The Sanskrit Paradigm of Tamil Grammar: Embrace and Resistance

E. Annamalai
Central Institute of Indian Languages, India; The University of Chicago, USA

Abstract   This paper is about the historical relationship between the grammars of Sanskrit and Tamil and the debates around it. The debates are between the grammarians and commentators on Tamil grammar, not of Sanskrit. It is thus limited to one linguistic community. This is a result of the asymmetrical bilingualism of the Tamil-speaking and the Sanskrit-speaking grammarians. Their many other relationships – religious, literary, etc. – are also asymmetrical in the sub-continental perspective. The regional perspective of Tamil about the relationship of Tamil to Sanskrit is different but is not constant and varies according to the period and its language ideology.

There are political and social factors underpinning the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit and their communities. The debates over the grammatical description of Tamil are defined in a certain way. This paper does not go into these underlying factors but limits itself to cultural, ideological and intellectual factors. The cultural factor comes under the rubric of tradition – tradition that is emphasized by historical continuity and distinctive identity of a linguistic practice, which in the present case is the writing of grammars. This emphasis on tradition remains throughout the entire history even when it could be demonstrated that the distinctive identity of Tamil tradition changed to become closer to the Sanskrit's. The two traditions that are codified and given generic names – the Sanskrit grammatical tradition and the Tamil grammatical tradition. Tradition is called *marapu* in Tamil, whose meaning is expansive and includes convention and lineage, but the tradition obviously is not homogeneous or monolithic historically and even at the given period.

The authoritative head of the Tamil grammatical tradition is Tolkāppiyar, the author of the first known grammatical treatise in Tamil, written in the milieu of earliest literary texts called Sangam poetry of the period before and after Common Era. Most probably he was a Jain (S. Vaiyapuri Pillai quoted in Zvelebil 1973). His grammar is the *Ur*-text of the Tamil tradition and is based on the interpretation of texts, primarily literary texts. The authoritative head of the Sanskrit grammatical tradition is Pāṇini, a Brahmin who generated the *Ur* text of that tradition; its purview is the codification of the language of the later Vedic texts. Tamil grammarians from the earliest times take Tolkāppiyar as the fountainhead of their tradition and as the primary authority of Tamil grammar, if the mythological figure Agastya is kept out of count. The Tamil grammarians take Pāṇini to be the fountainhead and the authority of the Sanskrit grammatical tradition, if the passing reference to the grammar of Indra is ignored. Tolkāppiyar represents the Tamil grammatical tradition of about two millennia, and Pāṇini represents the Sanskrit grammatical tradition during the same period in the Tamil country. If one visualizes a cultural war between these two grammatical traditions, it is a war of ideas attributed to the two above authorities. But historically and culturally the defence of ideas is not visualized as a war until the modern period with its nationalistic interpretation of Tamil history, including the history of grammatical science. Even during this modern period, war is understood as the question of who took ideas from whom and what ideas were imposed on Tamil grammars, particularly those found in the commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam*. The 'imposed' ones are viewed as contrary to the intellectual tradition of Tamil and are

rejected so that the alleged 'purity' of the tradition is maintained.[1]

The intellectual tradition is understood and defined in terms of texts and the relationship between them. Moreover, they are defined by shared and improved grammatical analyses, or by the absence or presence of their deviations. The chronologically earlier and authoritative text is called *mutal nūl* 'primary or original (scientific) text', while the secondary and later texts are called *vaḻi nūl* 'descendent text' and *cārpu nūl* 'dependent text'. The former of the two stays close to the original except for making changes to accommodate historical changes in the language and some new ideas that are considered supplementary. Expanded and condensed versions of the original also belong to the same category of *vaḻi nūl*. The other type is called dependent as it shares many analyses with the original but substitutes new analyses in some cases. It is not an independent text despite this partial deviation from the original.

Cankaranamaccivāyar, an eighteenth-century commentator on the thirteenth-century *Nannūl* (Dhamotharan 1999), gives the analogy of a son to *vaḻi nūl*, and of a son-in-law, who does not inherit from the father-in-law, to *cārpu nūl*. Both these categories of texts stay within the tradition, which this analogy views as an extended family. The cultural emphasis is on staying within and perpetuating the tradition or genealogy, and so there is no significant discussion of texts that break the tradition.

Mayilaināṭar, the earlier commentator on *Nannūl*, mentions another type of texts referred to as *etir nūl* 'counter text'. This would qualify texts that break away from the tradition and start a new one. No Tamil grammatical text has ever been designated as such to the best of my knowledge. One could argue that the texts I will discuss below, such as Vīracōḻiyam and Ilakkaṇakkottu, may be classified as such counter texts, but they are not. This shows that the tradition within Tamil grammar is inclusive.

Sivañāna Munivar (of Mutal Cūttira virutti, which pegs his ideas in his commentary of the first sutra of *Tolkāppiyam*), a grammarian, litterateur and a Saivite philosopher of the eighteenth century, gives arguments for deciding the relationship between the two texts, *Tolkāppiyam* and *Nannūl*, with more than a millennium between them. These two texts are universally considered to be solid parts of the Tamil tradition and to belong to the same lineage in spite of the fact that they have different concepts of the grammar. For *Tolkāppiyam*, poetics is part of the grammar, indeed the largest section in this text,

---

1 Such views can be seen in many interpretations of the sutras of *Tolkāppiyam* by Tamil scholars in the modern period such as Ialkkuvanar, who translated this work into English with critical notes. Similar views can be seen in some publications in Tamil relating to *Tolkāppiyam* by scholars of similar persuasion.

but it is altogether dropped from the grammar by *Nannūl*. This is not just a matter of condensation for *Nannūl*, but is an ideological shift. It is believed to have made *Tolkāppiyam* simpler for students and to have incorporated the linguistic changes in the Tamil of his time.

Let me give two illustrative examples from Munivar about the textual relationship between these two texts, one from phonology and another from morphology. These are examples considered to be stepping out of the legacy (Annamalai 2018).

Tolkāppiyam divides letters/phonemes into two categories, viz., primary (*mutal eḻuttu*) and secondary (*cārpu eḻuttu*). The latter category is determined by their occurrence in specific syllabic structures and sequences having *sandhi* effects. Their phonetic feature is length reduction of the phonemes, and this synchronic phonetic alternation is contextual. The first category (primary letters) has thirty phonetic manifestations of letters and the second category has three. *Nannūl*, on the other hand, puts ten phonetic manifestations of letters in the second category. It uses a different criterion of phonetic alternation for counting, that is, morae measures (*māttirai*) of letters/phonemes in the basic unit of prosody, called *acai* 'syllable' (it does not treat prosody to be a part of its grammar). This is a significant difference that extends the phenomenon of ordinary language to versified language for the analysis of phonetic reduction and elongation.

Another is an example from morphology. The first person (and the second person) pronouns are treated as human (*uyar tiṇai*) in *Tolkāppiyam*, but as common to human and non-human (*viravu-t tiṇai*) in *Nannūl*. The former's criterion is the verbal ending (it is pronounced in predicates that are participial nouns: *naan paṭittavan / paṭittavaḷ* 'I am an educated person'; the gender male or female is marked in the predicate for human subjects, which is *nān* (I) in this case. *Nannūl*'s criterion is referential, where the referent of the first (and the second) person could be any animate being, inclusive of humans and animals. This difference in the criterion to determine gender of the first (and second) person is theoretical and therefore significant.

Though differences such as the above are significant, they do not show that these two texts belong to different legacies. Munivar brings in the concept of error (*vaḻu*) to argue that the differing analysis in the later text is an error and so does not count. His motivation is to protect the tradition from disintegration and to keep the reproduction of knowledge within the tradition's framework (Annamalai 2018). His view tells us that breaking a tradition by unrestrained novel analyses is perceived to be a cultural issue, in fact a problem, in knowledge production.

The meaning of content dependence, intellectual descent and counter-analyses with reference to texts mentioned above is not understood by mere empirical and quantitative facts but rather by the conceptual framing of the grammatical problem and its solution.

Admission of a counter text, given this criterion, is rather an exception than a norm in the Tamil grammatical tradition.

The analysis of the grammar of Sanskrit by Pāṇini (and others) was an attractive alternative for Tamil grammarians, allowing them to rethink Tamil grammar. There were multiple reasons for this attraction, tied to the religious, political, and intellectual power the Sanskrit scholars and linguists constructed around that language. The response of the Tamil grammarians to the analytical power of Sanskrit was either to embrace this mode of analysis or to resist it. Those who embraced it were called the followers of Sanskrit textualism (*vaṭanūlār matam* 'school of thought based on Sanskrit [Shastric] texts' [S-School]) and those who resisted were called the followers of Tamil textualism (*tamiḻ nūlār matam* 'school of thought based on Tamil texts' [T-School]). *Yāpparunkala virutti*, a detailed commentary on Prosody of the eleventh century, but the idea of two schools of thought is widespread. The interesting point is that neither school of thought questions *Tolkāppiyam* as the *Ur* text of Tamil grammar of all times.

The grammatical theory and analysis taken from Sanskrit grammarians was also argued, from this perspective, to be in line with the Tamil grammatical tradition enunciated in *Tolkāppiyam*. That is, there was no need to reject *Tolkāppiyam* and justify a counter text. What was required was a reinterpretation of the text of *Tolkāppiyam* for the new analytical model. The commentators on *Tolkāppiyam* differ about the interpretations of this text, but all insist that theirs do not deviate from what the text intended to mean by its author. Their text-based arguments (the way the sutra is worded etc.) to validate their interpretation as true are interesting in themselves, but they are a subject for a different paper.

Resistance to accepting a Sanskrit analysis to describe Tamil is in most cases based on the view that such an analysis is not the view of *Tolkāppiyam* as stated in its sutras. The opposite is true for those later grammarians who embraced analysis from Sanskrit grammar, as mentioned above. When they argue that their new analysis was the actual intent of the sutra of *Tolkappiyam*, they take the position that the medieval commentators have misinterpreted the sutra.

The embrace of Sanskrit models may be selective or total. Selection is guided by the principle of maintaining the nature of the Tamil language, which boils down to maintaining the Tamil tradition in analysing Tamil grammar. This is called, subjectively, by some modern scholars as paying attention to the Tamil 'genius' (Thirugnanasambandam 1994). The selective embrace is a feature of earlier times in history, i.e. of earlier commentators and grammarians. The preference in historically later times is to be liberal with selection, coming closer to total adoption. We will see latter in the paper how the idea of Sanskrit grammar and of Tamil grammar changed during the latter times.

Let me first illustrate the selective adaptation of Sanskrit analysis of compound nouns of Tamil in *Tolkāppiyam*. Analysis of compound nouns is a preferred topic in the traditional grammars of all major Indian languages. Tamil is no exception.

D'Avella (2012) makes an incisive comparative study of the analysis of compound nouns in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and *Tolkāppiyam*. Two grammatical concepts are operative in compound formation viz., semantic integration of the meanings of the constituent words (*ekārthabhāva* in Sanskrit) and formal condensation (by dropping the morphemes that identify the grammatical relation between the constituent words – (*lopa* in Sanskrit). Tamil has a homophonous root with both these meanings, *toku* (*tokukka*, 'collect together') and *toku* (*tokka*, 'elide'). The wording of the sutras on compounds in *Tolkāppiyam* suggests that it gives primacy to semantic integration; interpreting sutra 2.1.1 of *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, Patañjali, as cited by D'Avella (2012, 10), says that *samartha* in the sutra "indicates that when we apply an operation to words a single meaning should emerge from the constituting parts". Pāṇini and Tolkāppiyar, living in different periods, concur. *Tolkāppiyam* (*Collatikāram* 414) states: *ellāt tokaiyum oru connaṭaiya* (all compounds exhibit the behaviour of a single word). He further says that the integrated meaning of the compounds derives from the claim that they have the conjunct meaning of their analytical equivalents. The analytical equivalents of the compounds may or may not have inflection in the words that compose them. Hence, elision will be superfluous to define some types of compounds. If there is an inflection such as a case suffix in the analytical equivalents, this suffix is elided in the compounds to give them the nature of a unitary word defined by the grammatical behaviour of compounds, as in, for example, the plural formation. Furthermore, elision is not universally true for all types of compounds. Nevertheless, elision is considered to be the defining feature of compounds by some grammarians (including the commentators) both in Sanskrit and Tamil (D'Avella 2012, 7). The debate between these two theoretical stances about compounds took place across language boundaries and across century divisions. The grammatical tradition of Tamil contributed to the refinement of the theory. D'Avella concludes his paper that is focused on Sanskrit and Tamil thus:

> The processes of borrowing and adopting were often nuanced both at the lexical as well as the conceptual levels […]. The mix of these strategies result from the complex linguistic reality Tamil occupied and the efforts Tamil grammarians made to maintain a distinct identity for their grammatical tradition. (7)

The epistemological interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit was at meta-grammatical and grammatical levels, according to him.

Let me illustrate another case of similar interaction from the analysis of compounds itself. Though compounds received much attention by Pāṇini and Tolkāppiyar, their interests are different. The former's lies in the construction of larger lexical units built on phrasal structures; the ambiguous semantic interpretations of such units is of secondary interest to him. The latter's interest is in accounting for the semantics of the compounds, as they are used abundantly in literary texts such as the ancient Sangam texts. In the words of D'Avella (2012, 12):

> the linguistic element which has been lost in compounding need not always be specified exactly because the *Tolkāppiyam* is not interested in *deriving* compounds, as is the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* but rather offering a means to analyze and talk about the words that we find in literary language.

Though there was shared interest in grammatical phenomena common to Sanskrit and Tamil,

> not all the compounds in Sanskrit have an equivalent in Tamil, namely the *avyayībhāva* 'adverbial compound' and the *dvigu* 'numerical compound'. Similarly, the *viṉaiyiṉ tokai* and *uvamat-tokai* have no equivalent among the major types of Sanskrit compounds, although Pāṇini and subsequent commentators do recognize simile compounds as a subtype of *karmadhāraya*s. The *viṉaiyiṉ tokai*, which consists of a bare verbal root followed by a noun, is completely foreign to the Sanskrit language. (D'avella 2012, 10)

D'Avella further reasons that

> the addition of the verbal compound to Tamil grammar not only demonstrates a willingness to deviate from the general Sanskrit categories but also reflects the author's (Tolkāppiyar's) attention to syntactic structures specific to Tamil poetry. The use of a bare verbal stem instead of a relative participle is ubiquitous in Caṅkam poetry.

It may not even be seen as an addition to Tamil grammar from the point of view of the Sanskrit grammar, but could be seen as independently conceived, empirically grounded conclusion in the Tamil tradition. This is in spite of the fact that the Sangam texts have evidence that the bare verb of this compound may have other syntactic elements – Subject, Object etc. – just like the verbal predicate of a sentence (Lehmann 1994; Wilden 2018). It suggests that, in the Tamil conceptualization of the compound, fusion into one word is paramount (as shown above) even when it allows one constituent of the

compound to remain in relation with the other words of the sentence which it is part of.

The above citations from D'Avella show that there were grammatical ideas flowing probably bi-directionally and that Tamil grammar and the *Ur* text of its tradition took cognizance of the facts of the Tamil language and the purpose of its grammar when it began the tradition. To cite D'Avella's (2012) over-all view about the Tamil grammars of the early period (i.e. before the medieval period of the second millennium),

> it would be [...] extreme to see a slavish adherence to the preexisting Sanskritic models. Instead, I envision the author(s) of the *Tolkāppiyam* as turning to Sanskrit texts (or ideas derived therefrom) to create a unique system of linguistic analysis well suited for Tamil, albeit a few mismatches remain.

While such an interactive approach continued to be followed in the description of Tamil grammar by the commentators on *Tolkāppiyam*, who individually varied in adopting and adapting the ideas of Panini's grammar of Sanskrit and its elaborations and refutations, there was a fundamental retooling of Tamil grammar in the pre-modern period (around the eighteenth century) by grammarians patronized by Saiva mutts in the Kaveri delta, which were headed by non-Brahmin pontiffs and were engaged in codifying and promoting Saiva texts in Tamil as well as the Tamil language; their work included translations into Tamil from Sanskrit. This effort however started much earlier, at the dawn of the second millennium in the same region under the Chola dynasty by Vīracōḻiyam (VC), an eleventh-century Buddhist grammar. It was part of the role of Buddhist thinkers of its time to generate knowledge in Sanskrit and spread it in the languages of the regions where they were preaching. As D'Avella (2021) has demonstrated non-Paninian grammatical texts played a greater role in creating new grammatical models; the text *Prayogamukhi*, which was important to the wandering Buddhist textual community, was the primary source for VC.

VC makes many references to Sanskrit texts (without naming them but calling them generically as *vaṭanūl* 'northern (Shastric) texts'. Its goal might be to apply the Sanskrit grammatical model to Tamil. It creates a new model and a new metalanguage (using the Sanskrit technical terms without calquing) for the description of Tamil. It does not criticize or reject *Tolkāppiyam* openly when deviating from it. It keeps the conceptual framework of the five-fold division of grammar of *Tolkāppiyam* that includes poetics, but the VC's theories are derived from works in Sanskrit. As D'Avella notes, this development was motivated by the perceived superiority of Sanskrit theories or knowledge as well by the changing empirical realities of the Tamil language

and literature, some of which exhibit the influence of Sanskrit.

A good example of modelling Tamil grammar (Meenakshisundaran 1974) after the grammar of Sanskrit is the treatment of cases. *Tolkāppiyam* analyses case as the morphology of nouns that relates them syntactically with the predicate verb of the sentence. It is a relation of a set of verbs that are grouped semantically as they govern the nouns of particular declensions, i.e., nouns with particular case markers. The first case (*mutalām vēṟṟumai*) or the nominative or Subject case (*eḻuvāy vēṟṟumai*), which does not have a case marker, is different from other cases; it is not governed by any set of lexical verbs but by sentence types indicated by specific predicates such as verbal indicative, nominal indicative, interrogative and imperative. The case theory of *Tolkāppiyam* is based on the simple idea that the meaning of predicates determines certain types of nouns (like the fact that the transitivity of the verb determines the occurrence of the Object noun).

The types of nouns so determined are expressive of a certain associations of the verbal action. They are: the noun as the object, as the recipient of the object, as the location of the action, as the source from which the action emanates, as being similar to another object. As the case nouns have different morphologies and their corresponding associate statuses are different, this phenomenon of nouns is given the name *vēṟṟumai* (difference). This idea is similar to Panini's idea of *vibhakti* (difference).

Tolkāppiyam calls what I have termed inadequately 'associate' by the term *mutal*, as in *vinai mutal* (the antecedent of predicate), which could be understood as the 'antecedent' of predicates. They are antecedents in the sense that the associates object, recipient etc. exist independently, and the predicate assigns them to nouns to construct the structure of a sentence. *Tolkāppiyam* calls this assignment 'case meaning' (*vēṟṟumaipporuḷ*) and the marker that indicates the assignment 'the case morph or suffix' (*vēṟṟumai urupu*). Panini adds another layer to *vibhakti*s or case-morphs and calls it *kāraka*, which are extra-syntactic in their generation and are the logical antecedents of an action. The grammar maps the nominal syntactic units of a sentence with the logical antecedents of the action of the predicate.

Tolkāppiyar's description of cases is a tool for interpreting a literary text such as the ancient Sangam texts, which have a preponderance of elided cases in a sentence. The way to recover the right case is from the meaning of the predicate, which governs the case. For the same purpose, *Tolkāppiyam* is also concerned with the appearance of one case in place of the anticipated and legitimate another case dependent on a specified meaning of the predicate but without altering the case meaning. This is called *vēṟṟumai mayakkam* (alternation of cases). That is, one case marker alternates with another for a predication in the same meaning. The predicate *kuttu* (poke) may

govern an object case or the location case: poked the eye/poked in the eye; the predicate *veṭṭu* (cut down) may do the same: cut down the branch/cut down (the tree) at the branch. These are cases of predicates overlapping in their governance of cases.

Karaka theory is concerned with the absence of one-to-one correspondence between *karaka* and *vibhakti* endings. A 'mismatch' may, along with other ways, have a resolution in the morphology of the verbal predicate. In a sentence in Tamil or Sanskrit that is equivalent to the English sentence 'the book sold well', the book's logical relationship with 'sell' is that of an Object, not of a Subject, as its case indicates. *Karaka* in Sanskrit has a dual effect on the noun and on the verb. *Tolkāppiyam* does not deal with the verbal effect in the chapter on cases but in the chapter on verbs. It says that it is the property of some verbs like 'sell' (not its morphology) to allow the use of Object as Subject by convention, not by the grammar (*Tolkāppiyam Collatikāram* 246. செயப்படுபொருளைச் செய்தது போலத் தொழிற்படக் கிளத்தலும் வழக்கியல் மரபே *ceyappaṭuporuḷaic ceytatu pōlat toḻiṟpaṭak kiḷattalum vaḻakkiyal marapē* 'There is a convention in language use to express the Object (what is done) as the doer (Subject) that gives action'. The commentator Cēnāvaraiyar takes this to be an error of convention (மரபு வழு, i.e. a usage that is not sanctioned by a general rule of grammar and so it needs a special rule), and this sutra legitimizes the usage. The corresponding sentences in English are 'the book sold well, this rice cooked well'.

In essence, *Tolkāppiyam* doesn't have a use for a theory of *karaka* to be added to the description of case for his purpose of the grammar, which is to aid interpretation of literary texts. *Karaka*, on the other hand, is a theory to explain people's common 'mismatches' between the case of the noun and the semantic role of it in the proposition, which is a commonplace in language use, as the above sutra of *Tolkāppiyam* says.[2]

The absence of the description of *karaka* in *Tolkāppiyam* is a challenge to the desire of VC to approximate the grammar of Tamil to that of Sanskrit, though the purposes of these grammars are different. VC, in the very first sutra of the chapter on *vēṟṟumai* (case), takes the chapter to be inclusive of *vibhakti* and *karaka* and goes on to say that there are eight *vēṟṟumai* following *Tolkāppiyam* and six *karaka*s following Panini. He takes the latter's view that a *karaka* has morphological effects on the noun as well as on the verb and concludes that the person-number-gender suffixes of the verbs are reflected in the nouns that are in the nominative case and that they are the markers of the nominative case. This is totally different from the analysis in

---

2 Matilal 1991 attributes this observation of the commonness of the mismatch to some scholars.

Tolkāppiyam that the nominative case is not morphologically marked and it is simply the noun itself. This difference between the nominative (i.e., Subject) case in Tamil and Sanskrit is obliterated by the misapplication of analysis of *karaka*'s effect on the predicate verb. VC and its commentator go on to sub-divide the six *karaka*s, which reflect the post-Paninian discussion of *karaka*s by Sanskrit grammarians, and to explain the lack of one-to-one match between the *karakas* and the case marked nouns. To have the nominative case marked morphologically is contrary to the Tamil system, which has it unmarked as it is governed by all predicates of all meanings, unlike the other cases.

Cēnāvaraiyar, a thirteenth-century commentator of *Tolkāppiyam* steeped in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition, is subtler than VC in merging the *kāraka* theory with the case theory of *Tolkāppiyam* (Tol Col 112). He does not alter the sutras of cases in *Tolkāppiyam* but takes a sutra at the end of the chapter on *vēṟṟumai mayakkam*, which is a list of antecedents, *mutal*, mentioned above. It is called *toḻil mutalnilai* (the standing of the antecedents of the verb), which he takes to mean *karaka*. His logic for getting this meaning is this: antecedent (*mutal*) gives case meaning (*vēṟṟumaip poruḷ*), which is the same as the reason/rationale for the case (*vēṟṟumaik kāraṇam*), and *kāraṇam* is synonymous with *karaka*. It must be noted that Cenāvaraiyar does not assign any marker for the nominative case and does not deviate from the Tamil tradition in this respect.

The eighteenth-century grammars Pirayōkavivēkam and Ilakkaṇakkottu take the route of VC, though they take their cue from Cēnāvaraiyar (to extend *vēṟṟumaip poruḷ* of *Tolkāppiyam* to the *karaka* meaning of Panini). But they go farther than VC in giving multiple case markers for the nominative case. Ilakkaṇakkottu, using his self-claimed prerogative of bringing up hard-to-solve rules of grammars (*ariya viti*) for a solution, adds a sutra to the Tamil-oriented grammatical texts: "while there are three morphological markers of the nominative case in Sanskrit, Tamil could desire to have more, or less, of this number" (வடமொழி எழுவாய்க்கு உருபு மூன்று; அவைதாம் விரியவும் தொகவும் விரும்பும் என்ப, *vaṭamoḻi eḻuvāykku urupu mūṉṟu; avaitām viriyavum tokavum virumpum eṉpa*, 140). He thus goes beyond reinterpreting the Tamil grammatical texts to alter them in order to approximate the Tamil grammar with the Sanskrit grammar. He justifies his move in the following way: தமிழிற்கு இன்றாகிய வடமொழி இலக்கணம் தமிழில் வருதலானும் எழுவாய் உருபும் வடமொழியிற் கண்டு இன்று கொண்டுவந்தது என்றலும் ஒன்று *tamiḻiṟku iṉṟākiya vaṭamoḻi ilakkaṇam tamiḻil varutalāṉum eḻuvāy urupum vaṭamoḻiyiṟ kaṇṭu iṉṟu koṇṭuvantatu eṉṟalum oṉṟu* (Ilakkaṇakkottu, 140). "As Sanskrit grammatical features not found in the Tamil grammar do occur in Tamil language, it can be said that the case marker of the nominative found in Sanskrit is brought to Tamil in the current times". His argument is to take the features of Sanskritized Tamil as evidence for including

them in the Tamil grammar.

A new grammar rule is added to the grammar of Tamil when a grammatical feature is not mentioned in the Tamil grammar but the Sanskrit grammar has it; this is to claim that the Tamil language has that grammatical feature also. The empirical evidence provided, however, can be interpreted not as a case marker at all. Nevertheless, the axiomatic statement of Ilakkaṇakkottu (92) "keep in mind that the two languages Sanskrit and Tamil have the same grammar" increase the motivation to ignore the nuances of empiricism (வடமொழி தமிழ்மொழி எனும் இரு மொழியினும் இலக்கணம் ஒன்றே என்றே எண்ணுக *vaṭamoḻi tamiḻmoḻi eṇum iru moḻiyiṇum ilakkaṇam oṉṟē eṉṟē eṇṇuka*).

The centuries-long interaction between grammarians in the history of the North and the South described here did not take place merely within the grammar of a single language but also between the grammarians of two different languages, Sanskrit and Tamil. It was between the grammarian of Tamil as the first language and the grammarian of Sanskrit as a second language (not the grammarian of Sanskrit as the first language). The grammarians of Tamil, almost all of them bilingual in Sanskrit, were exposed to Sanskrit grammatical descriptions to different degrees, and some were well-trained in the Sanskrit tradition. They, at the very least, participated directly or indirectly in pan-Indian epistemological practices and theory building, and they absorbed pan-Indian trends while contributing to them as well.

Among the Tamil grammarians, there are two broad groups, as mentioned above; one group added new ideas to Tamil grammatical concepts, primarily, but not exclusively, from the Sanskrit grammatical system; the other group intended to bring Tamil grammatical concepts closer, if not identical, to those in Sanskrit. Within the second group, the dominant view was that the Sanskrit language was the *Ur* language for all the languages of the sub-continent and so its grammar is applicable to all other languages. A variant formulation of this view is to attribute primacy to Sanskrit texts as the embodiment of universal knowledge or theory. The commentator of VC (Sutra 60) Peruntēvan (twelfth century, a student of the author of the work), trying to explain the absence of providing etymologies of Tamil words in the text he is writing the commentary on, states this: தமிழ்ச்சொற்கெல்லாம் வடநூலே தாயாகி நிகழ்கின்றமையின் அங்குள்ள வழக்கெல்லாம் இங்கும் பெறும் *tamiḻccoṟkellām vaṭanūlē tāyāki nikaḻkiṉṟamaiyiṉ aṅkuḷḷa vaḻakkellām iṅkum peṟum* (As the treatises in Sanskrit are the mother /source (to explain) all the words in Tamil, all the explanatory practices there will apply here also). Note that the phrase is வடநூலே தாய் (Sanskrit treatises are the mother source), and not வடமொழியே தாய் (the Sanskrit language is the mother of Tamil words). Peruntēvan, it could be argued, is not thinking here of a genetic or historical relation between languages but is claiming an

epistemological relation of inquiry. Any analysis or theory propounded in Sanskrit Shastric texts has universal application. Hence there is no need to develop a treatise on Tamil etymology. This reveals the appeal of the knowledge produced in Sanskrit. One can see a similarity to the position with reference to English in the modern period. If this logic about the knowledge in Sanskrit is taken to its logical end, there is no need for a separate grammar based on different principles, and thus there can't be a Tamil grammatical tradition. To state it more precisely, there is an ethnic Tamil grammatical tradition but it is absorbed into a universal grammatical system discovered and expressed in Sanskrit.

The intellectual conflict between these two groups is not expressed through open clashes or condemnation in the Tamil context. *Tolkāppiyam* did not lose it status as the *Ur* text of the Tamil transition and there was no attempt to discredit it or to dislodge its status. This is in spite of the fact that S-School changed the Tamil grammar as initiated by *Tolkāppiyam* with new concepts taken from Sanskrit grammarians such as Pāṇini, but not only from him. This is an epistemological war based on the ideology of language order (Ollett 2017), which is ultimately about submersion of the identity and multiplicity of intellectual traditions relating to the study of grammar. But it was fought under the camouflage of reinterpretation of Tamil by searching for the universal truth of language through a single grammar for Tamil and Sanskrit.

Acknowledgement

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cēṉāvaraiyar (1938). *Tolkāppiyam with Cēṉāvaraiyam*. Ed. by Piramaśrī Ci. Kaṇēcaiyar. Cuṇṇākam: Tirumakaḷ Aḻuttakam

Ilakkuvaṉār, Singaravel (1963). *Tholkāppiyam (in English) with Critical Studies*. Madurai: Kuṛaḷ Neṛi Publishing House.

Munivar, Civagnāna (1968). *Tolkāppiyac cūttira virutti* தொல்காப்பியச் சூத்திர விருத்தி விளக்கக் குறிப்புகளுடன். Thiruvavadudurai: Thiruvavadudurai Atiinam.

Muṉivar, Pavaṇanti (1946). *Naṉṉūl*. With the commentary of Mayilai Nātar. Ed. by S. Kaliyāṇa Cuntar. Ceṉṉai: Kapīr Accukkūtam.

Muṉivar, Pavaṇanti (1999). *Naṉṉūl* of Pavaṇanti Muṉivar பவணந்தி முனிவர் இயற்றிய நன்னூல் மூலமும் சங்கரநமச்சிவாயர் செய்து சிவஞான முனிவரால் திருத்தப்பட்ட புத்தம் புத்துரை என்னும் விருத்தியுரையும் (*Nannūl* Text written by Pavaṇanti Munivar. Expansive Commentary written by Cankaranamaccivāyar and improved with a very new Commentary by Civagnana Munivar). Ed. by A. Dhamodharan. Chennai: International Institute of Indian Studies.

Puttamittiraṉ (1942). *Vīracōḻiyam*. With the commentary by Peruntēvaṉār. Ed. by Kā. Ra. Kōvintarāja Mutaliyār. Ceṉṉai: Pavāṉantar Kaḻakam.

Tecikar, Cāmināta (1973). *Ilakkaṇak Kottu*. Ed. by Ti. Vē. Kōpālaiyar. Tañcai: Caracuvati Malkāl Nūlnilayam. Tañcai Caracuvati Makāl Veḷiyīṭu 146.

Tīkṣitar, Cuppiramaṇiyaw (1973). *Pirayōka Vivēkam*. Ed. by Ti. Vē. Kōpālaiyar. Tañcai: Caracuvati Makāl Nūlnilayam. Tañcai Caracuvati Makāl Veḷiyīṭu 147.

Secondary Sources

Annamalai, E. (2018). "Restoring Knowledge by Integration and Refutation: Sivañana Munivar's Conceptualization of Tradition" [Unpublished]. *The Tenth NETamil Workshop = Tracing School Formations and Scholarly Networks*. Puducherry: EFEO, Pondicherry Centre.

D'Avella, V. (2012). "Translating and Transforming Grammar: Compounding in the *Tolkāppiyam*" [Unpublished]. *40th Annual Conference on South Asia* (Masidon, 20-23 October 2011). Madison.

D'Avella, V. (2020). "The Theorization of Tamil Compounds". *Beitrage zur Geschichte de Sparachwissenschafft*, 30.

D'Avella, V. (2021). "The *Vīracōḻiyam*: A Tamil Grammar Through the Eyes of Sanskrit". Ciotti, G.; McCann, E. (eds), *Linguistic and Textual Aspects of Multilingualism in South India and Sri Lanka*. Pondicherry: École Française d'Extrême-Orient ; Institut Français de Pondichéry, 327-410.

Lehmann, T. (1994). *Grammatik des Alttamil*. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag.

Matilal, Bimal K. (1991). "Bhavanada on 'What is Karaka?'". Deshpand, M.M.; Bhate, S. (eds), *Paninian Studies: Professor S.D. Joshi Felicitation Volume*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 263-82.

Meenakshisundaran, T.P. (1974). *Foreign Models in Tamil Grammar*. Trivandrum: Dravidian Linguistics Association.

Ollett, A. (2017). *Language of the Snakes. Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

Thirugnanasambandham, P. (1992). *Sanskrit Tamil Contact*. Thiruvananthapuram: International School of Dravidian Linguistics.

Wilden, E. (2018). *Grammar of Old Tamil for Students*. Pondicherry: École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO); Institut français de Pondichéry (IFP). Collection Indologie 137, NETamil Series 3.

Zvelebil, K. (1973). *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*. Leiden: Brill.