

Comments on Suganya Anandakichenin's Translation of Kulacēkara Ālvār's
Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi.

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Suganya Anandakichenin's translation of Kulacēkara Ālvār's *Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi*, which includes a translation of Periyavāccāṅ Pillai's Maṇipravāḷa commentary, is the first volume in a series which is to cover the entire corpus of Tamil Vaiṣṇava Bhakti poetry. The second volume is Lynn Ate's *Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's Five Shorter Works: Experiments in Literature*.¹ The following is not a proper review. Large parts of the book will be passed over, among which the lengthy introduction and the Maṇipravāḷa commentary, large parts of which are mere paraphrases of the Tamil hymns anyhow. My comments are restricted to the translations of the Tamil hymns and deal mainly with cases in which Anandakichenin misrepresents the grammar or misses the point the speaker in the poem – there is always a speaker, the devotee – is making. Of such mistakes there are more than enough. I should add, though, that I do not derive any particular pleasure from finding faults in the work of others. For me the challenge is to discover what such passages mean, if not what has been made of them so far. They are little puzzles testing one's philological agility. It will become clear that Anandakichenin does not have the interest in, nor the patience for this kind of work. But as I will show elsewhere, in the field of classical Tamil studies she is not the only one who hasn't. One more remark. Though my name is included in the list of members of the Advisory Board printed in the preliminary pages of Anandakichenin's book I have not been asked to review it. In fact, I have been asked only once, more than a decade ago, for another publication by another scholar for a series parallel to the present one. At the time, however, I was told in no uncertain terms that my report was not appreciated. Since then I have never been asked as an advisor again, and this practice is now official. As can be seen in Ate's book I am no longer a member of the Board and am therefore also no longer, directly or indirectly, responsible for the quality of the publications.

1.2

Anandakichenin (henceforth AK) presents the Tamil text of the hymns in two ways, first in the Tamil script and broken down in metrical units and after that in the western script with the sandhi between the word dissolved. In quoting the text passages I follow the second practice. However, in the following example (1.2) AK erroneously cut up one word into two. The passage concerned reads *cem tī ... ceṅṅi vitāṅamē pōl ... parantu ataṅ kīl ... paḷḷikoḷḷum māyōṅ*, which she translates with: "Māyōṅ who sleeps ... [lying] beneath [the fire] as the red fire ... spreads ... just like a canopy to [His] head." The translation does capture the situation, but the underlying grammatical analysis is wrong. The Tamil text reads *parantataṅ*, which AK, as can be seen, divides into the verbal participle

¹ Ate's book has been reviewed by me for the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. The review will appear in the course of this year.

parantu and the pronoun *atan* (*atu* + the euphonic increment *an*), in which case we have to do with a change of subject between the *parantu* sentence, subject the red fire, and the main sentence, subject Māyōṇ, which in Tamil is just as unlikely to occur as in Sanskrit. Instead *parantatan* is to be analyzed as consisting of the past tense verbal noun *parantatu* + *an*, and followed by the postposition *kīl*, “beneath”. *cem tī* is the thing which had spread. It may be compared with *kumār* in the sentence *kumār inkē vantatu tappu*, “that Kumār came here was a mistake” (Lehmann 1993: 301).

1.3

I like to comment on AK’s translation of the phrase *iraiñca ninra* in *ayan ... ētti ... iraiñca ninra ... ammān taṅ malar kamala koppul tōnra ... anaiyil pallikollum ammān* as “the Lord who sleeps on His bed, as His navel with the lotus flower appears, the Lord who stood (*ninra*) so that Aja bows down (*iraiñca*), praising Him”. This translation does not agree with Viṣṇu’s iconography, in that it presents the god sleeping in a standing position. But then, the subject of the participle *ninra* is not Viṣṇu, but Aja (Brahmā): “the lotus, on which Aja stands,” and *iraiñca* is an infinitive of purpose (see Lehmann 1993: 261): “to bow down (and praise, *ētti*).”

1.9

The translation of 1.9 does not do justice to the grammatical construction: *tonṭar ... kulumi ... pāṭi ... ētti ... muḷavu ocai paravai kāṭṭum tiruvaraṅkattu aravu anaiyil pallikollom ... ammān*, “the Lord, who sleeps on the serpent-bed in Śrīraṅgam, where the sound of the drum reminds [one] of the ocean [and] where servants, crowding [together] and singing, extol Him.” The construction is clear: the servants (*tonṭar*) who sing the god’s praises also perform the action denoted by the participle *kāṭṭum*: “in Śrīraṅgam, where the servants who have gathered (*kulumi*), sung (*pāṭi*) and praised (*ētti*) Viṣṇu, with the sound of their *muḷavu* drums show (i.e. imitate and in that way outdo) the (roaring) ocean.”

2.2

I like to comments on the interpretation of the passage *tōṭu ulām malar maṅkai tōḷ iṅai tōyntatu ... ninaintu*, “thinking of [His] embracing the pair of shoulders of the Woman of the lotus who is like a flower”. It is unclear why *malar maṅkai*, a descriptor for Lakṣmī, has been translated as “the woman of the lotus”, and not, as elsewhere as “the woman on the (lotus) flower” (see 2.10 and 6.10; cp. *tāmarai pētai* in 3.5). For the meaning “who is like” for *ulām* AK seems to rely on the *Tamil Lexicon* (p. 58). However, the lemma in question seems to have been based on a misunderstanding of *vēyulān tōḷ*, “shoulders which move (graciously) like bamboo”.² The use of *ulām*, the participle of *ulāvu-*, made here may be compared with that in *Cilappatikāram* 7.9.2: *kaṅaṅkoḷ vaṅṅārttulān kaṅṅinaruñālal kaiyil ēnti*, “A girl ... holds a fetid cassia in her hand. Round it (*ulām*) hum and while a swarm of bees” (translation Parthasarathy 1992), and

² The *Tamil Lexicon* refers to *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* 1581. Unfortunately, I have only access to the first volume, which stops at stanza 1556.

Maṇimēkalai 25.155-6, *tiraiyulāṅ kōmuki yēnnum poykai*, “the pond called Kōmuki (Gomukhi) in which waves move to and fro”. *tōṭu ulām malar maṅkai* may accordingly be translated as “the woman on the flower with all around it (or her) trembling petals”.

2.5

This poem will have to be dealt with in its entirety:

poy cilai kural ērru eruttam iruttu pōr aravu īrttu kōn
cey cilai cuṭar cūl oḷi tiṅṅa mā maṭiḷ teṅ araṅkaṅ ām
mey cilai karu mēkam oṅru tam neñcil niṅru tikaḷa pōy
meycilirppavar tammaiyē niṅaintu eṅ maṅam meycilirkkumē.

AK offers the following translation (the bracketed Tamil words have been added by me):

My heart will truly bristle [with joy] thinking of those who bristle [with joy], as the King, who smashed the necks of the spurious (*poy*) bulls with roaring voices (*cilai kural*) and dragged the bellicose snake [out of the pond], – He from Raṅgam in the South surrounded by rock-made (*cey cilai*), solid, big ramparts glowing with radiance (*cuṭar cūl oḷi*), the black Cloud with a bow [on its] body (*mey cilai*) – reaches their hearts, [and] shines from [there] (*neñcil niṅru*).

The poems seems to play with the different meanings of *mey*, namely “body” (*meycilir-*) and “truth, real(ity)”, and of *cilai*, namely “roar, thunder”, “rock” (Skt *śilā*) and “(rain)bow”. I like to begin, however, with *cey cilai*. AK’s translation “rock-made” assumes a different word order, namely *cilai cey*, and only shows her embarrassment with the combination. However, *cey cūnai*, “tank or pond, as formed by human labour” (*Tamil Lexicon*, p. 1601) points the way: *cilai cey* refers to stones formed by human labour and is a circumscription for bricks. As to *poy* in *poy cilai kural ērru*, it is to be noted that *ēru* beside “bull” also means “thunderbolt”. The phrase may be paraphrased as “bulls which produce a roaring sound which resembles that of a thunderbolt, which they are not”; it may be translated as “the bulls which ‘thunder’”, the quotation marks around thunder rendering *poy*, “not real(ly)”. For *mey* in *mey cilai karu mēkam* the meaning “body” (“with a bow [on its] body”) is already taken by *meycilir-*, “to bristle”. *mey cilai* may instead be set against *poy cilai*, and mean “real” here: “a single black cloud accompanied by a real *cilai*, or rainbow.”

The phrase *cuṭar cūl oḷi* may be compared with *puṛam cūl kappa* in 1.8: “while (all these things) protect (Tiruvaraṅkam), surrounding it on the outside.” Furthermore, we do not have to do with the noun *oḷi*, “brilliance, radiance”, here, but with the verb *oḷi-*, “to hide, conceal”: the ramparts of Tiruvaraṅkam are so high that they surround (envelop, cover, *cūl*) and hide (*oḷi*) the sun (*cuṭar*). Finally, there is *pōy* in *tikaḷa pōy meycilirppavar*. Following the text editor Annangaracharya, AK takes the verbal participle *pōy* as an expletive. Modern Tamil does indeed know of a particle *pōy* “used in the sense ‘of all

persons or of all things” (see the *Cre-A Dictionary*, p. 1050). However, I do not see how this meaning can be fitted in in the present context. Instead, *pōy* means here what it also otherwise means, namely “after (they) have go”, or more in particular, “after they have passed away, died”: “those people who after they have died go on bristling.” We are dealing with literary topos found in, for instance, *Sattasāi* 635:

As the good wife prepared
To join her beloved on the pyre
He came back to life,
And her widow’s finery
Turned to that of married bliss.
(Translation Khoroché and Tieken 2009: 169. no. 570)

What follows is a rough paraphrase:

My heart bristles with joy as I think of those who after they have died (*pōy*) continue to bristle with joy (*meycilirppavar*) as that single black cloud accompanied by a real rainbow (*mey cilai*) is still shining (*tikalā*) deep in their hearts (*neñcil ninru*),³ that cloud which is (no one else but) the king who had broken the necks of the bulls which “thundered” (*poy cilai kural*) and had pulled out of the water the aggressive snake, (the king also known as) Lord of southern Araṅkam surrounded by strong ramparts made of bricks (*cey cilai*), which are so high that they cover and hide the sun (*cuṭar cūl oḷi*).

3.8

In the first line the “I” in the poems says “Everyone is a demon to me, and I am a demon to everyone”. After that the text, in Tamil, continues: *itu pēci eṇ āyanē arāṅkā eṇru alaikkirēn*, with *itu pēci eṇ* filling up the first line and with *āyanē* beginning the second. AK translates “Why speak of it? I am calling out saying, ‘O Cowherd! O Raṅga!’” However, the construction of a verbal participle (*pēci*) followed by the interrogative *eṇ*, “why”, is otherwise unknown. Instead *eṇ*, meaning “my”, is to be construed with *āyanē* in the following line: “having said this, I call out ‘O, **my** cowherd ...’.” Compare 5.6 (*ammā uṇ# antam il cīrkkū*, “O Lord ... for **Your** endless excellence”), 5.8 (*ammā uṇ# ... cīr*, “Lord ... **Your** gracefulness”), 5.3 (*ammā eṇ# pāl nōkkāy*, “O Lord ... You will not look in **my** direction”) and 5.7 (*ammā eṇ#cittam ... uṇ pālē vaippan*, “O Lord ... I will place **my** mind on You”) (# denotes a caesura in a metrical line).

4.1

AK’s translation of *kūṇ ēru caṅkam iṭattāṇ* is ambiguous: “of Him who has a conch that is curved to the left”. Iconography helps out: the spirals of the conch Viṣṇu holds in his upper left hand turn to the right (Liebert 1976: 252-3), so “to

³ Note that AK takes *-il ninru* in *neñcil ninru* instead as a circumscription of the ablative, comparable to *-iliruntu*.

the left” refers to Viṣṇu’s left, or one of his left hands. The form *ṭattān* (from *ṭatu*, “left side”) seems to have had at least two related, but different, meanings. Thus in *Cilappatikāram* 17.15.3-4 *kaikkilāi piññai yṭattāl valattulāl muttaikku nalvirali*, “Kaikkilāi stood to the left of Piññai, the good Viḷari stood to the right of Muttai”, it means “someone standing to the left of”. However, as in the passage under consideration, it also means “someone with a left hand”. Thus *Akanānūru* 52.8 has *cilai uṭai ṭattar*, “men with a bow in their left hand”.⁴

4.3

I had expected a note on *pinṇiṭṭa*, “plaited”, and *tunṇiṭṭu*, “pushing [each other]”, from *pinṇi* + *iṭṭa* and *tunṇi* + *iṭṭu* respectively, and a reference to *manniṭṭa*, “to stay”, from *manni* + *iṭṭa* in 7.6.2. They look like colloquial forms, grafted on, for instance, *akarriṭṭinum*, from *akarru* + *iṭṭinum* (5.1.3), or *ceytiṭṭinum*, from *ceytu* + *iṭṭinum* (5.2.1).

4.5

AK translates *kampam matam yānai kaluttu akattiṇ mēl iruntu/ inpu amarum celvamum i(vv)aracum yān vēṇṭēn*, with “I shall not desire this kingdom (*aracum*) or the happiness-abiding (*inpu amarum*) wealth (*celvamum*) [that is] sitting upon (*mēl iruntu*) the neck of an elephant in must (*matam*) that trembles (*kampam*)”. Apparently, she took *amarum* as the participle of the verb *amar-*. It is not unlikely, though that we have to do with noun *amar*, “battle”, instead, followed by the enclitic *um*, “and”. *mēl iruntu* would then describe the speaker: “I do not desire the joy of battle, sitting on the neck of a wild elephant, nor wealth or this kingdom.” Here we have an enumeration of three royal concerns, namely battle (*amar*), wealth (*celvam*) and kingdom (*aracu*), in 4.2 only the latter two are mentioned: *vān ālum celvamum maṇ aracum yān vēṇṭēn*, “I do not desire the wealth of ruling over heaven, nor being king on earth.”

4.6

The last part of 4.6 reads: *vēṅkaṭattul/an(ṇ)añaiya poṇ kuvaṭu ām arum tavattan āvēnē*, which AK translates as “I shall have the rare [fruit of] *tapas* of becoming such a golden mountain as Vēṅkaṭa”. As to *aṇ añaiya* (*aṇṇañaiya*), she refers to the editor Uttamūr (1999), who discusses three possibilities, namely that it presents a combination of the synonyms *aṇṇa* and *añaiya*, that it is a corruption of *aṇṇatu añaiya*, “like such”, or a corruption of *aṇru añaiya*, in which *aṇru* would be an expletive. With all this, it remains unclear how AK herself interprets the form. What she does do, though, is, she ignores the locative ending *uḷ* in *vēṅkaṭattul*, “on the Vēṅkaṭam mountain”. Through his ascetic practices the speaker will not become a mountain like Vēṅkaṭam, but a mountain peak such as is found *on* Vēṅkaṭam. In this connection I may refer to 4.10 *tiruvēṅkaṭam ennum/ emperumān poṇmalai mēl ētēnum āvēnē*, “I will become whatever I want *on* the golden mountain of our Lord, known as Sacred Vēṅkaṭam”. This poem summarizes the decade. Thus, in 1 the devotee becomes a heron living *on* the

⁴ Despite the availability of a variant *valattar*, from *valatu*, “right side”, Wilden (2018^a) translates *ṭattar* as “place-they” and “local people” (and *valattar* as “strength-they”), deriving *ṭattār* from *ṭam*, “place”. Collecting variant readings is one thing, savouring them another.

mountain, in 2 a fish, in 4 a *ceṇpakam* tree, in 5 a tuft of grass, in 6 a mountain peak, in 7 a river, in 8 a path, and in 9 a doorstep. (3 falls out of tune: the devotee carries Viṣṇu’s spittoon.) To return to the mystery form *an(n)anaiya*, it is possible to divide the passage *vēṅkaṭattul/ an(n)anaiya* into *vēṅkaṭattulaṅ anaiya*, with *vēṅkaṭattulaṅ* meaning “a person living on (*uḷaṅ*) on the Vēṅkaṭa mountain” (compare *Puranānūru* 309,5-6 : *pācarai uḷaṅ*, “the man in the military camp”⁵): “I will become a golden mountain peak just like the person (Viṣṇu) living on (*uḷaṅ*) the Vēṅkaṭam mountain.” I am not certain, though, if Viṣṇu, who is black like a rain cloud, could be said to resemble a golden mountain peak.

4.8

AK translates *pirai ēru caṭaiyānum pīraṇum intiraṇum murai āya peru vēlvi kurai muṭippān marai ānān* as “of Him who is the Vedas, Him who ends [their] grievances [as] he with the matted locks on which the crescent moon stands, Brahmā and Indra [perform] big yajnas in the [proper] manner”. “[W]ho ends their grievances” translates *kurai muṭippān*. However, *muṭippān*, whatever its form, functions as an infinitive, and *kurai muṭi-* does not mean “to end a person’s grievances” but “to perform flawlessly”. Compare *nirai tavattin kurai muṭittu* (*Kamparāmāyaṇam* 3. 2845), “had finished ... the rites of his tapas”. (Hart and Heifetz 1988: 108). Furthermore *āya* in *murai(y)āya* is an abbreviation of the participle *āyina* (see for instance *cēti āya val viṇaikal*, “forceful karmas that are evil”, in 4.9.1). Thus, Viṣṇu had become the Vedas to instruct Śiva, Brahmā and Indra in how to perform their respective large sacrifices flawlessly.

5.8

AK translates

*tokku ilaṅku āru ellām parantu oṭi toṭu katalē
pukku anri puram nirka māṭṭāta marru avai pōl
mikka ilaṅku mukil nirattāy virruvakkōṭṭu ammā uṅ
pukku ilaṅku cīr allāl pukkilaṅ kāṅ punṇiyanē*

as follows:

Again, like all those glistening rivers that join [together], spread, flow and enter the ocean [that was] dug, unable to stay outside [of it], O Lord of Virruvakkōṭṭu! O You of the colour of exceedingly shiny clouds! I shall not enter [anything] other than Your gracefulness that shines entering [my heart], see, O holy One!

It will be noted that the translation does not account for the word *anri*, “without, except”. Furthermore, AK clearly had no idea what to do with *marru*. In certain contexts it might indeed mean “again”, but not “again” in the function given to it by AK here, as if the poem provided yet another example of a previously

⁵ But Tirumaṅkai Aḷvār’s *Tirukkuruṭāṅṭakam* 17 has *pēruḷāṅ*, “He, living in (*uḷāṅ*) Pēr”.

mentioned situation. Among other things *marru* marks a change of subject,⁶ as in, for instance, *akarru iṭinum marru aval taṅ aruḥ minaintē aḷum kuḷavi* (5.1): “even though the mother rejects the child, the child for its part cries (not because of the rejection but) because it misses her former kindness” (AK: “... the infant cries thinking of her benevolence **again**”). See also *ettanaiyum vāṅ maranta kālattum paim kūḷkaḷ maittu eḷunta mā mukilē pārṭtu irukkum marru avai pōl ...eṅ citta(m) mika uṅ pālē vaippan aṭiyēṅē* (5.7), “No matter how long the clouds forget about the young plants, the latter keep looking out for towering, black rainclouds. Like these green shoots I, for my part, I, who am your servant, have fixed my thoughts on you” (AK: ... “**Again**, like them, I, who am [your] servant ...”). In 5.10, however, *marru* in the meaning “other” is combined with the interrogative pronoun *ār-um*, “anyone”: *marru ārum parṭtu illēṅ*, “I have no one else to lean on”. *marru avai* in the 5.8 might well be a combination like *marru ārum*,⁷ and mean “other things”. In that case *anri* could be fitted in as follows: “like all those things that are not able to stay outside (cannot stop themselves from plunging into)⁸ other than (except) rivers (which, whether they like it or not, eventually all flow into the ocean).” The ocean and rivers do not form proper objects of comparison for what goes on between god and devotee, which the speaker makes even more clear in the last line, by saying that, “having entered you (*uṅ pukku*)⁹ like these things (but I did not do so automatically, *pukkilaṅ*, as rivers do) (but) because of your shining excellence (*ilaṅku cīr allāl*)”.¹⁰

I must admit that this interpretation of the situation depicted in the poem merely creates other problems. One way or the other, *anri* effectively disconnects *pukku* from *māṭṭāta*, irrespective of whether *māṭṭāta* is a participle or a participial noun, and in this way the verbal participle *pukku* comes to hang in mid-air. AK “solved” this by ignoring *anri*. When all is said and done, the above is therefore merely an elaborate argument against ignoring words like *anri*. After all, we do not have to do with, for instance, a noun, which may have different meanings, but with a word that plays an important role in the construction of the sentence.

5.4

AK translates *nī āḷā uṅatu aruḷē pārppan aṭiyēṅē* with “I, who am [your] servant, shall look for the grace of You, who have not accepted [me]”. While as

⁶ See Wilden^b 2018: 177.

⁷ The phrase *marru avai pōl* is found in the preceding poem (5.7) as well. The occurrence of the very same phrase in two consecutive poems suggests we look for different meanings, as in instances of the *yamaka* figure of speech in Sanskrit literature.

⁸ I take *māṭṭāta* as a negative participle construed with *marru avai*. AK takes it as a participial noun used as predicate “(things that) will not be able to ...”.

⁹ AK takes *uṅ pukku ilaṅku cīr* as one unit, containing a compound *pukkilaṅku*, consisting of a verbal participle (*pukku*) and a verb stem (*ilaṅku*).

¹⁰ The *cīr* must be the *cīr* of the god addressed, not the speaker’s, in which latter case he would say that he had managed to submerge himself into god with, or through, his shining excellence. Problematic is the absence of a case marker after *cīr* in *ilaṅku cīr allāl*, “I entered you because of your shining excellence”. Compare *antam il cīrṅku allāl akam kuḷaiya māṭṭēṅē* in 5.6, “My heart will not melt except when facing Your infinite excellence”.

a translation it is more or less correct, it does not properly represent the construction. *nī ālā* is to be construed with *aṭiyēn*, not with *uṇatu*, in which latter case *nī* would be superfluous. Thus, “I who have not been accepted by You as Your servant look out for Your grace”.

6.1

AK seems to have misunderstood the situation underlying the words in this poem. She translates: “Knowing of [my own] absence of desire for embracing Your chest in this town where there are so many cowherd women.” However, if it was her decision to meet Kṛṣṇa on the river bank and not in the village, of what lie (*poṃ*) is she accusing him then? From the woman’s words I gather that Kṛṣṇa had told her that he did not want to hurt the feelings of the women of the village by embracing her there and had suggested they meet at a deserted spot somewhere on the bank of the Yamunā river. That is where the woman at this moment is, shivering from the cold and realizing that it had been just a lie to get her out of the way.

6.2

kīlai akattu is not “the eastern house” (or as the commentator has it, the house to the east of Kṛṣṇa’s house in Gokula), but a house inhabited by low-caste people. See *kīlmakkaḷ* and *kīlkaḷ* in *Nālaṭiyār* 70 and 262 respectively.

6.6

AK translates this poem as follows (slightly abbreviated): “As [soon as] I, with forceful karma, fell asleep tonight (*irrai iravu*), during the middle watch (*iṭai ēmattu*) You placed me on a pleasant bed and went away. That night and the following day (*arrai iravum ōr pirrai*), You came embracing women. For what (*errukku*) have You come by my side [now]? Be gracious [enough] to leave!”

I do not think that AK has fully understood what the woman speaking in the poem is bothered by. She wakes up to find Kṛṣṇa still lying beside her on the bed. She cannot believe, however, that while she had been fast asleep, he had not sneaked out to meet other women, to return to the bed just in time before she woke up. The woman is angry at having slept so deeply, attributing it to her bad karma (*val vinai*). In actual fact, however, she had not slept that long at all, probably just a few minutes. It should be noted that in both interpretations, *irrai iravu* is not easy to fit in. For, how can the woman refer to the night before as “this night, tonight”. Note that next she speaks of “that night” (*arrai iravu*). As to *errukku*, in the present context, beside *irrai* from *inrai* and *arrai* from *anrai*, we are most likely dealing with a variant form of *enraikku*, “when?” (not “for what purpose”). In the following I have translated *irrai iravu* as “last night”: “In the middle watch of last night, after you had put me in bed, you have sneaked away. During (the remainder of) that night and the whole next day you have enjoyed yourself with women.¹¹ When (*errukku*) exactly have you returned to my side? Please, rise from the bed (I no want to have anything to do with you).”

¹¹ *vantāy* in *arivaiyarōtum aṇaintu vantāy* (AK: You came embracing women”) seems rather to function as an auxiliary here, denoting an action undertaken repeatedly or habitually.

6.7

In the case of this poem AK did not fare any better. Her translation (in abbreviated form) reads: “We are not [our] old selves (*paṇṭaiyōm allōm*). Neither are we woman (*kaṇṇiṇārum allōm*) – with shining eyes ... – whom You desire. You stop [Your] comings to our village after dawn (*vaiki?*). Enduring [Your] falsehood for one day, seeing the red clothes ... is enough (*poy oru nāl paṭṭatē amaiyum*). Do not speak falsehood (*pulluvam pēcātē*). Go, Lord.”

The situation may be summarized as follows: The women agree that they are not old. But they are not young girls (*kaṇṇiṇār*, from Skt *kanyā*) either. So they cannot take Kṛṣṇa’s advances serious. They tell him, after this visit (verbal participle *vaiki*) to their village not to come again. They enjoy seeing a handsome man, so they have put up with his behaviour for just this day. He should not try to convince them, telling them that he is serious. He better leave them alone.

6.8

pōti in *nī pōtiyēlum* is not a past tense (“[e]ven though you left”) but a present-future tense: “even if you manage to slip off (now), (I will get you later).”

6.9

Once more, I doubt if AK has understood the point of the poem. She translates: “You came sweetly blowing the flute with the women with curly hair that smells of honey, embracing [them]. As you come blowing [the flute] one day, it is us that the music of Your flute will not reach.”

“One day in our company,” the women boast, “and you will be too exhausted to play the flute.”

7.1

The last two lines of 7.1 read:

*ēlā(m) vār kulal eṇ makan tālō enru enru unṇai eṇ vāyītai niraiya
tāl olittiṭum tiru vīnai illā tāyaril kaṭai āyina tāyē,*

which AK translates as follows:

O my Son with long, unguent[-perfumed] curling hair, *tālō*! [I] have become the lowest among mothers, not having had the good karma to sing a lullaby to You, saying [this] again and again to the satisfaction of my mouth.

However, *āyina* is a participle, not a finite verb, and in the text there is nothing corresponding to “[I]” in “[I] have become”. The subject is “a mother” and the verb is *tāl olittiṭum*, “she sings a lullaby”: “A mother, who is the lowest among mothers (probably Yaśodā) sings a lullaby for you (*unṇai*) so that my (probably Devakī) lips (*vāyītai*) fall silent (*niraiya*).”

vāyītai, “lips”, from “blocking (*ītai*) the gap of the mouth”. It are the lips with are red (see also 7.5.3 (*cem ciru vāyītai*), which is why AK translates *cem ciru vāy* in 7.8.3 as “small, red lips”). For *nirai-* “to fall silent”, see the *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 2287, s.vv. *niraital* and *nirai³*, “bringing to a stand, stopping”.

7.2

AK made a complete mess of this poem, of the text as well as the translation. The relevant parts of the text are:

*malar kaṇ maruvi mēl inītu onrīnai nōkki
muṭakki cē aṭi malar ciru karum tāḷ poliyum nīr mukil kuḷaviyē pōla
aṭakki āra cem ciru viral aṇaittum aṅkaiyōṭu aṇaintu ānaiyil kiṭanta
kiṭakkai kaṇṭiṭa perrilan.*

AK’s translation of these lines runs as follows:

I did not get to see (*kaṇṭiṭa perrilan*) [Your] posture (*kiṭakkai*) [as You] lay (*kiṭanta*) like an elephant (*ānaiyil*), gazing sweetly at something above (*mēl inītu onrīnai nōkki*) placing (*maruvi*) [on it Your] red lotus eyes (*malar kaṇ*) ..., bending (*muṭakki*) the little dark feet (*ciru karum tāḷ*) with red lotus soles (*cē aṭi*), joining (*aṇaintu*) with the palm of the hand (*aṅkaiyōṭu*) all the little red fingers (*cem ciru viral aṇaittum*), having compressed [them] (*aṭakki*) fully (*āra*) like a baby cloud (*mukil kuḷaviyē pōla*) shining (*poliyum*) with water (*nīr*).

Let me start with a technical point, namely the division of *aṇaittum aṅkaiyōṭu*, the rest follows from there more or less of itself. This sequence should not be split up into *aṇaittum aṅkaiyōṭu* but into *aṇaittu maṅkaiyōṭu*: Little boy Kṛṣṇa is lying on the back of an elephant (*yānaiyil*, an elephant belonging to his father King Vasudeva) in the arms of (*aṇaintu*) a woman (*maṅkai*, Queen Devakī), with all (*aṇaittu*) his little red fingers pressing (*aṭakki*) (her breasts) so that he may drink (*āra*). With his lotus eyes fixed on her (*malar kaṇ maruvi*) he is looking up at just this one thing (his mother’s face, which hangs over him) (*mēl ... onrīnai nōkki*), with his short, black legs (*ciru karum tāḷ*) with red feet (*cē aṭi*) bent (*muṭakki*) (outwards at the knees. This is how our grandson Bram, lying on his back, slept) resembling a swollen (*poliyum*) baby cloud (filled) with water (*nīr*).

For *cem ciru viral aṇaittum*, compare *cem ciru kai viral aṇaittum vāri vāy koṇṭa*, “(the boiled rice) which you placed will all your little red fingers in Your mouth”, in 7.6.

7.8

AK divides *añci nōkkumaṅṅōkkum* into ... *nōkkum a+nōkkum*, “That (*a+*) glance given fearing [her] (Yaśodā). However, *a+nōkkum* would become *annōkkum*, not *aṅṅōkkum*. The sequence should instead be divided into *nōkkumaṅ nōkkum*, with the emphatic particle *maṅ*. For this particle, see Rajam

(1992: 425-8), which, however, does not mention instances of this particle after the non-past participle.

7.9

In her translation AK does not account for the locative *aṇaittilum*, or in paraphrase: “In all the mischief you committed as a child I did not see anything that made me happy.”

It is unclear what AK is doing with *ini unṭu* in *kāṇum āru ini unṭu eṇil arulē*, which she translates as “If there is a means (*ini unṭu?*) for me [who am a servant], to see [all that], [do] bestow [it upon me]”. I think we have to do with a construction comparable to *āyiruntu* in *Tirukkuruṭāṇṭakam 3: pāy irum paravai taṇṇuḷ paru varai tirittu vāṇōrkku āyiruntu amutam koṇṭa appanai ... vaṇaṅkiṇēṇē*, “I bow(ed) to the Father, who, having stirred the wild dark sea with a great mountain as a dasher, took the nectar from that (*āyiruntu*) (sea) for the gods”.¹² *ā* is the lengthened version of the deictic vowel as in *āyiṭai*, “between that/these (two) things”. The function of *iruntu* is the same as that in the ablative case ending *-iliruntu*, and *unṭu* in *ini unṭu* would have the same function as this *iruntu*. *ini unṭu* may, in turn, be compared with *ini pōy* in 9.3.3 and be translated as “henceforth, from now onwards”: “Be so kind to show me how from now onwards I will be able to see (things that will make me happy).”

7.10

AK’s English translation does not run properly: “... so that [she], having been dried out, [her] sinews and nerves came out, [and] were charred and scattered (*ukka*).” Furthermore, in the Glossary she takes *ukka* as the infinitive of a verb *ukku-*, meaning “to be shed, to gush forth”. The meaning the verb has here is, however, the regular one mentioned in the *Tamil Lexicon* (p. 386), namely “to waste away”. In paraphrase: drinking the poisoned milk from the breast of the demoness (Pūtanā), you sucked her dry, so that, sucked dry, her veins and sinews visible on her limbs, her skin charred, she wasted away.”

AK’s translation of the last line (*tañcam mēl oṇru ilēṇ uyntu iruntēṇ takkatē nalla tāyai perrāyē*) reads “I, who have no better refuge, have merely subsisted [for You]. You have indeed obtained a suitably good mother!” However, *mēl* does not specify preceding *tañcam*, “better refuge”. Rather it seems to mean “beyond” here: “I who have nothing beyond *tañcam*.” In this context we have to look for another meaning for *tañcam*. Taking it in the meaning “trifle, negligible matter”, which it has in, e.g., *Akanānūru* 382.2 and *Puṛaṇānūru* 34.19 and 73.3, the line may be translated as follows (in paraphrase): “While I had nothing to offer apart from a few unimportant things, (unlike Pūtanā) I have managed to stay alive. But it is not more than fitting that you have found yourself a good (a better) mother.”

8.1

¹² Ate translates “I bowed to our... Father who is beautiful (*āy iruntu*) and who got the nectar for the celestials.”

AK takes *cem poṇ cēr* in *cem poṇ cēr kaṇṇi nal mā maṭil puṭai cūḷ kaṇapurattu*¹³ as a description of the town *kaṇapuram*: “Kaṇapuram made of red gold, surrounded on [all] sides by good, big, imperishable ramparts.” However, *Puranānūru* 37.11, *cempural puricai ... mūtūr*, “with its walls shielded in bronze”, and 201.9, *cempu puṇaintiyarriya cēṇeṭum puricai*, “with its long walls that seemed to be formed of bronze”,¹⁴ shows that we are dealing with a description of the ramparts instead.

8.3

With *kaṅkaiyilum tīrttam mali kaṇapurattu* AK provides a footnote saying that *ilum* as a comparative suffix is not attested in older Tamil texts, which latter have *iṇum*. However, we are not dealing so much with a suffix as with a circumscription of the comparative, one, moreover, which is not unknown in modern Tamil. See, for instance, Beythan (1943: 191), who quotes *enṇilum avan keṭṭikkāraṇ*, “im Vergleich zu mir ist er ein geschickter Mensch, geschickter als ich”.

8.4

AK’s discussion, or rather lack of discussion of *ēmaruvu* in *ēmaruvum cilai valavā* shows her embarrassment with the expression. The passage concerned is just one of those describing a bow (*cilai* or *vil*) found in the *Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi*, in which the slot filled by *ēmaruvum* is filled by various other words, which, however, seem to be somehow related, possibly one being a corruption of the other.

In 8.4 AK divides *ēmaruvum* into *ē* and *maruvum*: “O You who are capable (*valavā*) [of mastering] the bow (*cilai*) combined with (*maruvum*) arrows (*ē*).” The same combination, or expression, is found in 9.7, in *ēmaru tōḷ eṇ putalvan*, which AK translates as “my son, who has [such] arms (*tōḷ*) that [the foes] are perplexed”. It is a rather convoluted translation, which, I guess, is based on the assumption that *ēmaru(vu)*- is a synonym of *ēmār*-, for which latter verb the *Tamil Lexicon* (p. 562) indeed gives the meaning “to be bewildered, confused”. As I see it, however, we have to do with the same verb *ēmaru(vu)*- found in *Tirukkuraḷ* 448, which may well be a contracted form of *ēmam* (Skt *kṣema*) and *maru(vu)*-, meaning “to protect, guarantee safety”. The *veṇṇā* in question reads:

iṭippārai illāta ēmarā maṇṇan
keṭuppār ilāṇum kētum,

A king who does not protect his subjects but is surrounded by a bunch of yes-men needs no enemies who are out for his destruction to be destroyed,

Rāma’s bow (8.4) and arms (9.7) provide protection to his subjects.

¹³ Note *kaṇṇi nal mā maṭil puṭai cūḷ kaṇapurattu* in 8.11.

¹⁴ Translations by Hart and Heifetz 1999.

But the story of Rāma’s bow does not end here. For in the slot of *ēmaruvum cilai*, 8.10 has *ē vari vem cilai*,¹⁵ and, to complicate matters even further, 10.3 (fourth line) has *evvu ari vem cilai* (that is, *evvari vem cilai*). *vari* in these two passages is also found in *vem vari (vevvari) nal cilai vāñki* in 10.3 (second line 2) and *vari vem cilaikku* in 3.3, and with *vil* instead of *cilai* in *vari vil vāñki* in 10.5. In these sentences *vari* refers to the strips of wood that went into the making of the composite bow. These strips seem to have been painted in different colours, as becomes clear from *Kuriñcippāṭṭu* 124 *vaṇṇa varivil ēnti yampu terintu*, “holding the bow with coloured strips and selecting arrows”. *varivil* is also used to refer to the rainbow, as in *Akanānūru* 192 *vicumpiṇ eyyā varivil aṇṇa paintārc cevvaṅc cirukilī citaiya vāñki*, “small parrots that look like unattainable rainbows in the sky with their red beaks and green necks come and destroy the crop” (translation Hart 2015). Going back to *ē vari vem cilai* in 8.10, it is unclear how *ē* in the meaning “arrow” fits in. There is nothing in the text corresponding to bracketed “fitted” in AK’s translation “the cruel, striped bow [fitted] with arrows”. As to her translation of *evvu ari (evvari) vem cilai* in 10.3 (4) with “cruel bow that is difficult (*ari*) to discharge (*evvu*)”, she chooses to ignore that the text reads *ari*, not *aru*. *vem vari (vevvari) nal cilai* in 10.3 (2) she translates with “the cruel (*vem*), striped, good bow”. All these translations are produced without any comment. All she does is adding a superfluous footnote here and there. To give just one example, to her translation of *vem vari (vevvari) nal cilai* of 10.3 (2) she adds a footnote (no 782) with the following text: “Uttamūr (1999: 94) suggests that it is possible to take *ari* to mean ‘Hari,’ i.e. Nārāyaṇa, for it is His bow that Paraśurāma handed Him, as opposed to Śiva’s that He broke in an attempt to string it. Hence, Uttamūr adds the further possibility of taking *nal* as meaning ‘better [bow],’ as Nārāyaṇa’s bow was deemed better than Śiva’s.” Unfortunately, AK does not share with us her opinion about Uttamūr’s suggestions. It may be unfair to expect a definite answer to the question of how *ēmaru(vum)* and *ēvari/evvari/vevvari*, if at all, are related. I do have a problem, though, that problematic passages such as these are silently passed by.

8.9

AK translates *kaḷai kaḷunīr maruṅku alarum kaṇapurattu* with “Kaṇapuram where the purple waterlilies (*kaḷunīr*) that were weeded out (*kaḷai*) blossom on the side!” It does not require a great familiarity with Indian poetry to see that the image of waterlilies ruthlessly plucked from the river and discarded on its banks does not work in a passage the aim of which is to praise that river’s beauty and sanctity. However, beside “waterlily”, *kaḷunīr* also refers to sacred water that, like that of the Ganges, is able to wash away people’s sins (*Tamil Lexicon*, p. 804, *s.v. kaḷunīr*²). *kaḷai*, “to pluck out weeds”, is used here in the sense of plucking out sins growing between merits. As to *alarum*, beside “to blossom”, the *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 146, also gives meanings like “to spread, expand, manifest itself, shine forth”. The line under consideration may accordingly be translated

¹⁵ In a footnote to 8.4 AK refers to a variant reading *ēmaru vem cilai*, “a cruel bow combined with arrows”, mentioned in Kuruṣṇamācāriyar’s edition (1903: 160).

with “Kaṇapuram on the side of which (*maruṅku*) flows (a river with) holy water that washes away our sins.”

10.8

AK translates *akattiyaṅ vāy tāṅ mun konrāṅ taṅ perun tol katai kēṭṭu* with “listened from the mouth of Agastya to the great, old story of him (Rāvaṇa) whom He (Rāma) had previously killed”. After this Rāma hears about his own adventures (*taṅ caritai*), recited by his sons Kuśa and Lava. The three words, *tāṅ mun konrāṅ* summarize *Uttarakāṇḍa* 1-36, in which Agastya provides details of Rāvaṇa’s life before his encounter with Rāma. This would mean that *mun* refers to the period before Rāma had anything to do with Rāvaṇa, let alone had the opportunity to kill him. All the killing in this “old story” is done by Rāvaṇa. In this context *konrāṅ* seems to function as a participial noun: “the story of him (*taṅ*), when he himself (*tāṅ*) was (*mun*) the killer”. Such participial nouns may indeed have a passive meaning, “he who was killed” (Beytham 1943: 110). But, as said, a passive can be ruled out on the basis of *Uttarakāṇḍa* 1-36.

10.9

In *tavattōṅ īnta nirai maṇi pūṅ aṇiyum koṅṭu* we read that Rāma received from the ascetic Agastya a chain (?*pūṅ aṇi*) densely set (*nirai*) with jewels (*maṇi*).¹⁶ In the corresponding passage in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* 3, 2685-6 Rāma does not receive ornaments but only weapons: a bow which formerly had belonged to Viṣṇu, a bunch of arrows and a quiver “that cannot be emptied”, and a sword and an arrow formerly used by Śiva (See also Hart and Heifetz 1998: 72-3, stanzas 55-6/2776-7). On this point the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* corresponds closely to Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the latter, in 3.11.29-31, Rāma receives Viṣṇu’s long bow (*mahaccāpaṃ ... vaiṣṇavaṃ*), a very good arrow (*śarottamaḥ*), which Agastya had received from Brahmā, and a quiver which is never without arrows (*tūṅī ... akṣayasāyakau*), and a sword (*asi*), which had belonged to Indra. However, in a passage inserted in (216*, mainly North Indian manuscripts) ornaments are mentioned:

*dattvā dhanuścaiva śarāṃśca viprah
khaḍgaṃ ca tūṅau ca pṛṣatkapūrṇau/
vastrottamaṃ caiva dadau mahatmā
śakrapradatte apu kuṇḍale dve*

After having presented the bow and the arrows, and the sword and the quiver filled with arrows, the holy Brahmin made two more gifts, namely of a beautiful garment and of two earrings he himself had earlier received from Indra.

It is, however, not immediately clear if there is a direct relation between the Tamil text and this inserted passage. In any case, I, for one, find it difficult to

¹⁶ *nirai maṇi* is perhaps to be compared with *niraikalnakai*, “ornament set profusely with precious stones” (*Tamil Lexicon*, p. 2288).

recognize in the words *niṛai maṇi pūṇ aṇiyum* anything coming close to garments and earrings.

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