Early Tamil poetics between *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Rāgamālā*

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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[1]

The earliest śāstric text in Tamil is *Tolkāppiyam.*[2] It is part of the so-called Caṅkam corpus, which otherwise includes eight anthologies of poems.

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[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.[3] 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 *uttikaḷ* in 9.112/1614, which correspond to the 32 *tantrayukti*s mentioned in, among other texts, the *Arthaśāstra* (Chapter 15, Chevillard 2009).

In this process of peeling off layers of Sanskritic 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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tradition of its own. This means that the study of the grammar of Tamil, of which the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions are the first products, did not start independently of the North Indian grammatical tradition. This same indebtedness to the Sanskrit tradition is also met with in the later period, for which we have proper grammars of Tamil, the earliest of which is, as said, *Tolkāppiyam*.

[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.[4] 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 *tiṇai*s, 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 land-scapes. Thus, scenes involving secret meetings of lovers (*puṇartal*) are set in hills and mountains (*maivarai*), and are referred to by the mountain flower *kuṟiñci*. Those describing a sulking wife (*ūṭal*) are found in a village amidst rice fields (*tīmpuṇal*). 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 anx-iously 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 undis-
turbedly. 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 land-
scape is also characterized by its own season and time of the day (*peru-*
and *cirupolutu*, or "big" and "little" time respectively). For instance, the
kuṟiñci 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 agri-
culture, and their staple food is millet, while the god appearing among
them is Murukaṉ. 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 *kaikkiḷai* and *peruntiṇai* respec-
tively, two terms the meanings of which I will come back to later. The
definition of *kaikkiḷai* in *Poruḷatikāram* 53/1000 consists of the descrip-
tion 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:

> *kaikkiḷai* 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 iḷamaiyōḷ vayiṉ*
  ēmañ cālāv iṭumpaiy eyti
  naṉmaiyun tīmaiyum eṉr'iru tiṟattāṟ
  raṉṉotum avaḷotun tarukkiya puṇarttuc
  col etir perāaṉ colliy iṉpuṟal
  pullit tōṉṟuṅ kaikkiḷaik kuṟippē.
  Compare the reference to *kaikkiḷaik kāma(m)* in *Paripāṭal* 11.135–136, which concerns
young, innocent girls:
  miṉṉilai naṟunutaṉ makaṉ mēmpaṭṭa
  kaṉṉimai kaṉiyāk kaikkiḷaikkāma.

While in *kaikkiḷai* 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 (*ēṟiya 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 mikutiṟaṉ*), 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 (*iḷamaitīrtiṟam*).[6] In both situations we are dealing with relationships between unequal partners: in *kaikkiḷai* 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 *tiṇai*s. By placing these two situations at both ends of the series of *tiṇai*s, 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.[7] 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.[8]

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,

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Or in Gros' translation:
Amour non partagé, pas encore mûr, dans l'éminente virginité
Des filles au front parfumé et aux parures étincelantes.

[6] *ēṟiya maṭaṟ ṟiṟam iḷamaitīrtiṟaṉ*
    tēṟutal oḻinta kāmattu mikutiṟaṉ
    mikka kāmattu miṭaloṭu tokaiic
    ceppiya nāṉkum peruntiṇaik kuṟippē.

[7] On the continuous frustration of the lovers, see Tieken (2001, passim). For references to "riding the palmyra", see, e.g., *Kuṟuntokai* 17 and 32; for men trying to seduce very young girls playing in the sand, making sand castles or playing with dolls, see, for instance, *Akanāṉūṟu* 60, and Hart (1975: 249).

[8] *muṉṉaiya nāṉku muṉṉataṟk'eṉpa.*

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 *kaikkiḷai* 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.[9] 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 niṉṟa 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.[10] The following two lines (34–35) speak

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[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 varumuṟaip 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 *kuṟiñci*, which is produced by playing the *tuttam* note as the *kural*.[11] Furthermore, in the so-called *cevvaḻippālai* the *kural* is "joined" with (*cēr*) the *kaikkiḷai*, or the third note, to form a chord (7.47),[12] and in the *viḷarippālai* for that same purpose the first note (*kural*) is joined to the fifth (*iḷi*) (7.48).[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 *pālai* 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

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[11] *tuttaṅ kuralākat toṉmuṟaiy iyaṟkaiyiṉ*
   antīṅ kuṟiñci.
   (Puis elles jouaient) le mode *kuriñci* dans lequel la seconde note est le point de départ. (Daniélou 1961: 218).
   In Dikshitar's translation: "[Then they played] the beautiful *kuṟiñci-paṇ* in the traditional mode which was the result of taking *tuttam* (the second note of the scale) as *kural* ".
[12] *āṅkaṇam pāṭiyav āyiḻai piṉṉarum*
   kāntaṉ melviraṟ kaikkiḷai cērkural
   tīntoṭaic cevvaḻippālaiy icaiy eḻīip
   pāṅkiṉiṟ pāṭiyōr paṇṇup peyarttāḷ.
   Après ces chants, semblables à ceux de Kōvalan, la jolie fille fit [sortir du luth] sous ses doigts rosés, des modes légers. Elle jouait de brèves variations sur des chansons de l'amour malheureux, en prenant pour tonique la première corde du *yāl*. Puis, dans un style sans défaut, elle improvisa un mode nouveau. (Daniélou 1961: 63).
   Or, in Dikshitar's translation: "Singing thus in the mode in which Kōvalaṉ had sung, the beautiful damsel (Mādavi) again exhibited with her rosy little fingers the charm of the *cevvaḻippālai* in which the *kaikkiḷai* was joined with *kural*. She sang in suitable strains a new melody-type (*paṇ*)."
[13] *nuḷaiyar viḷari noṭitarun tīmpālai*
   iḷikiḷaiyiṟ koḷḷav iṟuttāyāṉ mālai
   iḷikiḷaiyiṟ koḷḷav iṟuttāy maṉṉīy ēr
   koḷaivallāy eṉṉāvi koḷ vāḻi mālai.
   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).
   In Dikshitar's translation: "O evening, during that charming *viḷarippālai* peculiar to the residents of the maritime tract, you made *iḷi* blended with *kiḷai* (*kaikkiḷai*). O evening, even as you made *iḷi* join with *kiḷai*, you are able to take away my life. Please yourself. May you live long".

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 *cevvaḻi*; 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]

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

īṟēḻ toṭutta cemmuṟaik kēḻviyiṉ
ōṟēḻ pālai niṟuttal vēṇṭi
vaṉmaiyiṟ kiṭanta tāra pākamum
meṉmaiyiṟ kiṭanta kuraliṉ pākamum
meykkiḷai narampiṟ kaikkiḷai koḷḷak
kaikkiḷaiy oḻinta pākamum poṟpuṭait
taḷarāt tāram viḷarikk'īttuk
kiḷaivaḻip paṭṭaṉaḷ āṅkē kiḷaiyum
taṉkiḷaiy aḻivu kaṇṭavaḷvayiṟ cēra
ēṉai makaḷiruṅ kiḷaivaḻic cēra
mēlat'uḻaiyiḻi kīḻatu kaikkiḷai
vampuṟu marapiṟ cempālaiy āya-
t'iṟutiy ātiy ākav āṅkavai
peṟumuṟai vanta peṟṟiyiṉīṅkātu
paṭumalai cevvaḻi pakarum pālaiy eṉak
kural kuralākat taṟkiḻamai tirintapiṉ
muṉṉataṉ vakaiyē muṟaimaiyiṟ ṟirintāṅ-
k'iḷimutalākiyav etirpaṭu kiḻamaiyum
kōṭi viḷari mēṟcempālaiy eṉa
nītik kiṭanta kēḻvik kiṭakkaiyiṉ
iṉainaramputaiyaṉav aṉaivuṟak koṇṭāṅ-
k'iyāḻmēṟ pālaiy iṭamuṟai meliyak
kuḻaṉmēṟ kōṭi valamuṟai meliya
valivu melivuṅ camaṉum ellām
poliyak kōtta pulamaiyōṉuṭaṉ.

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 *paṇ*s, or melodic types, with the North Indian *rāga*s. 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*, *arukiyaṉmarutam* and *perukiyaṉmarutam* 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 *kuṟiñci*, *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, *kaikkiḷai* 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

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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 *kaikkiḷai* 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 *uḻai*, the most slender string, up to the *kaikkiḷai*, 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 *kaikkiḷai*, *cevvaḷippālai* 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".

[15] I do not think that Daniélou's translation as "la douce flûte du berger" is correct (Daniélou 1961: 144). *koṉṟaiyantīṅkuḻal* in *Cil.* 17.19.3 seems to be a poetic creation after *mullaiyantīṅkuḻal*, with the *koṉṟai* 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*
arukiyaṉmarutamum perukiyaṉmarutamum
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]. (Daniélou 1961: 67).

In Dikshitar's translation: "She tested her skill in the four modes [*cāti*] of *akanilai-marutam*, *puṟanilai-marutam*, [m]*arukiyal-marutam*, and *perukiyal-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 *kaikkiḷai* is found only once, namely in *Paripāṭal* 11.136 in the expression *kaikkiḷaikkāmam. kaikkiḷai* 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".[18] I will return below to the use of *kaikkiḷai* 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 *Puranāṉūru* 373.28, *viḷaṅkutiṇai vēntar* "kings belonging to illustrious families or clans". In the majority of instances the words *kuṟiñci, 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 *Akanāṉūru* 102.6 (*kuṟiñci pāṭa*, "while they sing a/the *kuṟiñci*"), *Naṟṟiṇai* 255.2 (*kuṟiñci pāṭi ... kāṉavar*, "the forest people ... sing a/the *kuṟiñci*"), *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 408.1 (*pāṇar mullai pāṭa* "while singers sing a/the *mullai*") and *Puranāṉūru* 389.16–17 (*makaḷir neytal kēḷaṉmār*, "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, *kuṟiñci*, for instance, as a song typical of the mountains.[19] However, the instance of *mullai* in the phrase *mullai nal yāḻ pāṇa* in *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 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 *Puranāṉūru* 194 is a song or a piece of music expressing sadness, *in casu* the sadness of widows:[20]

> 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 *kuṟiñci, marutam* and *mullai* in *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* 218–221, quoted below.
[20] See also *Puranāṉūru* 389.16–17, quoted above: *makaḷir neytal kēḷaṉmār*, "may your women never hear a/the *neytal*".

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.[21]

In *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 149, *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 *marutam*
on their lutes
and in the morning a *cevvaḻi*.
They have forgotten the proper time for each
because of your generosity in the giving of gifts.[22]

4. *jāti, rāga* and *Rāgamālā*

In these two *Puṟanāṉūṟu* poems the melodic types of *neytal* and *marutam* are associated with a particular mood and a particular time of day respectively.[23] These same associations are found in the poetical theory

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[21] *ōriṉeytal kaṟaṅkav ōril*
  īrntaṉ muḻaviṉ pāṇi tatumpap
  puṇarntōr pūvaṇiy aṇiyap pirintōr
  paitaluṅkaṉ paṉivārp'uṟaippap
  paṭaittōṉ maṉṟav appaṇpilāḷaṉ
  iṉṉāt'ammav ivvulakam
  iṉiya kāṇk'itaṉ iyalpuṇarntōrē.
[22] *naḷḷi vāḻiyō naḷḷi naḷḷeṉ*
  mālai marutam paṇṇik kālaik
  kaivaḻi maruṅkiṟ cevvaḻi paṇṇi
  varav'emar maṟantaṉar atu nī
  puravukkaṭaṉ pūṇṭa vaṇmaiyāṉē.
[23] See also *Cil.* 7.48, quoted above (n. 13), for a particular *pālai* performed in the evening (*mālai*). In *Patiṟṟuppattu* 65 *pālai* is associated with, or bringing about, a melancholic mood (*paiyuḷ*). See lines 14–15: *tīntoṭai narampiṉ pālai vallōṉ / paiyuḷuṟuppiṟ paṇṇup peyartt'āṅku*, "just as a skilled harp player on sweet-tuned strings plays the various

of *Poruḷatikāram* under the headings of *uri* and *ciṟupoḻutu* 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 *jāti*s were connected with the *rasa*s. Having dealt with the production and composition of the various *jāti*s in 28.37–141, *Nāṭyaśāstra* 29.1–13 continues with assigning *rasa*s to the various *jāti*s with reference to their dominant notes. For instance, 29.1:

> The *ṣaḍjodīcyavatī* and *ṣaḍjamadhyamā jāti*s can be used for the *śṛṅgāra* (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 *jāti*s refer to the *śloka*s in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Chapter 29):[25]

jāti	*rasa*
ṣaḍjodīcyavatī, ṣaḍjmadhyamā (1)	*śṛṅgāra, hāsya*
ṣāḍjī, ārṣabhī (2)	*vīra, raudra, adbhuta*
naiṣādī, ṣaḍjakaiśikī (3)	*karuṇa*
dhaivatī (4)	*bībhatsa, bhayānaka*
gāndhārī, raktagāndhārī (5)	*karuṇa*
madhyamā, pañcamī, nandayantī, gāndhārapañcamī, madhyamodīcyavā (6)	*śṛṅgāra, hāsya*
kārmāravī, āndhrī, gāndhārodīcyavā (7)	*vīra, raudra, adbhuta*
kaiśikī (7)	*bībhatsa, bhayānaka*
ṣaḍjamadhyā (12)	all *rasa*s

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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 madhyapañcamabāhulyāt kāryā śṛṅgārahāsyayoḥ.*

[25] For a more complete table, see Nijenhuis (1992: 32).

The *jāti*s gradually lost their importance and came to be subsumed under the *rāga*s. Nārada's *Saṅgītamakaranda* (between 700 and 1100) introduced a classification into male, female and neuter *rāga*s. This classification is based on the attribution of the *rāga*s to the *rasa*s. Those producing the *vīra*, *adbhuta* and *raudra rasa*s are male, those producing the *śṛṅgāra*, *hāsya* and *karuṇa rasa*s are female, and those producing the *bībhatsa*, *bhayānaka* and *śānta rasa*s are neuter (Koch 1995: 30–31). In the same text the *rāga*s 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 *rasa*s, with animal cries (e.g. *ṣaḍja* with the cry of the peacock), colors, gods, ancestors, seers, demons, the four castes and regions. In the same treatise the *rāga*s were subjected to a similar categorization as well. As in the *Saṅgītamakaranda* the *rāga*s were also linked to the seasons, the times of the day and the *rasa*s (Koch 1995: 31–33). This whole edifice has culminated in the *Rāgamālā* miniature painting, in which the male *rāga*s, the female *rāgiṇī*s and their sons, or *rāgaputra*s, 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 *rāga*s is grouped around six main male *rāga*s (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 *nūṟpā*s (*nūṟpā* is a loan translation of Sanskrit *sūtra*) of the *Poruḷatikāram*. While enumerating the seven *tiṇai*s, the first *nūṟpā* appears to refer to an earlier work, which on the basis of the third *nūṟpā* may be identified as a treatise on singing and song texts.

In the very first *nūṟpā* the number of *tiṇai*s, beginning with *kaikkiḷai* and ending with *peruntiṇai*, is said to be seven. These same seven *tiṇai*s are also said to have been treated before (*muṟpaṭa kiḷanta eḻutiṇai*). This phrase raises a problem, for this is the first time the seven *tiṇai*s are mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam*. There is no evidence of a lost part of the

Poruḷatikāram preceding the present first chapter either.[26] 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 *mutal*s, or "first or basic elements"), things native to the landscapes (*karu*) and love situations (*uri*) peculiar to the middle five *tiṇai*s. The text reads:

> *mutal karuv uripporuḷ eṉ̠ra mūṉ̠r̠ē*
> *nuvaluṅ kālai muṟai ciṟantaṉavē*
> *pāṭaluṭ payiṉ̠r̠avai 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.[27]

It should be noted that the word *pāṭal* in the third line refers to songs, not to poems like those of, for instance, *Kuṟuntokai*. 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 *tiṇai*s 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*.[28] 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 *nūṟpā*. 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 *rasa*s. 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 *aḥṟiṇai*.

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 *tiṇai*s, which raises several questions regarding the ways and means by which the literary theory was put together.

As we have seen, the number of *tiṇai*s in the Tamil literary theory is seven. Seven is also the number of the scales formed by the *jāti*s, 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 (*grāma*s) is not clear. Two have been explicitly mentioned in Chapter 28 on the *jāti*s, namely the *ṣaḍjagrāma* and *madhyamagrāma*, so called after their first notes, *ṣaḍja* 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 *sandhi*s, in a play, that is, beside the *ṣaḍjagrāma* (in the *pratimukha*) and *madhyamagrāma* (in the *mukha*), the *ṣāḍava* (in the *pūrvaraṅga*), *sādhārita* (in the *garbha*), *pañcama* (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: *kaikkiḷai*, 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 *tiṇai*s (or *jāti*s) 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 *tiṇai*s 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 *tiṇai*s 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 *kuṟiñci, 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 *kaikkiḷaikkāmam*, "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 *tiṇai*, meaning "melodic type", as well as *mullai* in the meaning of "forest" (this meaning is vouchsafed by the preceding expression *nīṉira*, which cannot possibly refer to the jasmine):

kuṟiñci paratavar pāṭa neytal
naṟumpūṅ kaṇṇi kuṟavar cūṭak

kāṉavar marutam pāṭav akavar
nīṉiṟa mullaip paḥriṇai nuvala,

> 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*)[29] from the rice fields sing (the) various melodies
> (*paḥriṇai*) from the dark (*nīṉiṟa*) forest …

Maturaikkāñci 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 *neytal* in 315–325). These descriptions are
concluded in line 326 with the phrase *aimpāl tiṇai*, "so far the five *tiṇai*s".
Here we see the words *marutam,* etc. and *tiṇai* in their technical mean-
ings 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 lat-
ter 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.

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[29] *akavar* means literally "singers" (from *akavu*) or "inhabitants" (from *aka[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 *jāti*s (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.[30] 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.[31] Taken in this way the Tamil practice of distinguishing landscapes might be compared with the identifications of the individual *rāga*s with different regions of India (Jaunpurī, Multānī, etc.) in, for instance, the *Saṅgītaratnākara*.[32]

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 *jāti*s, 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[b]).

[32] Koch (1995: 32). See also the scheme *ibidem*, p. 43.

seven *tiṇai*s. 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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