Early Tamil poetics between *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Rāgamālā*

Herman Tieken

To the memory of Godard Schokker (1929–2009), who introduced me to Prākrit and Apabhraṃśa literature and thus gave me the key to understanding Caṅkam poetry

1. Introduction

The earliest śāstric text in Tamil is *Tolkāppiyam*. It is part of the so-called Caṅkam corpus, which otherwise includes eight anthologies of poems.

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1 I want to thank Christine Mangala Frost (Oxford) and my wife Ingrid for their advice concerning the use of terminology of musical theory.

2 The earliest evidence of a śāstric tradition (as against śāstric texts) in Tamil is represented by the so-called Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions, which date from between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE approximately. Even if this date has been based on weak evidence, as a corpus the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions are indeed probably much older than any of the other sources, literary as well as inscriptional, available for Tamil. The influence of a śāstric tradition in the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions is evident in the orthography, which is marked by a striking economy that is achieved by taking into account the concept of allophony. In putting together the inventory of the Tamil-Brāhmī graphemes, which presents a selection and, where necessary, an adaptation of the North Indian Brāhmī script, certain voiced plosives of the latter were ignored, as in Tamil these were merely positionally conditioned allophones of the corresponding voiceless ones. The recognition of this feature of the Tamil sound system testifies to an advanced knowledge of, and experience in, linguistic analysis on the part of the scribes responsible for these first attempts at writing Tamil. However, as indicated, the analysis of Tamil phonology did not take place in a vacuum. The starting point was the North Indian Brāhmī alphabet, which, we may assume, was accompanied by a linguistic
Tolkāppiyam describes, or prescribes, the grammar and poetics of this literary tradition. The indebtedness of its grammatical part in Books 1 and 2 to the Sanskrit tradition, and in particular the Aindra or Kātantra school of grammar, has long been recognized (Burnell 1875: 8–20; Scharfe 1973). The indebtedness involves modes of analysis as well as terminology and shows that the Tamil tradition did not start from scratch but was in its origin inspired by earlier North Indian examples.

From the poetic part in Book 3 of Tolkāppiyam, known as Poruḷatikāram, a similar picture emerges (Marr 1985: 52–68). Some topics were borrowed directly from the Sanskrit literary tradition. This applies, for instance, to the treatment of similes (uvamai, Skt. upamā) and moods (meyppāṭu, Skt. bhāva) in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively. The borrowings may also concern details, such as the distinction between nāṭaka vaḻakku and ulakiyal vaḻakku introduced in 1.56/1003, which corresponds to the one between the pair nāṭyadharmī and lokadharmī of the Nāṭyaśāstra (13.70 ff.; Takahashi 1989: 21; Tieken 2001: 163–164); or parts of chapters, such as the enumeration of the 32 uttikal in 9.112/1614, which correspond to the 32 tantrayuktis mentioned in, among other texts, the Arthaśāstra (Chapter 15, Chevillard 2009).

In this process of peeling off layers of Sanskrit material from the Tolkāppiyam, one usually stops short of the classification of poetry into seven so-called tiṇai, or types, laid down in Poruḷatikāram, Chapters 1–5. This part of the literary theory is claimed to be a purely indigenous invention independent of any influence from the North (Zvelebil 1973: 85; Marr 1985: 15). In what follows, however, I will try to show that the literary theory is based on categories derived from a theory of music of North Indian, i.e. Sanskrit, origin. The earliest textual source for this theory is the Nāṭyaśāstra (before the 5th century CE). However, the musical theory underlying Tamil poetics, if indeed related to the one outlined in the Nāṭyaśāstra, is already far removed from it. The musical theory appears to have followed the same trajectory as the later North Indian Rāga and

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3 On this topic, see Cox’s contribution to this volume.
Rāgamālā systems. The aim of this article is, among other things, to try and situate the Tamil literary theory more exactly in relation to these various North Indian musical theories.

2. The Tamil literary theory

Old Tamil Caṅkam poetry is divided into two genres. On the one hand, we have poems depicting life in small villages in the countryside and, on the other, there are poems evoking a so-called heroic society. The heroic poems feature kings doing battle and bards trying to make a living by praising these kings’ heroic deeds. In the village poems farmers try to make the best of their love lives against all odds. For the love poems Poruḷatikāram has coined the term akam, or “interior”, and for the heroic poems the term puṟam, or “exterior”. In Poruḷatikāram the scenes of the poems, which are theoretically infinite in number, were brought down to distinct “types”, or tiṇais, that is, seven for the village poems and (twice) seven for the heroic poems. The various types were indicated by plant names. In what follows I will deal with the names given to the different types of Akam, which besides referring to plants and types of poetic scenes appear to designate specific melodic types as well. In the case of the names for the Puṟam types, though these are similar in nature, there does not appear to be any connection with melody. Most likely the names were merely invented to create a system identical to the one of Akam.

Of the seven Akam types, the middle five are assigned to specific kinds of landscapes and are named after plants or flowers typical of those landscapes. Thus, scenes involving secret meetings of lovers (punartal) are set in hills and mountains (maivarai), and are referred to by the mountain flower kuriṇci. Those describing a sulking wife (ūtal) are found in a village amidst rice fields (tīmpuṉal). This type of scene is named after the marutam tree. A woman waiting (iruttal) for her lover to show up is portrayed against a background of a forest (kāṭu) in spring, the season of love, when the mullai-jasmine blooms. Situations involving women anxiously waiting for their lovers are set on the sea front (perumaṇal) among the fishermen community and are called neytal, after the white Indian water lily. In one way or another all poems deal with the impossibility

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4 For an overview of the Tamil literary theory, see, for instance, Zvelebil (1973: 85–110) and Marr (1985: 14–68).
of either lovers or husband and wife to be together and make love undisturbedly. A specific variation on the theme of separation is that of the man travelling (pirital) in summer at midday through a desiccated jungle and longing for his wife. These poems are named after the pālai flower typical of such dried-up tracts. Apart from the above-mentioned love situations (uri), like the secret meeting and the sulking wife, each landscape is also characterized by its own season and time of the day (peru- and cirupoḷutu, or “big” and “little” time respectively). For instance, the kuriṇci scenes take place in winter in the middle of the night, and those of pālai in summer at midday. In addition, each landscape has its own native elements (karu), which include gods, local food, animals, plants, birds, musical instruments (or melodies) and occupations. Thus, a typical occupation of the mountain people is hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture, and their staple food is millet, while the god appearing among them is Murukan. Typical animals are monkey, tiger and peacock.

Beside these five types there are two more, the first and the seventh, which are, however, not associated with a particular landscape or named after a plant or flower. They are called kaikkilai and peruntinai respectively, two terms the meanings of which I will come back to later. The definition of kaikkilai in Poruḷatikāram 53/1000 consists of the description of a scene involving a young girl and a man who takes advantage of her shyness by interpreting her silence as a sign of agreement:

kaikkilai consists of a scene in which a man, frustrated and unhappy in the company of a young girl who is not (yet) ready for love, tries to overwhelm her by, alternatively, kind words and threats, and, when he gets no response, is not held back but goes on speaking to her in that way and enjoys himself making love to her.5

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5 kāmañ cālāv ilamaiyōl vayin
ēmañ cālāv īṭumpaṭiy eyti
naṉmaiyyun timaiyum enṉ’iru tirattār
rannotum avaloṭun tarukkiya puṇarttuc
col etir peraaṇ colliy inpuṟal
pullit tōṉruṇu kaikkiḷaiik kuṟippē.

Compare the reference to kaikkilaiak kāma(m) in Paripāṭal 11.135–136, which concerns young, innocent girls:
miṉnilai naṟunutan makan mēmpatṭa
kaṇṇimai kaṇiyāk kaikkilaiikkāma.
While in kaikkilai the thwarted lover is keeping a clear head, in peruntiṇai (54/1001) he is making more desperate moves. One of these is riding the rugged trunk of the palmyra palm (ēriya maṭal) in front of the house of the girl who has rejected him. In another he has completely lost his mind from an excess of desire (tēṟutal oḻinta kāmattu mikutiraṉ), and in the third his passions seem to have completely incapacitated him (mikka kāmattu miṭal). In this respect the fourth situation (actually the second in the enumeration, coming after riding the palmyra) is somewhat out of tune: it presents a lover who is too old (iḷamaitīrtiram). In both situations we are dealing with relationships between unequal partners: in kaikkilai the girl is helpless and the man too strong for her, in peruntiṇai it is the other way around. As I will argue below, these aspects turn up in the names of the two tiṇais. By placing these two situations at both ends of the series of tiṇais, the theory seems to demarcate the radius of action of the middle five, which would thus concern relationships between equal partners. If this is indeed what the literary theory wants to imply, which I think it does, it should immediately be added that on this point it also willfully ignores the poetic practice. For, in the poems the lovers are continuously frustrated — that is what the love poems are about and the men do ride palmyra trees and do try to win over very young girls.

What is strange, though, is that only for peruntiṇai allowances are made: in 55/1002, as a kind of afterthought, it is stated that the four scenes of peruntiṇai may also be found in the type(s) mentioned before.

I am not concerned here with the question of whether there is any overlap between the various types distinguished in Poruḷatikāram or what the exact relationship is between this classification and the poems. Interestingly,
the theory itself, by introducing the concept of *tiṇaimayakkam*, or confusion of types (14/961), allows for a considerable degree of overlap. A typical case of *tiṇaimayakkam* is when animals or plants of one type are found in poems of another type. Instead I am concerned with the origin of the literary theory. In this connection I want to draw attention to the fact that the names of the seven Akam types are also found in poetry as technical terms of music. While *kaikkilai* is originally a musical term — and, as we shall see, the same applies to *tiṇai* in *peruntiṇai* — the use of the plant names as technical terms of music seems to have a more complicated history. In what follows some of the instances of the plants names as musical terms in literature will be considered, beginning with those in the *Cilappatikāram* (*Cil*). This text abounds in descriptions of performances of music, song and dance, and the terms in question are often found in contexts which are to a large extent self-explanatory. As such, these instances will be helpful in understanding the short and therefore vague instances of the terms in Caṅkam poetry.

3. Plant names as technical terms from music

The *Cilappatikāram* contains several instances showing the use of the plant names *kuṟiñci*, *pālai*, *mullai* and *marutam* as musical terms. (In the *Cilappatikāram* the word *neytal* is not found as such.) Thus, in *Cil*. 3.149 we read about a *pāṟpaṭa ninṟa pālaippaṇ*. The word *paṇ* in *pālaippaṇ* suggests that *pālai* is a melody type with a musical scale of its own. In this respect 28.33 contains more specific information. The passage refers to a *pālai* (melody) played on the harp in which the *kural* note is taken as the *kural*, or tonic. The following two lines (34–35) speak

9 The music passages of the *Cilappatikāram* are clearly in need of a careful, separate study, as are the many other passages describing dancing and other aspects of folk culture in that text. As translations for the passage on music I quote, for obvious reasons, those of the musicologist Daniélou (1961). When deemed useful, beside these French translations the English ones by Dikshitar (1939) are given as well. In both cases I have adapted the transcription of the musical terms to the one used throughout this article.

10 *kural kuralāka varumurçaip pālaiyil.*

([E]lles ... jouaient ...) la gamme naturelle dans laquelle le do sert de tonique.

(Daniélou 1961: 218).

In Dikshitar’s translation: “[They played] a *pālai*-paṇ which was the natural result of taking the *kural* (basic note) itself as the tonic (*kural)*.”
of a sweet kuṟiṅci, which is produced by playing the tuttam note as the kural.\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, in the so-called ceṟvaḷippālai the kural is “joined” with (cēr) the kaikkīḷai, or the third note, to form a chord (7.47),\textsuperscript{12} and in the viḷarippālai for that same purpose the first note (kural) is joined to the fifth (ili) (7.48).\textsuperscript{13}

Both harp and flute can be tuned according to these particular scales. Cil. 3.70–94 gives a description of this process of tuning for the pāḷai mode:

Puis venait le maître du luth aux quatorze cordes. Pour établir les sept notes du mode il faisait résonner ensemble les deux cordes donnant la

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{11}]{
\textit{tuttaṅ kuralākat tōṇmurai iyarkaiyūn}
\textit{antiṅ kuṟiṅci}.
(Puis elles jouaient) le mode kuṟiṅci dans lequel la seconde note est le point de départ.
(Daniélou 1961: 218).
}\end{itemize}

In Dikshitar’s translation: “[Then they played] the beautiful kuṟiṅci-paN in the traditional mode which was the result of taking tuttam (the second note of the scale) as kural”.

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{12}]{
\textit{āṅkaṉam pāṭiyav āyilai piṇnarum}
\textit{kántan melvirar kaikkīḷai cērkural}
\textit{tintoṭaic ceṟvaḷippālai icaiy elīip}
\textit{pāṅkinir pāṭiyōr pannup peyarttāḷ}.
Or, in Dikshitar’s translation: “Singing thus in the mode in which Kōvalaṉ had sung, the beautiful damsels again exhibited with her rosy little fingers the charm of the ceṟvaḷippālai in which the kaikkīḷai was joined with kural. She sang in suitable strains a new melody-type (paN).”
}\end{itemize}

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\item [\textsuperscript{13}]{
\textit{nuḷaiyar viḷari noṭitarun timpāḷai}
\textit{iḷikiḷaiyir koḷḷav iruttāyān māḷai}
\textit{iḷikiḷaiyir koḷḷav iruttāy manṇiy ēr}
\textit{kolaivāḷay enṇāvi koḷ vāḷi māḷai}.
O soir! Dans la charmante gamme descendante que chantent les peuples de la mer vous avez mêlé la quarte à la tierce, irréconciliables ennemis. O soir! si tu peux créer l’harmonie entre une tierce et une quarte tu peux aussi prendre ma vie. Fais comme il te plaira. Je te souhaite longue vie. (Daniélou 1961: 63).
}\end{itemize}

In Dikshitar’s translation: “O evening, during that charming viḷarippāḷai peculiar to the residents of the maritime tract, you made ilī blended with kiḷai (kaikkīḷai). O evening, even as you made ilī join with kiḷai, you are able to take away my life. Please yourself. May you live long”.

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tonique et la note aiguë qui sont au centre de l’instrument, et sur lesquelles on peut accorder la tierce. Puis accordant la corde grave du côté de l’aigu et deux cordes aiguës du côté de la tonique, il accordait la sixte. De la quarte [de l’octave grave] jusqu’à la tierce [de l’octave aiguë] il jouait les quatorze cordes montrant ainsi l’ampleur du mode. Les séquences [qui forment les modes] apparaissaient dans un ordre prévu: en partant de la tierce on obtenait la gamme appelée paṭumalai. De la seconde commençait le mode cevvaḷi; de la septième le mode kōṭi; et de la sixte le mode viḷari; de la quinte le mode mēṟcem. Ainsi s’effectuaient les divers arrangements des intervalles. Sur le luth, les sons sont de plus en plus graves en allant vers la gauche; sur la flûte c’est le contraire. L’expert joueur de luth sait mêler les sons graves et les sons aigus avec les sons moyens d’une manière douce pour l’oreille.¹⁴

¹⁴ Daniélou 1961: 24–25. The Tamil texts reads:

Dikshitar’s translation runs as follows: “Then there was the master of the lute of the fourteen strings. In order to produce the seven pālai notes he would conjointly sound
The expression *mullaiyantīṅkuḻal* in *Cil*. 17.21.3 may accordingly be taken to refer to a flute tuned in the *mullai* mode.\(^{15}\)

It is tempting to connect these *paṇs*, or melodic types, with the North Indian *rāgas*. The *Cilappatikāram*, however, uses the term *jāti*, which, while not the direct precursor of the *rāga*, refers to an earlier, closely related concept.\(^{16}\) See in this connection *Cil*. 8.39–41, in which the *marutam cāti* (Skt. *jāti*) is said to consist of four types, called *akanilaimarutam*, *puṟanilaimarutam*, *arukiyanmarutam* and *perukiyanmarutam* respectively.\(^{17}\) As must be noted, the first two varieties have names, *akam* and *puṟam*, which are also found in the literary theory.

Thus, while the words *kūrįṇci*, *mullai*, *pālai* and *marutam* (as indicated, in the *Cilappatikāram* no instances of *neytal* as a term from music are found) all refer to melodic types, *kaikkilai* is somewhat out of tune. It does not refer to a melodic type but, as in e.g. *Cil*. 7.47, it is the term for the respective strings in the lute, known as the *tāram*, and the *kural*, and bringing them to the central part of the lute he would tune the *kaikkilai* part of the instrument. Similarly, touching the other stout (*sic*) string on the *tāram* side and the other two slender strings on the *kural* side and bringing them to the central part of the lute, he would tune the *viḷari* part of the instrument. Then proceeding from *ulai*, the most slender string, up to the *kaikkilai*, he would play upon all the fourteen strings and thus produce the *cempālai* note. In a definite order the notes would arise, e.g. *paṭumalaippālai* from *kaikkilai*, *cevvaḻippālai* from *tuttam*, *kōṭippālai* from *tāram*, *viḷarippālai* from *viḷari*, *mēṟcempālai* from *iḷi* — thus are the combinations effected. In the lute, the notes become lower and lower as they pass over to the left (side of the instrument). It is just the opposite in the flute. The expert in the lute can mix the low and high and the middling notes with a pleasing effect”.

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\(^{15}\) I do not think that Daniéelou’s translation as “la douce flûte du berger” is correct (Daniéelou 1961: 144). *konraiyantīṅkuḻal* in *Cil*. 17.19.3 seems to be a poetic creation after *mullaiyantīṅkuḻal*, with the *konra* flower playing a functionally similar role as the *mullai*, namely that of a flower typical of a particular season.

\(^{16}\) *Nāṭyaśāstra* 28.36 has the compound *jātirāga*. On the relationship between *jāti* and *rāga*, see Nijenhuis (1992: 38 and passim).

\(^{17}\) *akanilaimarutamum puṟanilaimarutamum arukiyanmarutamum perukiyanmarutamum nālvakaic cātiyu nalampeṟa nōkki*.

Elle s’essaya aux quatre groupes de modes: l’*akanilai*, le *puṟanilai* et le *marikiyal-marutam* [qui se jouent sur les seize cordes] et le *perukiyal-marutam* [qui a trente-deux sons]. (Daniéelou 1961: 67).

In Dikshitar’s translation: “She tested her skill in the four modes [cāti] of *akanilai-marutam*, *puṟanilai-marutam*, [m]arukiyan-marutam, and *perukiyan-marutam*.”
an individual note. The term *tiṇai* as in *peruntiṇai* is extremely rare in the *Cilappatikāram* and is not used in that text as a musical term.

If we now turn to the Caṅkam poems proper, there the word *kaikkilai* is found only once, namely in *Paripāṭal* 11.136 in the expression *kaikkilai*akkāmam. *kaikkilai* clearly does not refer to a note here but it is used in its technical, literary meaning of “love between a young, innocent girl and an experienced womanizer”.

I will return below to the use of *kaikkilai* in this meaning in a Caṅkam text. The word *tiṇai* in Caṅkam poetry has nothing to do with music. In the few known instances of the word it seems to mean “family, clan”, as in *Puranāṉūṟu* 373.28, *viḷaṅkutinai* vēntar “kings belonging to illustrious families or clans”. In the majority of instances the words *kuriṇci*, *mullai*, *neytal*, *marutam* and *pālai* refer to the respective plants. In a few instances, however, they refer to pieces of music. Cases in point are *Akanāṉūṟu* 102.6 (*kuriṇci* pāṭa, “while they sing a/the *kuriṇci*”), *Naṟṟiṇai* 255.2 (*kuriṇci* pāṭi ... kāṉavar, “the forest people ... sing a/the *kuriṇci*”), *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 408.1 (*pāṇar mullai pāṭa* “while singers sing a/the *mullai*”) and *Puranāṉūṟu* 389.16–17 (*makalir neyal kēlaṉmār*, “may your women never hear a/the *neytal*”). The first impression from these cases is that we might be dealing with songs typical of the respective regions, *kuriṇci*, for instance, as a song typical of the mountains. However, the instance of *mullai* in the phrase *mullai nal yāḷ pāṇa* in *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 478.5, which may be compared with *mullaiyantīṅkuḻal* in *Cil.* 17.21.3, seems to suggest that these songs are also characterized by their own melodic mode or musical scale: “O singer with the good harp (tuned in) *mullai*”.

As such these melodies seem to be capable of expressing certain moods. Thus, *neytal* in *Puranāṉūṟu* 194 is a song or a piece of music expressing sadness, *in casu* the sadness of widows.

From one house the sound of a *neytal* emerges,
from the other a melody (*pāṇi*) on a drum (smeared) with cool mud.
Women who have their men with them (*puṇarntōr*),
don ornaments of flowers!
Women whose men have gone off (*pirintōr*),

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18 See above, n. 5.
19 See *kuriṇci*, *marutam* and *mullai* in *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* 218–221, quoted below.
20 See also *Puranāṉūṟu* 389.16–17, quoted above: *makalir neyal kēlaṉmār*, “may your women never hear a/the *neytal*”. 

21 See above, n. 5.
pour down tears from grieving, kohl-rimmed eyes.
Surely, the one who created this world has no virtues.
This world is an unhappy place,
Only those who know its real nature
will know happiness.\textsuperscript{21}

In \textit{Puranāṉūṟu} 149, \textit{marutam} refers to a melody particularly suited to the morning. As such it is mentioned here alongside one particularly suited to the evening:

Naḷḷi! May you live long! Naḷḷi!
In the evening my men perform a/the \textit{marutam}
on their lutes
and in the morning a \textit{cevvali}.
They have forgotten the proper time for each
because of your generosity in the giving of gifts.\textsuperscript{22}

\section*{4. \textit{jāti}, \textit{rāga} and \textit{Rāgamālā}}

In these two \textit{Puranāṉūṟu} poems the melodic types of \textit{neytal} and \textit{marutam} are associated with a particular mood and a particular time of day respectively.\textsuperscript{23} These same associations are found in the poetical theory

\textsuperscript{21}ōrīneytal karaṅkav ōril

\textsuperscript{22}naḷḷi vāḷiyō naḷḷi nalḷen

\textsuperscript{23}See also Cil. 7.48, quoted above (n. 13), for a particular \textit{pālai} performed in the evening (mālai). In \textit{Pattirruppattu} 65 \textit{pālai} is associated with, or bringing about, a melancholic mood (paiyuḷ). See lines 14–15: \textit{tintoṭai nampiṅ pālai vallōṉ / paiyuḷuṟuppir panṇup peyart’āṅku}, “just as a skilled harp player on sweet-tuned strings plays the various
of *Poruḷatikāram* under the headings of *uri* and *cirupolutu* respectively. However, they are also found in the North Indian *rāga* system (and the so-called *Rāgamālā* paintings), and something similar is also found in the *jāti* system as outlined in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Indian music theory, from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* onwards, has been interested in notes and scales and their effects on, and power to produce, moods and sentiments. Traditionally, the notes and scales have served as focal points around which are brought together all kinds of situations which contributed to the production of the different moods. Thus, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the *jātis* were connected with the *rasas*. Having dealt with the production and composition of the various *jātis* in 28.37–141, *Nāṭyaśāstra* 29.1–13 continues with assigning *rasas* to the various *jātis* with reference to their dominant notes. For instance, 29.1:

The *ṣaḍjodīcyavatī* and *ṣaḍjamadhyamā jātis* can be used for the *śrīngāra* (erotic) and *hāsya* (comic) moods as the *madhyama* and *pañcama* notes abound (are amplified) in them.24

It is possible to draw up a scheme like the following (the numbers after the *jātis* refer to the ślokas in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Chapter 29).25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>jāti</th>
<th>rasa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ṣaḍjodīcyavatī, ṣaḍjamadhyamā</em> (1)</td>
<td><em>śrīngāra, hāsya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sāḍjī, ārṣabhī</em> (2)</td>
<td><em>vīra, raudra,adbhuta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>naiṣādī, ṣaḍjakaiśikī</em> (3)</td>
<td><em>karuṇa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dhaivatī</em> (4)</td>
<td><em>bibhatsa, bhayānaka</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gāndhārī, raktagāndhārī</em> (5)</td>
<td><em>karuṇa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>madhyamā, pañcamī, nandayantī,</em></td>
<td><em>śrīngāra, hāsya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gāndhārapañcamī, madhyamodīcyavā</em> (6)</td>
<td><em>vīra, raudra, adbhuba</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kārmāravī, āndhrī, gāndhārodīcyavā</em> (7)</td>
<td><em>bibhatsa, bhayānaka</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kaiśikī</em> (7)</td>
<td><em>all rasas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ṣaḍjamadhyā</em> (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*pālai* which are full of melancholic sentiments”. The word *pālai* in this passage might well be standing for a harp tuned in *pālai*.

24 *ṣaḍjodīcyavatī caiva ṣaḍjamadhyā tathaiva ca madhyapāñcamamahulyāt kāryā śrīngārahāsya yah.

25 For a more complete table, see Nijenhuis (1992: 32).
The jātis gradually lost their importance and came to be subsumed under the rāgas. Nārada’s Saṅgītamakaranda (between 700 and 1100) introduced a classification into male, female and neuter rāgas. This classification is based on the attribution of the rāgas to the rasas. Those producing the vīra, adbhuta and raudra rasas are male, those producing the śṛṇgāra, hāsyā and karuṇa rasas are female, and those producing the bibhatsa, bhayānaka and śānta rasas are neuter (Koch 1995: 30–31). In the same text the rāgas are also assigned to different seasons and times of the day (Koch 1995: 32, n. 15). A more elaborate system has been attested in Śārṅgadeva’s Saṅgītaratnākara (first half of the 13th century). The seven notes are connected with the rasas, with animal cries (e.g. śadja with the cry of the peacock), colors, gods, ancestors, seers, demons, the four castes and regions. In the same treatise the rāgas were subjected to a similar categorization as well. As in the Saṅgītamakaranda the rāgas were also linked to the seasons, the times of the day and the rasas (Koch 1995: 31–33). This whole edifice has culminated in the Rāgamālā miniature painting, in which the male rāgas, the female rāginīs and their sons, or rāgaputra, were depicted as gods or goddesses in settings appropriate to the moods of the rāga. The paintings were meant as objects of meditation (dhyāna). One of the earliest examples is the Rāgamālā by Kṣemakarṇa (16th century). In Rāgamālā the great variety of rāgas is grouped around six main male rāgas (Bautze 2001).

5. Poetry and singing

The developments seen in the Saṅgītaratnākara and Rāgamālā seem to reflect the meeting of music, (song) text and image. As I will try to show, Tamil literary theory is the product of such a combination as well. In order to make this clear, I will turn to the first three nūrpās (nūrpā is a loan translation of Sanskrit sūtra) of the Poruḷatikāram. While enumerating the seven tiṇais, the first nūrpā appears to refer to an earlier work, which on the basis of the third nūrpā may be identified as a treatise on singing and song texts.

In the very first nūrpā the number of tiṇais, beginning with kaikkiḷai and ending with peruntiṇai, is said to be seven. These same seven tiṇais are also said to have been treated before (murpaṭa kīlanta elutina). This phrase raises a problem, for this is the first time the seven tiṇais are mentioned in the Tolkāppiyam. There is no evidence of a lost part of the
Porulatikāram preceding the present first chapter either. For a possible answer to what source the text is referring to here we may turn to the third nūṟpā. First, however, in the second nūṟpā, the middle five tiṇais are set apart. Five or four of these, if pālai is excluded, stand for different eco-types (mountains, forests, rice fields and beach). Pālai, like Sanskrit aṭavī, is the wild jungle lying around or in between these areas. The third nūṟpā, then, turns to the categories of landscape (nilam) and time (poḻutu, the mutals, or “first or basic elements”), things native to the landscapes (karu) and love situations (uri) peculiar to the middle five tiṇais. The text reads:

mutal karuv uripporuḻ enṟa mūṉrē
nuvaluṅ kālai murai cirantanavē
pāṭaluṭ payinṟavai nāṭuṅ kālai.

The absence of any marker of coordination in the two parallel subordinate clauses (... nuvaluṅ kālai and ... nāṭuṅ kālai) suggests that the two clauses each have a different relationship to the main sentence. It may be assumed that the second one, found after the main verb of the sentence, supplies a kind of afterthought. This would give a translation like the following:

Upon examination of the set of three things, namely the basic elements, the things native to the tracts and the love situations, that ordering makes sense, (in particular) when one (also) takes into consideration their use in song.

It should be noted that the word pāṭal in the third line refers to songs, not to poems like those of, for instance, Kuruntokai. Thus, in nūṟpā 56/1003 the word pāṭal refers to the songs embedded in the Kalittokai and Paripāṭal poems (Tieken 2001: 163; Tieken 2009; Takahashi 1989: 21). It seems that in presenting the tiṇai system the author of Poruḷatikāram looked from the corner of his eye at songs or singing, and apparently that song tradition was characterized by seven tiṇais as well.

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26 The problem has been noted before by Wilden (2004: 190, n. 32). However, I do not accept her conclusions in the effort to establish chronological layers in the text of the Tolkāppiyam.

27 I am very much tempted to translate the last line as follows: “[they appear to form a beautiful system,] a system more beautiful than what can be seen in their use in song.”
In this connection it is important to note that the key word of the literary theory, namely *tiṇai*, “class, type”, is a loan translation of the term for the melody types, *jāti*. It may therefore be assumed that the author of the Tamil literary theory was inspired by a theory of music and songs, if not by an actual treatise on these topics, which, whether theory or treatise, may well have been the “earlier” source referred to in the first *nūrpā*. Apart from all this, it may be noted that, although the compound *peruntiṇai* is otherwise unknown, even the seventh *tiṇai*, like the other six, now appears to have been named by a term from music, or rather to include a term from music, *tiṇai*.

6. The numbers seven and five

The term *tiṇai* suggests that the music theory concerned was formulated in Sanskrit or goes back to one formulated in that language. This theory must have resembled more closely the fully elaborated systems we find in the *Saṅgītamakaranda* or *Saṅgītaratnākara* than the one in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. However, as to the relatively “meager” music theory found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it should be noted that this text was only concerned with those aspects of the contemporary music theory which could contribute to the realization of the *rasas*. Furthermore, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is only concerned with poetic conventions in a very general way. On the other hand, most Tamil scholars will consider the *Saṅgītamakaranda* and *Saṅgītaratnākara* too late for comparison with the Tamil literary theory. Both texts, however, may well refer to aspects of music which already had long traditions at the time of their composition. Apart from that, the question is: how old is Caṅkam poetry anyway? The dates assigned to Tamil Caṅkam poetry differ widely, ranging from the 3rd century BCE to the 8th or 9th century CE. However, as I have tried to show on various other occasions, the early date has never been backed up with verifiable evidence (Tieken 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). The evidence is mostly circular, that is to say, once it is accepted that the early date is not established as firmly as one wants to believe, most of the evidence put forward in its support collapses. In addition to that, if the Tamil literary

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28 Like *jāti*, *tiṇai* also means “family, clan”, as in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 373.28, *viḷaṅkutiṇai vēntar* “kings belonging to illustrious families or clans”, already quoted above, and “gender” as in *aḥrinai*. 
theory has indeed been based, directly or indirectly, on a music theory formulated in Sanskrit, here we have another piece of evidence suggesting that the tradition is not as early or as independent as it is often claimed to be. As suggested already elsewhere, we should start from a post-Pallava date for Caṅkam poetry (Tieken 2001).

With this relatively late date, the distance in time between the Tamil literary theory and the two Sanskrit treatises on music mentioned above becomes considerably smaller. In what follows, however, I do not intend to undertake a detailed comparison between the two systems. Instead I want to draw attention to the existence side by side in the Tamil literary theory of seven and five *tiṇais*, which raises several questions regarding the ways and means by which the literary theory was put together.

As we have seen, the number of *tiṇais* in the Tamil literary theory is seven. Seven is also the number of the scales formed by the *jātis*, mentioned in the Kuḍimiyamalai inscription of the South Indian Pallava king Mahendravarman I (7th century, Nijenhuis 1992: 38). It should be noted that in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the number of the *jāti* scales (grāmas) is not clear. Two have been explicitly mentioned in Chapter 28 on the *jātis*, namely the *ṣadjagrāma* and *madhyamagrāma*, so called after their first notes, *ṣadja* and *madhyama* respectively. Beside these two, the text mentions four more. Thus, in Chapter 32, 428–429 it speaks of altogether six different scales to be used in the six phases, or *sandhis*, in a play, that is, beside the *ṣadjagrāma* (in the *pratimukha*) and *madhyamagrāma* (in the *mukha*), the *sāḍava* (in the *pūrvaraṅga*), *sāḍharita* (in the *garbha*), *pāncama* (in the *avamarśa*) and *kaiśika* (in the *nirvahaṇa*). In Tamil poetics, however, the number seven is reached only by changing the criteria halfway as well as the terminology used in the classification. Thus, only the middle five, the so-called *aintiṇai*, are associated with eco-types, seasons, times of the day, and things native to the eco-types, and are named after flowers or plants. The other two types by contrast are not connected with such things as landscapes (and therefore could not be given plant names). They are just headings for a number of (more or less reprehensible) love scenes, for which appropriate names were selected, or coined, drawing from music terminology proper: *kaikkilai*, which along with *kai*, “smallness, (something in need of) a helping hand”, could possibly serve to express the young girl’s helplessness, and *peruntiṇai*, which along with *peru* “big” suggested the woman’s aloofness.
Given this situation it is tempting to conclude that the plant names were not part of the original music theory. That is to say, the seven tinais (or jātis) of the music theory were not, or not yet, named after plants. In any case, if they were, it is difficult to see why such names were not used for the first and the seventh poetic tinais as well. It may be assumed that the plant names were introduced only at the moment when music and poetry came to be considered together: they were suggested by the poetic scenes. This assumption raises several questions. For one thing, it is difficult to decide if at that moment scholars were working on the basis of an existing classification of poetry through five landscapes or not, or if the five landscapes constituted an earlier poetic convention or a category created only on that moment. I will return below to this point. Whatever had been the case, in either scenario a strange light is cast on the use in the poems of the plant names for melodic types expressive of specific moods. These occurrences suggest either that the supposed earlier poetic conventions with the five tinais had been based on a music theory as well, which already had become part of the poetic tradition itself, or that the poetry which we now have was a scholarly affair dependent on the literary theory as formulated in the Poruḷatikāram. In connection with the latter point I want to mention the possibility that the Caṅkam corpus as we now have it may well be a fairly late version produced under the patronage of the Cēras, who through this literature tried to revive an earlier literary culture of the Pāṇṭiyas of the east coast (Tieken 2001: 230–234). Such a “revival” presupposes the availability of a scholarly tradition regarding the poetry in question.

In this connection I want to draw attention to the fact that the instances in the Caṅkam poems of the words kuriṇci, neytal, mullai, marutam and pālai, if borrowed from the literary theory, do not stand on their own. They are matched by some other such borrowings. One of these is the expression kaikkilaikkāmam, “mismatched love”, in Paripāṭal 11.136, already referred to above. Some other instances are found in the Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai and Maturaikkāñci, both from the Pattuppāṭṭu. Thus, in Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai 218–221 we find tinai, meaning “melodic type”, as well as mullai in the meaning of “forest” (this meaning is vouchsafed by the preceding expression ninira, which cannot possibly refer to the jasmine):

kuriṇci paratavar pāṭa neytal
narumpūn kaṇṇi kuravar cūṭak
While the fisher folks from the sea coast sing mountain songs (kuṟiñci), while the mountain people wear garlands made of fragrant flowers from the sea coast (neytal), while the people from the forests sing songs from the rice fields, and the cultivators (akavar) from the rice fields sing (the) various melodies (pahrinai) from the dark (niniṟa) forest ...

Maturaikkānci 238–326 provides stereotyped descriptions of the five types of landscapes (marutam in 238–270, mullai in 271–285, kuṟiñci in 286–301, pālai in 302–314 and neyal in 315–325). These descriptions are concluded in line 326 with the phrase aimpāl tinai, “so far the five tinais”. Here we see the words marutam, etc. and tinai in their technical meanings of landscapes and landscape types respectively. I have already dealt with the occurrences of this set of words in Cilappatikāram. As to the implication of the occurrence of these technical terms in the other two collections, Paripāṭal and Pattuppāṭṭu, it should be noted that scholars disagree on the position of precisely these two texts vis-à-vis “Caṅkam” poetry. Thus, while the Paripāṭal is mentioned in the traditional list of Caṅkam works, modern scholars tend to place it apart as a late text. The case of the Pattuppāṭṭu is the opposite: the text is not found in the list but scholars like nevertheless to include it in the Caṅkam corpus. As I have argued elsewhere, however, both the Paripāṭal and Pattuppāṭṭu represent “merely” genres different from that of the so-called short Caṅkam poems, but are as such not necessarily later than these. Or, to put it differently, the short Caṅkam poems are not demonstrably earlier than the Paripāṭal and Pattuppāṭṭu (Tieken 2001: 170–182 and 196–200). Most likely, the latter two texts had their origin in the very same milieu as the other Caṅkam poems. The Pattuppāṭṭu is the result of the attempt to adapt the style and conventions of stanzaic Caṅkam poetry to the Mahākāvya genre (Tieken 2001: 196–200). In the Mahākāvya genre, showing off one’s learning is a common poetic device. In addition, it offers simply more space for literary games of this sort than do the relatively short poems of Caṅkam proper.

29 akavar means literally “singers” (from akavu) or “inhabitants” (from akā[m]). The present context suggests that they are the inhabitants of the marutam or rice field region.
The rareness of technical terms borrowed from the literary theory in the Caṅkam poems could after all well be a matter of genre.

Above, it has been assumed that the number seven has its origin in music, with its seven jātis (and its seven notes). As far as poetry is concerned, however, seven must have proved problematic from the very beginning. The number of recognized seasons is six and, whatever way day and night are divided, a division in seven is not found. Of course almost anything can, if necessary, be forced into a division of seven, but in the case of, for instance, the seasons and the day and night, in order to be convincing one had to stick to the traditional divisions. Furthermore, the division of the landscapes has resulted in five distinct types, not seven. Above I have already noted that it is unclear if this division into five represented an earlier literary tradition or was one newly introduced. In this connection it might be noted, though, that, if the final result was to be seven, starting with five has resulted in a strikingly neat system, neater than would have been possible with, for instance, four or six, with a middle group of five and one placed at either end. An entirely different question is why landscape with its native plants or flowers was made the primary category in the classification, rather than, for instance, season. A reason might be precisely that in this case the number had not been fixed yet, contrary to that of season or time of day, so that it could be adapted to the circumstances. In addition to that, however, it is also possible to read nationalistic motives in the classification. The Tamil speaking world is defined as a world in itself. Every type of landscape is represented in it. “Tamilnadu” may be smaller than India but it is just as varied and complete. Taken in this way the Tamil practice of distinguishing landscapes might be compared with the identifications of the individual rāgas with different regions of India (Jaunpurī, Multānī, etc.) in, for instance, the Saṅgītaratnākara.

7. Conclusion

Above, I have argued that the Tamil literary theory was inspired by a theory of music that originally must have been formulated in Sanskrit. The latter theory distinguished seven jātis, which we meet again in the

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30 On the seasons, see Zvelebil (1973: 95) and more recently Feller (1995), and on the division of day and night (in, for instance, sixteen parts), see Arthaśāstra 1.19.

31 For the cosmopolitan ambitions in the vernacular literatures, see Tieken (2008).

32 Koch (1995: 32). See also the scheme ibidem, p. 43.
seven *tiṇai*. The Tamil literary theory itself seems to expressly acknowledge its indebtedness to a song tradition. All this raises more questions than can be answered here. The questions concern the way the music theory was actually implemented and the relationship between the literary theory and the poems that we now have. The latter points need a fresh, thorough investigation of Tamil literature, in which all options are left open. This applies in particular to the question of the dating of Caṅkam literature, which has unfortunately developed into a trench war. In this connection I should, however, note once more that the fact that the key term of the Tamil literary theory, *tiṇai*, is a loan translation of a Sanskrit theory of music seems one more piece of evidence for a late date of the Tamil theory.

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