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Personal Poetics: An Adapted Version of a Well-Known Treatise in Old Tamil

Abstract: This article is a case study of one text in a multiple-text manuscript of grammatical works in Old Tamil, now kept in the Mahārājā Serfoji Sarasvatī Mahāl Library in Tañcāvūr under shelf mark 631. It gives a personal (or local?) adaptation of a well-known and important treatise on poetics, the *Irāiyanār Akapporuḷ* (seventh century?), normally transmitted together with the even more famous commentary by Nakkīraṇ (ninth century?), whom many regard as the founder of the Tamil tradition of theoretical commentary. The text deviates from the canonised standard version in the number of *sūtras* (aphorisms) it contains and, in the order in which they are listed, some *sūtras* having been omitted and others added to it. The provenance of the extra *sūtras* is clearly part of the repertoire of anonymous quotations from older, partly lost treatises on poetics that are found within Nakkīraṇ's commentary, thus proving that the author-copyist of the manuscript was well acquainted with the commentary and deliberately chose not to copy it along with the text. His purpose may have been to teach *akam* (love) poetics to his students. His choice of additions was probably motivated by what was perceived as lacunae in the standard text with respect to one important application of poetic theory, namely the writing of miniature commentaries elucidating the speech situations encountered in a single poem (*kiḷavi*, later *koḷu*) for classical poetry. This was an activity demonstrably still pursued by copyists as late as the nineteenth century, most likely in connection with one of the later poetic genres, the *kōvai*, the kind of poetic text that corresponded most closely to the treatise and that was alive until then.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Tamil tradition of producing scholarly manuscripts

Unlike most manuscript traditions mentioned in this volume, the learned Tamil traditions, while making use of palm-leaf and the corresponding *pothi* format typical of all Indic traditions, have produced very few examples of manuscripts that

stand out because of their intricate layout. On the contrary, the standard characteristics of a Tamil scholarly manuscript are the following:

- maximum exploitation of space on the folio by condensing the writing and creating minimal margins
- regular lines and smooth writing
- *scriptio continua* with minimal mark-up, if any, resulting in the text and commentary having an integrated structure
- no or next to no corrections (except for the occasional letter cancelled by a dot above it)
- no interlinear or marginal glosses (although omitted words are occasionally noted in the margin)
- information on the textual tradition in pre- or post-posed verses, but only rarely information on the individual manuscript.

As a consequence, there are two possibilities if material is to be added, be it exegetical or complementary: either to add extra folios at the beginning and end of a manuscript or to re-copy the whole text and integrate the additions. The only type of complexity possible is that of a multiple-text manuscript. Composite manuscripts are rarer and more difficult to produce: since almost every manuscript comes in a non-standard size and with the holes made in different positions, it is not easy to insert folios of different provenances into the same object, and if they do get inserted, the difference in size is usually obvious at first sight. The manuscript under scrutiny in this article, Tañcāvūr, Mahārājā Serfoji Sarasvatī Mahāl Library (hereafter MSSML), 631, is a typical multiple-text manuscript from the Tamil tradition of grammar and poetics (*ilakkaṇam*), that is, the tradition of language-related disciplines that are needed in the education of poets and connoisseurs. While the overall structure and contents of the manuscript will be subject of a separate investigation, the focus here is on one of the texts contained in it, a unique personal adaptation of a well-known and important short treatise on Tamil poetics called the *Irāiyaṇār Akapporuḷ* ('the Lord's Poetics on Love [Poetry]').

1.2 A brief history of Tamil poetics and the position of the *Irāiyaṇār Akapporuḷ*

When the first collections of early Tamil love poems were made (perhaps around the late sixth century), these were to become the core of today's *Eṭṭuttokai* ('Eight Anthologies'), one of two basic collections constituting the Classical Tamil corpus. Each poem was provided with a kind of miniature commentary traditionally

named *kiḷavi* ('speech situation'). Originally, they named the speaker, listener and poetic situation involved. This was presumably one reason why the branch of poetics dealing with such situations and sub-situations was particularly prolific. The close connection *kiḷavis* had with the early treatises is evident as all of them share a phrasal inventory that in part points to an oral substratum, but in part already allows the identification of exact quotations, thus pointing to written sources.¹

The in core earliest depiction (although reworked many times over a long period) is found in the third part of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the oldest surviving fairly comprehensive grammar of Tamil and the core text of the most important grammatical school, which was continued by commentators up to the fifteenth century at least. The third part deals with poetics, and the sub-situations of love poetics are treated in Chapters 3 and 4, *Kaḷaviyal* and *Karpiyal* ('section on the secret phase' and 'section on the married phase'). The *Tolkāppiyam*, however, is not actually organised as a progressive description of situations, but as an enumeration of speakers.² One of the simplest arguments to demonstrate that the text is made up of disparate elements lies in the fact that the speakers are treated no less than three times (in Chapter 1 of the third part, in Chapters 2 and 3, and in Chapter 8), and all the three presentations betray a different level of development.³

The first (surviving) attempt at standardisation may have been made in the second treatise, the one in question here, that is, the *Kaḷaviyal* ('section on the secret phase')⁴ alias *Iraiyāṇār Akapporuḷ* (hereafter 'IA'). It did not comprise the whole of poetics, but just the two sections on the speech situations of love poetry; they were sorted into a progressive sequence of events for the first time here. The work is usually transmitted along with the famous commentary by Nakkīraṇ (ninth century?), reputedly the first commentator of the Tamil grammatical tradition. It is presented by the commentary as a work produced at the court of a Pāṇṭiya king, the Pāṇṭiyas of Madurai being the dynasty that is connected with the famous Caṅkam legend (the legend about the consecutive literary academies at the Pāṇṭiya court told in the preamble to the commentary of this text); this dynasty was strongly involved in the first anthologisation of the classical corpus. Its practical use at the time of its composition may well have been the production of *kiḷavis* for the early anthologies.

¹ See Wilden 2006.

² Takahashi 1995.

³ Wilden 2006 and 2009, but for a different interpretation, cf. Takahashi 2004.

⁴ The text was originally named after its first section, but just like the *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Kaḷaviyal* is followed by a *Karpiyal*.

It is this commentator, Nakkīraṇ, who links up the earlier poetic tradition with a new poetic development: the *Kōvai* ('stringing') genre. The basic structure of a *Kōvai* is a depiction of poetic situations treated as a sort of serialised event in love poetry, i.e. a kind of dramatic backbone script ranging from a couple's first meeting and falling in love with each other to their married life and quarrels. Nakkīraṇ quotes extensively from the oldest *Kōvai*, the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* ('stringing on the Pāṇṭiyas'),⁵ and cleverly uses its numerous poems to extend the number of sub-situations, thus building a bridge between the early tradition of *kiḷavis* and the later *koḷus* ('gist'), which accompany the whole set of situations in the later *Kōvais*, with a standard number of 400 verses.⁶ Both the rewriting of *kiḷavis* when copying older texts and the composition of *Kōvai* with its *koḷus* remained alive well into the nineteenth century. This is attested for the former by the numerous (and substantial) *kiḷavi* variants in the extant manuscripts and for the latter by the continued production of new works in the *Kōvai* genre.

2 The multiple-text manuscript MSSML 631

2.1 Remarks on the recent history of the manuscript

The Mahārājā Serfoji Sarasvatī Mahāl Library (MSSML) in Tañcāvūr is one of the old royal libraries built by the Nayaks in the seventeenth century and taken over by the Maratha king Serfoji II (1798–1832). Its manuscript collection comprises works in both Northern and Southern languages, but the bulk of them, as usual, are in Sanskrit, followed by Tamil. There is no air conditioning in the building to this day, and, due to humidity and neglect, the collection was in a sad state for a long time until manuscripts became fashionable again with the recent debate on classicism that, in 2004, led to Tamil being declared the second classical language of India besides Sanskrit, followed by several other languages. I went there for the first time in spring 2004, looking for the manuscript of the *IA* mentioned in the catalogue,⁷ and was allowed to see the bundle of palm-leaves that contained it. At that time I was not interested in multiple-text manuscripts, just in

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⁵ The second constitutive element of the *Kōvai* is that every single word of it praises the patron who sponsored the work – in this case a Pāṇṭiya king (whose identity is disputed).

⁶ This list of 400 verses does not really correspond to 400 sub-situations because the poet is allowed to make multiple verses on the same *koḷu*, poetic variation on the same topic being a mark of the poet's prowess.

⁷ See Chellamuthu 1989–1991, III, 1036.

that one particular text, so I did not take note of what surrounded it. Permission to photograph or obtain a copy was denied; only during my second visit was I allowed to file a request and pay for a reproduction of the three leaves containing my text. (This was still the period of analogue photography and manual scanning.) After waiting for the copy in vain for a few months, I went back to Tañcāvūr again in the winter and asked for my reproductions in person. Since I had written evidence of having paid for them (just a few hundred rupees at the time), the librarian in charge that day had the manuscript brought out and put it on an ordinary photocopying machine to make me a copy there and then. At that point in time, the bundle was dusty and not well cared for, but it was still intact except for a few insect holes and its crumbling margins.

I scanned this paper copy, and it has turned out to be perfectly good for reading and editing the text. The photo team from the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFO) went back to the library in 2018 in order to negotiate the reproduction of the whole manuscript bundle for me. In most libraries the team is allowed to take digital images for its own use (providing the library with copies and acknowledging the provenance, of course), but the library now has its own photographer and refused to let another team take pictures of the bundle. They provided their own images, which turned out to have three drawbacks unfortunately:

1. the resolution is very poor in places, making any text there hard to read;
2. the manuscript has badly deteriorated over the course of time (13 years); while I first saw an intact bundle with a few holes in it, numerous pieces are now missing and quite some of the leaves are broken;
3. the sequence the folios are in is now in complete disorder; they have even been mixed up with those from another manuscript (the *Civakacintāmaṇi*, one of the early epics). Since the bundle is still a large one with some 250 folios (corresponding to 500 pages), the task of putting it back in the right order is no small one, especially as many of the left-hand margins (where the folio numbers and inter-titles are normally found) have been lost.

2.2 The content of MSSML 631

However, even in this imperfect reproduction, the manuscript turned out to be a fascinating compendium of grammatical treatises. A few dozen folios stand out on the grounds of their poetic content, as already mentioned, but the difference in their width clearly betrays the fact that they actually come from a separate codicological unit. Looking at the photographs, however, it is not clear whether the mix-up is due to the folios just being in a single loose bundle or whether the

mistake occurred when saving the images – a new type of conundrum that will plague researchers in the digital age. So far, I have managed to identify pieces of the following texts in the bundle, like the one to be analysed here, mostly root texts without a commentary:

- *Nannūl* (image 002; *Eḷuttu* and *Col*)
- *Tolkāppiyaccūttiram tokai* (image 018; *Eḷuttu*, *Col* and *Poruḷ*)
- *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* (main title missing, but with a marginal chapter title: image 275)
- *Nēminātam* (image 299)
- *Iraivaṇār Poruḷ* (image 340)
- *Veṇṇpāpaṭṭiyal* (image 409)
- *Citamparappāṭṭiyal* (image 499)

This small group of works covers almost the whole breadth of Tamil grammar. Many of the chapter titles show that certain texts present originally are now missing. At the beginning the *Nannūl* ('Good Treatise') is found, an early 13th-century work on grammar in the strict sense (phonetics, morphology and syntax), the most widespread standard treatise on grammar until the nineteenth century. It managed to outmode the more complex and archaic *Tolkāppiyam* (a proper name referring to the author), which follows it in this manuscript. Both of these major grammatical schools mostly come with their own set of commentaries, but not so here. The next text that could be identified is the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* ('Lamp on Love Poetics'), the standard treatise on Tamil love poetry, which was composed in the twelfth century and was also transmitted very broadly. Then follows the *Nēminātaṇ* (proper name); this is a small treatise only on phonology, morphology and syntax that is possibly from the twelfth century as well, perhaps pre-dating the *Nannūl*, but which proved far less popular. Next in line is *Iraivaṇār Akapporuḷ* ('the Lord's Love Poetics'), which bears the title of *Iraivaṇār Poruḷ* in this manuscript (see Fig. 1 below); this should be regarded as a phonetic deviation in the first part (-v- being used as a glide instead of -y-) and as an abbreviation in the second part, leaving out the specification referring to love poetry.⁸ Furthermore, there are several texts from a later grammatical genre of *Pāṭṭiyal* ('Nature of Songs'), which deals with definitions of later poetic genres.

⁸ Note that with respect to what we know about the curriculum in teaching grammar, the *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* took over from the *IA*, just as the *Nannūl* took over from the *Tolkāppiyam*.

Fig. 1: MSSML 631 with a marginal title for *IA*; © Maharaja Serfoji Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjavūr (no better image exists).

Whatever the purpose of the collective bundle may have been should be discussed only on the basis of a thorough investigation of its overall contents, not only with respect to the missing headings and other texts that the manuscripts originally contained, but with respect to the wording of the individual treatises as well. On close inspection, it turns out that this copy of *IA* does not actually transmit the standard text of the well-known treatise under discussion here.

3 The text presented in this manuscript

The types of changes made here with respect to the established text can be described as a re-arrangement of the treatise by

- changing the order and number of the *sūtras*,
- omitting some of the *sūtras*,
- adding extra *sūtras*.

The result is that the sixty standard aphorisms of *IA* become sixty-one here, leaving out four standard *sūtras*, adding another four and splitting one standard *sūtra* in two.

3.1 Changes in order and number

The differences in order and number are best presented in a table juxtaposing the standard numbers (which are identical in all the editions) with the ones given in MSSML 631:

/A standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
MSSML 631	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				

/A standard	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20				
MSSML 631	11	12	13	14	15	32	33	16	17	18				

/A standard	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
MSSML 631	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28				

/A standard	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	–	–	40		
MSSML 631	29	30	31	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42		

/A standard	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50				
MSSML 631	43	44	45	–	–	–	46	47	48	49				

/A standard	51	–	52	–	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	–	
MSSML 631	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57, 58	59	60	61	–	61	

The table shows that the only substantial change in order is found in the second chart after *sūtra* 15 (a standard *sūtra*); all the other differences in number are direct consequences of the additions and omissions. In order to understand the motivation behind the first re-arrangement, it is necessary to understand the types of *sūtra* concerned and the way this treatise is structured. Very broadly, it can be said that the aim of the whole treatise was to categorise the actions that are possible within the poetic universe. The fundamental distinction is the one between the ‘secret’ and the ‘married’ phase (*kaḷavu* and *karpu*) mentioned above in section 1. Thus the first *sūtra* in the treatise defines *kaḷavu* and then begins to enumerate the sub-situations to be found in it. Some *sūtras* add options, whereas others add exceptions. However, there are also a number of *sūtras* interspersed that range on a higher theoretical level and thus provide more background information or discuss points of contention within the tradition.

One of the latter type of *sūtra* is no. 15, the last in the first long sequence of identical numbering. It defines *karpu*, not in order to begin the actual *karpu* section (which starts with *sūtra* 34), but in order to clarify the boundaries of *kaḷavu*. In the standard treatise, it is followed by two more *sūtras* (16 and 17) that deal with additional or exceptional situations within *kaḷavu*; the former treats the

possibility of the series of secret meetings before marriage being interrupted, the latter a particular sub-situation that equally leads to an (involuntary) interruption, namely the topos of a sign misunderstood (*allakuṛi*), that is, an appointment gone wrong, meaning that the couple are unable to meet. These two *sūtras* are postponed in the manuscript until the end of the *kaḷavu* section. The rationale behind this choice may simply have been the wish to have the exceptions at the end, but there was probably another reason in the case of the misunderstood sign. In standard *sūtra* 18 we find the definition of the assignation (*kuṛi*), that is, an appointed time and place when the lovers can meet in secret, and *sūtras* 19–21 enumerate the sub-types of *kuṛi* and their conditions. Given the fact that standard *sūtra* 17 on *allakuṛi* is an exceptional case of *kuṛi*, it is oddly positioned in the standard order, being placed before the definition *sūtra* that initially tells us what a *kuṛi* is. This problem is resolved with the manuscript's re-arrangement.

One last little re-arrangement takes place towards the end where standard *sūtra* 56 is split into two aphorisms numbered 57 and 58. The splitting of *sūtras* is a well-known issue that caused disagreement between different commentators as well as variations in numbering, as we can see in the *Tolkāppiyam*, for example. Usually, however, this is done in cases where the *sūtra* contains parts that may be construed as independent sentences, which is not so here.⁹

56. [The ten constituents of *akam* poetry]

திணையே கைகொள் கூற்றே கேட்போ
ரிடனே கால மெச்ச மெய்ப்பாடு
பயனே கோளென் றுங்கப் பத்தே [57]¹⁰
யகனைந் திணையு முரைத்த லானே [58]

tiṇai kaikōḷ kūṟṟu kēṭpōr
iṭam kālam eccam meypṭāṭu
payan kōḷ enṟāṅkap pattē
akaṇ aintiṇaiyum uraittal āṛē

Tiṇai (i.e. setting), love phase, speaker, listener,
place, time, ellipsis, manifestation of emotion,
outcome, syntactic construction –
these ten [points] are the way of explaining the five *tiṇais* of love [poetry].

⁹ The quotations of standard *sūtras* that follow are generally taken from an unpublished critical edition and translation of the *IA* that is the joint work of five scholars, namely Jean-Luc Chevillard, Sascha Ebeling, Thomas Lehmann, Takanobu Takahashi and myself. The choices between multiple ways of translating that have been used here were made by me personally. I also edited and translated the additional *sūtras* from the *Taṇcāvūr* manuscript.

¹⁰ The manuscript adds the number 57 here and the number 58 after the next part.

The *sūtra* is the first among the general ones at the end of the treatise and simply enumerates the elements that are indispensable for understanding and composing a love poem. The manuscript splits off the last line with the predicate noun, thus producing two noun strings, neither of which makes sense in itself. This is the one place in the manuscript where it is hard to explain the author's decision.

3.2 Omission of *sūtras*

Four standard *sūtras* are missing in our manuscript, namely nos. 44–46 and the final one, no. 60, that is, one block and one last statement that sums up the treatise. The second section on the married phase (*karpū*) starts in *sūtra* 34 and basically consists of an enumeration and discussion of the various types of separation possible during the married phase, ranging from going on a mere business trip to going to war on behalf of the King, as well as short absences on account of a rival woman, who may be a second spouse or a courtesan (34–44). This is followed by a number of specifications concerning certain poetic utterances by the hero and heroine (45–46) and by the second important topic of the married phase, the heroine sulking or quarrelling with her unfaithful husband (47–50). The first row of omissions concerns the last *sūtra* in the block on separation, a specification about the possible (remorseful?) return of a philandering husband to his wife and quiet married life:

44. [Return from the rival woman]

கற்பினுட் பிரிந்தோன் பரத்தையின் மறுத்தந்
தறப்பொருட் படுப்பினும் வரைநிலை யின்றே

karpiṇuḥ pirintōṇ parattaiyiṇ maruttantu
aṛapporuḥ paṭuppiṇum varai nilai inrē

If he who has separated [from the heroine] during *karpū*
returns from the rival woman and [thus] respects the path of virtue,
this is not to be excluded.

The wording of the *sūtra* suggest that a return of this kind was not an event that really inspired poetic imagination. In fact, this seems to be true of Tamil poets in general: no poetic example springs to mind of a husband mending his ways of his own account, whereas male attempts at reconciliation and female recrimination can be found in abundance. Perhaps the author simply regarded the *sūtra* as expendable.

Similarly, he may have thought the following aphorisms were off the point as they do not advance the enumeration of sub-situations, but specify the way marital (dis)approbation may or may not be expressed.

45. [Possible characterisations of the hero]

புகழுங் கொடுமையுங் கிழவோன் மேன

pukaḷum koṭumaiyum kiḷavōṇ mēna

[Receiving] praise and [being called] cruel are for the hero.

46. [Possible characterisations of the heroine]

கொடுமை யில்லைக் கிழவி மேன

koṭumai illai kiḷavi mēṇṇē

[Being called] cruel is not for the heroine.

The poetic situation we are concerned with here is that of the hero coming back to the marital home after an encounter with his lover, a rival woman. The heroine may both cajole and blame him on such an occasion (45), while she who is blameless should not be blamed by him (46). From the point of view of the poetry, however, this is a surprising statement because the hero frequently accuses his wife of being cruel when she fails to accept his apologies and forgive him. This may have been an additional reason for leaving out the latter *sūtra*.

By contrast, the presence or absence of the very last aphorism poses a completely different kind of problem. The last five *sūtras* of the treatise, 56–60, do not actually belong to *kaḷavu* or *karpu* any more, but concern general poetic features including figures of speech, for example. *Sūtra* 59 is a caveat that makes room for additional features and figures that have not been enumerated yet, but may be added by an educated reader. This looks like a perfectly satisfactory ending for the treatise, but then *sūtra* 60 follows as a kind of summarising afterthought:

60. [Idealisation of *kaḷavu* and *karpu*]

களவு கற்பெனக் கண்ணிய வீண்டையோ

ருளாநிக முன்பி னுயர்ச்சி மேன

kaḷavu karpu eṇak kaṇṇiya iṇṭaiyōr

uḷam nikaḷ anpiṇ uyarccei mēna

Those that are considered as *kaḷavu* and *karpu* [stand] for the idealisation of the love that occurs in the hearts of those who live in this world.

Whatever may have been the exact meaning of that sentence, it conveniently brings the total up to a round figure of sixty *sūtras*, but it does not add anything to our knowledge of poetic situations or techniques. The author of the manuscript decided to end it with the caveat. That this was a deliberate decision and not one of the hazards of transmission transpires from the fact that *sūtra* no. 61 is followed by the usual end titles: ‘The second section on the married phase ends [here]. The *Īraivaṇār Poruḷ* is finished [and] ends [here]’ (*iraṇṭāvatu karpiyal murrum. Īraivaṇār Poruḷ muṭintatu murrum*).

3.3 Addition of *sūtra*

An equal number of *sūtras*, namely four, have been added to the standard text. The questions to be answered here do not only concern the rationale of inserting them, but also their provenance – none of them have been produced *ad hoc*; they have all been quoted from other sources, albeit with alterations. The first two belong together. In fact, they are two halves of one *sūtra* that is found in the more extensive *Karpiyal* of the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram*. The context is some further specifications for a particular speech situation during a separation, namely the travelling hero talking (to his heart or to his charioteer). This topic is simply not raised in the standard treatise.

The *Tolkāppiyam* makes a distinction here as to when the hero is allowed or not allowed to talk about the wife he left at home, pining and lonely (See Fig. 2: *sūtras* 40 + 41).

Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram 184i.

கிழவி நிலையே வினையிடத் துரையார்
வென்றிக் காலத்தும் விளங்கித் தோன்றும்

kiḷavi nilaiyē viṇaiyiṭatt’ uraiyār
venṛik kālattum viḷaṅkit tōṇṇum

They (scholars or heroes?) don’t talk about the state of the heroine at [the hero’s] workplace; it clearly appears at the time of victory too.

The wording is as elusive as *sūtras* go, but the point is presumably the following: when the hero is engaged in his business (either working or fighting), he is not supposed to talk about his wife and home, but he may (and will) once the victory has been won. Two elements of the wording are puzzling. First of all, the negative honorific plural form *uraiyār* at the end of line 1 is odd. The subject is not mentioned explicitly; one would expect it to refer to the hero, but that would normally be done using a masculine singular, whereas the honorific plural is mostly

reserved for the scholars of poetics who made the rule. Second, the coordinative *-um* on *kālattu* in line 2 does not fit in well with the context as the second line is contrastive and not additional. Our manuscript provides a solution on both counts here by altering the text slightly and expressing disagreement with the *Tolkāppiyam* incidentally.

MSSML 631: 40. [Talking about the heroine]

கிழவி நிலையே வினையிடத்து வரையார்

kiḷavi nilaiyē viṇaiyiṭattu varaiyār

They do not exclude [speaking about] the heroine's state at [the hero's] workplace.

Splitting the *sūtra* into two parts is just a matter of convenience here as we have two separate sentences. The really significant change is that the manuscript author changes *uraiyār* to *varaiyār*, a customary phrasal element of *sūtras* that stipulates an exception: 'they (i.e., the scholars) do not exclude x'. In other words, unlike in the *Tolkāppiyam*, the hero is given leave to speak about his wife here even though he is still engaged in business and/or travelling. From the point of view of the poetry, this seems perfectly reasonable because there are many poems where he does precisely that. The coordinative in the second half makes perfect sense now, too:

MSSML 631: 41. [Talking about the heroine in the event of victory]

வென்றிக் காலத்தும் விளங்கித் தோன்றும்

venṇirik kālattum viḷaṅkiṭ tōṇṇum

It (the talking) clearly appears in times of victory, too.

The two following additions are slightly different types. Within the logic of the treatise itself, the first of them simply looks out of place as it talks about a *tiṇai*, one of the settings in an interior landscape, the famous correlations between a type of landscape and the feelings of the protagonists.¹¹ This is a topic only alluded to and presupposed in *IA*, but *in extenso* it is treated by the commentator, who also quotes this older anonymous aphorism in connection with his exposition of the types of separation possible (subsequent to *IA* 51), since Pālai, the

¹¹ The five key settings in Tamil poetry are Kuṇiṇci, Mullai, Neytal, Marutam and Pālai, that is, a mountain, forest, the seaside, a river valley or a desert, each correlating with poetic moods and themes. In the case of Pālai, the desert, it is associated with separation and suffering. The term 'interior landscape' was first brought up by Ramanujan 1967; the basic conventions are explained, for example, in Zvelebil 1986.

desert region, is the part of the poetic universe where most of these separations take place (See Fig. 3: *sūtras* 51 + 53 on image 341).

MSSML 631: 51. [Definition of *Pālai*]

பொருள்வயிற் பிரியினும் புரைந்துடன் போகினு
மதுபிரி வுரைப்பினும் பாலை யாகும்

poruḷvayinḥ piriyaṇum puraint' uṭaṇ pōkiṇum
atu piriv' uraippiṇum pālai ākum

When [he] separates for the sake of wealth, when they go away together honourably and when [the mother] talks about that as separation, it is *Pālai*.

This short verse neatly summarises the three main sub-situations of *Pālai* encountered in Tamil poetry, namely the solitary journey of the hero, the elopement of hero and heroine, who are not allowed to marry, and finally the heroine's mother pining after her daughter who has gone away to be together with the man. This *sūtra* defining a single *tiṇai* thematically makes perfect sense in the light of *kiḷavi* conventions: the only regional specification to be found there regularly is *iṭaicurattu*, 'in the middle of the desert'. This is a very important addition for somebody engaged in writing the miniature commentaries that add the speech situations to the individual poems (*kiḷavi*).

Similarly, the last additional *sūtra* is an anonymous quotation from Nakkiraṇ's commentary on *IA* 52, but here it is more difficult to understand the copyist's choice. The topic is a trance dance (*verī*), which is part of an exorcism ritual initiated by a mother if she is afraid that her daughter's health and beauty are failing, a thing she attributes to malevolent deities and not to the absence of the hero (which she does not know about yet). This is one of the sub-situations that lead to marriage and as such does not have a place in the section on marital life itself (*karpiyal*):

MSSML 631: 53. [Leaving, although the *verī* dance is imminent]

ஆடிய வெறியு மழுங்கிய செலவு
நாடுங் காலை யில்லென மொழிப

āṭiya veriyum aḷuṅkiya celavu
nāṭum kālai illeṇa moḷipa.

Even a *Verī* to be danced is not a [reason for] going to be dispensed with, [so] they say at the time of examination.

The aphorism says that the hero may not delay his departure even if the *Veri* dance is about to be performed, thus exposing the secret love affair.¹² Just as in the case of *Pālai*, the *veri* dance is not treated in the standard treatise, which is very concise, but is an element that plays a role in the production of *kīḷavis*. This does not seem to be the point here, though, since what is explained is not the normal situation where the *veri* dance occurs in poetry, namely in the phase of secrecy (*kaḷavu*) when a mother starts an exorcism rite to help her daughter regain her health, but the relation between the dance and the topic of separation: even though discovery may be imminent – because the *veri* dance is one of the occasions that lead to the discovery of the secret love affair (and then to marriage) – the hero should not postpone his journey. So it is not clear (to me at least) what the text gained by adding this *sūtra*.

In sum, then, what all four additional *sūtras* have in common is that they are quoted in the standard commentary; the scholar who produced this manuscript was definitely familiar with *Nakkīraṇ*, but chose to leave his commentary out for some unknown reason.

4 The end of the text

At the end of the text in the manuscript – not the final summarising *sūtra* of the standard treatise (no. 60), but the caveat that precedes it – the customary end titles do not form a transition to a colophon, either textual or scribal. (The latter would have been surprising as we are still a good way from the end of the manuscript.) But the folio ends with the quotation of two poems which provide some information about the environment and interests of our author-copyist. The first one is the most famous *Caṅkam* poem in the whole corpus, *Kuṟuntokai* 2 (*koṅkutēr vāḷkkai*), the poem that Śaivite legends say Śiva composed himself in order to help his poor but devout devotee Tarumi win the poetic contest instigated by the Pāṇṭiya king in the Madurai academy hall and be rewarded with a thousand gold coins. When all the works of the *Eṭṭuttokai* ('Eight Anthologies') and *Pattuppāṭṭu* ('Ten Songs') were long forgotten, this one poem lived on in public memory. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether our author was actively engaged in re-copying the classical corpus or he only knew the later legends as told in the later Śaiva tradition of the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭarpurāṇams*, for example.

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¹² The second line contains a mere metrical filler, as the 'time of examination' refers to the debates among scholars when setting up the rules.

The second poem, which is longer, is the first item in the eleventh *Tirumurai*, book eleven of the Śaiva devotional canon, which is also believed to have been composed by Śiva himself under the name of Tiruvālavāyūṭaiyar (the lord of the sacred temple of Ālavāy in Madurai). In other words, both poems betray strong Śaiva leanings and a definite local affiliation with Madurai, the capital of the Southern Pāṇṭiya dynasty, far from the Cōḷa city of Tañcāvūr where the manuscript was found. The whole manuscript needs to be studied carefully before any meaningful conclusions about it can be drawn, however, especially the colophons and any other satellite material¹³ it contains.

5 Some tentative conclusions

Obviously, we can only speculate about the purposes that this intelligent adaptation of the standard treatise may have served in this manuscript. It seems fair to say that it is not a chance corruption caused by a loss of information, however. It is quite likely that it had some practical goal such as teaching *akam* (love) poetics to students. Many choices can be convincingly explained as being motivated by what may have been perceived as lacunae in the standard text with respect to one important application of poetic theory, namely the writing of miniature commentaries to the individual poems (*kiḷavi*). These practices were still being pursued by copyists as late as the nineteenth century, as can be seen in the many variations and alternative versions of the *kiḷavis* that come with the early classical corpus. An additional concern may have been the writing of *kōvais*, the genre that corresponded most closely to the treatise, which was kept alive until well into the nineteenth century. Further research will hopefully reveal more to us in the future.

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¹³ See Wilden 2017 for a preliminary discussion of the concept of satellite material (free-floating stanzas surrounding the main texts in manuscripts, which were copied and connected with their transmission history).

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Figs 2 and 3: The additional *sūtras* found in MSSML 61: *sūtras* 40 + 41 on image 337 (left) and *sūtras* 51 + 53 on image 341 (right); © Maharaja Serfoji Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjavūr.