly, there is no parallel in Pallava sculpture. The concept of a ‘dual image,’ such as made out by Emmanuel FRANCIS, seems far

²⁶ This is the title of the famous AUSTIN’s book, which is considered, in the western world, the starting point of that branch of linguistics named ‘pragmatics.’ (Austin, 1962).

²⁷ The presence of two holes in the ground of the cella gives strength to the hypothesis that there were either one or

two other pieces of sculpture: if one, it might have been a *niṣkalaliṅga* (the second hole being intended for ablution water), and if two, a statue of Śiva and another of Pārvatī. For discussion and bibliographical references, see (Francis, 2017), p. 518, n. 36, & p. 521, n. 48.

²⁸ (Lockwood *et al.*, 2001).

Figure 28: Left pilaster



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more convincing.²⁹ According to that concept, the image represents the god only, but as an archetype through which the king is alluded to. This allusion is based also upon a structural parallelism: Mahendravarman makes the river 'descend' from the brahmanical North into the Cōla country in the form of the Kāvērī, just as Śiva makes her descend from heavens onto earth, both acting for the benefit of mankind.³⁰ The human king thus achieves on earth a deed which

²⁹ (Francis, 2017), p. 517: « Une image du dieu qui, en tant qu'archétype, rendue, c'est-à-dire une représentation voie également au roi. »

reflects and reduplicates the one that his archetype performed at the level of the cosmos.³¹ In addition, both the god and the king are intermediaries between two worlds, heavens and earth (see n. 24, p. 238). Therefore the identity between the god and the king does not rest upon a double portrait, but emerges, with the status of a suggestion, from the canvas of parallelisms at work throughout the poem.

IX.5.2 2nd stanza

The second stanza, along with the third, exclusively deals with the offering of the temple – while the fourth will come back to that of the image. Its first two *pādas* are shaped exactly as would be any temple dedicatory inscription, but the king here is named *śatrumalla-*, a different *biruda* from that of the architrave, which is *laḷitāṃkura-*. The only remarkable point is the way Śiva is named: the compound *girīndrakanyakāpateḥ* contains the noun *giri-*, which is employed in the locative case at the end of the same *pāda*, and thus alludes to the close connection of Śiva with the mountains. The last two *pādas* insist on that connection, by the repeated word *giriśa-*, a common surname of Śiva as residing on the Kailāsanātha – but here the actualisation of the surname is based on his dwelling in the temple located on Cirāmalai.³² The topic of pragmatics is involved by the syntagm *giriśasaṃjñām anvarthīkartum*, ‘in order to make the name of “Mountaineer” consistent with its reality.’ The verb of that syntagm makes an etymological figure through its association with the following word, *artthapatiḥ*, which designates the same referent as *śatrumallaḥ* in *pāda* a. Pierre-Sylvain FILLIOZAT³³ showed that this compound, in that particular context, conveys two meanings

³⁰ Emmanuel FRANCIS points out another parallelism: the king receives the water of the royal consecration (i.e. that which makes him a king) onto his head, just as the god receives the celestial Gaṅgā onto his own (ibid.).

³¹ See the commentary on the fifth stanza, § IX.5.5, p. 244.

³² There is probably a play on the San-

skrit and Tamil words *śiras-* / *cirā-*: to place a temple and an image of Śiva on the summit of the ancient Cōḷa dominion is making it a Śaiva country, and, at the same time, since Śaivism is Mahendra’s obedience, putting down a marker of his own sovereignty over it. See (Francis, 2017), pp. 527–9.

³³ (Filliozat, 1984), p. 109.

(it is a *śliṣṭa* word): 'king' as 'master of riches' or 'master of politics,' and 'poet' as 'master of meanings.' There is no need to remind that Mahendravarman claimed he was a poet and a playwright (two plays are attributed to him) as well as a composer of music.³⁴ But the most important thing is the reference to what the epigraphic poem and the whole *yajña*-process it records are actually performing: conferring its true meaning on the god's surname by making him dwell in the temple. The king is a poet in the sense that, by the power of speech, which is at work in the dedicatory epigraphs necessary to the dedication of temples and images, he gives the words their meanings, i.e. makes real what the words mean.

IX.5.3 3rd stanza

The third stanza, which dwells on the topic of the temple dedication connected with that of the mountain, contains an *utprekṣā* by means of which the poet imagines a short dialog between Śiva and the king: the gift of the temple situated on Cirāmalai (*adiśad abhramliham idam ... giribhavanam*, 'allotted this mountain palace which touches the sky') is thus presented as the consequence of the god's benevolence towards his royal devotee, which compels him to 'look after' (*avekṣeya*) his dominion and its prosperity. The dialog by itself suggests a close friendship, an intimacy between the god and the king. That intimacy is emphasised by the adverb *prītyā*, 'affectionately,' 'with affection,' which might bear either on *uktaḥ* or on *adiśat*, thus qualifying either the god's or the king's attitude. The first interpretation might be the most appropriate, since in connection with *atimudā*, 'with an extreme joy,' in 4a, it would make out the reciprocity which is an important aspect of the relationship between the god and his devotee. Royal temples, in mediæval South India, were an expression of the king's devotion towards the god they were dedicated to.

IX.5.4 4th stanza

The fourth stanza, which is also the last of the poem's first part, deals with the image, to which the words *śailīm harasya tanum*, 'a stone body of Hara,' refer, at exactly the same location as in the

³⁴ (Widdess, 1979).

first stanza: that part of the poem is by itself more or less shaped according to the pattern of ‘ring-composition,’ the last stanza echoing the first. The whole stanza conveys the idea of devotion, not only by mentioning the ‘extreme joy’ with which the king had the image of Gaṅgādhara made, but also by the phrase *śivaṃ (śirasi) dhārayatātmasaṃstham* in *pāda* c, which could be considered the most specific expression of *bhakti*. The question arises, to which phrase the word *śirasi* belongs, and of its exact meaning: it might bear either on *dhārayatā* or on *kṛtvā*. In the first case, the phrase *śivaṃ śirasi dhārayatātmasaṃstham* would mean ‘by <that excellent man> who holds on his head Śiva resting in his heart’ – the expression ‘to hold on one’s head’ being understood metaphorically, with the meaning ‘to give a predominant place to.’³⁵ In the second case, *kṛtvā*, preceded by an accusative case (*śailīṃ harsya tanum*) and followed by a locative case (*śirasi*), would mean ‘having located,’ ‘having installed,’ and *śiras-* could mean nothing but ‘eminence,’ ‘peak,’ ‘summit’: that word would refer to Cīrāmalai, on which the relief had been installed. The latter interpretation is more consistent than the former with the following *pāda*, where *śirastvam acalasya* could hardly convey a meaning different from ‘the quality of being an eminence of the mountain.’ One must confess that the whole stanza would sound odd if there was no connection between *śirasi* and *śirastvam*: it is precisely because the king has installed an image of Śiva Gaṅgādhara on Cīrāmalai that he may pretend he has ‘made the meaning of the mountain’s eminence real’ (*śirastvam acalasya kṛtaṃ kṛtārtham*), which is another statement that pertains to the topic of pragmatics. The stanza deserves one last remark: up to it, and also in the following stanzas, the words for ‘mountain’ are either *giri-* (2b, 2c, 3d, 5c), which may be considered the generic term, or *śaila* (1a, 7a), which refers to its material. Here, for the first and only time, it is named *acala-*, which literally means ‘immovable,’ and, not only reminds one of the surname *sthāṇu-* of the

³⁵ There is no evidence of any practice among the Pallava rulers consisting of actually placing on their head an image of the deity, not to mention the contradiction that would result from constructing together *śivaṃ śirasi... dhārayatā* and *ātmasaṃstham*. Therefore it seems better to take *śirasi* metaphorically. This figurative meaning is quite common and recorded by dictionaries, for example (Monier-Williams, v.s.v.).

first stanza, but also weaves an indirect link between stone and immutability. It participates in the ring-composition of the passage and will be echoed once more in the eighth stanza.

IX.5.5 5th stanza

The second part of the inscription, engraved on the left pilaster, deals with the other aspect of the *yajña*-process, which is its expected result and the benefit for the king as *yajamāna*- (and beyond for the kingdom under his protection). The fifth stanza, the longest of the whole poem (it is composed in the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter), contains a long *utprekṣā*³⁶ by means of which the poet asserts the successful character of the double dedication: the 'Mountain's Daughter' decides to move into the temple, where Śiva has already settled. The identity of that 'Mountain's Daughter' has long been a matter of discussion and is far from providing certainty. HULTZSCH, in 1890, suggested that she was Pārvatī. LOCKWOOD and BHATT, in 1976 and 2001, considered that this was a misunderstanding and that the goddess had to be identified as Gaṅgā. The compound *girikanyakā*- in itself may refer either to Pārvatī, as Himavat's daughter, or to Gaṅgā, who also descends from Himavat, and, as a river, springs from the mountain; but the context of the inscription, and in particular, the presence of the Gaṅgādhara relief, makes the latter much more probable than the former.³⁷ It should be noted that in 2b Pārvatī is named *girīndrakanyakā*-,³⁸ 'Daughter of the Mountain King,' while the goddess referred to in 5c is called *girikanyakā*-, 'Daughter of the mountain': the difference must be considered meaningful, even if it is not absolutely compelling. In the rhetorical frame created by the *utprekṣā*, the feeling of jealousy,

³⁶ More accurately, it is a *hetūtprekṣā*, 'imagining the cause <of the given situation>.' tautological.

³⁷ A double entendre would be very difficult to assume, since there is no referential duality to support it – except if another sculpture, representing Pārvatī, was also in the temple. But that is mere supposition, in no way evidenced, and the reasoning would be

³⁸ As prior member of the *tatpuruṣa* compound *girīndrakanyalāpati*-, 'Consort of the Mountain King's Daughter.' It must be noticed that the argument is far from being compelling and that 'Mountain King's daughter' could be Gaṅgā as well. I however assume that this slight difference between the two namings is significant.

which is a feature of Pārvatī confronted with her husband's infidelity, is transferred to Gaṅgā,³⁹ who fears that the god will have a love affair with such a rival as the Kāvērī, another river – because, as she knows, he is *nadīpriyaḥ*, a 'lover of rivers.' At the beginning of *pāda* d, the phrase *nityan tiṣṭhati*, 'stays forever,' which is encompassed by the *utprekṣā* and therefore is poetical fantasy, etymologically and semantically echoes Śiva's surname *sthāṇu-* in 1c, and pertains to the topic of immutability. The rest of the *pāda* is a speech act performed by Gaṅgā, who, by naming her rival 'the Pallava's beloved,' prevents her from becoming Śiva's. That interpretation has the merit of drawing a complete and symmetrical picture of the double dedication's beneficial effect: on the one hand, Śiva chooses the new temple as his residence, and, on the other hand, the Gaṅgā becomes present in the relief, in order to ensure that the feat of making a divine river descend on earth will be replicated with the Kāvērī, who, consequently, will play her role in Mahendravarman's dominion. At the same time, naming the Kāvērī 'beloved of the Pallava' is ascertaining the latter's sovereignty over that country, which previously was the realm of the Cōḷa king. As Emmanuel FRANCIS makes it out, just as Śiva becomes Gaṅgā's lover, Mahendra becomes Gaṅgā's, taking her from her husband.⁴⁰ It deserves notice that if Gaṅgā's presence is explicitly asserted, the god's coming remains implicit. It is only suggested by the phrase *kāvīrīn ... devo vīkṣya*, 'the God, having seen the Kāvērī ...' More generally, the *utprekṣā*, a figure of speech which superimposes something imagined on reality, has the benefit of locating, in the realm of imagination, the achievements aimed at by the *yajña*-process, with the hope that what is poetically articulated, will become real.

IX.5.6 6th stanza

The sixth stanza is probably the most puzzling in the whole poem. For a long time scholars have paid much attention to it, proposing various interpretations. It would be tedious and somehow useless to review all of them. The stanza contains four words which raise a

³⁹ It should be noticed that in the (‘love in separation’): see *Nāṭyaśāstra*, aesthetic theory – such as elaborated VI, prose before stanza 46, (Nagar, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* – jealousy is an 1988), vol. 1, p. 304.
⁴⁰ (Francis, 2017), pp. 519–20.

anubhāva (‘consequent emotion’) of the erotic, in its mood named *vipralambha*

problem: *liṅga-*, *liṅgin-*, *vipakṣavṛtti-* and *jñāna-*. Taken all together, those four words form a lexical network which in its context might delineate three different domains: i. semiotics; ii. religion; and iii. logic. The key word, the interpretation of which involves that of the others, is the first, i.e. *liṅga-*.

1. The basic meaning of *liṅga-* is related to semiotics in general: 'sign,' 'symbol,' 'token.' If that meaning is given to *liṅga-*, its possessive derivative can only mean 'bearing a sign,' 'wearing a distinctive mark.' Those two connected meanings perfectly apply to the context of the epigraph, provided the referent of *anena liṅgena* is the inscription itself, playing the role of a sign. In that case, the general meaning of the stanza is the following: due to the inscription in which the king is named (*guṇabharanāmani rājani ... liṅgini*) and identified as the one who founded the temple and dedicated the image in it, that foundation and dedication will be sustainably attributed to him. The instrumental syntagm *anena liṅgena* must then bear on *liṅgini*, and the meaning of the whole syntagm must be: 'the king named Guṇabhara being marked by this mark.' Consequently, *jñāna-* refers to the knowledge that Guṇabhara is the founder and dedicator, i.e. the equivalent of the *yajāmana-* in the context of temple foundation. And *vipakṣavṛtti-* can only mean 'the fact of being assigned (*vṛtti-*) to an opponent (*vipakṣa-*),'⁴¹ a misunderstanding from which the inscription is thus intended to prevent. This interpretation, based on the most generic meanings of the words at issue, was first assumed by Pierre-Sylvain FILLIOZAT in his article of 1984,⁴² and has the merit of shedding light on one of the functions achieved by that kind of inscription, which is making known the royal founder and dedicator: that *jñāna-* is nothing but the king's glory, which will be referred to in the eighth stanza by the word <*mūrtiḥ*> *kīrtimayī*.
2. The generic meaning 'token' gives birth to different specific significations, one of which is 'Śivaliṅga,' as Śiva's male symbol.⁴³ It is then related to the sphere of religion. Its possessive derivative, as a result, primarily means 'having a Śivaliṅga,' which might be understood as 'adept of the Śivaliṅga.'⁴⁴ In the context thus

⁴¹ *vipakṣa-*: 'who is on the opposite side,' 'enemy,' 'opponent.'

⁴² (Filliozat, 1984), pp. 112–14.

⁴³ The exact nature of the Śivaliṅga is not at issue in this study and will not be discussed.

delineated, *jñāna-* means ‘faith’ and *vipakṣavṛtti-*, either ‘hostile (*vipakṣa-*) conduct (*vṛtti-*),’ if taken in a moral sense, or ‘opposite (*vipakṣa-*) practice / belief (*vṛtti-*),’ if taken in a strictly religious sense. The instrumental syntagm *anena liṅgena* bears no longer on *liṅgini* but on *pratathāt* (‘may the <Śaiva> faith, thanks to that *liṅga*, spread over the world ...’). That interpretation is seemingly supported by the *Periyapurāṇam*,⁴⁵ in which Mahendravarman’s conversion from Jainism to Śaivism is narrated: in this view, the Laṭitāṅkurapallaveśvaragr̥ham temple could be considered the architectural expression of that conversion. There is, however, a significant obstacle standing against this interpretation: the lack of evidence of the presence of any Śivaliṅga in the temple – not to mention that nothing allows one to assume that the cult of the *liṅga* was already introduced in the region by the time of Mahendravarman.⁴⁶ Inferring from the epigraph that the temple had contained a Śivaliṅga during this period, and then interpreting that same stanza on the basis of the latter, would be reasoning tautologically! Therefore, it seems difficult to accept the hypothesis of a Śivaliṅga.

But it does not mean that any religious interpretation should be dismissed: taking *liṅga-* generically, i.e. in the sense of ‘token,’ ‘symbol,’ and *anena liṅgena* as referring to the Gaṅgādhara relief, one may assume that the phrase *anena liṅgena jñānam pratathāt ... loke* means ‘may the <Śaiva> faith, thanks to that symbol [i.e. the Gaṅgādhara relief] spread over the world.’ The word *liṅgin-* remains a source of difficulty, since the most likely meaning it could convey in this context seems to be ‘adept of the Śivaliṅga,’ which, as stated above, raises a problem of chronology. This difficulty would be avoided by giving to *liṅgin-* the

⁴⁴ This meaning is far from being ascertained, although it looks quite possible, provided the idea of possession is taken metaphorically (just like the name ‘Christophe,’ which from its etymological and literal meaning ‘carrying the Christ’ —Greek Χριστοφόρος— came to mean ‘Christian’). The word *liṅgin-* is attested as the name of a Śaiva sect, (Monier-Williams, v.s.v.).

⁴⁵ (Vanmikanathan, 1985). But the

evidence provided by the *Periyapurāṇam* is not quite reliable, since this work, composed several centuries after Mahendra’s period, is a sort of hagiography which contains many examples of Jaina kings who allegedly converted to Śaivism – in such a way that that conversion may be considered a *topos*.

⁴⁶ Another issue which will not be discussed here.

same meaning as in 1., i.e. 'bearing a mark' – in spite of the fact that not constructing the syntagm *anena līṅgena* with *guṇabharaṇāmani rājani ... līṅgini* but with *pratathāt* would make obscure the nature of the mark referred to by the possessive derivative: in this view, one has to admit a kind of ellipsis and understand 'marked <by the inscription>.' Such an interpretation is highly hypothetical, but not totally inappropriate. It is partially identical with 1., except that the syntagm *anena līṅgena*, referring to the image and bearing on the verb *pratathāt*, gives the whole sentence a religious meaning. It draws a parallelism between the king 'marked' by the inscription and the god marked by the relief which has been dedicated, both 'marks' being designated by the same word *līṅga*-. The parallelism, therefore, extends to the different kinds of signs displayed in the temple. The word *mūrti*-, in the last stanza, provides the same kind of referential ambiguity.

3. Another specific meaning of *līṅga*- derives from its generic meaning and seems to fit the context of the stanza: 'middle-term <of the inference>.' It constitutes one element of the inference as outlined by Indian logic and leads to interpreting the other three words as related to the same domain: *līṅgin*-, in this view, would mean 'subject <of the inference>,' i.e. the thing that is inferred from the *līṅga*- (like a hidden fire which is inferred from the smoke), and *vipakṣavṛtti*-, 'occurring (*vṛtti*-) of a counter-example (*vipakṣa*-).' It goes without saying that *jñāna*-, then, means 'knowledge.' The consistency of four words employed in one short stanza, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the fact that one of Mahendravarman's *birudas* was *anumāna*-, 'inference,' are strongly compelling, and it is tempting to identify a double entendre. But a great obstacle stands against that assumption: it is impossible to construct the whole sentence in such a way that it provides a consistent and autonomous signification in connection with logic – which is a condition *sine qua non* of double entendre. Such a statement as 'King named Guṇabhara being the subject <of the inference>, may the knowledge, thanks to the middle-term, spread over the world for a long time and turn away from any counter-example' would be meaningless, unless it is considered as a simple metaphor of the 'semiotic' signification discussed above – in which case it is no

full-fledged signification.⁴⁷ For this reason, the hypothesis of a double entendre will not be retained, although the stanza undoubtedly contains an allusion to logic, which responds to Mahendravarman's *biruda* quoted above.⁴⁸

In conclusion, it might be assumed that the whole stanza conveys two different, autonomous, and consistent meanings: the 'semiotic' one, which deserves to be considered the most ascertained; and the religious one, not as referring to any Śivaliṅga, which would be anachronistic and devoid of empirical evidence, but as referring to the Gaṅgādhara relief itself, playing the role of a token of the Śaiva faith. In addition, the stanza contains an allusion to logic, in the sense that it reformulates its 'semiotic' signification in a metaphorical way which alludes to that domain. Thus interpreted, that puzzling stanza closely associates the king and the god, through the image and the epigraph, both considered as complementary tokens. This idea is to be found also in the next two stanzas and will help one understand the last one, since, as will be seen, the concept of *liṅga*- responds to that of *mūrti*- (8c), the latter being one of the forms the former might take.

IX.5.7 7th stanza

The seventh stanza consists of a series of similes, the function of which is to assert the benefit resulting from the double dedication. Each simile is independent, in the sense that it has its own object

⁴⁷ It is significant that HULTZSCH, the first scholar who assumed the presence of a double entendre, does not provide any 'second' translation of the stanza – which he translates only as referring to a Śivaliṅga. His note about it is quite ambiguous, since it does not decide between double entendre and mere allusion: 'This whole verse has a *double entendre*. It contains allusions to the Indian logic (*tarkaśāstra*), in which *liṅgin*- means the subject of a proposition, *liṅga* the predicate of a proposition

and *vipakṣa* an instance on the opposite side,' (Hultzs, 1890), p. 29, n. 3. All things considered, aside from its first and short sentence, this great scholar's appraisal was perfectly appropriate!

⁴⁸ This allusion falls within the field of *dhvani*, 'suggestion,' as will be outlined by Indian poetics later (the great treatise on *dhvani*, Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*, was composed around the 9th century CE, which does not imply with certainty that the concept did not exist before).

Figure 29: Front pillar



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and its own subject of comparison, but they consistently converge towards one another and draw a complete picture of the network of equivalences that the temple's foundation and the image's dedication aim at setting up. The Cōla territory (*coḷaviṣaya*-), recently conquered and included into the Pallava Kingdom, is implicitly equated with a king,⁴⁹ and three elements of the *yajña*-process are successively compared with some of the specific attributes of that king:

⁴⁹ King Mahendravarman himself, of course. The symbolic equation of the kingdom with its king will not be investigated in the present article, since it is widely admitted that it is more or less a universal equivalence.

Table 59: The meanings of *śliṣṭa* words of the sixth stanza, according to their different frames of reference

<i>lexemes</i> → <i>domains</i> ↓	<i>liṅga-</i>	<i>liṅgin-</i>	<i>vipakṣa-vṛtti-</i>	<i>jñāna-</i>
(3) <i>semiotics</i>	token (epigraph) ^a	the one (king) who bears a token (epigraph)	application to an enemy	knowledge
(2a) ^b <i>religion</i> ^{*c}	Śivaliṅga	adept of the Śiva- liṅga / devotee of Śiva (king)	opposite belief / practice	faith
(2b) <i>religion</i>	symbol (Gaṅgād- hara relief)	the one (king) who bears a token (epigraph)	opposite belief / practice	faith
(1) <i>logic</i> [*]	middle-term	subject	occurring of a counter-example	knowledge

^a Referents are given within brackets.

^b The two ‘religious’ significations are labelled ‘a’ and ‘b.’

^c Rejected interpretations are marked with an asterisk.

the Cīramalai hill on the slope of which the temple has been hollowed out with his crown (*mauli-*); the temple with the great jewel of the latter (*mahāmaṇi-*); and the splendour of Śaṃkara, which is a metonymic designation of the relief, with the brightness of that jewel.⁵⁰ At the same time, placing the temple on his head is a mark of the king’s devotion, since the devotee is usually said to bear on his head the godly object of his devotion. The choice of the qualifier *śāṃkara-* for Śiva’s splendour deserves notice, because it explicitly refers to the god as a benefactor and suggests that the final result of the process will be the prosperity bestowed on the kingdom by his divine power, which the king has thus prompted.

⁵⁰ The referent of *asya* (pāda b) is *tadīyam* (pāda d) is *mahāmaṇiḥ*. *mauliḥ*, and the ‘possessor’ involved in

IX.5.8 8th stanza

The eighth stanza, the last one of the poem and its conclusion, first raises an issue which is about reading. Its first word was read *śilākhareṇa* by HULTZSCH, who translated it as 'by the stone-chisel.' The adjective *khara-* means 'hard,' 'rough,' 'sharp,' and in that view it must be taken as a substantive meaning 'something hard' or 'something sharp,' thus 'hard tool' or 'sharp tool.' The compound then must be a *pañcamītatpuruṣa* meaning literally 'sharp tool intended for stone.' But this compound is nowhere attested, and its interpretation looks somehow arbitrary. LOCKWOOD and BHATT propose to read *śilākṣareṇa*, which is more convincing, not only in terms of palaeography, but also in terms of semantics. As for palaeography, the conjunct character seems to lack a small inward loop on the right vertical stroke (Fig. 30, p. 253), which is clearly present in the other occurrences of *-kṣ-* in the text (Fig. 31, p. 257: *vīkṣya*, 5b; Fig. 32, p. 262: *vīpakṣavṛtteḥ*, 6d). The inscription however is greatly damaged, and, in addition, a close examination of the digital image, after it has been greatly enlarged, reveals what might be the beginning of the missing loop's inferior curve. For those different reasons, the reading *śilākṣareṇa* seems much better than the reading *śilākhareṇa*, and it will be definitely admitted.

The palaeographical problem being solved, the stanza remains to be interpreted, which is far from being an easy task. It raises many questions, which have been debated for a long time. These questions might be narrowed to: i. the referent(s) of *satyasandhasya*; ii. the referent(s) of *mūrtiḥ*; iii. the structure(s) and meaning(s) of the compound *śilākṣareṇa*. The first two issues must be investigated together, because the two words are associated in the same syntagm, i.e. *satyasandhasya bhautikī mūrtiḥ*. The third is closely dependent on the interpretation of that syntagm.

1. The word *satyasandha-*, 'whose promises are true,' seems to be at the same time a *biruda* of King Mahendravarman, and a qualifier of Śiva. On the one hand, there is no doubt that it is one of the king's *birudas*, since, as stated above, it is also attested in the lists engraved in the same temple and in the Pallāvaram temple. On the other hand, *satyasandha-*, if not an 'official' surname of Śiva, is a qualifier which might apply to any god: being 'true to one's

Figure 30: *(Śi)lākṣare(ṇa)*, 8a

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promises' has been a characteristic of gods in general since the Vedic times.

2. The main idea conveyed by the word *mūrti*- is that of representing something or somebody through a material form. It denotes any physical and perceptible manifestation or embodiment. In the context of a temple which contains a sculpture, it naturally fits the latter, all the more when qualified as *bhautikī*, 'material,' whence the meaning 'statue.' But a mere symbolic referent, in-

stead of a figurative representation, is not disqualified, provided that it is of material nature.

Therefore, the syntagm *satyasandhasya bautikī mūrtiḥ*, 'material form of Satyasandha,' should refer to a material manifestation either of Mahendravarman or of Śiva, depending on the referent given to the name *satyasandha*-. Considering that material manifestation as a statue, and taking into account the fact that *satyasandha*- is, first of all, a *biruda* of Mahendravarman, scholars assumed that there was a portrait of Mahendravarman in the temple: a separate sculpture, as HULTZSCH put it,⁵¹ or the Gaṅgādhara relief itself, considered as an iconic *śleṣa* representing both Śiva and Mahendravarman, according to LOCKWOOD *et al.* But, as stated above, neither of these two assumptions is supported by empirical data. It remains to take *satyasandha*- as qualifying Śiva, and to assume that the whole syntagm refers to the Gaṅgādhara relief. In that view, *bautikī mūrtiḥ* is nothing but the *śailī tanuḥ* which occurs in 1c and 4b. That interpretation is undoubtedly correct, but *satyasandha*- being a *biruda* of Mahendravarman more evidently than a qualifier of Śiva, it is hard not to look for another meaning – in other words, not to presume that the sentence contains a *śleṣa*. This is what LOCKWOOD *et al.* did, but in a complicated manner, based on the idea that a sculptural portrait of the king was there.⁵² To solve the problem, one has to take *mūrti*- as designating not only a statue, i.e. a figurative representation, but also a symbolic representation. In that case, it might refer to the inscription, which is not figurative but undoubtedly material. This interpretation leads one to assume that a royal inscription might be considered a physical embodiment of the king, a kind of scriptural 'body.' It sheds light on the role of epigraphy, which is making the king physically present

⁵¹ In his note on that stanza, HULTZSCH, after he has noticed that *satyasandha*- 'must have been a *biruda* of Guṇabhara,' adds that 'a statue of the king is also alluded to in the first verse of the right pillar.' (Hultzs, 1890), p. 50.

⁵² The detail of their interpretation

will not be given here. Be it sufficient to remind that their close and complete analysis of the inscription in its context, if not perfect, was extremely insightful, solved more than one difficulty, and uncovered many important aspects of the problem. The present study greatly benefited from it.

in the temple – and, since involving the stone, lastingly present (*kṛtā tenaiva śāśvatī*).

3. Up to that point, the ambiguity which has been investigated bears on the referents only: the sentence conveys two meanings because *satyasandha-*, on the one hand, and *bhautikī mūrtiḥ*, on the other, might both be given two referents. But *śilākṣareṇa* must also be interpreted, which involves more than a question of referent. This nominal compound is capable of two different segmentations (it is a case of *sabhaṅgaśleṣa*), and, for one of them, its posterior member, as will be seen, might convey two different meanings. This compound, if taken as referring to the Gaṅgādhara relief, must be segmented *śilā-kṣareṇa*, literally ‘by a body (*kṣara-*) of stone (*śilā-*).’ As a matter of fact, the word *kṣara-*, ‘destructible,’ is capable of meaning ‘body,’ when it is employed as a substantive. But taken as referring to the inscription, it must be segmented **śilā-akṣareṇa*, ‘by character<s> (*akṣara-*) <engraved> in the stone (*śilā-*).’⁵³ One may object that if the inscription is considered an embodiment of the king, the previous splitting and meaning is also appropriate. But there is an implicit rule in *śleṣa*-composition whereby if two meanings of a given segment equally fit two referents, the most specific to each of them, the most relevant, must be selected⁵⁴: in that particular case, no doubt that ‘character<s engraved> in the stone’ is more specific to an epigraph than ‘body of stone,’ while the latter alone is relevant as far as the Gaṅgādhara relief is concerned.

⁵³ LOCKWOOD *et al.*, arguing that *akṣara-*, ‘indestructible,’ hence ‘eternal,’ and, taken substantively, ‘the one who is eternal,’ is also a surname of Śiva, propose the following translation for one of the stanza’s three meanings they identify: ‘Through this stone-Śiva, a physical embodiment of Satyasandha [Mahendravarman] was created, and through this form, his fame was made eternal.’ Leaving aside the end of that translation, which is slightly too far from the Sanskrit

text (*kīrtimayī* is an adjective meaning ‘made of fame’), their interpretation is based on the rejected assumption that the Gaṅgādhara relief was a representation of both Śiva and Mahendravarman. It goes without saying that this analysis of *śilākṣareṇa* would be tautological, and consequently irrelevant for the relief as referring to the god.

⁵⁴ About this ‘rule,’ which might be named ‘rule of the greatest relevance,’ see (Brocquet, 2016), pp. 1112–4.

Two methodological remarks deserve to be made: the first concerns the use of *śleṣa* in general; and the second, the way sentences or poems with double entendre should be approached. The double entendre, or *śleṣa*, might be employed two different ways: either as supporting a figure of speech, for instance a simile, which is then named *śleṣopamā*, 'simile based on double entendre',⁵⁵ or as an autonomous figure of speech in itself. In the latter, the sentence conveys two (or more) autonomous and complete meanings and needs two separate translations, while this is impossible when the double entendre simply supports another figure of speech. In the last stanza of the inscription at issue, it is about the second case, i.e. a sentence conveying several separate meanings.

As for the way that kind of *śleṣa* must be analysed, the prominence of the referents must be emphasised: as BENVENISTE made it out,⁵⁶ the referent 'governs' the construction of the meaning, so that the latter cannot be ascertained but starting from the former. A poem is an *anekārthakāvya*, 'poem conveying several meanings,' only because it may refer to two different stories.⁵⁷ This remark leads one to have recourse to an approach which falls within the field of 'interpretative semantics,' rather than to a more traditional approach, based on the collection of the different meanings of the words, such as recorded in dictionaries or *kośa*. In the case of the stanza at issue, the process may be delineated as follows: the reader, when he reads the syntagm *satyasandhasya bhautikī mūrtiḥ*, is probably confused, or at least, somehow disoriented, because the first word steers his understanding towards a representation of Mahendravarman, while the second and third words steer it towards the thing capable of being named *mūrti*- which is immediately at hand, i.e. towards the Gaṅgādhara relief. This confusing paradox leads him to enlarge his interpretation in order to solve what seems to be a contradiction: at that point, he becomes able

⁵⁵ In that case, one or several qualifiers may apply both to the object and to the subject of comparison, as in *rājā sūrya iva tejasvī*, 'the king, like the sun, is endowed with brightness / majesty.'

⁵⁶ (Benveniste, 1966), pp. 49–55; (Benveniste, 1974), pp. 43–66.

⁵⁷ These stories, almost as a rule,

are explicitly identified at the beginning of the poem, because without knowing them, the reader would fail to delineate the different meanings of each and every sentence the work contains. On this question, see (Brocquet, 2013), pp. 18–22, and (Brocquet, 2016), pp. 1095–6.

Figure 31: *Vikṣya*, 5b

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to reinterpret both words, i.e. *satyasandha-* as possibly referring to Śiva (which fits the relief), and *mūrti-* as possibly referring to the inscription (which fits Mahendravarman). He is also compelled, as a consequence, to recognise the double segmentation of the initial compound: *śilā-kṣareṇa*, ‘by the body of stone,’ fits the relief while **śilā-akṣareṇa*, ‘by the characters <engraved> in the stone,’ fits the epigraph.

Therefore, at least two autonomous meanings are conveyed by the stanza: (A) ‘This stone-body gave birth to a material form of Satyasandha [Śiva]’; and (B) ‘These character<s en-

graved> in the stone gave birth to a material form of Satya-sandha [Mahendravarman].'

It is possible to go still further, though in a slightly more hypothetical manner. As reminded in the first part of the present study, the temple is at the same time a projection of the body of the deity, and, as a *yajña*-, an equivalent to the king's own body.⁵⁸

Since *satyasandha*- is capable of referring to both Śiva and Mahendravarman, the word *mūrti*-, in the sentence, might apply to the temple, as a physical manifestation of both the god and the king. The compound *śilākṣareṇa* must, in both cases, be analysed *śilā-kṣareṇa*; but when applied to a rock-cut temple, *kṣara*- means 'diminishing,' more accurately, 'hollowing out.'⁵⁹ The meaning would

⁵⁸ The context of *bhakti* provides an argument in favour of the assumption that the temple itself is an equivalent to the king, a material form or body of him: the parallelism of the temple with the royal devotee who had it erected (or, in that case, hollowed out). The devotee and the temple both serve as the abode of the deity. The idea that the devotee is *inhabited* by the god, or that the latter abides in his heart or mind, is frequently expressed. It might be, of course, mere metaphor (like Greek Χριστοφόρος, see p. 246, n. 44), but such a metaphor remains significant: the devotee is a 'living temple' for the god. Consequently, the monument might be considered a materialisation in stone of the devotee – with, in addition, the benefit of perpetuation. In addition, the devotee bears on his head the god whose devotee he is. The idea that the king is a bearer of and a receptacle for the god occurs in Pallava epigraphy; apart from *dhārayatātmasaṁstham* in 4c, see, for example, the first two stanzas of the dedicatory inscription

of Atiraṇacaṇḍeśvara cave-temple in Śāḷuvaṅkuppam (the same as the eighth and ninth stanzas of the dedicatory inscription of the Dharmarāja Maṇḍapa in Mahābalipuram, nearby): śrīmato 'tyantakāmasya dvi-ṣaddarppāpahāriṇaḥ | śrīnidheḥ kāmārāgasya harārādhanasaṅginaḥ || abhi-ṣekajalāpūrṇṇe citraratnāmbujākare | āste viśale sumukhaḥ śīrassarasi śaṁkaraḥ || 'Of the illustrious Atyantakāma, who deprived his enemies of their pride – of Śrīnidhi, who is endowed with Kāma's loveliness and devotes himself to the cult of Hara, / Full of the water poured for the consecration, abounding in lotuses in the form of brilliant jewels, the large head is a lake where Śaṁkāra with a beautiful face abides.'

⁵⁹ Of course, that interpretation of the nominal compound would fit the two other meanings as well, since the Gaṅgādhara relief and the inscription both involve the process of hollowing out the stone. But having recourse to the criterion of the 'greatest relevance,' one may assign it by preference to the

Table 60: The meanings of *śliṣṭa* words of the eighth stanza, according to their different frames of reference

<i>domains of reference</i> → <i>ambiguous</i> ↓ <i>segments</i>	A'	B'	C'	D'
	Gaṅgādhara relief & Śiva	inscription & Mahendravarman	temple & Śiva	temple & Mahendravarman
<i>śilākṣareṇa</i>	‘stone- (<i>śilā</i> -) body (<i>kṣara</i> -)’	‘character<s> (<i>akṣara</i> -) <engraved> in the stone (<i>śilā</i> -)’	‘hollowing out (<i>kṣara</i> -) of the stone (<i>śilā</i> -)’	‘hollowing out (<i>kṣara</i> -) of the stone (<i>śilā</i> -)’
<i>satyasandhasya ... asya</i>	‘this <god> true to his promises’	‘this <king> true to his promises’	‘this <god> true to his promises’	‘this <king> true to his promises’
<i>bhautikī mūrtiḥ</i>	‘material form’ [relief]	‘material form’ [inscription]	‘material form’ [temple]	‘material form’ [temple]

be then: ‘By hollowing out the stone, was created a material form of Satyasandha [Śiva / Mahendravarman].’ This last interpretation of the stanza gives rise to two significations that will be considered the third and fourth (labelled C’ and D’). These two different meanings, indeed, oppose each other only by their respective referents – contrary to the first two ones (labelled A’ and B’), which involve two different analyses of the initial compound. In terms of *śleṣa*, a total of four meanings must be admitted.

Table 60 summarises the semantic organisation of the quite complex double entendre displayed by the stanza. This interpretation deserves two remarks. The first concerns some equations that result from this semiotic context: the god’s as well as the king’s *mūrtis* —the Gaṅgādhara relief in the first case, the inscription in the second, and the temple in both of them— act as a *liṅga*-, a mark, a sign of their presence and of their action, intended to spread the faith in the first and the second’s glory.

The second remark is about what could be considered a discrepancy, since two different objects, i.e. the temple and the inscription,

temple, the building of which is specifically characterised by that very process, while *akṣara*-, ‘character,’ perfectly fits the epigraph and *kṣara*-, ‘body,’ the statue.

are supposed to be a 'material form' of the king. But this double physical manifestation of the king is not different from that of the god, which does not need any demonstration: that the deity is manifested through the statue goes without saying, while the character of the temple, equated with the god's body through the process of its building and its consecration, is strongly ascertained. One has just to admit that the same entity can be manifested through several co-existing *mūrtis*, here the temple and the statue: this view is consistent with the very concept of *mūrti*-. The same might happen in the case of the king, who is manifested through the temple he dedicated and the inscription he had engraved in it, that contains his name, together with the name of the deity. Such a semiotic design reinforces the parallelism at work: both the king, and the god he is a devotee of, are physically manifested, through the ritual process of the double dedication (temple and statue), which involves the engraving of an epigraph. The ritual process encompasses at the same time architecture, sculpture and epigraphy. The temple, in that symbolic organisation, proves to be the meeting point of the two entities, the very spot where the network of equivalences on which kingship is grounded arises. That view is perfectly consistent with all that is known about royal ideology.

The last two *pādas* of the stanza, which are a sort of conclusion to the whole poem, deal with the important topic of perpetuation. The *mūrti*- of the king or of the god, be it the statue, the inscription, or the temple itself, is 'made of his glory' (*kīrtimayī*)⁶⁰ and the same agent, i.e. the dedication of the first, the engraving of the second, and the hollowing out of the third, makes it 'eternal' (*śāsvatī*). Both the king and the deity are thus associated⁶¹ through the same process of perpetuation that the stone enables: perpetuation of their presence and of their beneficial action, those of the god being made possible by the king's act of piety. The god's presence consists in his permanent dwelling in the temple and his permanent benevolence towards the newly enlarged king's dominion

⁶⁰ As stated above, this 'glory' or 'renown' (literally 'the fact of being mentioned'), echoes the *jñāna*- of 6b, which in the case of the king designates his glory in the proper sense, and in that of the god, the Śaiva faith. process of devotion, which tends to make the devotee become the deity. In that particular case, Mahendravarman becomes, or more accurately, has already become, Śiva, and thus attained immortality.

⁶¹ Which is consistent with the

—and, correlatively, in the spreading of the Śaiva faith— whereas that of the king consists in his glory, which is expected to last long after his physical death. Therefore, leading the ‘ring-composition’ to its end, the poem’s last stanza mirrors the very first, where the same epithet *sthānu-*, through the poetical power of the inscription (*vyadhatta vidhir eṣa yathārthasaṃjñam*), became a qualifier of both the god and the king. As far as the latter is concerned, the play on the etymological meaning of the word *akṣara-*, ‘(scriptural) character,’⁶² must be noted: it is because characters written in the stone are eternal that they can spread the king’s glory and make it eternal. This is most probably one of the main reasons for the existence of royal epigraphy.

IX.6 CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that any interpretation of this puzzling inscription, especially of its sixth and eighth stanzas, is hypothetical, and the one proposed in the present study is no exception. However, an attempt has been made to distinguish what is probable from what is less so, on the basis of a close analysis of the potential double entendre that the two stanzas contain. The main difficulty, when trying to interpret texts with double entendre, is not allowing one’s imagination to wander beyond the context, which is all the more difficult when the context remains partly obscure – or when the attainable knowledge of it depends mainly on the text itself, which leads to a risk of tautology. In the analysis of literary artefacts, one or several commentaries are generally available, which ensure a minimum of emic evidence (the commentators, if not always contemporaneous with the author, are at least expected to share his ‘culture’ and their assumptions are admittedly qualified). But the study of inscriptions, because of the very nature of its object, lacks that kind of help. A colleague of mine, an archæologist, dealing with the sixth stanza of this epigraph and arguing in favour of its meaning in logic, told me that any ‘possible’ second meaning must be admitted, since, from the viewpoint of poetics, it would be a fault to compose a sentence capable of conveying a ‘second meaning’ if that second meaning is invalid. This assertion

⁶² It should be added that the word *mountain* in 4d. *akṣara-* echoes *acala-*, which denotes the

Figure 32: (Vi)pakṣavṛ(tteḥ), 6d



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is nothing but common sense, but it does not solve the main difficulty: what does 'possible' mean? The concept of possibility involves at least two aspects: internal and external compatibilities. The internal depends on syntactical and semantic consistency,⁶³

⁶³ The first does not need to be defined. As for the second, the following fact must be taken into account: in any language, nearly all the words are ambiguous and might convey several meanings, but the context in which

they are employed is restrictive and in most cases make all of them invalid except one. A double entendre is arguable wherever that process remains incomplete and the semantic restriction al-

and, as such, must be assessed by the means of a linguistic analysis. The external relies on the referential context, which requires cross-evidence, but, most generally, is far from being fully ascertained by other sources. When external evidence is lacking, nothing can be assumed with certainty. It is the reason why the hypothesis that there was a Śivaliṅga or another sculpture representing Mahendravarman in the temple, let alone the assumption that the Gaṅgādhara relief was also a king's portrait, should be dismissed. On the contrary, an interpretation might be based upon what is at hand: the relief, the inscription, and the temple itself, because the three of them, in the ideological context of the Pallavas, deserve being referred to as *liṅga*- and as *mūrti*-. It is such an interpretation that has been attempted in the present study.

These observations are rooted in the fact the starting point of semantic interpretation is the referent, which the reader must have identified before elaborating the signification of the sentence, and which, in turn, the modern interpreter must investigate first of all. Generally speaking, the analysis of texts supposedly conveying more than one meaning needs, as a prerequisite, a clear distinction between the signified and the referent. It is noticeable that in the inscription at issue, most of the ambiguity is referential.⁶⁴

Methodologically speaking, two statements result from the present study: i. the analysis of inscriptions, at least of those of that kind, needs a good knowledge of poetics, since they belong to the most refined court poetry (*kāvya*); and ii. a poetically shaped epigraph must be studied as a whole, i.e. as a poem which follows a rhetoric design. The signification of each and every stanza of the 'Trichy-inscription' emerges from the complex canvas of topics and concepts at work throughout the text, and in particular from its lexical networks. In other words, interpreting inscriptions necessarily

lowers two meanings (which is not true, for instance, insofar as the meaning in 'logic' of a set of words of the sixth stanza is concerned: as stated above the whole sentence, if these words are given their meaning in logic, would be meaningless. That does not rule out that the domain of logic is suggested,

but 'suggested' is different from 'signified').

⁶⁴ Only the syntactical connection of *anena liṅgena* in 6b and the segmentation of *śilākṣareṇa* in 8a do not fall within the realm of referential ambiguity. All the other ambiguities are strictly referential in nature.

involves a literary and semantic approach, in addition to the otherwise requested historical one.

That approach leads to a better understanding of the increasing role played by inscriptions in Ancient India. The starting point could be the following paradox: on the one hand, the Indians were very much reluctant to use writing, above all in Sanskrit. On the other hand, from the time of Aśoka —and, insofar as Sanskrit is concerned, from Rudradāman's Janāgaḍh inscription of 150 CE⁶⁵— the rulers had more and more recourse to epigraphy, especially Sanskrit epigraphy, in order to record such decisions as temple foundation, which in no way could be considered as pertaining to inferior spheres of activity. The concept of perpetuation might solve this apparent contradiction, provided that it is taken in its pragmatic dimension: the aim is not to treasure a piece of information, but to eternally reiterate a speech act. It is more about reiteration than perpetuation properly. The stone must be considered both as an 'eternal body' of the king and as the medium through which an eternal reiteration of words can be achieved.⁶⁶

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⁶⁵ (Salomon, 1998), pp. 86–90. SALOMON shows that it is slightly more complex: Rudradāman's inscription, if the first fully in Sanskrit, is preceded by a number of 'Prakrit' epigraphs including an increasing number of Sanskrit words and phrases. The triumph of Sanskrit in royal epigraphy, like everything

else in history, results from a slow maturation.

⁶⁶ It goes without saying that the use of inscriptions is also related to socio-economic and political changes, in terms of which this need for reiteration should be considered. But that falls out of the present study's scope.

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