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# Tamil Satellite Stanzas: Genres and Distribution

**Abstract:** In the Tamil and also the wider Indian tradition we find, among the multifarious types of paratexts that accompany and envelop a text in a manuscript, little (and sometimes not so little) stanzas that in one way or another have a bearing on the text and its transmission. Little work has been done so far in order to understand their function(s), and many of them do not even make it into the printed editions. However, the fact that they have verse form shows two things, namely on the one hand that some thought and effort has been put into their production, and on the other hand that it was deemed important that they should be easy to memorise, in other words, they stand on the threshold between an oral and a written tradition. This article, the third in a series, will try to map the positions such stanzas take up, to distinguish their genres and finally to understand how editors dealt with them when developing the standard layout of a Tamil literary edition. In order to demonstrate how widespread the phenomenon was, examples are taken firstly from one well-defined sub-group of classical Tamil manuscripts and secondly from the smaller Tamil manuscript collection in the Cambridge University Library.

## 1 Introduction

In recent years there has been some debate in order to adapt the conception of paratexts as developed by Genette with respect to the print presentation of early European books to the description of manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> From a manuscript perspective, the term paratext is first of all intended as a phenomenological reference to

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This article, produced within the intellectual framework of the ERC-funded project NETamil, is the third in a series of so far three dealing with the Tamil satellite stanzas (cf. Wilden 2017a). It is based on a presentation in ‘The South Asian Manuscript Book: Material, Textual and Historical Investigations’, Cambridge, 26 September 2014, enhanced by a number of discussions within the Paratext group and the Terminology group of the Hamburg Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (Sonderforschungsbereich 950, funded by the DFG), and a presentation at the workshop ‘Distinguishing Paratexts from Texts. Orality. Commentaries. Genres’, Hamburg, 15 May 2015. My thanks go to all the participants who contributed to the discussion. Special thanks go to Jean-Luc Chevillard and Giovanni Ciotti for reading preliminary versions.

**1** For some recent case studies centred on such a notion, see Ciotti/Lin 2016.

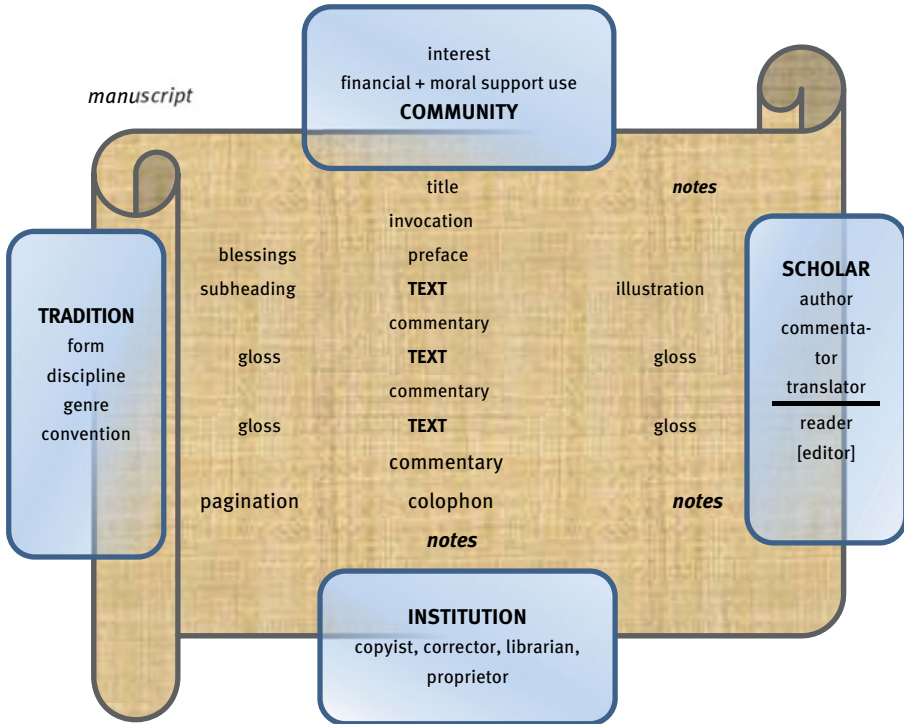
all the little texts that surround a text in a manuscript, or rather that embed a text in a manuscript and in its *Lebenswelt*, i.e., the whole is an interwoven texture that links a piece of human knowledge deemed worthy of further transmission with those who produced, transmitted and used it. Genette's famous metaphor is that of the threshold ('seuil'): paratexts would be the way that leads into a text.

We may think of different elaborations of that metaphor for the different types of paratexts. For the documenting type such as colophons, the threshold of a mere house may be too simple a model, but we may visualise an Indian temple town where one or several central shrines as the text(s) are surrounded by concentric walls which each have their separate gate. For the commenting type, i.e. glosses and commentaries we might rather choose a tree as a model, that is, the concentric year rings of growth that can be counted in an old tree (once it has been felled, to be sure) where the inner part becomes solid while on the outside there is green growth, adding a new layer every year as long as the transmission is alive. The hard inner core can even rot away, like a root text overtly still explained by a commentary, which in fact has long since taken over the function of the main text, as is the case in most Indian theoretical domains. Another aspect of the threshold is that usually it is not only one-way, but two-way. It is a means of going in, namely into the text, but also of going out into the community and culture that produced the manuscript. This may be more of a self-evident point for Genette, thinking about European book culture where the outside (mostly) is prettily mapped and well documented, but in many less well-known traditions the paratexts are our only way back into that world.

A basic definition of the term 'paratext' could be the following: a paratext is a textual element that mediates and mirrors the relationship between a textual artefact in a manuscript and its environment, that is, the people who conceived, produced and used it. Paratexts capture the threefold tie a manuscript has with time, namely, firstly, with the time prior to its production, when the text it carries was composed, secondly, the period when the individual manuscript was copied, and, thirdly, its more or less long history of storage and use. The word can be used as a cover term for a huge number of subcategories that partly overlap with literary sub-genres, which can be arranged by function (A) and by position within the layout of a manuscript (B). It does not make sense to divorce literary studies and manuscript studies with respect to paratexts. We have to understand how, why and when paratextual sub-genres developed in the respective literary traditions in order to make sense of the data encountered in the individual manuscripts, and in turn manuscript evidence can help us to reconstruct the processes of their evolution.

How would we want to describe the basic configuration of that world around a manuscript? On the one hand there are various agencies involved in conception,

production and storage, and use. On the other hand there is the individual physical incarnation of one text in a particular manuscript. The relationship between them is mirrored and often overtly negotiated in the paratexts that surround the text as it is copied. With yet another metaphor paratexts might be characterised as a doubly permeable membrane from environment to manuscript and manuscript to text. The whole fabric of text, paratext and manuscript can be depicted in the following diagram:



A manuscript as a physical object is the outcome of a complex process of production and transmission. It presupposes a *community* that lends financial and moral support to the fabrication and is interested in making use of the outcome, be it by mere storing, by reading in a wider sense or by specialised usages, for example in ritual. Usually the task of producing manuscripts is entrusted to an *institution* that procures writing support (palm leaf, etc.) and employs artisans such as scribes and correctors, and at the same time functions as a repository where the stock is collected, stored and safeguarded and, if necessity arises, recopied. This function of a librarian can be taken over, on a smaller scale, by individual proprietors. Form and content of a manuscript and/or a manuscript collection are predetermined by *tradition*. Tradition is made up by an implicit substratum of conventions about layout and genre on which can be superposed explicit schools of theoretical thinking about text and text forms. Its historical dimension is the mapping out of the intellectual universe into domains or disciplines. The intellectual work of either conceiving and composing new texts, or of explaining and transmitting older textual material is in the hand of *scholars* (teachers, priests, poets, specialists in a particular domain). They function as authors, commentators or even translators and they form the kernel of a readership viewed with benevolence or even actively supported by the wider community.

The manuscript is anchored in time in a triple way. As a copy, it is meant to record the state of a text prior to the copy's own period. As a physical object, it bears the testimony of its own production. As a historical artefact, it bears the traces of its transmission and reception, not to mention the visible signs of its more or less advanced physical deterioration. Questions of layout can be practically discounted in any South-Indian tradition. In this respect the real manuscript does not resemble the diagram above. The text lies in a massive block on the narrow palm-leaf; at first glance there is nothing much to be seen but a high-density data storage device. The *scriptio continua* does not encourage the differentiation of layers, and except for marginal titles, possibly inter-titles, and folio numbers, we find little mark-up. Marginal blessings can be seen in the beginning and at the end, and possibly a *pratīka* index with verse- or *sūtra* beginnings. Corrections and additions of phrases omitted on the page are rare. The intricate web of the actual text, its representation and its elucidation has to be discerned by the educated and attentive reader who ideally is already familiar with its wording.

The copy aims at preserving the text as it is at a given point in time but it is fairly free as to its embedding. Title and author are usually mentioned, if not in the margin then in a stanza composed for the purpose and transmitted in the wake of the text or in a colophon that belongs to the text and is recopied with it. If there is a commentary it means that the copy already incorporates a minimum of two distinct stages in the

life of the text, for few texts were composed along with a commentary. The need was felt after a certain time had passed. Comments range from simple glosses of difficult or rare words to elaborate paraphrases. They can be accompanied by more or less extensive discussions, and there is a point where one may ask whether what is framed like a paratext is not the actual text after all. Such is typically the case in many theoretical domains.

The physical object is shaped, within the limitations set by the material, according to the conventions of the genre, time, and place. The copyist may add explicit information to that extent, for example by writing a colophon. More often he does not. However, he leaves his mark on the text he copies, depending on his own degree of education and involvement. He may leave blanks in a text where he could no longer decipher the model he perused. He may simply close the gaps and thus produce at best a metrically faulty passage. Or at worst the passage in question is no longer comprehensible. He also leaves traces of his local or idiosyncratic spelling. He may alter the commentary, abridging or expanding it as he sees fit. He may bring in additional material. He may make partial copies, combining texts that traditionally do not belong together, in accordance with his own needs or preferences.

The historical artefact may appear more convoluted, for example by folios added at the beginning and/or the end, typically bringing in further glosses, tables of content, glossaries or additional verse material. Remarks and notes may appear, often not inked and thus hard to decipher. Readers may try to correct the text and even fill in blank space left by the original scribe in places where his source already was defective. Today's surviving palm-leaf manuscripts often contain pencil marks and secondary pagination applied by earlier editors of the text. The strings that bind the bundle probably had to be replaced several times. Libraries add their seals to the leaves and labels to the wooden covers. They also put successive shelf marks and inventory numbers.

One pervasive motif in all the three temporal strands that run together in this one object is the anxiety for its safety and continued transmission. Margins are left free, especially the right one where the leaf is turned, and spaces are left around the vulnerable holes. Invocation and colophon bracket the beginning and end of the text, blank folios precede and follow, because it is there that calamity, for example in the form of insects, strikes first. Mnemonic stanzas safeguard the structure of the text, its position within a corpus, its authorship and provenance. Commentaries try to ensure the continued comprehensibility of what may have been composed in a distant past. They are changing over time because the language of the copyists is changing, along with their degree of education and motivation. Colophon verses remind scribes as well as readers of their duty to preserve intact what has been transmitted. The first and most important lesson we can learn from the generations of

scribes we are looking back on is one of humility. We are not the end-point in a long process but we are just one link in the ongoing chain of transmitters.

The purpose of the present paper is to map out one significant element among the paratexts occupying this Tamil manuscript world, one ubiquitous not only in the South-Indian traditions but in the pan-Indian ones and beyond. The simplest designation for this element is the satellite stanza, consisting in a variety of little (and sometimes not so little) verses that surround a text as it is copied. We can basically distinguish three types, namely the anonymous one, that with a known author, and that which can be identified as a quotation from elsewhere. Their number, distribution and wording are variable from manuscript to manuscript, and often several varieties are found. The currently known text with the highest density may be the *Tirumurukāruppaṭai*: already Cāminātaiyar's standard edition comes with twelve additional verses, and some thirty-six have by now been collected by Emmanuel Francis for his critical edition.<sup>2</sup> The relation in which such a stanza stands to the manuscript and/or the text it is transmitted with has to be established in each particular case, although of course there are conventions.

## 2 Distribution and genres

After first stumbling across these stanzas when working on the manuscript transmission of the *Caṅkam* corpus<sup>3</sup> I believed that they were a peculiarity of those very 'classical' texts, but since then the occupation with other groups of manuscripts brought home to me the fact that, firstly, they are ubiquitous, and, secondly, they have repercussions with several literary genres: they are threshold texts in yet another sense, in that they influenced the development of pre-modern notions on literary genres and the elements they are made of.<sup>4</sup> In other words, we find ourselves in the slightly paradoxical situation of seeing some paratexts defined as subgenres of the texts they are supposed to mediate – some, but by no means all of them. This point is important since what I intend to show here is that in cases where a sub-genre came into being – a process linked to the creation of a Tamil term to denote the type in question – the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Francis forthcoming.

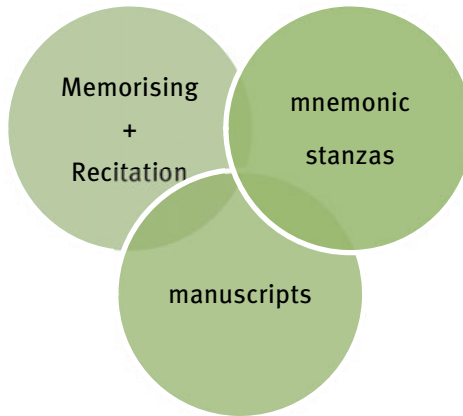
<sup>3</sup> For a collection, collation and translation of the verses connected with the *Caṅkam* corpus, see Wilden 2014, 177–215.

<sup>4</sup> This point ought to be examined in greater detail at some point, but here suffice it to say that some types of stanzas, such as the *kāppu*, find their place, if not a straightforward one, in the enumerations of *pirapantam*-s (< Skt. *prabandha*-, 'composition'), the current Tamil word that comes closest to a European notion of literary genre; cf. n. 9.

transmission is more stable and often led to the inclusion of the verse into the edition of the respective text. Where that was not the case, and this is true especially of one important type I am inclined to call colophon stanza, transmission tends to be more variable and the way such stanzas cross over to the print age is less predictable.

At this point the question arises how and why did they survive at all? The answer to this is best illustrated with one further, more general question: How to preserve knowledge on a precarious material basis? How is it possible to ensure a continuous transmission when palm leaf is fragile and times are dangerous, the political situation, hence the economy and the livelihood of scholars, and even religious institutions, unstable, as they were so often during the long course of Indian history? The standard answer here points to the parallel existence of an oral tradition. Yes, this certainly is one aspect. Texts were recited and, of course, they were taught. But it is not enough to know a text, or even many texts by heart. A scholar also has to memorise the domains and their interrelations, the composition and layout of text corpora, the names and credentials of poets and theoreticians – in other words, he has to know the precise position of everything and everybody in the dense network of intertextual relations that constitutes a major literary tradition. A significant role in transporting through time the vital pieces of meta-information on what was to be transmitted was played by mnemonic stanzas, put in verse so as to be easy to memorise.

oral tradition



Manuscripts were copied and collected, in monastery and palace libraries as well as by scholars. At the same time the teaching tradition ensured that students had the capacity to memorise and recite large chunks of text.<sup>5</sup> The links between the two kinds of activity were the mnemonic stanzas, many of which survive in the margins of the manuscript transmission. They appear in a variety of metres, genres and positions.

The minimal coherence of the codicological unit of South-Indian palm-leaf manuscripts dictates the possible places for additional material. Thinking of a manuscript from one of the early classical corpora (*Caṅkam* and *Kiḷkkaṇakku*), we usually have manuscripts that contain more than one text and as a group make up the corpus or, more likely, a considerable portion of it. The folios are numbered, but often the manuscript contains one or more unnumbered extra folios, both at the beginning and at the end. Often such extra folios will contain stray stanzas, while almost always the folio 1a begins with an invocation stanza, the *kaṭavuḷ vālttu* ('praise of god'), named as such in the manuscript itself. This is the most straightforward type of stanza in that it has come to be regarded as part of the text itself – in many cases, such as the *Kalittokai*, the *Pattuppāṭṭu* and the *Tirukkural*, it is even included in the numbering of verses in the text, as poem number 1.<sup>6</sup> This is directly followed by the text itself. The next possible place for insertions is the end of a section where we usually find a short intermediate colophon. It rarely goes beyond the final title, but occasionally further information interspersed with verse material is inserted here. The natural position, however, is at the end of the text, where we get the final title and the traditional colophon for text and/or commentary. This colophon is the preferred position for further stray stanzas, hence colophon stanzas. Here at least four types can be distinguished, namely poetological stanza, caveat, author stanza and patron stanza. Significantly, none of them seems to have acquired a Tamil designation. This, then, may or may not be followed by a scribal colophon, again possibly enhanced by further verses.

This first, unsystematic state of affairs seems to have influenced the shape of texts within the next set of classical collections, the bhakti anthologies. A large majority of bhakti texts is composed in decades that each end with a stanza which is at the same time a signature verse and a *phalaśruti* (an enumeration of the benefits to be derived from knowing and reciting the decade). The term developed to denote them is, in the Śaiva tradition, *tirukkaṭaikkāppu*, 'sacred end protection'. In

<sup>5</sup> For a description of how written and oral education were carried out side by side in the training of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century poet-scholar (*pulavar*) see Ebeling 2010, 37ff.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of the invocation stanzas connected with the classical corpus, see Wilden 2017b (in print).



phraseology and spirit they seem related to the author stanzas found in the colophons of the earlier anthologies mentioned above. Although partly disputed as later additions, in general they are viewed as part of the textual transmission, not as paratexts. Moreover, in the Vaiṣṇava *Tivyappirapantam* we find a minimum of one author stanza per text, again modelled on one type of the earlier colophon stanzas. An important difference is, however, that now the authors of the stanzas, too, are known by name, which incidentally gives us a clue as to their age, since these authors are usually Ācāryas of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community – the sect that transmitted the Tamil bhakti corpus and linked it with the theology of Rāmānuja. This shows that an expectation has been raised and that a new type of subgenre has been created, although here the designation is still simply *taṇṇiyaṅ*, ‘solitary verse’.<sup>7</sup> These seem to be the first instances where the author of a text is named and lauded in the beginning, not at the end.

The end point of this development can be seen in the early prints of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The system found in place there can be shown to be based on a reorganisation of the additional material as it was found on the leaves of a manuscript. Its basic principle might be explained as a restructuring of the beginning and an unburdening of the end: in brief, the colophon is ejected and replaced by an elaborate pattern of prefatory materials. How this evolution actually took place and how long it took is difficult to say since Tamil manuscripts, with at best some 300 years of age, are just not old enough. Accordingly, the evidence presented in the practical part of this paper is based on a mixed argument: it seems that the patterns in place for the older texts do no longer work for the younger texts, so that in spite of the fact that material evidence roughly belongs to the same period certain tendencies can be observed. Moreover, what is badly needed, here as elsewhere, is manuscript statistics: while I can say that I have a fair idea of what remains of the manuscript transmission for texts from the first millennium, my knowledge for those of the medieval and early modern periods is restricted to snapshots such as the ones I give later from the Tamil manuscripts of the Cambridge collection. As far as early printed literature is concerned, the following six are sub-genres of verses prefixed to a text, although hardly a case could be found where all six would be present for a single text:

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7 A preliminary count of *taṇṇiyaṅs* related to the *Tivyappirapantam* on the part of Suganya Anandakichenin (EFEO Pondy) comes up to 54, 13 in Sanskrit and 41 in Tamil.

1. *kāppu* ('protection')
2. *ciṛappuppāyiram* ('laudatory preface')
3. *varalāru* ('line of transmission')
4. *pāyiram* ('preface' of a treatise)
5. *patikam* ('preface' of a poetic text?)
6. *avaiyaṭakkam* ('submission to the assembly')

Part of the genesis can be explained with some confidence. The invocation stanza, named *kaṭavuḷ vālttu* in the early classical tradition, also referred to as *kaṭavuḷ vaṇakkam* in the medieval tradition, seems to make way for the *kāppu*. The early invocation never explicitly referred to the text it was added to, although there was an indirect relationship in that the metrical form of the *kaṭavuḷ vālttu* mirrored the form of the poetic text it belonged to, and was dedicated to the chosen deity of the poet or compiler. The *kāppus* did not follow the metrical imitation principle anymore, but often had the form of a four-line Venṇā – the most simple and predominant form of a mnemonic verse – and they had a tendency not only to refer to a deity (frequently Gaṇeśa), but also to allude to the title of the text and/or its author, in other words, many of them look like portmanteau stanzas for the earlier invocation combined with a colophon stanza. They may even contain *phalaśruti* phrases as were found in the signature verses of the bhakti corpus. The problem here is that it is not always easy to identify a *kāppu*. Ideally there is one verse that is put at the beginning of the first folio, along with the designation *kāppu*. But in many cases there are several verses prefixed, part of them on unnumbered folios, and a designation is not necessarily given. Many texts end up printed with several *kāppus*, and a detailed investigation into their respective manuscript traditions would be necessary. It is quite obvious that not all these verses appear in all the manuscripts. It looks probable that in subsequent copies there is a gradual process of integrating scribal and authorial invocation verses.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This development seems to be reflected even in some recesses of theoretical literature in that some medieval works on genre, of the *Pāṭṭiyal* type, contain spurious verses on a *pirapantam* genre called *Kāppumālai*, 'garland of protection [verses]', made up of three, five or seven stanzas (cf. *Navanītap Pāṭṭiyal*, 14<sup>th</sup> c., comm. on s. 31: *kāppu mūnṛ' aint' eḷ kāppumālai ām*; the editor Vaiyāpurip Pillai gives an appendix with a concordance of *pirapantam* definitions where there are further references).

Talking about the series of further prefatory sub-genres loosely connected by the heading of ‘preface’ (*pāyiram*), then, means opening Pandora’s box.<sup>9</sup> We have to distinguish three layers, namely centuries of theoretical discussion and definition,<sup>10</sup> usage in the manuscript tradition (with differences between marginal and final titles, but also simply between local traditions and/or scribes), and finally the early prints. For our present purposes it is sufficient, however, to understand the rationale underlying the categories and conventions followed by early editors. First of all there is a dividing line between items 2 plus 3 and 4, 5, 6 in the above list. The laudatory preface (*ciṛappuppāyiram*) and the line of transmission (*varalāru*) are supposed to have been written by somebody who is not the author of the actual text. The former has been described as a key element in the ‘economy of praise’ among the *pulavar* (‘poet-scholars’ of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where it was of supreme importance for the promotion of a new literary work to secure such a preface from a poet already well established [Ebeling 2010, 73–84]). Here the emphasis lies on laudatory, and that might be one reason why the *ciṛappuppāyiram* has become the main slot for the relocation of colophon material to the beginning of a book. Where the name of a work or an author is mentioned in verse, there one finds at least a couple of ornamental attributes in order to fill the metre, and often more elaborate praise. Be that as it may, in any case, while there is not much evidence for laudatory prefaces in the preprint tradition except of the type described by Ebeling, the category is almost invariably present in any printed book.

The three categories that remain, *pāyiram* (‘preface’), *patikam* (‘introduction’) and *avaiyaṭakkam* (‘submission to the assembly’) are supposed to be composed by the author of a work. There is some evidence to suggest that *pāyiram* was the word for prefaces used with theoretical texts while *patikam* comes with poetic works such as the *Cilappatikāram*, but that ought to be further investigated. Interesting

**9** To give just one example, the famous verse starting with *vaṭavēnkaṭam tenkumari* that customarily precedes the *Toḷkāppiyam Eḷuttatikāram* is identified as a *pāyiram* composed by Paṇampāraṇār in the commentary of Pērācīriyar on TPr 649, that is, in about the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the palm-leaf transmission it is called a *pāyiram*, without the name of the author, or the *uraiyācīriyar pāyiram*, that is, the ‘preface by the commentary teacher’, i.e. by ḷampūraṇār who is the oldest commentator of the *Toḷkāppiyam* tradition. In some late paper manuscripts we find the first designation as *ciṛappuppāyiram*, as becomes the print standard, and in T.V. Gopal Iyer’s edition of 2003, then, the identical verse is headed as *ciṛappuppāyiram* as it precedes ḷampūraṇār’s commentary and as *potuppāyiram* (‘general preface’) as it precedes Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar’s commentary.

**10** The two earliest discussions are found in Nakkīraṇ’s commentary on the *Ḫṛaiyaṇār Akapporuḷ*, in the beginning of the elaborate discourse after the first *sūtra* that functions as preamble to the commentary, in the prefatory material to the *Nannūḷ*, and then again in that treatise itself. Their distinction between a ‘general preface’ (*potuppāyiram*) and a ‘specific preface’ (*ciṛappuppāyiram*) does not seem to have much reflection in the manuscript tradition.

here is the last one, the *avaiyaṭakkam*, because here again we see a slot for relocation. While manuscripts often integrate caveat verses into their colophons, excusing the quality of the copy with the insufficient education of their scribes and asking the audience to keep the transmission up, now the same sentiment and often similar phrases are transferred to the poet who has to excuse himself in front of the assembly, the traditional venue to present new compositions, for any flaws that may remain in his work.

In order to substantiate the preceding rather theoretical exposition I will now present two sets of examples: one is a particularly instructive special case that still has to be termed ‘literary’, because only a very small part of the manuscript evidence has been inspected so far, the other is based on manuscripts I recently happened to look at with a view to cataloguing them, most of them from the collection of the Cambridge University Library.

## 2.1 Literary examples

Author stanzas are one of the two primary sources of information about a poet, theoretician or commentator. Often the stanza does no more than establish a link between a text and a name, but there are also cases where the place of birth or residence, the family, the caste and/or further works are mentioned. The only other source of direct information are the prose part of the colophon and marginal intertitles and final titles, usually quite terse and often in a rather loose correspondence to the stanzas. The stanzas connected with Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar, the celebrated commentator of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, constitute one extreme case since there are no less than six of them, five free-floating and one with an identifiable source. They are also instructive in their partial agreement and partial disagreement and in their metrical variety, which allows some educated guesses as to their respective ages. In the introduction to his edition of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, U.V. Cāminātaiyar has brought them together under the heading ‘history of Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar’ (*nacciṅārkkīṇiyar varalāru*), identifying the verses as ‘verses of laudatory preface to the commentary’ (*uraicciṟappupāyirac ceyyuṭka!*). He then simply heads five of them by the metre, as is also often done in manuscripts, namely two Veṅpā, one Ācīriyappā and two Ācīriya viruttam, while for one he mentions the source instead, namely the *Pāṇṭi Maṅṭala Catakam*.

Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar is an outstanding figure among the great medieval commentators in that he constitutes a link between no less than three great literary traditions, the poetic, the grammatical and the epic. His commentaries survive for two of the *Caṅkam* anthologies, the *Kalittokai* and the *Pattuppāṭṭu* (hence the inclusion of verses for him in Cāminātaiyar’s preface to the latter), for the foundational text

of *ilakkaṇam*, the *Tolkāppiyam* (*Eḷuttu*, *Col* and six chapters of *Poruḷ*), and last but not least for one of the ‘Five Big Poetic Compositions’ (*aimperuṅkāppiyam*, Skt. *mahākāvya*) the celebrated *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. All of this would comprise an enormous body of manuscripts to be checked, and since the transmission for both the grammar and the epic is more substantial than for the *Caṅkam* corpus, the foray into the jungle made by the *Caṅkam* project probably just reveals the tip of the iceberg.<sup>11</sup> Notable is, first of all, that not a single verse on the commentator has come down to us with any of the still extant *Pattuppāṭṭu* manuscripts. One likely explanation for this is the fact that few among them still have a beginning or an end: only one manuscript (UVSL 1074) still begins with the *Tirumurukāruppaṭai* and that starts directly on the first line of the poem (*ulakam uvappa...*). Of the two remaining manuscripts that cover the end of the last song, the *Malaipaṭukaṭām*, one (UVSL 279, palm-leaf) simply end with the *Veṅṅpā* that usually accompanies the poem, and the other, one of the emergency paper copies of disintegrating palm-leaves made in the GOML (D-269), ends with a special verse on the songs contained in the anthology that seems to mention the scribe and the patron for the manuscript (not the text).<sup>12</sup> Different is the situation with the *Kalittokai*. Three of the verses collected by Cāminātaiyar, among them the one in Āciriappā – highly unusual in that it does not content itself with the customary four lines, but runs up to a proud 57 lines – are found in one old palm-leaf manuscript (GOML D-210) and in a paper manuscript (GOML R-5754) that is probably its copy, since the stanza text and their sequence are in close agreement. They appear as integrated into the colophon, together with a caveat verse, at the end of the *Kali* text and its commentary. There is no means of ascertaining whether this row was firmly established in the *Kali* transmission since these two manuscripts are the only surviving ones that cover the end of the text.

Before looking into the verses themselves it might be useful to add a few observations on metre as an indication of age. Of course it is impossible to date an anonymous verse with any degree of certainty, but at least it is permissible, and perhaps useful, to weigh the probabilities. The four-line *Veṅṅpā* has to be regarded as the standard format for mnemonic stanzas. The metre developed in the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century, and some stanzas might well go back at least to the late centuries of the first millennium; one of the verses accompanying the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, the one for the *Malaipaṭukaṭām*, for instance, is quoted in the *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti* (10<sup>th</sup> c.). This

<sup>11</sup> Note, however, that in the chapter on *Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar* contained in Cāminātaiyar’s earlier edition of the *Cintāmaṇi* two of the six stanzas are still missing, one *Veṅṅpā* and the Āciriappā. This suggests that neither of them was found in any manuscript of the *Cintāmaṇi* at his disposal.

<sup>12</sup> This poem is quoted and translated in Wilden 2014, 200.

means that probably the oldest surviving stanzas were composed in Veṅṅpā, and since Nacciṅārkkīṅiyar belongs to perhaps the 14<sup>th</sup> c., any verse dedicated to him might be seen as the continuation of a tradition. One should add, perhaps, that also attempts to rewrite (or re-substantiate) history more likely than not made use of this format.<sup>13</sup> Their layout is terse, easy to memorise and where necessary supplemented by ornamental adjectives as metre fillers. Ācīriyappā is of course the metre of the oldest heritage. To have it composed in the second millennium almost certainly implies a political statement. In 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the final period of glory for Maturai and classical learning under Pāṅṅṅiya aegis, it might be meant precisely to forge a link between Nacciṅārkkīṅiar, the *Caṅkam* corpus and the second Pāṅṅṅiya dynasty. As for Ācīriya viruttam, it is one of the complicated later metres en vogue when after the fall of Vijayanagara and the independence of the Nayaks there was a resurrection of traditional Tamil culture, and thus was perhaps employed in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It also comprises four lines, but far longer ones, which means the amount of information is not at all greater than in a Veṅṅpā but there is far more space for ornamentation and mere laudatory phrases, or, worded differently, that there is ample space to display poetic skills.

The first verse to be quoted<sup>14</sup> is the memorable and informative standard Veṅṅpā, so far not found in any manuscript (that is, neither with the *Pattuppāṅṅṅu* nor with the *Kalittokai*). It was found, according to Cāminātaiyar, in a manuscript of the *Tirukkuraḷ* with Parimēlaḷakar's commentary from Tiruvāvaṅṅuturai Mutt in a series of further mnemonic stanzas, i.e., the ones enumerating the texts assembled in the *Eṅṅuttokai*, the *Pattuppāṅṅṅu* and the *Kiḷkkaṅṅakku*.<sup>15</sup>

*pāra+ tolkāppiyamum pattupāṅṅṅum kaliyūm*  
*āra+ kuṅṅuntokaiyuḷ aiṅṅṅāṅṅkum – cāra+*  
*tīru+ taku mā muṅṅi cey cintāmaṅṅiyum*  
*virutti nacciṅārkkīṅiyamē.*

**13** A case in point is the author stanza of the *Kalittokai*, discussed in Wilden 2017a; see also the introduction to the new critical *Kali* edition by T. Rajesvari (p. li–lii).

**14** In all transcriptions from Tamil that follow the plus sign (+) is used to indicate geminated consonants and a tilde (~) stands for the gliding consonants *y* and *v*.

**15** This shows us, incidentally, that at least smaller collections of stanzas existed. An extant case in point is one of the *Kiḷkkaṅṅakku* mss. of the UVSL (885, fol. 1a) where on a prefixed folio we find the three standard Veṅṅpās connected with the three classical anthologies. In fact the back of this folio is blank and the next page again begins counting from 1. This means that either the folio has come from elsewhere or, perhaps more likely, that it was added as an afterthought and could be formally integrated only by being redundant on numbering.

On the weighty *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Pattuppāṭṭu* and *Kali*  
and on five [times] four in the ornamental *Kuṟuntokai* and on the  
essential *Cintāmaṇi* made by the brilliant great sage (Tirutakkaṭēvar)  
[are] the elaborate commentaries [attributed] to Nacciṇārkkīyār.

So here the stanza gives just the name of the commentator and the commentaries made by him, including one on 20 verses of the *Kuṟuntokai*. This latter one has never been seen in living memory, but its existence has always been taken for granted by the tradition, precisely on the strength of the Veṅṅā. I have even heard, from my late and lamented teacher T.V. Gopal Iyer, that ‘some say’ once there was a commentary by Nacciṇārkkīyār’s predecessor Pērācīriyār on almost the whole of the *Kuṟuntokai*, except for the last 20 stanzas, which is why Nacciṇārkkīyār had to take them up. This sounds like a trope imitating the story of the *Tolkāppiyam*, where Nacciṇārkkīyār’s commentary on the *Poruḷ* section just covers the chapters that had been left off by Pērācīriyār (with the famous exception of the *Ceyyūḷiyal* for which we have commentaries by both). However, what comes closest to a written source for this story is another verse, the 57-line Ācīriyappā.

The stanzas quoted in what follows are given as far as possible in the wording found in the *Kali* manuscripts; for a critical apparatus collating also the versions from Cāminātaiyār’s *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition and that from the early *Kali* editions, see Wilden 2014, 187ff. Since the full text and translation for the 57-line Ācīriyappā are also found there, suffice it here to quote the lines of interest to the current argument.<sup>16</sup> In GOML D-210, fol. 332a, line 9, the Ācīriyappā just follows the final title of *Mullai* plus Nacciṇārkkīyār’s commentary, i.e., the end of the text. Distributed over the first 40 lines we find praise for the known commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam*, *Pattuppāṭṭu*, *Kalittokai* and *Cintāmaṇi*. Lines 41–45, then, continue with the story about the *Kuṟuntokai* commentary.

*nal +ariv'-uṭaiya tol pēr ācān*  
*kalviyum kāṭciyum kāciṇi ~ariya+*  
*poruḷ teri kuṟuntokai ~irupatu pāṭṭiṟk'*  
*itu poruḷ enṟavan eḷutāt' oḷiya*  
*~itu poruḷ enṟatark' ērpa ~uraittum*

45

<sup>16</sup> The amount of variation between the two *Kali* manuscripts and Tāmōtarampiḷḷai’s *editio princeps* show clearly that he must have had another source, i.e. *Kali* manuscripts lost or incomplete today. Cāminātaiyār’s version in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition, however, follows Tāmōtarampiḷḷai so closely that either he perused the same source(s) or copied from the former’s *Kali* edition (as was done by all the later *Kali* editors).

when scholarship and insight  
of the old great teacher possessing good knowledge  
was left unwritten, He, thinking this to be the meaning of the twice ten songs  
in the *Kuṛuntokai* where meaning [yet] has to be understood, for the world to know,  
made a commentary in order to take charge of expressing this meaning,

So here we see an allusion to at least some of the elements reported by T.V. Gopal Iyer. The *pēr ācaṅ* of the stanza evidently has been taken to refer to Pērācīriyar, the commentator, interpreting *ācāṅ* as a non-honorific and more contracted form of the same Sanskrit loan word *ācārya*. That part of that scholar's knowledge on the *Kuṛuntokai* was left unwritten might imply that the rest had been written down (but is now lost, which is of course perfectly possible). Finally, for the twice ten stanzas in the *Kuṛuntokai* that were left off Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar wrote the commentary (now also lost).

The rest of the Ācīriyappā fleshes out the information on the person of Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar:

*taṅ tamīl terinta vaṅ pukaḷ maṛaiyōṅ*  
*vaṅṭ' imir cōlai maturā puri taṅil*  
*eṅ ticai viḷaṅka vanta vācāṅ*  
*payiṅṛa kēlvi pārattuvācaṅ*  
*nāṅ maṛai tuṅinta nārporuḷ ākiya* 50  
*tūya ṅāṅam iṛanta civa+ cuṭar*  
*tāṅē ~ākiya taṅmai ~āḷaṅ*  
*naviṅṛa vāymai nacciṅārkkīṇiyāṅ*  
...  
*vāḷi vāḷi ~im maṅ-micai yāṅē.*

the liberally praised **brahmin** to whom cool Tamil was clear,  
inhabitant who came, for the eight directions to shine,  
from **Maturai city** with groves where bees hum,  
**Bhāradvāja** of practiced transmission,  
who is the four meanings resolved in the four Vedas,  
the man of a nature that is Śiva's glow  
itself, who traversed pure knowledge,  
**Nacciṅārkkīṇiyāṅ**, of practiced truthfulness,  
...  
may he live, may he live on this earth.

Where the Veṅpā gave the mere name, here we find a variation of the name, non-honorific and with a long vowel in the last syllable, Nacciṅārkkīṇiyāṅ – further variations are found in other verses and in the colophons – and he is identified as a Brahmin of Bhāradvāja gotra hailing from Maturai. What follows in the *Kali* manuscripts is one further Veṅpā:



*tolkāppiyattin̄ tokutta poruḷ aṇaittum*  
*ellārkkum oppa iṇit' uraittāṇ – col +ār*  
*maturai naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ mā maṛaiyōṇ kalvi*  
*katirin̄ cuṭar erippa kaṇṭu.*

He who pleasingly commented, agreeable to all,  
 on the whole of the accumulated meaning/matter of the *Tolkāppiyam*  
 [is] Naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ from Maturai filled with words, a great Brahmin,  
 having seen [it], for the lustre of the beams of [his] erudition to shine.

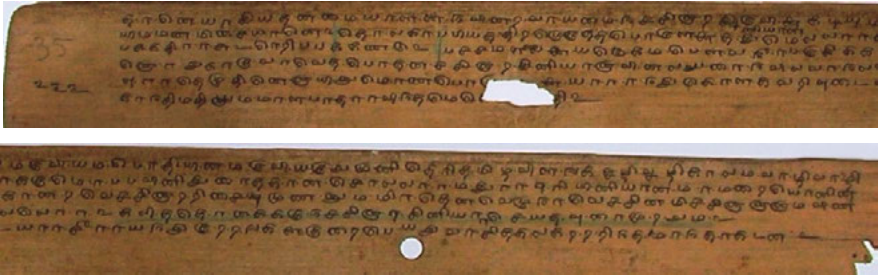
Here there is confirmation of the fact that Naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ (here with short *a*) would have been a Brahmin from Maturai. What is interesting is that the verse does not mention the commentary on the *Kalittokai*, as one would expect in a *Kali* manuscript, but only the one on the *Tolkāppiyam*, and that, too, in slightly surprising terms, since we know well that it is not complete. To give the author the benefit of the doubt, however, we may assume that the ‘whole’ here refers to the fact that the commentary covers all three sections, *Eḷuttu*, *Col* and *Poruḷ*, even if the latter is incomplete.

One more stanza is added by the manuscript, this one in Āciriyaivirttam:

*paccai māl aṇaiya mēkam pauvam nīr paruki+ kāṇṇa*  
*~eccin̄āl ticiayum uṇṇum amirteṇa ~eḷu-nā vecciṇ*  
*miccil nāl-nāḷum viṇṇōr nukarkuvar vēta pōtan̄*  
*naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ nāvil nal +urai navilavar nallōr.*

Good people study the good commentary from the tongue of Naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ,  
 knowledgeable in the Vedas of the celestials, who daily enjoy the remainder  
 from the heat of the one with seven tongues (Agni), like ambrosia, absorbed by all the direc-  
 tions from the excess that drips after the green, Māl-like clouds have drunk from the ocean.

No further information can be gleaned from this, just an elaborate praise of the commentator, alluding to his Brahmin origin by emphasising his knowledge of the Veda, and to Vedic sacrifice that is drunk by the gods. As mentioned above, the four lines in this metre are far longer and leave ample space for poetic embellishment. In the *Kali* palm-leaf manuscript, this is followed by a brief final colophon clause stating that the commentary to the *Kali* made by Naccin̄ārkkiniyaṇ ended there. Afterwards we get a fourth verse, a *caveat* in the form of a *Veṇṇpā* and then a final blessing. The paper copy follows suit, except that the caveat *Veṇṇpā* is truncated and followed by another blessing.



**Fig. 1:** GOML D-210, fol. 233b: end of the Ācīriyappā in line 2, Veṅṅā up to line 3, Ācīriyaviruttam up to middle of line 4, colophon clause, caveat beginning line 5, blessing line 6. © Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai, India.

To sum up the situation, manuscript evidence for the verses connected with the name of Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar has been surveyed from the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, where none of the extant manuscripts contains any verse on the commentator, and from the *Kalittokai*, where two manuscripts do. One palm leaf (GOML D-210, fol. 233a+b, see Fig. 1) is closely followed by one paper copy from the same library (GOML R-5754, image 250f.). Of the six stanzas collected by Cāminātaiyar in his *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition, three have been quoted there in the colophon, namely the long Ācīriyappā, one Veṅṅā and one Ācīriyaviruttam. If we now look at Tāmōtaram piḷḷai’s *editio princeps* of the *Kalittokai*, printed in 1887, we find all three of them included at the beginning. The Ācīriyaviruttam has become ‘praise of the commentary scholar’ (*uraiyācīriyar cīrappu*). The Ācīriyappā has become the laudatory preface (*cīrappuppāyiram*). The Veṅṅā has been relegated to the editor’s preface. The caveat has not been included at all.

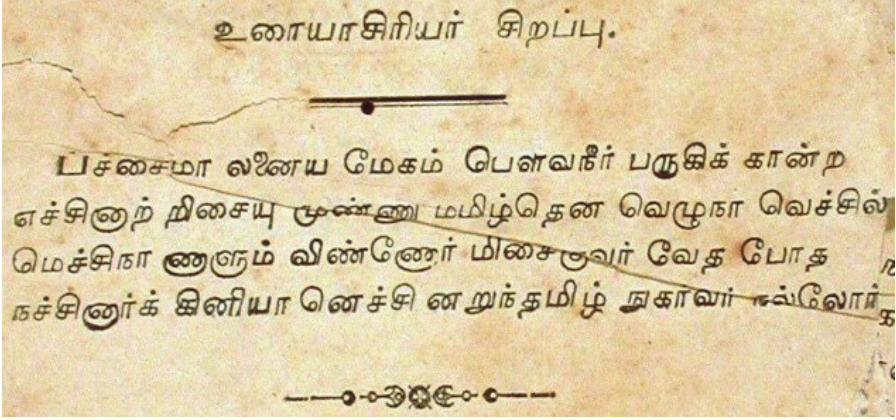


Fig. 2: Kalittokai edition, Tāmōtarampiḷlai 1887: the Ācīriyaviruttam as *uraiyācīriyar cīrappu*.

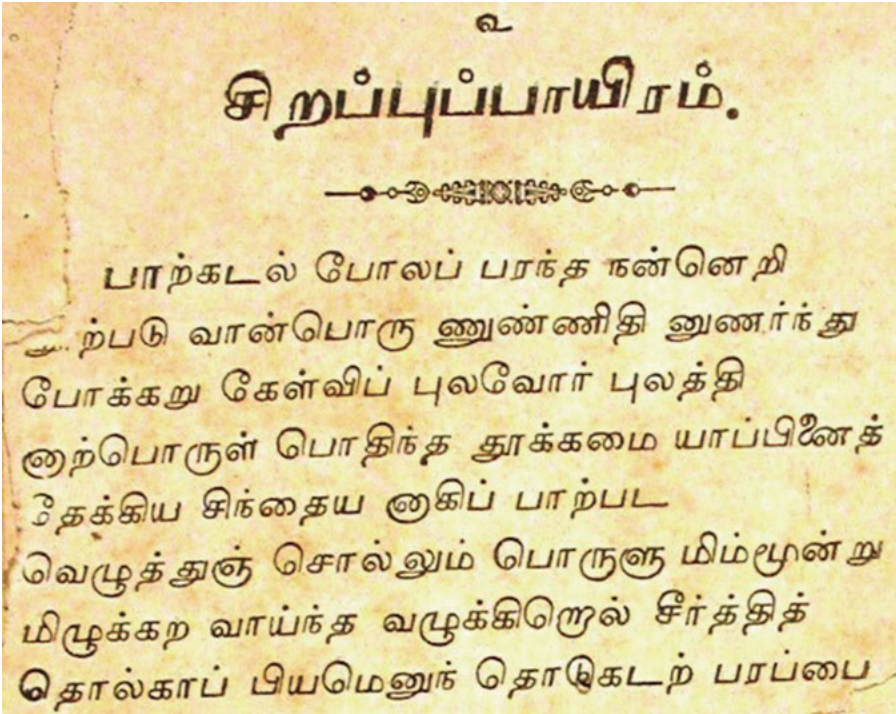
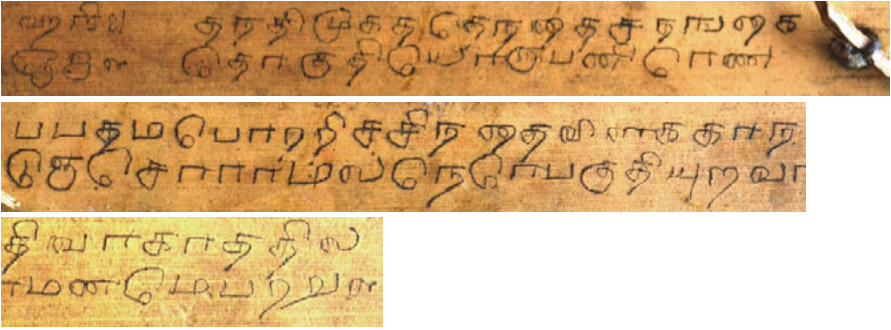


Fig. 3: Kalittokai edition, Tāmōtarampiḷlai 1887: the Ācīriyappā (beginning) as *cīrappupāyiram*.

## 2.2 Manuscript examples

In order to illustrate the variety of genres that are endowed with stanzas the third part of this paper will deal with examples from random manuscripts I chanced to come across in recent years, one from the Royal Library of Copenhagen and five from the Tamil manuscripts of the Cambridge collections (which are not very numerous – less than 50 items).

The first verse appears on an unnumbered folio prefixed to the Copenhagen manuscript of the earliest in a long line of poetic Thesauri from the Tamil literary tradition, the *Tivākaram*, of perhaps the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Royal Library Copenhagen Cod. Tam. 45 (Fig. 4):<sup>17</sup>



**Fig. 4:** Copenhagen Tam. 45, unnumbered head folio: Venṇpā. © Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen: Cod. Tamil. 45.

*tantimukatt' entai cataṅkai+ patam pōrri+*  
*cintai viḷakk' ām tivākaraṭṭil [l. 1] [vanta]*  
*tokuti -oru pa[n]nirenṇum cōrāmaḷ nēre*  
*pakuti -uṟavar maṇamē parru.[l. 2]*

Praising the bell-stringed feet of the elephant-faced one's father,  
 straight, without relinquishing the unique twelve sections  
 that come in the *Tivākaram* that is a lamp to the mind,  
 grasp [it] o minds of those who will partake.

Here we are back again to the standard Venṇpā format. No author is mentioned, but the title is named along with the number of chapters, i.e. twelve. Moreover, there is

<sup>17</sup> On the function and the history of such poet's dictionaries, see Chevillard 2010.

reference to a deity, in other words, we see here what I above termed a portmanteau verse fulfilling at the same time the functions of an invocation and of a colophon stanza. The god to be praised by the reader (addressed as *maṇamē*, ‘o mind’) is Śiva, described as the father of Gaṇeśa. The elephant god becomes a very popular addressee for *kāppu* verses, for the first time perhaps seen in the first *kaṭavuḷ vaṇakkam* of the roughly contemporaneous *Pārataveṇṇpā*.<sup>18</sup> Although at least the manuscript referred to does not say so – to be sure, one would have to check many more manuscripts of this popular text – the verse is printed as a *kāppu* in the *editio princeps* of 1840.

A similar verse is found in the first numbered folio of Cambridge Add.2573 (Fig. 5), a multiple-text manuscript that begins with a *Paḷamoḷi Viḷakkam*, alias Taṇṭalaiyār Catakam, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century poem by Cāntaliṅkak Kavirāyar, this one not in Veṇṇpā, but something that might be Ācīriyaviruttam.

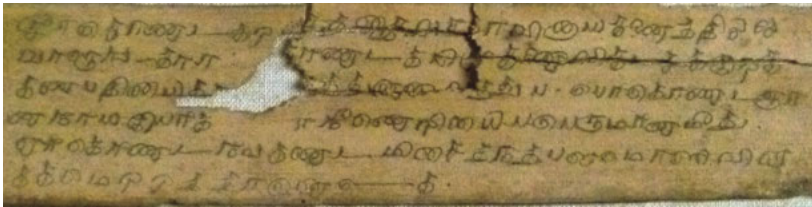


Fig. 5: Cambridge Add.2573 fol. 1 a: Ācīriyaviruttam. © Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

*cīr koṇṭa karpakattai vātāvi ṇāyakaṇai+ tillai[1. 1] vā[1]um  
 kār koṇṭa karimukaṇai vikaṭa cakkura+[1. 2] kaṇapatiyai+ karuttu[ vaittu[m]  
 pēr koṇṭa ṇā[1. 3]ṇam nāyaki pāka[n] nī[ neri ~[em]+ perumāṇ mītu[1. 4]  
 ēr koṇṭa nava-kaṇṭam icai-tanta pa[1]amo[1]i viḷa[1. 5]kkam ērra+ tāṇē.*<sup>19</sup>

**18** Incidentally, the *Pārataveṇṇpā* is printed with three verses of *kaṭavuḷ vaṇakkam*, thus perhaps providing the first instance of what the theoreticians named a *Kāppumālai* (cf. n. 9). The first Veṇṇpā runs thus:

*ōta viṇai akalum oṅku pukaḷ perukum  
 kātal poruḷ anaittum kaikkūṭum citap  
 paṇi kōṭṭu māl varai-mēl pāratap pōr tiṭṭum  
 taṇi kōṭṭu vāraṇattin tāḷ.*

‘Bad karma departs, high fame increases,  
 love [and] wealth all succeed –

at the feet of the elephant with the single tusk  
 who writes about the *Bhārata* war on the vast mountain with cool dewy peaks.’

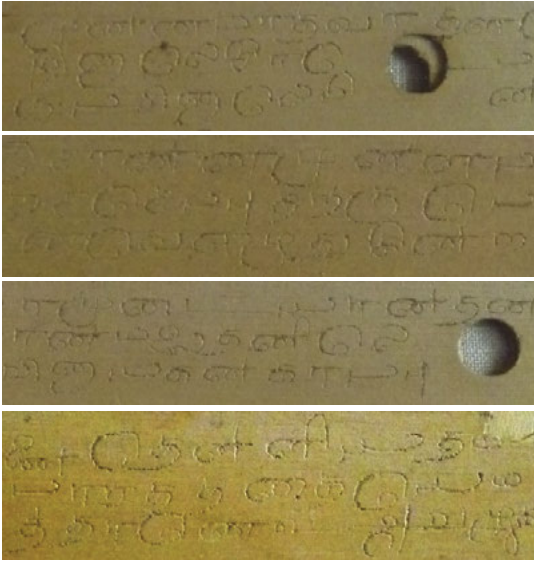
**19** Here in the text a number of corrections are necessary, most of them obvious, with the exception of the third line where the manuscript reads *neriyai perumāṇ*, emended with the help of the printed text into *neri eṇperumāṇ*.

In our mind let us place the excellent wish-fulfilling tree, the lord of Vātāvi,  
the cloud[-coloured] elephant-faced one who lives in Tillai, Kaṇapati with the mischievous  
discus,

so that the *Paḷamoḷi Viḷakkam* – sung on the nine beautiful continents, on our great lord  
of the long path who has as a part the famous lady of knowledge – may sound in praise.

Here the element of reception is missing. Gaṇeśa is indirectly implored to help the poet (speaking of himself in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural) accomplish the poem to the honour of Śiva. This poem and the two following ones are printed as *kāppu*, again presumably constituting a minimal *Kāppumālai*. There is a *śleṣa* in the first line, namely either *vātāvi nāyakaṇ*, as read by the edition, or *vātā viṇāyakaṇ*, ‘the untorn Viṇāyaka’, as is suggested by the alveolar *ṇ* in the manuscript version.

The next verse is prefixed on an extra folio to a so far unidentified version of the *Pāratam*, a *Mahābhārata* in Tamil, Cambridge Add.299, again a simple four-liner, but in a longer metre (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6:** Cambridge Add.299, unnumbered head folio; no soot left in the Ācīriyaviruttam. © Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

*muṇṇa mā tavarkaḷ coṇṇa muḷḷa mā muṭaiyāṇ*  
*taṇṇai teḷḷiya tami*[1.]*ḷiṇālē cīrpera+ cepputarku*  
*poṇṇmalai taṇilē pāratattaiyē ma*[1.]*ruppiṇālē*  
*miṇṇavē ~eḷutukiṇṇa viṇāyakaṇ kāppu+ tāṇē.*

Protection itself [is] Viṇāyakaṅ who writes flashingly  
 with [his] tusk the *Pāratam* on the golden mountain itself,  
 in order to speak excellently in Tamil to make it clear to the one  
 with a thorny big palm-leaf umbrella, spoken about by the great ascetics of old.

Here we have yet another verse dedicated to Gaṇeśa, clearly mirroring the one from the *Pārataveṅpā* cited in note 18. The person for whose benefit the elephant god writes is presumably the legendary author of the Sanskrit epic, Vyāsa, but it is not clear why he would be described as the one with the palm-leaf umbrella.

The same topos of the god writing with his tusk as a stylus is found yet again with the most famous Tamil version of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Villipāratam*, composed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Villiputtūrālvār. This popular text (or rather part of it) is preserved in two manuscript copies in the Cambridge collections. Both are quoted here to show the deviations between the two versions, the first from an unnumbered prefixed folio in Cambridge Add.1572 (Fig. 7), the other on the title folio itself of Cambridge Corpus Christi, Oriental Box 38, item 1 (Fig. 8).

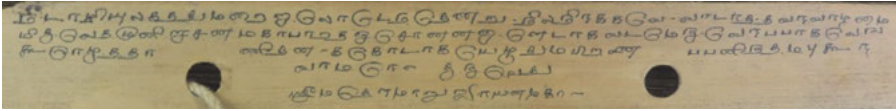


Fig. 7: Cambridge Add.1572, head folio. © Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

*nīṭ' āli ~ulakattu maṛai nāloṭ' ēnt' enru - nilam nirkkavē*  
*vāṭāta tavar vāṭmai [1. 1] miku vēta munirācaṅ makāpāratam conṇa nāl*  
*ēṭ' āka vaṭamēru verpp' āka vem [1. 2] kūr eḷuttāṇi taṅ -*  
*kkōṭ' āka ~eḷutum pīraṇai+ paṇint' ampu kūr[1. 3]vām arē.*

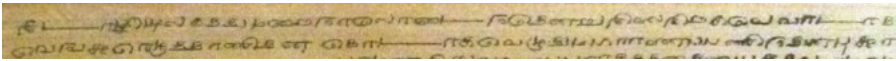


Fig. 8: Cambridge Corpus Christi, Box 38, item 1, title folio. © Cambridge Corpus Christi College.

*nīṭ' āli ~ulakattu maṛai nāloṭ' aint' enru nilai nirkavē*  
*vāṭāta tava vāṭmai miku vēta munirācaṅ māpāratam conṇa nāl*  
*ēṭ' āka vaṭamēru verp' āka[1. 1] vem kūr eḷuttāṇi taṅ*  
*kōṭ' āka ~eḷutum pīraṇai+ paṇint' anpu kūr vām arō.*

Ah, we are full of love, humbling ourselves before the lord who writes with his tusk  
 as a cruel sharp stylus, while there is the Northern Mēru mountain as a palm-leaf,  
 on the day the *Māpāratam* is told by the king of Veda sages ample in truthfulness, of unfading  
 penance,  
 so that it may stand fast as fifth with the four Vedas in the world [fenced] by the vast ocean.

Here it is obvious that the first version is full of copying mistakes and moreover betrays an oral substratum where the distinction between the two type of *r* consonant, *periya* and *cinna ra* (= *r* or *r̥*) is blurred. The only interesting deviation concerns the title of the text, the first a direct transposition of the Sanskrit word *mahābhārata*- into Tamil, the other a translation of the adjective Sanskrit *mahā* into Tamil *mā*. The tone is far more devotional and might be connected with an agenda, since it tries to establish the *Pāratam* as the fifth Veda. Its position in the transmission of the text, however, will need further study. It has been printed as the first of two *kāppu* in the *Villipāratam*.

The second of the two copies, the one from Corpus Christi with the verse on the title page, is prefixed with yet another stanza on an unnumbered folio:

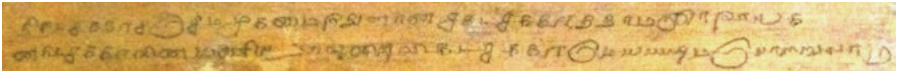


Fig. 9: Cambridge Corpus Christi, Box 38, item 1, head folio. © Cambridge Corpus Christi College.

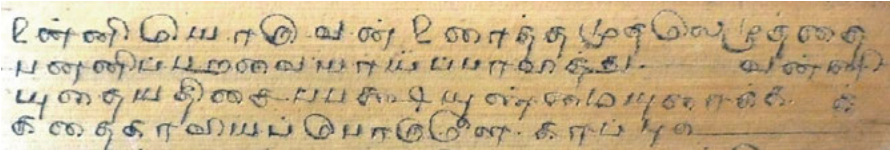
*tika| taca+ karam cem mukam aint' uḷāṅ*  
*cakaṭa cakkara+ tāmarai nāyaka[. 1]ṅ*  
*akaṭa cakkara ~iṅ maṇiyat' ā ~urai*  
*vikaṭa cakkaram mey+ patam pōṛṛal ām.*

He who is with five red faces [and] ten shining hands  
 the lord with a chariot wheel in [his] lotus [hand],  
 let us praise the bodily/true feet of [him with] the mischievous discus  
 who dwells with the cow of sweet bells, with a belly wheel.

Here the meaning of the third line (the fourth in the translation) is not clear. If there is a link between the two verses, it does not seem to be the *Mahābhārata* anymore but just the praise of Gaṇeśa. However, this stanza does not originally belong to the transmission of the *Villipāratam*, but it is otherwise attested as the *kāppu* of the *Kantapurāṇam*.

To conclude with a completely different genre, the *Pañcapakṣicāstiram* is a treatise on bird omens. The Cambridge copy Add.3438 (Fig. 10), starts folio 1 with two prefixed *Veṅpās*, the first of them qualified as a *kāppu*:





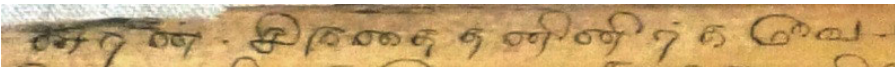
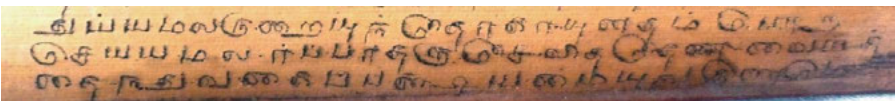
**Fig. 10:** Cambridge Add.3438, fol. 1a, l. 1–4: Venṇā. © Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

*unṇi ~oruvan uraitta mutal eḷuttai* [col. 3, l. 1]  
*panṇi+ paravai ~āy+ pāvittu – vanṇi* [l. 2]  
*~utaiya ticai+ pakṣi ~uṇmai ~uraikka+* [l. 3]  
*katai kāviya+ poruḷē.* [l. 4]

Uttering the first syllable spoken by the one to be meditated upon,  
 contemplating it as birds, let the birds  
 in the fiery(?) eastern direction tell the truth,  
 so that the message carries meaning.

Here the reference to a deity is rather veiled; presumably the ‘one to be meditated upon’, who uttered the first syllable, is Śiva. The birds from the title are mentioned, and the function of the treatise is alluded to when those birds are exhorted to tell the truth. The library of the French Institute in Pondicherry holds two texts with the title *Pañcapakṣicāstiram* (with the shelf marks TA SC-MATH 0010 and 0047), old cheap brochure prints without title pages, one of which seems to correspond to the text of the manuscript.

The second stanza, which is not termed a *kāppu*, brings in an open reverence to Lakṣmī. Here there also is an allusion to the actual text, with the birds of five kinds:



**Fig. 11:** Cambridge Add.3438, fol. 1a, l. 5–1b, l. 1: Venṇā 1. © Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

*tuyya malar uṛaiyum tōkaiyu[m] tam poṇ* [l. 5]  
*ceyya malar+ pātam cēvittēṅ – vaiyatt’* [l. 6]  
*aintu vakaip pakṣi ~amaiyum kuṇam* [l. 7; f. 1b] *eṅ tan*  
*cintai taṇi niṅkavē.*

I have served the gold-red feet of the peacock [lady]  
 who dwells in the pure [lotus] blossom, so that my mind  
 may stand in solitude [directed] to the characteristics that are fit  
 for the birds of five kinds in the world.

When read together these two verses seem to suggest a double invocation by the author of the treatise, one to the birds whose voice is vital to his trade, the other to the goddess of wealth and luck. However, the *Pañcapakṣicāstiram* is the only text taken up here that does not come from one of the literary traditions, but from a practical domain. As such it may follow another set of conventions that have not been established yet.

### 3 Preliminary conclusions

The two practical parts of the present article discussed one genre of paratext to be found in manuscripts, i.e., of additional stanzaic material, from two different perspectives. The first proceeded from a collection of additional stanzas made by an earlier scholar (U.V. Cāminātaiyar in his edition of the *Pattupāṭṭu*) and the manuscript evidence that can be found for them. The second proceeded from the stray verses present in a series of manuscripts arbitrarily chosen from different literary domains (for the most part brought together by chance in one library in Cambridge). The foremost conclusion is that in order to fully judge and understand the development that led from a fairly simple arrangement with an invocation in the beginning and one or several colophon stanzas at the end of a text in a manuscript, via the creation of various layers by adding folios at the beginning and at the end, to an elaborate system of prefatory materials in the early Tamil prints, it would be necessary to survey far more extant manuscript material in all its peculiarities.

However, a few preliminary conclusions can be drawn with respect to the construction of Tamil literary history on the strength of the material shown on one of the greatest medieval Tamil scholars, the commentator Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar.

- Most of the information available on the commentator Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar directly or indirectly comes from the stanzas, beginning with his name, to be found in about five different spellings, if one includes marginal, inter- and end titles.

- A sideline to be followed up in future research is smaller regional texts such as the *Pāṇṭi Nāṭu Catakam*, which digest such information and presumably integrate them into their praise of the glories of the particular region.<sup>20</sup>
- In print the verses are displaced and taken out of their original context, from the colophon to the beginning of the text. Some are delegated into the editor's prefaces (and some vanish altogether). At the same time literary history is written which retains and freely interprets the information but discards the sources.

Now, why would it matter whether a stanza found on the vestiges of a manuscript tradition was printed at the beginning or at the end? Because it changes our approach towards its interpretation. When a colophon stanza is relocated from the end of a manuscript to the beginning of a printed book as a laudatory preface (*ciṟappuppāyiram*), its function is re-defined. Genette might say it is transferred from a metatext into a peritext. The main function of a colophon stanza was to be a mnemonic verse, a poem composed in order to ensure the transmission of vital information in a semi-oral environment. It certainly included ornamental elements, on the one hand as metrical fillers, on the other hand as a means of paying proper respect to the text and its author. The main function of a *ciṟappuppāyiram*, however, was, as the name says, laudatory, at least in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the period of the last *pulavar* productions, but also of the vast majority of manuscripts that remain – to establish and maintain a place of recognition for the author of a poetic work within a community of connoisseurs. The former was an anonymous stanza, the latter was a verse replete with the personality of its author.<sup>21</sup>

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**20** This verse does not add anything new, but on the contrary leaves off the commentary on the *Kali* and does not mention the *Kuṟuntokai*. Quoted from Cāminātaiyar's *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition it reads:

*karai peṟrat' ṛ pañcalaṭcaṇamāṇa tolkāppiyamum  
tarai muṟṟum pōṟṟiya cintāmaṇiyun tamīl caṅkattin  
nirai peṟṟ' uyar pattuppāṭṭum viḷaṅka nica uraiyai  
varai naccinārkkīṇiyaṅ aiyaṅ pāṇṭiya maṅṭalamē.*

'The lord of the Pāṇṭiya land [is] Naccinārkkīṇiyaṅ who wrote eternal commentaries on high *Pattuppāṭṭu*, getting a firm position(?) in the Tamil academy, on the *Cintāmaṇi*, lauded by the whole earth, and on the *Tolkāppiyam*, a [treatise on the] five categories of grammar that has seen the [other] shore (of the ocean of knowledge).'

**21** In this respect the *taṇiyaṅ*-s of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *Tivyappirapantam* transmission might be seen as its predecessor. Although demonstrably continuing the form of the author stanza, they are already employed in a different manner in that they constitute the personal praise of an Āḷvār and his/her work uttered by persons important to the community.

Admittedly in practice such a distinction was not always easy and straightforward, as is demonstrated by the material in the third part. One factor is that we often find portmanteau stanzas at the beginning of a manuscript, often on folios outside the regular pagination, verses that integrate elements of the earlier colophon stanzas with information on the author and the text, with elements of invocation verses that address a deity. These in turn seem to trigger the addition of yet other verses of purely devotional content, often quoted from elsewhere. Another factor is the length of a transmission period, measured on the one hand by the centuries a text remains alive and important enough to copy to some people, on the other hand by the number of physical acts of recopying. If a verse on a text or scholar has already become part of the transmission, further readers/users/copyists of the text may want to add their own to what is already there, perhaps slightly altering the informative content according to the views of their own community, employing the metres in vogue at their own time or simply producing poetic variation. Thus stanzas accumulate.

A clearer picture might be gained from collecting and collating as great as possible a number of stanzas from a variety of domains.

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<i>Pāratam</i>	Cambridge UL Add.299
<i>Villipāratam</i>	Cambridge UL Add.1572 Cambridge Corpus Christi, Oriental Box 38, item 1
<i>Pañcapakṣicāsttiram</i>	Cambridge UL Add.3438

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