

The Concept of *ākupeyar* in Tamil Grammar A Historical and Comparative Perspective

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Abstract This paper traces the history of the concept of the syntactic category *ākupeyar* ‘referent shifting noun’ in Tamil grammatical tradition and its transformation into a semantic category and the role of Sanskrit grammatical thoughts in the transformation. Theoretically limited number of *ākupeyars* multiplies and the semantic (referential) shift between nouns becomes layered. A shared syntactic of *ākupeyar* with *vērrumai-p peyar* ‘case carrying noun’ loses its importance when the discussion of the former turns to semantics. The discussion turns to the difference of the semantic shift in *ākupeyar* and the headless compound *aṇmolittokai*. In modern literary and other communication studies, *ākupeyar* is equated with trope.

Keywords *Ākupeyar*. Tamil grammatical tradition. Denotative and connotative meanings. Semantic ambivalence. Lakṣaṇā. Trope.

Summary 1 Early Period. – 2 Medieval Period. – 3 Modern Period. – 4 Semantic Shift Expressed by Zero Morph. – 5 Conclusion.



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1 Early Period

1.1 Semantics of Nouns

1.1.1 Definition

Nouns as a word class have the unique property of coding referents outside the language in the real world, which could be abstracted and objectified. Grammatically, nouns in a language may refer either to a specific individual object, in which case they are called proper nouns (*iyarpeyar*), or to the referents of other nouns, making their reference variable; these are called pronouns (*iṭappeyar*). Tamil grammarians posit a third kind of referents of a noun that shifts from one referent to another subject to a template of given semantic relations between the noun and the predicate. They call such nouns *ākupeyar* ‘the noun that becomes another noun with a different referent/meaning’. *Āku* is a verb that means ‘become (another)’ and this compound word (*viṇaittokai*) expands into *piṛitiṇ poruḷ āku peyar* ‘noun that becomes the referent of another (noun)’. Cēṇāvaraiyar (thirteenth c.), a commentator of the middle chapter *Collatikāram* (Col) ‘Chapter on Word’ of the first grammar of Tamil *Tolkāppiyam* (Tol), defines this grammatical term as *onṇraṇ peyar onṇrukku ākivaruvatu* ஒன்றன் பெயர் ஒன்றுக்கு ஆகிவருவது (the noun whose referent becomes another; Tol Col S. 114). This is paraphrased as *oru peyar taṇ poruḷai uṇarttātu maṇṇoru poruḷai uṇarttuvatu* ஒரு பெயர் தன் பொருளை உணர்த்தாது மற்றொரு பொருளை உணர்த்துவது (a noun, without referring to its meaning, refers to another meaning); in this paraphrase, reference to meaning (rather than to referent) is highlighted. Note that *poruḷ* in Tamil refers to, or stands for, object as well as meaning; it denotes the referent and the reference. This ‘becoming noun’ is translated into a ‘noun of shifted referent’ in this paper; in an earlier paper on the subject, I translated this referent-shifted noun as a ‘transference noun’ (Annamalai 1990).¹ The noun that is used unaltered for its referent/meaning is *iyarpeyar* (from *iyal* ‘natural’); like the proper noun, this noun also names an object for identification or indexing, though not uniquely as the proper noun. *Ākupeyar* is in opposition to *iyarpeyar*. *Ākupeyar* in its semantics comes to be viewed in the modern time as a trope (Rogahn 2025) discussed in Western literary theories and it is closer to the kind of trope called synecdoche; it shares with metonymy the characteristic

¹ ‘Transfer’ limits the process to moving the referent from one noun to another. There is, however, the possibility of the analysis in which one referent is selected in its occurrence out of many possible ones. ‘Shift’ is used here to be neutral between changing from one to another and selecting one over others. However, ‘transfer’ is used interchangeably with ‘shift’ in the paper.

of ‘association’ between objects (as opposed to similarity between objects: metaphor) (see 1.5.1).

Ākupeyar is a grammatical concept in its classical formulation that refers to a category of nouns (actually, nouns that trigger a process to identify their intended referent); in later times, as a semantic concept, it comes to be used to explain synchronic semantic shifts of nouns in a sentence. Caṅkaranamaccivāyar (seventeenth c.), a commentator of *Naṇṇūl*, places *ākupeyar* in the category of meaning-transparent/-motivated nouns (*kāraṇappeyar*, S. 290).² That is, the meaning of the *ākupeyar* is explainable from the nature of its formation. Not by the meaning of its components but by the regulated process of the semantic shift; that is, the shift is not opaque. The template that regulates or frames the process is conventional (*marapu*); so, the shift is not arbitrary. *Ākupeyar*, then, is a transparent conventional noun.

This paper is an attempt to trace this history conceptualizing *ākupeyar* from being a syntactic concept to a semantic concept.

1.2 Other Relations Between Word and Meaning

1.2.1 Homonymy and Polysemy

Semantically, *ākupeyar* is not a homonym, where the same phonological form has more than one referent, as in *paṭi* ‘step leading to a door’ and *paṭi* ‘a measuring container’. The sentence *eṭṭuppaṭi atikam* ‘eight steps are too many/eight measures are too many’ is therefore ambiguous. In homonymy, however, the meanings are unrelated and treated as separate lexical items; thus the two meanings of *paṭi* are regarded as two different words rather than as primary and transferred meanings of the same noun. This disqualifies the homonym to be an *ākupeyar*. *Ākupeyar*, unlike a homonym, is one noun despite its multiple meanings; a homonym will have multiple entries in a dictionary and its multiple meanings will go with the different entries of the homonym, unlike in polysemy. The ambiguity of a homonym can be resolved by specific predicates because of their incompatibility with one meaning; cf. *paṭi eṭṭiṇṇ* ‘he climbed up the steps’ with *paṭi aḷantāṇ* ‘he measured with a measuring instrument’.

2 Aṭiyārkkunallār (twelfth c.), in his commentary of *Cilappatikāram* (*patikam*) designates a noun an *ākupeyar* that doesn’t have a semantic shift but is etymologically transparent; *kuṇavāyil* ‘Eastern Gate’ is etymologically transparent as the name of a place, like names of many places are. Aṭiyārkkunallār perhaps, treats this as a semantic shift of the name of a geographical direction (east) to refer to a specific town in that direction, in which case the noun qualifies to be an *ākupeyar*. Or, he uses the term to mean simply a motivated noun. Note that the referent of this noun is a specific place; see later (4.3) in the paper for the referent to be, unusually, a proper name.

This is like *ākupeyar* in this respect, but it is not (see 1.4.1).

Ākupeyar is not a polysemous noun either. The senses of a polysemous word are related historically (by semantic evolution or language contact), figuratively or by altered boundaries of the senses. These related senses are recognized as contextual variants of a single lexical item. Accordingly, a polysemous word is typically listed in a dictionary as one entry with multiple senses, which together define the word semantically. For example, the sentence *avaṇ maruntu cāppiṭṭāṇ* ‘he took medicine/he took poison’ illustrates two ethno-culturally related meanings of *maruntu* (poison and antidote). However, the noun is not an *ākupeyar*. Unlike in polysemy, the multiple referents/meanings of the *ākupeyar* are open ended, dynamic and are subject to a template. Consequently, the different meanings of an *ākupeyar* are not listed in the dictionary; instead, one of the meanings is selected that is appropriate for predicate in a sentential context. Specific predicates can specify one meaning or another, as in, *maruntu uṭalaik kākkuṁ* ‘medicine protects health’, *maruntu uyiraiṁ kolluṁ* ‘poison takes away the life’. This is like *ākupeyar* (see 1.4.1), but it is not.

Finding the shifting referents is not the task of the lexicographer, but it is the task of the grammarian to provide the template to self-generate the possible referents. It is like the job of the syntactician, who does not generate all possible sentences but gives a body of syntactic rules to generate them. The commentators of literary texts identify a noun as *ākupeyar* and give its textual meaning.

1.2.2 Neutral Nouns for Gender and Number

Ākupeyar is also distinct from *viravuppeyar* ‘distinction-neutralized noun’ (Tol Col S. 173), which is literally close in translation to ‘(category-)crossing noun’, whose possible sense differentiation relating to gender and number is neutralized. For example, in *mātu mēyntatu/mēyntaṇa* ‘the cow/cows grazed’, *mātu* is unspecified with respect to number, unlike nouns such as *aracaṇ* ‘king’ and *aracar* ‘kings’, or the plural form *mātukaḷ* ‘cows’, which is historically later. The singular or the plural ending of the predicate (the agreement marker of it) marks the number of the noun and makes the number of referents explicit and solves the problem of the neutralized ambivalent number of the noun, i.e. the *mayakkam* of the number of the noun. *mātu* is neutral, and so is a *viravuppeyar*. Similarly, *mātu* is neutral with respect to gender, since it may refer either to a cow or a bull. The gender may become apparent from the meaning of the predicates: in *mātu kaṇṇatu/uḷutatu* ‘the bovine yielded milk/ploughed’, the predicates make the gender explicit, female and male respectively. Gender indication is possible morphologically with human *viravuppeyar* by the nominal predicates of the sentence

viruntāli nalla pāṭakan/pāṭaki ‘the guest is a good singer male/female, though *viruntāli* is a gender-neutral noun (as *mātu* above). Since the morphological marker of the predicate helps to choose the appropriate gender in at least in one kind of *viravuppeyar*, it is not to be considered an *ākupeyar*.

1.2.3 Immune to Morphological Marking

Ākupeyar is immune to marking the morphology of the noun or of the predicate depending on its referent. In *ūr alintatu*, where *ūr* is an *ākupeyar*, it means both ‘the (physical) village got destroyed’ and ‘the people of the village got destroyed’. There is no human or plural marking on either the noun or the predicate to deduce the second meaning, which has to be obtained by the shift in meaning. It is just a semantic shift of referent from the inanimate to human without any morphological adjustment. *Aṇmoḷittokai* ‘the compound word with zero human head’, not indicating the human gender, is different in this respect (see 4.2). If one wants to morphologically express the human and the plural meaning of the noun, the common noun must be used with the morphological inflection of human and plural, which has agreement with the predicate: *ūrār alintaṇar* ‘the villagers got destroyed’. This noun ceases to be an *ākupeyar*, as it has transparent morphology. *Ākupeyar* is thus morphologically opaque.

1.3 Different Views of the Concept

The above differentiations of *ākupeyar* from other kinds of nouns should not make us believe that *ākupeyar* is non-controversially differentiated from other kinds of noun. There is a long history of contesting interpretations of the concept in the Tamil grammatical tradition. The historical development concerns its conceptualization as a grammatical category and its grammatical function in the language. Even regarding its semantic shift, the taxonomic expansion of its kinds and the number of permissible layers of shifting of the referent in post-Tolkappiyam period is controversial. The general theoretical progression enunciated in the commentaries of *Tolkāppiyam* and by later grammarians is commented upon by Balasundaram, a modern commentator of *Tolkāppiyam*, in his commentary of the *Tolkāppiyam*’s *sutra* (Tol Col S. 114) on *ākupeyar* in the following words:

Some later Tamil grammarians, without appreciating the nuanced and flawless analysis of *ākupeyar* within the Tamil grammatical theory as formulated in *Tolkāppiyam* as a case of overlapping of the senses (*mayakkam*) of nouns like that of case markers,

treat *ākupeyar* as a part of the lexical meaning that is implicit or suggestive (*kuṛippu-p poru!*), by aligning the Tamil analytical tradition with that of Sanskrit; these later Tamil grammarians, not being cognizant of the difference between the suggestive meaning of words in poetry (the figurative language) and the meaning in the ordinary language, propose to treat *ākupeyar* under *dhvani* of Rhetoric in literature. (This long sentence is from the original in Tamil, as if to dismiss the later development in one sentence)

We will look with a critical eye at this alleged development and other developments in the treatment of *ākupeyar* within the Tamil grammatical tradition (see B under 2).

A. Nouns as Arguments and Referents: *Mayakkam*

1.4 Shared Features with Case Marking Theory

1.4.1 *Mayakkam*

The theory of *ākupeyar* of *Tolkāppiyam* has parallels with its theory of Case. In this theory, the case assignment of nouns is governed by the predicate. *Tolkāppiyam* lists predicates that are governed by, or compatible with, each case. This is similar to the analysis whereby transitive verbs govern the accusative or Object case; this is extended to all Cases. Similarly, with *ākupeyar*, the referent of nouns is governed by predicates. A noun is transferred to be an *ākupeyar* and changes its referent when its referent is incompatible with the predicate. The noun *Kanchipuram* refers to a city. In the sentence with the given meaning *kāñcipuram aṇintāl* ‘she wore the city of Kanchipuram’, the noun is incompatible with the predicate of the sentence. The meaning of the noun is transferred from the city to the silk sari for which the city is famous, and the noun is taken to mean ‘she wore a *Kanchipuram* sari’. The incompatibility is thus resolved. The noun with the new meaning or referent of a specific sari is *ākupeyar*. When the predicate is compatible, the noun can mean the city and the sari as in *kāñcipuram kaṭṭiṇāl*: ‘she built the city of Kanchipuram’ and ‘she wore a Kanchipuram sari’. In this respect, *ākupeyar* shares a semantic characteristic of homonymous or polysemous nouns, as pointed out above (see 1.2.1).

The analytical similarity between the Case noun (*vēṛṟumai-p peyar*) and *ākupeyar* is pointed out by the theoretical context in which *Tolkāppiyam* introduces the term and the concept of the latter. It perceives a similarity between case (noun’s grammatical function) assignment of nouns in a sentence and the meaning (referential)

assignment of certain nouns in a sentence. It is the predicate of the sentence that governs both. *Ākupeyar* ‘referent-shifted noun’ shares this syntactic property with *vērrumai-p peyar* ‘case noun’; both receive their syntactic function from the predicate.

For this reason, *Tolkāppiyam* introduces *ākupeyar* at the end of the chapter of *vērrumai mayāṅkiyal* ‘chapter on overlapping of case markers’ relating to their meanings or functions, which follows the chapter on Case. This chapter describes the situation where two case markers of nouns have the same meaning or function in a syntactic string. In the words of Cēṇāvaraiyar (Tol Col S. 114), *oṇṇaṇ poruṭkaṇ oṇṇu cēraleṇṇu moppumai* ஒன்றன் பொருட்கண் ஒன்று சேறலென்னு மொப்புமை (the similarity of the meaning of one coalescing with the meaning of another). They are not free variants substitutable in all contexts but are conditioned by the predicate. This is called (*vērrumai-p*) *porul mayakkam* ‘meaning-overlap of case markers’. An example: the accusative case and the locative case have the same meaning; particular predicates show that these two case makers are interchangeable keeping the truth value of the proposition constant. *Avan eṇ kaṇṇai/kaṇṇil kuttiṇāṇ* ‘he pierced/pierced into my eye’. The object of piercing is the place of piercing as well. This chapter in *Tol* is followed by the chapter on Nouns. Discussion of *ākupeyar* provides a link between the comparable semantic behavior of the noun with a case maker and a noun where one referent overlaps with another (the Tamil word for both meaning and referent is *porul* in Tamil; see 1.1.1). The shared semantic behavior of the two is *mayakkam* ‘overlapping of one for the other’,³ which is similar to the idea of ambivalence.

The phenomenon of *mayakkam* with reference to *ākupeyar* may be explained with the following standard example: *puḷi tiṇṇāṇ* ‘he ate the tamarind fruit’ and *puḷi naṭṭāṇ* ‘he planted the tamarind sapling’, the same noun *puḷi* ‘tamarind’ refers to two different objects/referents ‘fruit’ and ‘plant’ in the two sentences respectively and the specific referent is determined by the fact that it is not in conflict with the meaning of the predicate. While in the instance of case markers the sense overlaps when the forms are different and, in the case of nouns, the form overlaps when the senses are different. But both are visualized to illustrate the concept of overlap or ambivalence (*mayakkam*) of meanings or functions; in one case, overlap of case function and in another overlap of referential function, of nouns. Both are instances of *mayakkam* in the Tamil view.

3 *Mayakkam* is a concept used in all three chapters on Sound, Word and (poetic) Content of *Tolkāppiyam*. The common thread between them is that a privilege of occurrence in a syntagmatic string or in a paradigmatic set may be violative of the generalized privilege of occurrence but is functionally legitimized. The etymological meaning of the word *mayakkam* is ‘appearance of one for another’.

It must be noted that *mayakkam* happens when the predicate creates semantic oddity; that is, the predicate and the argument are incompatible. When the predicate is compatible, the referent is not limited to only one: *ūr erintatu* means ‘the village/village folks burned’, where both referents are appropriate for the predicate *eri* ‘burn’. So, there is no need to create an *ākupeyar* to ensure compatibility. Here two referents are ambivalent in the sentence because both are semantically admissible by the predicate.⁴ It is the textual context that will disambiguate.

1.4.2 Two Kinds of *Mayakkam*

Tolkāppiyam notes that there are two ways in which meanings or functions overlap or have *mayakkam*. In the above illustration of *mayakkam* with case markers, one case marker does not detach itself from its meaning in *mayakkam*, but retains it and is not contradictory to the meaning of the other case marker. This property of retention is called *taṟkiḷamai* ‘owning self’ (*kiḷamai* means ‘ownership, right to ownership’). The same is true of the shift, which ends in *mayakkam*, in the above example of *ākupeyar*; the meaning of sour (along with the word for it) is retained when the referent of fruit is shifted to the referent of plant with a different predicate. This is *taṟkiḷamai ākupeyar* ‘referent-shifted noun with retention of meaning’ (this is phrased as ‘every shifted referent in its meaning or referential function is close to that of the [primary] referent’: *tattam poruḷvayin tammoṭu civaṇal* தத்தம் பொருள்வயின் தம்மொடு சிவணல்; Tol Col S. 115). This is later equated with the Sanskrit-induced term *viṭāta ākupeyar*; *viṭāta* means ‘not letting the *poruḷ* go off’.

⁴ The predicate does not have to be a verb for the noun to be an *ākupeyar*. *puḷi/kāñcipuram vilai atikam* means ‘the tamarind fruit/Kanchipuram sari is expensive’, which are as grammatical as a verbal predicate such as *vāṅku* ‘buy’ would be regarding shift of meaning. The same is true when the same verbal predicate is used as in *vilaikku vāṅkiṇāṇ* ‘bought for a price’. The nouns in this sentence do not mean ‘the tamarind leaf/the physical town of Kanchipuram’, as the objects of these referents are not sold. This shows that cultural knowledge is in play to get the appropriate meaning of the *ākupeyar*. Contrary to the sentence with *puḷi* above, the sentence *vāḷai vilai atikam* could mean ‘the banana tree/stem/fruit/leaf is expensive’ by the cultural knowledge that each one of the referents could be sold. An instance of using the cultural knowledge even with a deterministic predicate in the sentence, which normally forces a semantic shift of the nouns, is below. *puḷi* refers to the whole plant with the verb *naṭu* ‘plant’; but in the case of *kaṭalai* in *kaṭalai naṭṭāṇ* ‘planted the peanut’ the predicate does not force the meaning of the whole plant because it is the nut (not the sapling) that is planted in peanut agriculture. As with the predicate *tiṇṇāṇ*, the predicate *naṭṭāṇ* also refers to the part ‘nut’ when the object is ‘under earth pea’. Tamil grammars, however, do not address directly the place of cultural knowledge in identifying the shift of referents. Theory of *ākupeyar* is the means of accounting the pragmatics of shifting referents, and not the means of semantic interpretation of nouns outside of their predicates.

In the other kind of *mayakkam* in case constructions, the meaning of one case marker is detached (*poruḷ tīrntu*) when there is *mayakkam*. It is replaced by the meaning of another case marker. This is called (*vērrumai*) *urupu mayakkam* ‘ambivalence of case markers’. The replacement is done by the meaning that is appropriate (*poruḷ cel maruṅku*; Tol Col S. 106) with the predicate. One example is *nāṇal maṇarḱu iṇṇa muḷai* ‘the sprout (root) that the reed made to come out *to the sand’ (*Akanāṇūru* 212), which should be read as *nāṇal maṇalil iṇṇa muḷai* ‘the sprout that the reed made to come out in the sand’, where the meaning of the dative case marker is replaced with the meaning of the locative case marker *-il* to reconcile with the predicate *iṇ* ‘give birth to, make come out’. An alternative reading, which would avoid *mayakkam*, could be that the poet is metaphorical here in using the dative case. Another example (*Tirukkuraḷ* 1313) is *oruttiyaik kāṭṭiya cūṭiṇīr* ‘(you) wore the (flower) for showing off *a woman (in the accusative case)’, which should be read as ‘(you) wore the flower for showing off to a woman (in the dative case)’. The legitimate case of the verb *kāṭṭu* ‘show off’ (in its infinitive form in the line) is the case of indirect object as in the second gloss and not the direct object as in the first gloss of sentence as in the text. Such shifts of case markers are called *pīritiṇ kiḷamai* ‘owning another meaning’.⁵ To avoid *mayakkam*, one could probably say that the poet uses the infinitive of the verb *kāṭṭu* in the poetically licensed sense of ‘attract’ that uses the accusative case.

The concept of *pīritiṇ kiḷamai* extends to *ākupeyar*, which shifts a referent to another in the transfer when the conceptual distance between the two referents is far (to the extent of being snapped). This is comparable with the contrasting difference between the two case makers in case constructions described above. In the example, *viḷakku ēṇṇiṇāl* ‘lighted the lamp’, the sense of the part ‘flame’ is not in natural or integral conjunction with the sense of the physical object ‘lamp’; lamp exists in the daytime without the flame. So, it could be considered detachable from the sense of the whole. When *viḷakku* as an *ākupeyar* has the referent ‘flame’, it could be an example of *pīritiṇ kiḷamai* (‘owning another’) *ākupeyar*. This may be called ‘the shifted referent refers to another meaning of the primary noun by lacking a way to link’ (*oppil vaḷiyār pīrituporuḷ cuṭṭal* ஒப்பில் வழியாற் பிறிதுபொருள் சுட்டல் in the sutra Tol Col S. 115). But the above is probably not the correct example of this kind of *ākupeyar* (see 1.4.4)

⁵ The *mayakkam* resolved by replacement of case meaning exemplified by commentators only from poetic Tamil. This is a grammatical effort to accept a *vaḷu* ‘(grammatical) deviation’ in the literary language as legitimate (*vaḷuvamaitti* ‘legitimization of deviation’). The *mayakkam* of the first kind has examples from the ordinary language and is legitimately in vogue.

1.4.3 Different Explanations of One *Mayakkam*

Commentators, however, do not have a uniform view on the two ways of linking the meaning of the primary noun and of the *ākupeyar*. They uniformly take the instances of the referent shift from the whole to the part, from the part to the whole, from the attribute to its object, from the material to the product from it to illustrate *tarķilamai ākupeyar*. They perceive the two referents in these shifts are inseparable perceptively. This is a subjective assessment. Some (Balasundaram Tol Col S. 115) try to give a formal criterion to tell one kind of *ākupeyar* from the other on the basis of the case relation between the shifted referents: *puḷi tinṛāṇ = puḷiyiṇ paḷattai-t tinṛāṇ* ‘ate the fruit of the tamarind’, where *puḷi* ‘tamarind’ is in genitive case relation with the noun *paḷam* ‘fruit’; *kāvi uṭuttiṇāṇ* is expanded into *kāviyai-t tōytta āṭaiyai uṭuttiṇāṇ* ‘wore the dress colored saffron’, in which the dress and the saffron are in accusative case relation. When the case relation is accusative or genitive the *ākupeyar* is *tarķilamai*, according to them. If it is locative, they call the *ākupeyar* *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai*. They further say that if the case relation is instrumental, *ākupeyar* could be either one of its two kinds depending on the nature of the instrumental action. The dichotomy of kinds is neutralized when the case relation is dative or ablative. This formal approach to explanation of two kinds of *ākupeyar* looks *ad hoc*.

Some other commentators seem to rationalize the two kinds in two ways. From the perceptual point of view, the instances of relationship between the place of origin and the product deriving from it such as the weaving town/community and the textile produced there, are seen as having no natural connection between them and so the link is considered to be separable. From the formal point of view, *kāñcipurattil neyta puṭavai* ‘the sari woven in a place called Kanchipuram’ could be argued to have locative case relationship and conclude that it is *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai*. But such arguments cut both ways. Note that *kāviyil tōytta āṭaiyai uṭuttiṇāṇ* ‘wore the dress dyed in saffron’, with the locative case, is also a possible expansion and so is not *tarķilamai*, contrary to the conclusion above, which was based on the accusative case relationship. The semantic difference setting up two kinds of *ākupeyar* cannot, therefore, be determined by the difference in the case relation between the noun and the predicate. In addition to indeterminacy and the *ad hoc* nature of classifying *ākupeyars* into the two semantic kinds, the formal criterion of case relationship used above is unreliable and is based on the subjective semantic criterion concerning the relation between two referents.

1.4.4 A Tentative Alternative Explanation

I propose that when the semantic shift from one noun to another undergoes multiple layers, the link between the meanings or referents of the expressed noun and the shifted noun is likely to snap in the minds of speakers, and this will exemplify *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai ākupeyar*. The *ākuporu!* ‘shifted meaning or referent’ of *kār* ‘rain clouds’ is *nel* ‘paddy’ in *kār viḷaintatu* ‘Paddy yielded’. The layers of shift are from rain clouds to rainy season to paddy crop to paddy (sown in the rainy season). The semantic link of paddy to rain clouds (referred to by the black/dark appearance of the clouds in the rainy season) may be considered to be snapped and so such an *ākupeyar* qualifies as *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai ākupeyar*. Later grammarians call such *ākupeyars* with multilayered shifts *maṭiyākupeyar* (see 2.3). *maṭiyākupeyars* are then *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai ākupeyar*. The problem, however, is that the *Tolkāppiyam* does not entertain multilayered semantic shifts. For it, *ākupeyar* is a shift from one referent to another, which does not take into account the semantics of the referents. Layered *ākupeyars* are possible when they are treated as carriers of meanings and not as holders of referents.

Let me digress on the misunderstanding of the commentators of the shared feature of semantic shift in *Tolkāppiyam*’s analysis of nouns carrying case markers and nouns incompatible with the predicate and their misapplication of the concept of *mayakkam* to more than one possible recovery of the meaning of absent case markers.

1.4.5 Tamil Division Versus Sanskrit Division

piṛitiṇ kiḷamai ākupeyar is later called *viṭṭa ākupeyar* ‘the shifted-referent noun that departs from the meaning of the primary noun’ to contrast with *taṛkiḷamai ākupeyar* called *viṭāta ākupeyar* ‘the shifted noun that retains a relationship with the other noun’. These later terms are terminological approximations of the Sanskrit terms *jahat-svārtha-lakṣaṇā* and *ajahat-svārtha-lakṣaṇā* to refer to two kinds of *lakṣaṇā*. An example of the former is the Sanskrit equivalent of the sentence ‘the village is on the Ganges’ whose intended meaning is ‘the village is on the banks of the Ganges’. This transferred meaning cancels the primary meaning; that is, it does not implicate it.⁶ And

⁶ The Tamil example corresponding to the Sanskrit example would be *kaṅkaiyil viṭu kaṭṭiṇāṇ* ‘built a house on the banks of the Ganges’, where ‘the bank of the Ganges’ is the *ākupeyar* with the shifted meaning from the meaning ‘Ganges’. It is, however, hard to fit the relation of the river and its bank in the permissible template of semantic relations of *Tolkāppiyam* such as whole and part. Under Case theory, this will be a *mayakkam* between two case markers (*iṭaiccol*) -il ‘in, at’ and *arukē* ‘by’.

an example of the latter is the Sanskrit equivalent of the sentence ‘the lances entered the fort’, whose transferred meaning is ‘the lancers entered the fort’; the transferred meaning implicates the primary meaning. But this is not the way the two kinds of *ākupeyar* are understood in Tamil grammar, as discussed above (1.4.3, 1.4.4). Implication is not the relation of *viṭāta ākupeyar* with the primary noun in Tamil, which is about semantic proximity.

It is possible, however, to classify *ākupeyars* in Tamil into two kinds based on implicational relationship. Village people implicate the village in *ūr cirittatu* ‘the village people laughed’, milk pot implicates milk in *pālai irakkivaittāl* ‘took off the milk pot (from the stove)’; the gold ornament implicates gold in *taṅkam aṇintāl* ‘wore a gold ornament’. Note that the referent shift is not to the ornament from any metal such as silver. These could be instances of *viṭāta ākupeyar*. But the implicational relationship extends to include all *ākupeyars*. Furthermore, there is no *ākupeyar* to instantiate *viṭāta ākupeyar*, as shown above (1.4.3) and layered *ākupeyars* could possibly qualify as *viṭāta ākupeyar* (1.4.4), but then they are not admissible in *Tolkāppiyam*. Recall (1.4.2) that *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai* in the case assignment of nouns in the Case theory is empirically limited to the poetic language and could be attributed to poetic license.

There cannot be a *viṭāta ākupeyar* in theory in Tamil because the primary noun and the transferred noun are related by the template (1.4.7) which ensures that the referent of the primary noun exists to motivate the shifted noun. The Sanskrit idea is not the idea Tamil grammarians use to differentiate *ākupeyar*. Their distinction between *tarkīlamai* and *piṛitiṇ kiḷamai*, though there is no consensus of what they exactly differentiate, is not based on implicational relationship between meanings. The concept of *mayakkam* does not include this relationship. These facts point to the suspicion that the later division of *ākupeyars* by later grammarians and their terms to approximate the division in Sanskrit represents a misapplication to the classical theory of *ākupeyar* in Tamil.

1.4.6 Shared Features with Grammar of Case

One cannot conclude that the two-kind analysis of *mayakkam* in case assignment is not extendable to the analysis of semantic shift of *ākupeyar*. *Tolkāppiyam* is explicit about the shared grammar of *mayakkam* in the grammar of the case and the noun in the last line of the *sutra* (Tol Col S. 115; some commentators take the following line to be a separate *sutra*) on *ākupeyar*: *vērrumai maruṅkil pōrral vēṇṭum* வேற்றுமை மருங்கில் போற்றல் வேண்டும் (the analysis of *ākupeyar* ‘must appreciate the parallel [*maruṅkil* ‘by the side of’] with the [analysis of] case). By this line, the author may be taken to include

three properties: (1) the shared semantic properties of *mayakkam* (described in 1.4.1 as the overlap of two nouns regarding their referents, i.e. one noun gets the meaning of another referentially), (2) the shift is warranted by the semantic nature of the predicate and (3) the meaning relationship of the two nouns by the shift is of two kinds. The parity between the syntactic behavior of the case and of the referent of the noun that *Tolkāppiyam* gives importance to, one could argue, stems from the fact that both are instances of fuzzy semantics (conceptualized as *mayakkam*). Both behaviors may be seen at one level as manifesting the same fuzzy phenomenon of nouns in a sentence, one of which relates to nouns' Argument function and another to their Referent function. But not to be understood as having a one-to-one formal correspondence between the two.

For the sharedness, the commentators of *Tolkāppiyam*, other than Cēṇāvaraiyar and Kallāṭar, however, go beyond the concept of *mayakkam* between the primary and shifted meanings of nouns, and rely on the formal properties of case and their explication. One of their extended interpretations is to treat the formless /zero referent as an external noun standing in a case relation with the primary noun (like in *aṇmolittokai*, see 4.2). *puḷi tiṇṇāṇ* is taken to have the syntactic frame *puḷiyiṇ paḷattait tiṇṇāṇ* 'ate the fruit of the tamarind', *taṇkam aṇintāl* to have the frame '*taṇkattil/taṇkattāl ceyta nakaiyai aṇintāl* 'wore the jewelry made in/from gold'. The first example has accusative case relation with the referent and the second has the locative or instrumental relation. The rationale seems to be that the specific referent (*paḷam* and *nakai* in these cases) should be transparent in the semantic relation between the nouns of the two referents and it is inadequate to leave the referent unspecified syntactically other than saying that it is not the whole (*mutal*) or material (*karuvi*). This extension of absent noun brings *ākupeyar* closer syntactically to *aṇmolittokai*, whose elided form is taken to be the head of the preceding compound whose syntax is expanded to be a relative clause (see 4.4). This extension probably helps the syntactic relationship between the two referents that could be the alternate of the default genitive relationship in the first example above (*puḷiyiṇ*) and the alternate of locative or instrumental relationship in the second example (*taṇkattil/taṇkattāl*).

There are, however, more than one syntactic relationship in other sentences to account for in this kind of analysis. In *kuḷam varriyatu* 'the tank went dry', for example, *kuḷam* is the *ākupeyar* for *nīr* 'water'; the syntactic relation between the two is more than one: *kuḷattu nīr/kuḷattil nīr varriyatu* 'water of the tank/water in the tank evaporated'. These two expansions do not have the same syntactic properties. Moreover, the genitive relationship between the two referents is not possible with some predicates. *kuḷam nīraintatu* 'the tank filled' where also *kuḷam* is the *ākupeyar* of *nīr*, but **kuḷattu nīr nīraintatu*

‘water of the tank filled’ is not a permissible syntactic relationship but *kuḷattil nīr nīraintatu* ‘water filled in the tank’ is with locative relationship. It is also permissible to have the instrumental case relationship: *kuḷam nīrāl nīraintatu* ‘the tank filled with water’.

It is hard to be sure what motivated the later grammarians to extend the similarity of *ākupeyar* with case structures with such explicit syntactic expansions. An alternative analysis that is closer to *Tolkāppiyam*’s description of *ākupeyar* is to have the shift of referents take place under certain template of semantic relationships between the referents (unlike the relationship between the predicate and the noun of *Tolkāppiyam*’s description). To specify that the shifted referent of specific nouns allowed by the template such as *paḷam* and *nakai* in the above examples (in this section) is to opt for a qualitative semantic interpretation rather than a formal syntactic expansion.

Another interpretation of the above *sutra* by later grammarians is to treat all *ākupeyar* as the *mayakkam* of the Subject case. The Subject in Tamil is the bare noun with no case marker and it has multiple potential referents depending on the predicate: *teṅku iṇittatu* ‘the coconut water was sweet’, *teṅku vaḷaintatu* ‘the coconut tree bent’.⁷ Non-Subject nouns take case markers and they too have *mayakkam* (for example, the Object in *teṅku tiṇṇāṇ* ‘ate the coconut meat’, *teṅku naṭṭāṇ* ‘planted a coconut tree’, *teṅku vēyntāṇ* ‘made the roof with coconut fronds’), which need to be resolved by referent shift. Unless case marking of all nouns is theorized to be made on the Subject noun, the *mayakkam* in non-Subject nouns in the sentence cannot be called Subject case *mayakkam* (*eḷuvāy vērrumai mayakkam*). The analysis of *mayakkam* with reference to Subject alone is untenable. Cēṇāvaraiyar (Tol Col S. 115) rejects the position of *Iḷampūraṇar* subscribing to Subject case *mayakkam*, and later accepted by *Nacciṇārkkiniyar*, in their commentaries of the same *Sutra*, and argues that the noun base of all declined nouns is not the Subject and further that the chapter *vērrumai mayāṅkiyal* does not mention any *mayakkam* for the first (*eḷuvāy*) case with any another case in the sentence (as it does for other cases). The various problems pointed out above, regarding explanations of sharedness by commentators, show that they admit that the semantic shift of *ākupeyar* cannot be explained by the syntactic relationship between the nouns of two referents. Their explanations result in overplaying the sharedness between *vērrumaip peyar* and *ākupeyar* and grounding the notion of *mayakkam* uncommonly on ambivalent syntactic relationships between the two referents of them.

⁷ An example from modern Tamil, which has replaced *tenku* with *teṇṇai* and has a different word *tēṅkāy* for the nut, would be *tēṅkāy tiṇṇāṇ* ‘ate the coconut meat’. *mā* ‘mango’, an equivalent of *teṅku*, will not have the predicate *vēy* ‘make roof’ because of the cultural practice of not using mango leaves for making a roof.

Let me return to the semantic component of *ākupeyar*.

B. Template of Semantic Shifts

1.5 Constraining the Transfer

1.5.1 Template of Eligible Meaning Relations

It must be noted that, besides the role of the predicate in determining the referent shift, there is a template to delineate the referents that are shifted. The template is to frame the semantic relation between the referents within a bounded system. The template is to have a limited, but not closed, set of two semantic types of nouns (such as the part and the whole of an object) and to limit the shift to take place between them. The template described by the *Tolkāppiyam* is given below in the footnote (Tol Col S. 114). This template derives from the convention (*marapu*, not logic) of language use. The permissible shifts between referents are thus empirical.⁸ For Cēṇāvaraiyar, *marapu* in this *sutra* is defined by the harmonious relation (*iyaipu* from the verb *icai* 'be in agreement') between the domain of the primary meaning and the domain of the shifted meaning.

The referent shift may be from the whole of an object to its part; from the place of origin to the product originating there; from the attribute to the object; from the material to the product from it; from the maker to the product or outcome from the making. Examples for the first shift from the whole to its part are *puḷi karaittāl* 'dissolved tamarind fruit paste',⁹ *viḷakku ērrināl* 'lighted the lamp'. In the first example, *puḷi*, which is not taken to refer to the whole of the tree,

8 முதலிற் கூறும் சினையறி கிளவியும்
சினையிற் கூறும் முதலறி கிளவியும்
பிறந்தவழிக் கூறலும் பண்புகொள் பெயரும்
இயன்றது மொழிதலும் இருபெய ரொட்டும்
வினைமுத லுரைக்குங் கிளவியொடு தொகைஇ
அனைய மரபினவே ஆகுபெயர்க் கிளவி

Identification of the shifted sense of a noun (*ākuporu!*) is based on the grammarians' and the present author's native speaker judgement of semantic appropriateness and, in the case of the expressed noun, semantic oddity.

9 *Puḷi* 'tamarind' in *en vayirril puḷiyaik karaittāl* 'dissolved tamarind fruit-paste in my stomach' means 'put fear in me' with a change of meaning to 'fear'. This metaphorical or idiomatic shift of meaning of *puḷi* in this example does not make the noun an *ākupeyar*. It shows that the traditional definition of *ākupeyar* by Tamil grammarians with reference to the referent (*peyar marṟoru poruḷukku ākivaruvatu ākupeyar* 'a noun that embraces another meaning' is *ākupeyar*), circumscribed by the template limits the scope of *ākupeyar*. When the limitation is removed, other semantic shifts found in kinds of trope will come under *ākupeyar* (see 2.2).

refers instead to the fruit part of the tree for it to be compatible with the predicate *karai* 'dissolve'. The referent shift from the whole to a part (*mutalāku peyar* 'the referent-whole-shifted noun' = 'the whole that shifts its referent to its part'). 'Whole' could be the referent of a natural object like a tree with parts ranging from the fruit to the root. Tamil happens to have a recurring word modifying the whole as well as its parts (*puḷiya maram* 'tamarind tree', *puḷiyam paḷam* 'tamarind fruit' etc.). 'Whole' could be the referent of a manufactured object as in the following example: *viḷakku*, the structure of it, is an example of it with many parts of which the flame is the necessary part in any shape of the lamp. In *viḷakku ēṟṟināl* 'lighted the lamp' the predicate determines that *viḷakku* refers to the flame of the lamp, not to the whole structure of lamp. This is another example of referent shift from the whole to the part.¹⁰

The role of the predicate in referent assignment, as the role of the predicate in case assignment, can be appreciated in examples like *viḷakku erintatu* 'the (wooden) lamp burnt/the lamp (was) lighted', where both referents (the whole and the part) are compatible with the verb *eri* 'burn' obviating the need for a shift. The predicate *eri* does not have incompatibility with either sense of the word *viḷakku* 'lamp, flame' and the meaning is dependent on the context. The meaning, in other words, relates to the context of use of the sentence, which includes the intended meaning of the speaker to use the particular sentence.

The second in the order of the *ākupeyar* template of *Tolkāppiyam* is the shift of referent from a part of an object to the whole. It is the converse of the first one. In *verrilai naṭṭān* 'planted the betel plant (creeper)', *ilai* 'leaf' is a part of the whole 'plant' and is incompatible with the predicate *naṭu* 'plant' and so the shift of referent to *ceṭi/koṭi* 'plant/creeper' is recognized. Since the leaf is a part and the plant is the whole, this is a case of shift from the part to the whole (*ciṇaiyāku peyar* 'the part-shifted-noun') to be meaningful. It must be noted that meaningfulness does not come from the predicate per se but from the relationship of compatibility between the predicate and the noun it governs. In *puḷi naṭṭān* 'planted a tamarind tree', *puḷi* has the whole (plant) as the referent and so there is no shift. It may also come from another primary meaning of the word. Some commentators, for example, take 'sour taste' to be the primary meaning of *puḷi*, in which case there is a shift to the meaning of 'plant' in the above sentence. This is possible when the referent-shift is replaced with meaning-shift in the historical development of the concept of *ākupeyar*.

10 Later grammarians treat it as a different kind of *ākupeyar* from the first example. It is called *tāṇiyāku peyar*, where the Sanskrit word *tāṇi* refers to what is held by a holder. The perception is that the flame is held by the lamp. This shows arbitrariness in relating the two meanings when the conventional template is abandoned.

The three *ākupeyars* in the template after the above two are transfer of referent from the place to the product from there, from the quality of an object to the object itself and from the material to the object made from it. The examples are *kāñcipuram kaṭṭiṇāl* ‘wore a silk sari woven in Kanchipuram’, in which the name of the town refers to the silk sari woven there; *paccai kuttiṇāṇ* ‘got a tattoo’, in which *paccai* ‘green’ stands for the design on the body that is green in color; *kaḷuttil poṭṭut taṅkam illai* ‘there is not a bit of ornament around her neck’, in which *taṅkam* ‘gold’ refers to the ornament made of gold’. Their names respectively are *iṭavāku peyar* ‘*ākupeyar* of place’, *paṇpāku peyar* ‘*ākupeyar* of quality’, *karuviyāku peyar* ‘*ākupeyar* of means’.

Note that in the last example the predicate *illai* ‘not’ is generic and the referent of ornament is obtained from the cultural knowledge of people wearing gold ornaments around the neck and not wearing pieces gold themselves. So, the condition that the semantics of the predicate determines the referent must be augmented. Or, the example should be interpreted literally as ‘there is no presence of gold around the neck’ and the cultural inference is that the reference is to gold ornament. This will be a case of inferred meaning, a kind of *kuṟippu-p poruḷ* ‘non-transparent meaning’ (see 2.2).

The sixth template is the referent of a maker or doer shifting to the outcome of the making or doing. *Valluvar*, the author, in *Vaḷḷuvar paṭittēṇ* ‘read the author *Vaḷḷuvar*’ is shifted to his work referentially to mean ‘read the book of *Vaḷḷuvar*’. This is called *karuttāvāku peyar* ‘*ākupeyar* of doer’. For *Vaḷḷuvam* ‘the thoughts in the book of *Vaḷḷuvar*’ in *Vaḷḷuvam paṭittēṇ* to qualify as an instance of this *ākupeyar*, it must be by double shift from the author to the book to the thoughts (see 1.4.4). The commentators differ on the question if nouns like this are *ākupeyar* on a different ground. There is no morphological change for a noun to be an *ākupeyar*. But *vaḷḷuvam* is derived from *Vaḷḷuvar* by changing the human marker *-ar* to the object marker *-am*. By this reasoning, *Tolkāppiyam* is a *karuttāvāku peyar* of its author *Tolkāppiyar* to mean the grammar of this author. Allowing an *ākupeyar* to be a derivative noun will undermine the concept of *ākupeyar* because derivations introduce unpredictable meanings that will go out of the template. So, the solution of some grammarians to introduce a new kind of *ākupeyar* viz., *ākupeyar* with formal change (*īru tirinta ākupeyar* ‘*ākupeyar* whose final morpheme is changed’) is misguided. The danger is that this would entail the claim that *kalai* ‘art’ is the *ākupeyar* of *kalaiṇār* ‘artists’ from which the derivative suffix is dropped in a sentence such as *kalai vaṟumaiyil vāṭiyatu* ‘artists withered in poverty’. This sentence does not mean that. The well-formed sentence could only be *kalaiṇār vaṟumaiyil vāṭiṇār* without having an *ākupeyar* to operate and with the predicate having agreement. This is like claiming that *ūrār cirittaṇar* ‘the village

people laughed' is an *ākupeyar* of *ūr* in *ūr cirittatu* with the same meaning by adding the derivative suffix *-ār*.

The above discussion shows that the kinds of *ākupeyar* increase by relaxing its classical constraint of the template and the feature the semantic shift being conventional. There is some arbitrariness in understanding the nature of the relationship between the meanings of the two nouns and consequently in naming *ākupeyars*.

1.5.2 Relating by Collocation

Tolkāppiyam has a separate *sutra* (Tol Col S. 117) for another kind of *ākupeyar*, which is the noun of measurement including weighing, scooping, and counting. *Kāl kilō/paṭi camaittāl* 'cooked quarter measure of rice'. The sentence does not mean 'cooked the measuring instrument'; but 'cooked the rice which is measured with the instrument'. The nouns of measurement are *ākupeyar*, and they refer to what is measured such as 'rice'. This is different from the *ākupeyars* discussed above. The difference is that there is no integral and natural relationship between the measuring instrument and what it measures; the relation is arbitrary and *ākuporu!* 'shifted meaning' could refer to anything measurable.¹¹ In the above example, *paṭi* could be any grain, not just rice, which though is the culturally foregrounded interpretation. Though this *ākupeyar* could be accommodated in the template of container and the contained, which is already there, it is given a separate name viz., *aḷavaiyāku peyar* 'the referent-shifted noun of measurement' for the difference in the process of the semantic shift.

A similar case is the count noun.¹² *eṭṭum pattum oṭiṇōm* 'Read the eight and the ten'. The numbers here refer to the books *eṭṭut tokai* 'Eight anthologies' and *pattup pāṭṭu* 'Ten songs' of the Sangam period of Tamil. The numbers are contiguous syntactically with *tokai* and *pāṭṭu* and through this association the standalone numbers have their referent shifted. This is also an instance of metonymy of the relation of linear contiguity and it too gives rise to *ākupeyar*

11 There is, furthermore, a syntactic difference regarding topicalization between the sentences that externalize *ākuporu!* *Oru paṭi arici camaittāl* 'she cooked one measure of rice' would topicalize the primary noun, as in *arici oru paṭi camaittāl* 'rice, she cooked one measure'. This is not possible with other *ākupeyars*: **puṭavai kāñcipuram aṇintāl* 'sari, she wore Kanchipuram'; **maram teṇnai naṭṭāṇ* 'tree, he planted coconut'.

12 *Nacciṇārkkīyār* in his commentary on *Kalittokai*, Invocation verse 1, calls *āru* 'six' on *ārari antaṇar* 'Brahmins who know the six components (*aṅkam*) of Vedas. *āru* meaning 'six components of Vedas' would be an *ākupeyar* from *āru aṅkam* (of Vedas). Note that with a different verb, say *cey* 'do', as in *āru cey antaṇar* 'Brahmins who engage in six kinds of occupation', *āru* would be an *ākupeyar* from *āru toḷil* 'six kinds of occupation'.

through a different process of shift. *Paṭi arici* ‘a measure of rice’ is a collocation where the two nouns have the relationship of contiguity and the referent of the second noun is transferred to the first noun and dropped. An instance of syntactic truncation.

This opens up the possibility of having an alternative theory of *ākupeyar* for the other kinds of *ākupeyar* described earlier. It is to claim that the shift of referent takes place from a contiguous noun rather than from a noun with a harmonious relationship, as *ākupeyars* are analyzed classically. In the alternative theory, *puli* gets the referent ‘tree’ from *puliya maram* etc, *kāñcipuram* gets the referent ‘sari’ from *kāñcipuram puṭavai*, *pāl* gets the referent ‘milk pot’ from *pāl pāṇai* and so on. Tamil grammarians did not choose this theory because lexical collocations are open-ended while deletion of one noun in the collocation to make *ākupeyar* is selective, as the kinds of *ākupeyar* are limited. For example, the second noun is not deleted from *kāñcipuram tuṇṭu* ‘Kanchipuram towel’ and the meaning of *kāñcipuram* is not shifted to ‘towel’. There is no way to determine the selectable noun other than from the fact of the possibility of *ākupeyars*, which would make the argument circular. There is also another reason. Truncation is possible with verbs by dropping the contiguous noun. *avaṇai jeyilukkullē taḷḷu* ‘put him behind bars’, by truncation, would give *avaṇai ullē taḷḷu* ‘incarcerate him’. The shift in the meaning of *ullē taḷḷu* to ‘incarcerate’ from its primary meaning ‘push inside’ would be an instance of *ākuporuḷ*.¹³ But there is no *ākuvinaḷ*, as the referent shift is restricted to nouns (see 2.13 for an explanation).

1.5.3 Binominal *ākupeyar*

Tolkappiyam includes in the list of *ākupeyar* formations *irupeyarotṭu ākupeyar* ‘compounded *ākupeyar* consisting of two nouns’. *Ākupeyar* is about the referent of a single noun that is shifted. It is a single referent and so it cannot by definition contain two nouns with two referents. This is a special kind for another reason also because it has two nouns and the semantic shift to generate the *ākupeyar* does not correspond to any of the types listed in the template. An example of this *ākupeyar* is *makkaṭ cuṭṭu* ‘human referent’. *cuṭṭu* means ‘reference’ and it is shifted to ‘referent’ through the preceding word meaning ‘people’, but there is no semantic relationship between them as required in the template such as whole and part as in other

¹³ This contrasts with *avaṇai veḷiyē taḷḷu* ‘push him out’, which is truncated from *avaṇai viṭṭukku veḷiyē taḷḷu* ‘push him out of the house’, but *veḷiyē* does not acquire any *ākuporuḷ* ‘shifted meaning’.

ākupeyars. Another example is *vakarak kiḷavi* ‘the letter *va*’. This is a shift from ‘utterance’ (*kiḷavi*) to ‘letter’ (*eḷuttu*) by the association of *vakaram*. *cuṭṭu* and *kiḷavi* are grammatical words and they do not have referents in the real world and so speakers may not perceive a referential oddity of the compounds when the noun is not an *ākupeyar*. It should be noted that these binominal compounds are an appositional construct syntactically and are expanded with *ākiya* between the nouns, rather than with any case marker (see 1.4.3), indicating they are equated.

Another possible binominal *ākupeyar* is found in the compound of examples such as *veḷḷait tamarai pūttatu* ‘white lotus bloomed’, where the first word is a modifier and lacks a referent. It is not a compound with two referents. The head noun *tamarai* ‘lotus’ refers to the flower due to the verb ‘bloom’ (not to the leaf or the plant), as an *ākupeyar*.¹⁴ The shift is only of the head noun to *tamarai* the flower as the *ākupeyar* (not the plant). Another compound is not binominal and the first word of it is a verb root. *tāl teṅku āṭiyatu* ‘low-bent coconut tree swayed’ is a verb-modifying compound *viṇaittokai* (வினைத்தொகை) and the head word has the shifted referent ‘tree’ by the predicate; as a verb, the modifier has no referent and does not participate in the shift. So this compound of two words does not have the problem of two referents for the shift.

A similar verbal compound *tāl kuḷal* ‘hanging tress (of hair)’ with two words; *kuḷal*, when it shifts to refer to a woman with the tress of hair, cannot be an *ākupeyar*. This is because the shifted referent to a woman with the predicate *āṭu* ‘dance’ requires the verb to take the feminine gender marker: *tāl kuḷal āṭiṇāḷ* ‘the women with low-hanging tress danced’. This referent shift does not retain, as in **tāl kuḷal āṭiyatu*, the neuter ending to agree with the primary *kuḷal* ‘tress of hair’, as *ākupeyar* does. The semantic shift of referent in *ākupeyar* leaves the morphological marking of the predicate unaltered (see 1.2.3.), even though grammatical agreement in Tamil is determined by the semantic category of the noun. The verb ending changes to agree with the shifted meaning in *aṇmolittokai*. The issue of binominal *ākupeyar* and its conflict with *aṇmolittokai* is discussed later (see 4.1).

14 *tamarai pūttatu* is an interesting example of *ākupeyar*. The shift may be the flower (part or *ciṇai*) from the plant or may be the flower (whole or *mutal*) from the bud (part or *ciṇai*). In the first mentioned shift, the predicate *pū* refers to the flower blossoming from the plant and in the second, the shift is from the bud to the flower when same predicate remains constant. This is an example of *tamarai* being both *ciṇaiyāku peyar* and *mutalāku peyar* with the same predicate. This can be avoided if the predicate is treated as polysemous, with two meanings, ‘bloom’ and ‘sprout’, and the shift is sensitive to the differentiated senses of one predicate.

2 Medieval Period

A. Proliferation of Kinds of *ākupeyar*

2.1 Open Ended Template of Later Times

Tolkāppiyam does not close the list of *ākupeyar* it gives, as mentioned. The list is kept open-ended, which means that more templates could be added to the six templates given. Later grammarians subdivide the six templates and also add brand new ones. An example of the former is splitting the template of material and product, which *Tolkāppiyam* phrases in the past tense (*iyaṇratu* ‘what was made from’). This is done by adding a phrasing in the non-past tense (*iyaivatu* ‘what will be made from’) (Balasundaram Commentary of Tol Col S. 114). In *tan̄kam aḷaku tarum* ‘the gold ornament gives beauty’, *tan̄kam* ‘gold’ shifts to an *ākupeyar* to mean ‘the gold ornament’, which is a product yet to be made from gold. *nel paciyaip pōkkum* ‘rice (cooked as food) removes hunger’ shifts *nel* ‘paddy’ to be an *ākupeyar* to mean *cōru* ‘cooked rice’, which results after the paddy is husked into raw rice and then cooked for consumption. The difference between the old *ākupeyar* and the new *ākupeyar* is that, in the former, the product is already made and, in the latter, the product is yet to be made. This difference, however, does not constitute a new kind of *ākupeyar* in substance and just contributes to the proliferation of kinds of *ākupeyar*.

Naṇṇūl (twelfth-thirteenth c.) (S. 290)¹⁵ adds to the six members of the class of *ākupeyar* (plus the one of measurement) five more: *col* ‘word’, *tāṇi* ‘holder’, *karuvi* ‘instrument’, *kāriyam* ‘result, outcome’, *karuttan* ‘doer or maker’ and ends the list with ‘such others’. *viṇaimutal* ‘initiator of act’, the sixth kind in *Tolkāppiyam*, must be different from *karuttan* for *Naṇṇūl*. *Karuvi* ‘means’ for *Naṇṇūl* is *kāraṇam* ‘reason, initiation’ elsewhere. *Naṇṇūl*’s *tāṇi* (as *pāl* ‘milk’ is the *ākupeyar* of ‘milk pot’ in *pālai irakku* ‘take out the milk pot (from the stove)’ could be a sub-category of *iṭam* ‘place’ (as in *pālaicuttam paṇṇu* ‘clean up the place the milk (spilled in)’). The point is that there is no unanimity among grammarians concerning the number and members of *ākupeyar* as well as about splitting one into more than one. On the other hand, there are cases that grammarians have not identified with any specific kind of *ākupeyar*. In *viṇai kēṭṭāṇ*

15 பொருள் முதல் ஆறோடு அளவை சொல் தானி
கருவி காரியம் கருத்தன் ஆதியுள்
ஒன்றன் பெயரான் அதற்கு இயை பிறிதைத்
தொல்முறை உரைப்பன ஆகுபெயரே

‘listened to the music of the lute’, the shift is from the place of origin to the music emanating from it and so could be *iṭavāku peyar* ‘shift-referent of place’.¹⁶ The shift could also be viewed as from the musical instrument to music; in that case it would be *karuviyāku peyar*, but the music produced is not a material object connected to the material from which it originated. If this relationship is widened, then the shift of the name of author to his work could also be *karuviyāku peyar* and a separate *karuttaavāku peyar* might be unnecessary. *Mayilainātar*, (thirteen c.), a student of the author of *Naṇṇūl* and its commentator, names sixteen members of *ākupeyar*. Some grammarians go beyond this number and there seems to be no theoretical constraint to make them finite and final. Given the large number of nouns that could be *ākupeyar* in sentences, it is more viable grammatically to generate all *ākupeyars* with some general principles than creating a taxonomy of *ākupeyar* through listing the members. *Tolkāppiyam* comes close to this by giving a small number of domains of a template, though the domains are expandable.

2.2 Ending Constraints of Meaning Relationship

Some newly proposed members of *ākupeyar* are missteps and do not qualify as *ākupeyar*, as conceptualized in *Tolkāppiyam*. One is *collāku peyar*, proposed to capture the shift from word (*col*) to meaning. It could, however, be argued that *col purintatu* ‘understood the meaning’ can be argued to involve no shift at all; *col* by definition has form (*coṇmai*) and meaning (*poruṇmai*) (Tol Col S. 156);¹⁷ *col* ‘word’ entails meaning. The appropriate gloss of the above utterance would be ‘understood the meaning of the word’. This is a case of entailment rather than shift. In *inta ilakkaṇam col* ‘this grammar is (the grammar of) word’, there is no shift of *col* to the meaning of grammar. It is a case of deletion of a redundant word in the sentence, which process produces the above sentence from *inta ilakkaṇam col ilakkaṇam* ‘this grammar is the grammar of word’.

Another untenable *ākupeyar* is *tolilāku peyar* ‘noun that has the shift of action’. An example is *cuṇṭal tinṇān* ‘ate fried lentil’. The verb is *cuṇṭu* ‘fry’ from which the noun *cuṇṭal* ‘the fried one’ is derived. Nouns derived from verbs carry the meanings of the verbs. It is not

¹⁶ *Ākupeyars* are named after the category of the sense of the primary or expressed noun; this sense changes to make meaningful. ‘Shift-referent’ in the translation of the terms indicates that the referent of this noun is shifted to another referent. For example, from the place of origin or the source/instrument to music that emanates from there.

¹⁷ பொருண்மை தெரிதலும் சொன்மை தெரிதலும்
சொல்லி னாகும் என்னனார் புலவர்.

a case of a semantic shift in the noun for getting its meaning from the verb. *cunṭal* is not an *ākupeyar*, but a derived noun.

Yet another instance is *uvamaiyāku peyar*, which is to describe the figurative meaning as a shift from the real referent. In *kālai pāyntāṇ* ‘the strong one (like the bull) charged’, the shift of referent from the bull to the man is not a transfer but a figuration. Note that, unlike *ākupeyar*, the predicate in this agrees morphologically with the noun shifted to and not the noun that shifts meaning. That is, the ending is masculine singular and not neuter singular. Unlike the shifted referent in *ūr cirittatu* ‘the village people laughed’ that does not require a morphological change in the predicate, *kālai veṇṇratu* ‘the bull won’ has the neuter ending of the predicate and its meaning is literal; for the shifted referent of man, the ending must instead be human masculine: *kālai veṇṇrāṇ* ‘the strong man (like the bull) won’. In the medieval period, the role played by the predicate in making an *ākupeyar* is not taken into account. Note further that figuration is based on similarity between objects, but *ākupeyar* is restricted to association between objects. *uvamaiyāku peyar* is a violation of the theory of *ākupeyar* of *Tolkāppiyam*. As pointed out below (2.5), *lakṣaṇā* in Sanskrit includes shift between objects that are similar. This fact might have influenced the positing of *uvamaiyāku peyar* in Tamil.¹⁸

2.3 Layered Meaning Relation

When *ākupeyar* is viewed as a grammatical phenomenon of shifting referent, the shift is a single movement from one referent to another in *Tolkāppiyam*. In *kār viḷaintatu* ‘paddy grew ripe’, the referent *kār* ‘rainy season’ shifts to the referent ‘grain paddy’ to be compatible with the verb *viḷai* ‘grow ripe’. This is a single-step shift. When *ākupeyar* is viewed as a shift of one sense to another rather than to a referent, it is possible that the semantic shift goes through layers of meaning. This reconceptualization of *ākupeyar* in the medieval period makes it possible to talk about the shift of senses in terms of multiple layers (*maṭi* ‘fold’). The crucial condition is that the meaning of the primary noun and the shifted noun must have a sequential relationship. This relationship might shift through layers, each layer being called a *maṭi* ‘fold’ and not necessarily from the primary sense to *ākuporuḷ* ‘shifted sense’ directly. *Ākupeyar* can therefore be described as having two, three, four step-shift and so on. *Ākupeyars* then are classified as

¹⁸ Note that this term violates the naming pattern of *ākupeyars* in Tamil grammars. The name *uvamaiyāku peyar* is made after the shifted sense in *ākupeyar* and not the sense of the primary noun. To follow the pattern of the names of other *ākupeyars*, it must be named *uvamēyamāku peyar*.

irumaṭi ākupeyar, 'double-shift *ākupeyar*', *mummaṭi ākupeyar* 'triple shift *ākupeyar*' and so on up to six. This gives a new kind of *ākupeyar* whose shift is layered and is differentiated from the single shift. I am not aware if Sanskrit grammarians speak about layered *lakṣaṇā*. The sentence *kār viḷaintatu* 'the paddy yielded' uses the noun *kār* with its primary sense 'monsoon, rainy season' and its shift gives the sense 'paddy of the crop sown in the rainy season', as the sentence is understood. The primary sense shifts to the final sense through the following shifts of sense: *kār* 'rainy season' to '(rice) crop' to 'paddy grain'. This goes through three layers. The word for paddy is *nel* and the above sentence with the shifted sense would be synonymous with *nel viḷaintatu* 'the paddy grew ripe', whose meaning is direct and without it being an *ākupeyar*. In the earlier sentence with *kār*, *nel* is an *ākupeyar* which goes through three layers of shift to get the meaning of the latter sentence. It would be *kālavāku peyar* 'season-shifted noun' giving the sense of paddy. The intermediate layers with the nouns of different senses would not change this designation of this *ākupeyar*.¹⁹ Note that each layer does not yield a different *ākupeyar* because the nouns of each intermediate sense would be incompatible with the given predicate *viḷai* 'grow ripe'. For the noun of the intermediate sense of 'rain' to be an *ākupeyar*, the predicate must be as in *kār peytatu* 'rain poured' and not *kār viḷaintatu* 'the paddy yielded'. The important point is that words are isolated from the sentence to identify a meaning shift; the shifting layers, thus, are at the word level and not at the syntactic level.

These developments in Tamil make the classical denotational analysis of nouns into *ākupeyar* in *Tolkāppiyam* to be a semantic analysis of relation between the senses of a noun. They further dilute the constraints placed on *ākupeyar* leading to the proliferation of its kinds. And the analysis of *ākupeyar* ceases to be the prerogative of grammarians and becomes the concern of literary commentators or philologists.

¹⁹ The number of layers of shift depends on the contemporary speaker's awareness of the sense of the primary word. If one goes deeper into the chain of sense development from 'rainy season' to 'blackness', which is the most primary sense of *kār*, there will be more layers: From the sense of 'darkness' to the sense of 'rain-bearing dark clouds' to the sense of 'rain' to the sense of 'monsoon, rainy season' and then to the rest of the senses, three more layers will be added. It is the speaker's consciousness of what the primary sense is in his contemporary language that determines the number of layers an *ākupeyar* goes through. This tells us that speaker perception of senses is crucial to understand the semantic shift of *ākupeyar*.

2.4 Causes for Proliferation of *ākupeyar*

The main reason for the proliferation of *ākupeyar* after *Tolkāppiyam* is of course the generic definition given to it by commentators. Though Cēṇāvaraiyar's definition of *ākupeyar* is generic as cited above (1.5.1), it accepts the limiting conditions laid down in *Tolkāppiyam*: the semantic relation between the two nouns is governed by a template; the relation must have harmony and must be sanctioned by convention. Another important factor in the proliferation is the understanding of the word *poruḷ* by the medieval grammarians, which causes the move from referent to sense. The shift begins to be seen by the medieval grammarians as taking place between senses rather than between referents. It was pointed out above (1.5.1) that when there is no incompatibility between the predicate and the referent the referent is multiple and ambiguous and the choice of the appropriate one in the specific context of the text is made by reference to the intent of the speaker. The latter situation is extended to all predicates in the medieval period and the identification of the sense does not require resolution of incompatibility but requires reference to the intent of the speaker. When incompatibility falls out of favor from analysis the consideration of the predicate is taken out of the equation. The semantic shift is analyzed as taking place between two nouns that stand alone. The analysis shifts from syntagmatic to paradigmatic. The two kinds of shift or transfer posited by Tamil grammarians (based on *taṟkiḷamai* 'carry over of self' and *piṟitiṇ kiḷamai* 'take-over of another') becomes less relevant. The attempt to reinterpret it as a distinction between *viṭāta ākupeyar* and *viṭṭa ākupeyar* corresponding respectively to *ajahat-svārtha-lakṣaṇā* and *jahat-svārtha-lakṣaṇā* by Sanskrit grammarians (see 1.4.5) is misleading, as they do not conceptually match with the distinction proposed in *Tolkāppiyam* and because of the difficulty of finding examples for *viṭṭa ākupeyar* (see 1.4.5).

B. Approximating Sanskrit Ideas

2.5 Comparison with *lakṣaṇā*

Comparison of *ākupeyar* with the similar concept of *lakṣaṇā* described by Sanskrit grammarians is in order. *Lakṣaṇā* refers to a noun whose

actual referent of the word has to be taken as different from the normal one, but in some way connected with it, either through similarity or some other relation. This function of the word, denoting a referent different from its normal and primary one,

but somehow related to it, is called *lakṣaṇā* or *upacāra*. (Kunjunni Raja 1977, 231)

Though this definition of *lakṣaṇā* appears closer to that of *ākupeyar*, there are crucial differences between the two. One is that the meaning relation is not specifically the relation between the predicate and the noun as in Tamil, though the analysis of the relation is in a syntactic context. The *lakṣaṇā* analysis recognizes semantic oddity of the primary meaning but places it in the generic context of language use. In the words of Kunjunni Raja (1977, 233),

it is the normal meaning that occurs to mind immediately on hearing a word; when this is found incompatible with the context, we resort to *lakṣaṇā* and get the actual sense which is related to the normal one and which removes the incompatibility.

Normal meaning is the primary or expressed meaning and the actual sense is the shifted or transferred meaning (*ākuporu!*) used in this paper.

Semantic oddity is not limited to the incompatible relation between predicate and noun in a sentence in the analysis of *lakṣaṇā*. The common example of *lakṣaṇā* given in Sanskrit grammars is the equivalent of ‘Devadatta lives in the village on the Ganges’. This sentence is odd because the village cannot exist in the river in the real world. So, the meaning of ‘on the Ganges’ is transferred to the meaning ‘on the bank of the Ganges’.²⁰ The oddity has nothing to do with the predicate of the sentence like the *ākupeyar* of *Tolkāppiyam*. The same oddity would occur with any predicate, for example, the sentence ‘Devadatta swam to the village on the Ganges’. In similar sentences with the same predicate such as ‘There is a tree in the Ganges’, there is no oddity. These examples show that the oddity of ‘There is a village in the Ganges’ belongs purely to real-world semantics, like *muyal kōṭu* ‘horns of the hare’, and is independent of syntax.

Another difference concerns the two kinds of relation posited between the two nouns; one is similarity and the other consists of other connections (Kunjunni Raja 1977: 240-1).²¹ The grammarians do not conceptually define the other connections or explain them with illustrations. And they differ in subdividing *lakṣaṇā* into kinds based

20 Another way of resolving incompatibility is to appeal to *Tolkāppiyam*’s theory of *mayakkam* between case markers, discussed in the body of the paper. The locative case marker ‘on’ is to be read in the meaning of the locative marker ‘by the side of’.

21 Giving primacy to similarity, Kunjunnai Raja (1977) glosses *lakṣaṇā* as metaphor, and so do others such as Tzohar (2018, Chapter 1).

on semantic relationships between the “primary and transferred referents” (Kunjunni Raja 1977), which is like what post-*Tolkāppiyam* grammarians do. But the specific illustrations of *ākupeyar* given by these Tamil grammarians (see 2.1) have less in common with the illustrations given by Sanskrit grammarians.

2.6 *Lakṣaṇā* as Secondary Meaning

Ollett (unpublished) discusses *lakṣaṇā* as a manifestation of secondary meaning intended by the speaker. The secondary meaning is defined by Ollett, citing the grammarian *Śabara*, as “a linguistic expression for one thing is used in reference to something else” (Ollett unpublished, 28). ‘Is used’ in the above definition is meant to refer to the use intended by the speaker. Note also that there is no mention of convention or naturalness of relationship between the two meanings in the definition, and there is no template governing the relationship. The definition mentions any linguistic expression, not just nouns, though they are probably implied. More importantly, *ākuporuḷ* is not secondary, and it is on par with the primary meaning from which it is transferred. If *lakṣaṇā* is a designation of secondary meaning, this is not true of the *ākupeyar* of *Tolkāppiyam*.

The semantic oddity analysis as well as the secondary meaning analysis of *ākupeyar* along the lines of *lakṣaṇā* in Tamil is a turn away from the denotational analysis of shift of referents of *Tolkāppiyam*. This turn has another consequence besides going for taxonomy and for layered shifts mentioned earlier (2.3). In the analysis of referent shift, the different referents of a noun are not hierarchized but only categorized into whole, part etc., with no difference in status, whole is shifted to part and part to whole; initiator is shifted to outcome and vice versa. When the predicate is compatible, any of the many referents could be chosen equally to derive the meaning of the sentence. With the semantic turn of the medieval period (moving away from the referent analysis), some meaning is taken to be primary in the sense of being the source for shift (note that there is no primary referent, analogously). In *puḷi tiṇṇāṇ* ‘ate tamarind’, the taste ‘sourness’ is taken to be primary by commentators because probably it is the predominant sense in the minds of speakers and this comes to mean ‘fruit’ as an *ākupeyar*, which may come to mean ‘tree’ as another *ākupeyar*. This is similar to relating synchronically the multiple senses of a polysemous word of any word class, not just nouns, in the grammar.

The shift from denotation to sense in the medieval period as the focus of analysis of *ākupeyar* reaches its high point in *Ilakkaṇakkottu* (seventeenth c.), which (*sutra* 128) lists *ākupeyar* as one among the fifteen (and more by the word *āti* ‘etc’ in the *sutra*) strategies for

deriving meanings in grammatical and literary texts. They include, besides *ākupeyar*, *velippāṭai* 'transparent word', *kuṟippu* 'discreet', *utti* 'commentarial technique', *oṭṭu* 'compound', *aṇmoḷi* 'zero ending of a compound for human referent', *uḷmayakku* 'inherent ambiguity' (as of homonyms or *uḷḷurai*), *meyppāṭu* 'emotive responses in the body', *uvamai* 'simile', *īraicci* 'coded message', *upacāram* 'polished or enriched saying' and *ācai* 'intention'. Note that the process of deriving the meaning of words includes words whose meaning is transparent requiring no strategy to get meaning. This shows that this grammarian does not make a difference between primary and secondary meanings in terms of relation with the word.

It is hard to say whether the turn to a semantic analysis of *ākupeyar* was intended to close the gap between it and *lakṣaṇā* or is a result of independent developments in Tamil described earlier (2.3) after dilution of the conditions for transfer. *Pirayōkavivēkam* (seventeenth c.) sees no gap between the two (*lakṣaṇā* and *ākupeyar*) and treats both as identical. Actually, it does not use the term *ākupeyar* at all and uses *lakṣaṇā* instead, as its practice to use the Sanskrit terms even for the established Tamil grammatical terms. Under this term, this work describes what *lakṣaṇā* stands for in the Sanskrit grammar and not what *ākupeyar* stands for in the Tamil grammar. Its definition includes, for example, the shift of meaning based on the relation of similarity and the shift of meaning includes verbs. As an example for the latter, the auto-commentary gives the example of *cel* 'go' in the line of the verse which describes the heart of the heroine going to the hero. This is metaphorical and instantiates *ākuvinai*, which is contrary to the concept of *ākupeyar* in Tamil (see 2.13).

Pirayōkavivēkam (S 47) squarely places *lakṣaṇā/ākupeyar* in the logicians' concept of unexpressed secondary meaning in making a counterargument pointing to *poruḷ vēru* 'meaning different (from the primary meaning)'. The secondary meaning is classified into three kinds in this work, as done by Sanskrit grammarians: *anvaya*, *sambandha*, *tātparya*, which are used to restore the primary semantic property of the word (*col mayam*) which is not odd in the sentence (*anupapatti*). *Anvaya* is linguistic equivalent; *sambandha* (like *iyalpu* of *Tolkāppiyam*) is having a natural relation with the primary meaning and *tātparya* is the intension of the speaker or writer. *Pirayōkavivēkam* says that this idea from another subject area is adopted to describe the grammar of the word in a sentence. The other subject-area is logic, which uses the above means of meaning determination in dealing with arguments. The auto-commentary says that this idea is adopted from literary theory as well and refers to aspects of *Poruḷatikāram* of *Tolkāppiyam* that are relevant to *Collatikāram*. Thus *lakṣaṇā/ākupeyar* is not a grammatical concept alone as *Tolkāppiyam* would have had it. *Pirayōkavivēkam* extends, in its auto-commentary, determination of meaning in literature to cover

a wide range of semantic shifts or transfers in all kinds of figurations (including anthropomorphism), and gives in general a major place for all kinds of metaphors in defining *lakṣaṇā/ākupeyar*.

2.7 Non-transparent Meaning

The semantic shift that goes beyond referent shift in the medieval period allows commentators to apply to *ākupeyar* the difference between transparent meaning and non-transparent meaning. The *sutra* in *Peyariyal* ‘Chapter on Nouns’ of *Tolkāppiyam* states that a word (including the noun) has a transparent meaning and a suggested meaning (Tol Col S. 158).²² The commentators take this statement to include the shifted meaning of *ākupeyar* under the implicit or secondary meaning, differing from Cēṇāvaraiyar, who claims, in his commentary on the same *sutra*, that the existence of the template of meaning shifts should make this meaning explicit and holds that incompatibility is the suggestion to look for a shifted meaning; the incompatibility alerts one to the existence of a different, but related, meaning for *ākupeyar*. For this reason, Caṅkaranamacciāyar (seventeenth c.) calls *ākupeyar* a *kāraṇap peyar* (see 1.1).

When the shifted or transferred meaning is treated as non-transparent, the intent of the speaker regarding the shifted meaning finds a place in the new analysis of *ākupeyar*. Its shifted sense comes to be called *kuṟippup poruḷ* ‘intended or implicit meaning (by the speaker)’.

Naṇṇūl (*Peyariyal* S.268) lists *ākupeyar* (along with *aṇmōḷittokai*) as one of the sites having a meaning that is not transparent. This position differs from the one of *Tolkāppiyam* concerning *ākupeyar*, which it considers to be a matter of denotation and not of meaning. The other cases listed in the *Naṇṇūl sutra* as having the property of *kuṟippu* ‘meaning from non-explicit form’ belong to the category of missing elements in a word such as shortened words (*vikāram*), tenseless verbs (*kuṟippu vinai*), abbreviations, elision in compounds (*tokai*), gender-unmarked nouns (*viravu-p peyar*) as well as indirect expressions for social appropriateness. This list is a hold-all for all instances of lack of a formal match for the meaning components of a word. Obtaining meaning when there is absence of the right formal element (the correct referent in this case) is viewed to be a characteristic of *ākupeyar* qualifying it for inclusion in the list of meaning by *kuṟippu*. Such absence is not the characteristic of *lakṣaṇā* in Sanskrit grammars.

22 தெரிபுவேறு நிலையலும் குறிப்பிற் றோன்றலும்
இருபாற் றென்ப பொருண்மை நிலையே

2.8 Intent of the Speaker and the Poet

Sanskrit grammarians bring the speaker into the equation and believe that there must be a motivation for using an incompatible referent in the first place. Though many of them do not give much importance to the analysis of motivation, it becomes important for literary theorists. This leads them to study intended meanings when the semantic shift or transfer of words is employed in the literary language. Since *Tolkāppiyam* is concerned basically with meaningfulness of ordinary sentences and their formal property, the implicit meaning (*kuṛippu poruḷ*) is limited to obtaining the right referent in ordinary language use. This technical term means that the formally absent referent must be obtained implicitly from the predicate, as per *Tolkāppiyam*. Note the rationale of *Nannūl*, mentioned above, for grouping *ākupeyar* with words that lack a formal part whose meaning is obtainable implicitly. The traditional analysis of *ākupeyar* must not play a role in the analysis of literary meanings such as figuring out the poet's intended meaning or getting the figurative meaning, which is also called *kuṛippu poruḷ*. But some medieval commentators view nouns with figurative meaning as *ākupeyar*.

Cēṇāvaraiyar, who argues in his commentary mentioned earlier (Tol Col S. 114) that *ākupeyar* is an example for deducible meaning, also comments on another sūtra (Tol Col S. 158), which states that poetic language employs suggestive meaning – that is, the speaker's or poet's intended but unexpressed meaning. He gives an example from *Tirukkuraḷ* (879) to show the suggestive meaning of the entire poem. The couplet advises one to 'destroy the thorny tree when it is young; it will damage your hand when it becomes strong'. The suggested meaning is that the advice of this couplet is to suggest how to handle adversaries. The Tamil word used everywhere including the grammar (cf. *kuṛippu viṇai* 'verb that has the tense implicit') for suggestion is *kuṛippu*, which is a polysemous word (Tamil Lexicon gives 19 senses). It has 'marked' as well as 'intended, implied, gestured' among its senses.²³ It has different technical senses all falling under the general category of non-transparent meaning as a technical term in grammar and literature.

Cēṇāvaraiyar goes on to say that in the terminology of grammarians of *aṇi* (*alaṅkāram*), *kuṛippu* is *toni* (*dhvani*). A word may convey a different meaning from what it says in normal use; *piritu mōḷital*

²³ *Tolkāppiyam* (Poruḷ S. 491) defines *kuṛippu mōḷi* 'intended language' as the language of the other side of meaning but not coded in words and sounds. *eḷuttoṭuñ colloṭum puṇarātākip poruṭpuṇarattuvē kuṛippumōḷiyenṇa* எழுத்தொடுஞ் சொல்லொடும் புணராதாகிப் பொருட்புறத்ததுவே குறிப்புமொழியென்ப (that which carries meaning but not coded in sounds and morphs is the intended language).

‘expressing a different one (meaning)’ is the description of this by the commentator of *Tirukkuraḷ*, Parimēlaḷakar. The intended meaning enters the aesthetic domain in poetry. It is similar to *kuṛippil tōṇṇal* ‘(meaning) appearing by intention’ in grammatical descriptions, but it is broader in its conception.

2.9 Lexical Description of *ākupeyar*

Cēṇāvaraiyar does not go into the mechanism of how a poem builds the suggestive meaning. It can be argued that *ākupeyar* makes this meaning possible in a poem. In the above poem, ‘thorny tree’ transfers its meaning to ‘the adversary’ and ‘hand’ to ‘the defender’. For this to be possible, *ākupeyar* is divorced from its syntactic context and the focus is on the noun alone. *Ākupeyar* ceases to be a matter of referents in this approach, and the shift becomes a figure or trope. A grammatical phenomenon becomes a literary phenomenon as the poetic way of communicating meaning non-transparently. This is a major departure from *Tolkāppiyam*’s analysis of *ākupeyar*. It is hard to say when this reimagined analysis of *ākupeyar* appeared in Tamil, but we can surmise that it appeared in the commentaries on literary texts.

As noted above (2.8), *ākupeyar* came to be described in the medieval period at the lexical level comparing the meanings of two nouns for their semantic difference, where the meanings are relatable by shift or transfer from one meaning to the other meaning. *pulī*, for example, is taken to have the meanings ‘taste’, ‘fruit’, ‘tree’ and others that are relatable, not historically or derivationally, but by transfer from one to the other. So tamarind fruit can be read to mean tamarind tree in a sentence and in a text even though the two meanings are not listed for the noun tamarind in a *nighandu*. The meaning transfer is outside syntax, i.e. outside grammar.

The meanings could also be envisaged to be related metaphorically, not just lexically, as in *naṭpu pulittuvittatu* ‘friendship soured’. Meaning transfers could then in principle be applied to the words of all word classes and not be limited to nouns. This reimagination opens up the relation between the referential meanings of two nouns in the sentence to include the relation between the expressed meaning and the suggested meaning of the speaker.

2.10 From Metonymic to Metaphorical Relationship

When *ākupeyar*, in its analysis, is separated from syntax and the relatedness of its meanings includes the metaphorical in the imaginative language of poetry, it becomes a figure or trope. The commentators of literary texts begin to read a figure as an *ākupeyar*.

The extension of the concept of *ākupeyar* to a trope (etymologically from the Greek word meaning ‘turn’, used for the turn of meanings) crucially depends on diluting the condition that the shift or transfer of meaning in *ākupeyar* is admissible when the two meanings have a relation of a particular kind; the word used by *Tolkāppiyam* is *iyaiṇu* ‘harmony’ (later grammarians use the more generic word *toṭarpu* ‘connection’). Another dilution concerns the condition that the relation be conventionally accepted (*marapiṇa* ‘conventional’, as *Tolkāppiyam* puts it, and *tolmuṟai* ‘in ancient ways’, as Naṇṇūl puts it). Tropes, on the other hand, establish the relationship between meanings through a figure imagined by individual poets or speakers. The connection between ‘thorny tree’ and ‘adversary’ is not from any of traditional template but from the figure of harm shared by the meaning of both words and imagined by the poet. The connection may get widespread acceptance and become conventional as time passes.

Let me digress to illustrate how *ākupeyar* fares in the hands of literary commentators whose job it is to heighten the literariness of a text more than its grammaticalness.

2.11 As a Philological Tool

The dilution of the conditions facilitates counting not only figuration as the *ākupeyar*, but also to count even far-fetched connection of meanings as constituting an *ākupeyar* for the purpose of increasing the value of literary appreciation. This is a philological exercise. Parimēlaḷakar (thirteenth c.), the reputed commentator of *Tirukkuraḷ*, is noted for meticulously identifying *ākupeyar*, according to Sundaramurthi (1985); he has identified and explained the meaning of 118 lexical occurrences as *ākupeyar* and 98 as *upacāram* in the text of 1330 couplets. Let me point out three of them to illustrate the above point about the dilution of the condition of relationship.

It was already noted above (2.8) that Cēṇāvaraiyar, in citing *Tirukkuraḷ* (879), treats *muḷmaram* ‘thorny tree’ as a trope, not as an *ākupeyar*. Maybe because there is no template for shifting the referent from ‘tree’ to ‘adversary’. He also points out that it would be the suggestive meaning of *toni* ‘hinting, suggesting’ in literary theory. Parimēlaḷakar, in his commentary of this *Tirukkuraḷ*, agrees with Cēṇāvaraiyar’s conclusion that this word is not an *ākupeyar*; it is *piṟitu moḷital* ‘saying different (from the word used)’. But not all commentators adhere to this position.

Let us see Parimēlaḷakar’s examples of transferred meaning (*ākuporu!*) below, which are not considered to be suggestive meanings (*kuṟippup poru!*), and see how he extends the scope of transfer of meaning.

Tirukkuraḷ 180 says:

iṛalīṇum eṇṇātu vekkiṇ viṛalīṇum
vēṇṭāmai eṇṇum cerukku

இறலீனும் எண்ணாது வெஃகின் விறலீனும்
வேண்டாமை என்னும் செருக்கு

Coveting the wealth of others will bring your end;
the self-assurance (*cerukku*) to desist from it will bring you
elevation.

Parimēlaḷakar considers self-assurance an *ākupeyar* of wealth. The modern editor of this commentary, along with all other commentaries, Dandapani Desikar, in a footnote, explains that *cerukku* is a *kāriyavāku peyar* ‘result shifted *ākupeyar*’ in its meaning of self-assurance (*kāriyam* ‘result (from action)’), which refers to behavior in the context of the poem) and it comes from wealth (*kāraṇam* ‘originator’, which refers to cause here). This is the meaning the poet intends to convey by his use of the word *cerukku* in place of the direct word *celvam* ‘wealth’ for the cause. This is a straightforward (except that it falls out of the traditional template) case of the reimagined shift of meaning of *ākupeyar*. *cerukku* is treated as an *ākupeyar* not to resolve any syntactic incompatibility or semantic oddity but to have a deeper poetic interpretation that, however, doesn’t reach the level of poetic embellishment or ornament (*aṇi*). It remains a philological exercise of enrichment of the meaning of the verse.

Tirukkuraḷ 1034 is about the importance of peasants to a kingdom. The peasants are referred to as *alakuṭai nīlavar* ‘the people (living) in the shadow of ears of paddy’:

palakuṭai nīlalum taṇkuṭaikkīḷ kāṇpar
alakuṭai nīla lavar

பலகுடை நீழலும் தங்குடைக்கீழ்க் காண்பர்
அலகுடை நீழ் லவர்

They see the shade of many (kings’) parasols under their (king)’s,
(the peasants) who live in the shadow of their paddy’s ears.

Parimēlaḷakar considers *alaku* ‘the ear of paddy’ an *ākupeyar* to mean ‘the crop of paddy plant’, which gives shade. *nīlal* ‘shadow’ is also an *ākupeyar* to mean ‘protector (from hardship)’. The whole phrase means ‘those who possess well-grown ears of paddy that cast shadow’ has the transferred meaning of ‘providers of plentiful paddy (food)’ referring to peasants’ prosperity. The first line of the couplet is *palar kuṭai nīlalum tam kuṭaikkīḷ kāṇpar* ‘(they) will see many (other kings’) shades (of umbrella) under the umbrella of theirs (the parasol of their king)’. Note that *nīlal* used in reference to other kings means ‘shade’ and in reference to peasants, it means ‘shadow’. The sense ‘shadow’

is not an instance of *ākupeyar* of shade; shade and shadow are two senses of the polysemous word *nīlal* in Tamil. The commentator calls *kuṭai nīlal* 'shade of the parasol' an *ākupeyar*, meaning 'protection'; this compound actually has two *ākupeyars*: *kuṭai* 'umbrella/parasol' for canopy (of protection) combines with *nīlal* 'shade' for cool stay (under protection). The transferred meanings of the compound give 'protective cover for hardship-free living'; the compound in the next-step transfer means '(their king's) reign'. The meaning of the whole line has the transferred meaning of 'the protective reign of many (kings) will come under the protective reign of their (peasants') king'. The message of the couplet is that the rich productivity of the peasants will help their king bring many other kings under his reign.

The above transfer is metaphoric (not metonymic), which does not figure in the definition of *ākupeyar* in *Tolkāppiyam*. The verse further exploits two kinds of semantic relationship between words. viz., polysemy and semantic transfer. *kuṭai nīlal* is an interesting *ākupeyar* in that it is a compound of two nouns, both of which are *ākupeyars* and have two transfers of meaning, as mentioned above. This will be a compounded *ākupeyar*, which grammarians have not mentioned. The two (or three) *ākupeyars* in this couplet are regular instances of semantic transfer, and their suggested meanings derive from their lexical meanings. Whether the transferred meanings of *ākupeyars* are just a *kurippup poru!* of ordinary language or *tonip poru!* of figurative language is debatable from the point of view of the reimagined metaphoric interpretation of *ākupeyar*. It is debatable because, unlike 'thorny tree', which is clearly *toni* (an *alanikāram*) discussed above, *nīlal* 'shade' could be viewed also as a *kurippup poru!* (and not a *tonip poru!* and is within the purview of the meaning transfer of a noun, though the transfer is outside the template while still being conventional.

The above discussion of a literary commentary of the thirteenth century shows that the progression of a new understanding of *ākupeyar*, from the time of *Tolkāppiyam*, for which it is a phenomenon of grammar, to a phenomenon of semantics of literature is reflected in this commentary of the medieval period. It needs further research to confirm whether this commentary attests the beginning or the progression of the reimagination of *ākupeyar*.

2.12 Expansion by Literary Commentators

The question is whether the two senses of two nouns (not just their referents) in the reimagined *ākupeyar* should be related in some way. The answer is yes, but the distance of the relationship has widened. And the template of the earlier period giving harmonious relationships is given up. The harmony in literature is of the perception of the

reader about the semantics of two nouns. When such a relationship is not obviously perceived to exist, Parimēlaḷakar does not call such a meaning-shifted noun an *ākupeya*, but calls the relationship by the term *upacāram* (or *upacāra vaḷakku*). *Upacāram* also refers to the semantic shift of the noun (or any word, during this period), where the relation between the meanings is distant. It is to be examined if this term from Sanskrit is used by this commentator in the same sense it is used by Sanskrit grammarians and commentators. *Parimēlaḷakar* may use the technical term *upacāram* differently from its use by Sanskrit grammarians, among whom there is no consensus about its use (p.c. Andrew Ollett and Whitney Cox).

Let me illustrate this with the example of Parimēlaḷakar's commentary on *Tirukkuraḷ* 383.

tūṅkāmai kalvi tuṇivuṭaimai immūṇṇrum
nīṅkā nilaṇāḷ pavaṇku

தூங்காமை கல்வி துணிவுடைமை இம்மூன்றும்

நீங்கா நிலனாள் பவற்கு

Being alert, informed and bold – these three never leave one
who rules the land.

The commentator glosses *tuṇivu* 'courage' as *āṇmai* 'ability to take bold /decisive action' (according to his own gloss). He says that *tuṇivu* in this verse means *āṇmai* and this meaning is by *upacāram*; *tuṇivu* is not called *ākupeyar* by him. The reason seems to be that the relation between the meanings of the two words is distant.²⁴

Another instance of *upacāram*.

aṇaiḷikkātu allatu nīkki maṇaiḷikkā
māṇam uṭaiyatu aracu

அறனிழிக்காது அல்லது நீக்கி மறனிழிக்கா

மானம் உடையது அரசு

The character of a king is to earn honour with unfailing valour
that does not fail from the code of conduct and that eschews any
negative display of it. (*Tirukkuraḷ* 384)

Aracu 'kingdom' in the verse means, for the commentator, 'the nature of a king' and it is called *upacāram*, not *ākupeyar*. The commentator gives this designation to the shifted meaning of *aracu* because the relation of kingdom to the character of the king is not conventional, and

²⁴ *tuṇivu* and *tuṇiccal* themselves have the meaning 'boldness' in modern Tamil and are polysemous with the senses of courage and boldness. It may not have been the case in the time of *Parimēlaḷakar*. It is true that there is no difference between primary and secondary meaning of this word in modern Tamil. This noun does not have to be an *ākupeyar* to get an additional sense. This shows that *ākupeyar* is a source for polysemy.

it is individualistic. This secondary sense, and not the other possible secondary sense, viz., ‘king’, is supported by the neuter ending of the predicate (*uṭaiyatu*), though the morphological change to human male is not required even if the secondary meaning is ‘king’.

In another *Tirukkuraḷ* (381), Parimēlaḷakar does not consider the metaphorical relation of the shifted meaning (relation of similarity) as legitimate for *ākupeyar* and calls it *upacāram*. The example is *aracarūḷ ēru* ‘bull among the kings’. This suggests that Parimēlaḷakar does not seem to consider the medieval grammarians’ innovation of *uvama ākupeyar* a legitimate *ākupeyar* (see 2.5).

2.13 Meaning Shift in Words Other Than Nouns

Since *ākupeyar* in its reimagination in the medieval period has moved away from the transfer of referent to the transfer of sense of the word, it becomes possible to talk about transfer in the members of word classes other than nouns.

aṇpōṭu iyainta vaḷakkenṇa āruyirkku

eṇpōṭu iyainta toṭarpu

அன்போடு இயைந்த வழக்கென்ப ஆருயிர்க்கு

என்போடு இயைந்த தொடர்பு

They say that the lived life bounded with love is like the binding of the precious life to the bones. (*Tirukkuraḷ* 73)

Parimēlaḷakar takes *vaḷakku* ‘prevalence, practice’ in the first line to mean *vāḷkkai* ‘life’ and takes the word to mean *vāḷkkaiyiṇ payaṇ* ‘result/benefit of life’ and so takes it to be an *ākupeyar*; this is because his belief in previous birth underlies his interpretation of this verse. He reads it thus: the soul has the same body in the next birth due to the life of love in the previous birth.²⁵

This commentator calls *iyainta* in the first line, which is a relative participle from the verb *iyai* ‘combine in harmony’, an instance of an *upacāram*. The same word is used in the second line to describe the relation between body and life, which are inseparable/inalienable (*caiyōka campantam* சையோக சம்பந்தம் – *saivyōga-sambandha* in Sanskrit). This sense of inseparability is elevated to *iyainta* ‘natural’ in the first line mentioning love and life, which, though, are, in reality, alienable (*camayōka campantam* சமயோக

²⁵ It is, however, possible to explain the *ākupeyar* in a different way without reference to belief in rebirth. The sense of ‘life’ of *vaḷakku* is the transfer of the sense of ‘prevalent practices’ that constitute life. This will probably fall under the template *iyagrata mōḷital* (Tol Col S. 114), which is about the relation between a thing and what it is made of: Life is made of social and cultural practices.

சம்பந்தம் – *saṃyōga-sambandha* in Sanskrit).²⁶ *Upacāram* is the property (i.e. the iconic sense) of one (here the inseparability of things in line two) being attributed to another (here the separability of the things in line one). This is characterized as *oṇṇaraku uriyaṇa vēṇṇaraku varutal* ‘that which belongs to one applies to another’. Hence *iyaṇta* in line one is *upacāra vaḷakku*; that is, it acquires the meaning of the same word in line two for a purpose. *Upacāram* can be viewed as appropriate or iconic modification of meaning from the literal meaning for a proper reading of the text. The semantic inappropriateness without this modification is not a case of semantic anomaly as in the case of *ākupeyar* without the transfer of meaning but a case of semantic poverty.

As *upacāram* is extended to words other than nouns in the above, *ākupeyar* could be extended too. This would not be possible in the early theory which concerns shifting referents and not quality of referents and thus is relevant only for nouns. Another condition that the primary noun and the *ākupeyar* cannot break the naturally linked semantic relationship between them prohibit having meaning-shifted non-nouns. There cannot be, for example, *ākuviṇai*, in which the verb shifted its meaning from the meaning of the noun. When there is incompatibility between the noun and the predicate as in *pālai iṇṇakkiṇāḷ* ‘brought the milk down’, the noun receives the meaning ‘milk pot’ transferred to it to dissolve the incompatibility. If the verb *iṇṇakku* gets the meaning *kottu* ‘pour’ transferred to it as in *pālaik kottṇiṇāḷ* ‘poured the milk down’, the incompatibility also dissolves. But the meanings ‘bring down’ and ‘pour down’ lie beyond any linked relationship. The absence of linked relationship between two verbal senses prohibits the transfer of verbal sense. Hence, in theory, *ākuviṇai* is impossible. When the relationship condition is voided or weakened in the reimaged *ākupeyar* of the medieval period, *ākuviṇai* should be possible. And it exists in tropes.

26 See the explanation of Dandapani Desikar, who compiled the commentaries of *Tirukkuraḷ* together and wrote comparative notes, for these terms and their religious use. He identifies *eṇṇu* ‘bone’ as an *ākupeyar* (*ciṇaiyāku peyar*) to mean ‘body’; Parimēlaḷakar gives this meaning of body to the word bone without calling it an *ākupeyar*. It means that the commentators do not mark every *ākupeyar* in the text and it is left to the readers of their commentaries to know the nature of the noun in the text by the gloss the commentators give it. This couplet may have a simple reading: Love is integrated with life (living) like the body is with life.

2.14 From Semantic Shift and Enrichment to Semantic Embellishment

When the semantic adjustment by transfer in *ākupeyar* or in *upacāram* is towards semantic enrichment, the transfer becomes semantic embellishment, as found in the literary trope. By liberating the semantic transfer to avoid oddity from the restriction of transfer to referents and from the presence of incompatibility between the noun and the predicate and from the restriction of transfer to nouns and from adherence to a template sanctioned by convention, semantic embellishment of *ākupeyar* becomes possible to enhance the aesthetic ways of expressing meanings and the effective ways of communicating. Unlike traditional *ākupeyar*, which operates in a sentence (syntagmatic), tropes operate between words arranged in parallel (paradigmatic). The parallels are created by poets and speakers of the language and may or may not be conventionalized. We already saw an example of it in literature (see 2.8) with regard to ‘thorny tree’ carrying the unexpressed (*kuṛippu*) meaning of ‘adversary’, which becomes conventional over time, but it might be rare. The shift from framing *ākupeyar* as a syntagmatic phenomenon to framing it as a paradigmatic phenomenon and the shift from being convention centered to person centered are major ones in the reimagining of *ākupeyar*.

2.15 Beyond Literary Texts

Ākupeyar is employed in religious discourse to relate the human to God’s qualities and actions. *Cuṭar* ‘flame’ in the last line of the following verse from *Tirumantiram* (2011: 924), which means ‘head’ and refers to Shiva’s head, is an *ākupeyar* if the word is taken to mean ‘brightness (of face)’. This analysis could be like any other analysis of *ākupeyar* in a text: a quality (flame) transfers to the possessor of the quality (face). This could not be the traditional *ākupeyar* if the word in the meaning ‘flame’ is a figure for Shiva’s head.

The relation between the two senses of the body parts of Shiva and the letters of the *mantra* is more problematic; it is figurative within the iconographic convention of Saivism, which iconizes the *mantra namaccivāya* as the body of Shiva, but a commentator considers the icon to be an *ākupeyar*.

ākiṇṇa pātamum annavvāy niṇṇiṭum
ākiṇṇa nāpiyul aṇkē makāramām
ākiṇṇa cīru tōl vavvāyk kaṇṭapiṇ
ākiṇṇa accuṭar avviyav vāmē

ஆகின்ற பாதமும் அந்நவ்வாய் நின்றிடும்
ஆகின்ற நாடியுள் அங்கே மகாரமாம்
ஆகின்ற சீஇரு தோள் வவ்வாய்க் கண்டபின்
ஆகின்ற அச்சுடர் அவ்வியவ் வாமே
The foot that is there stands for the letter *na*,
the navel that is in the body is the letter *ma*,
the two great shoulders are the letter *vaa*, having seen all,
the flaming face that is there is the letter *ya*.

The letter *na* in the first line represents the foot of Shiva. Arunai Vadivel, who wrote notes on the verses of *Tirumantiram* in its edition of Dharmapuram Adheenam, calls *nav* ‘the letter *na*’ an *ākupeyar* of Shiva’s foot. And the letter *ma* in the second line and the letter *va* in the third line are figures for the belly button and shoulder respectively. This is miscategorization of *ākupeyar*; letters are not words with a meaning that can be transferred; there is no semantic relation (*toṭarpu*) between the letters and the body parts of Shiva. The relation between them is figurative and it is not from an ancient tradition. For these reasons, the letters and their symbolisms are idiosyncratic, imagined by a devotee, at best a creation in a religious tradition. The commentator seems to extend the sense relation of *ākupeyar* to the relation of symbolism.

There are other words in Saiva texts that potentially qualify as *ākupeyar*. *Ākupeyar* could be a way of creating meanings of words in the register of religion and other special domains. The fundamental trio of words around which the Saiva philosophy is constructed are *pai* ‘leader’, *pacu* ‘cow’, *pācam* ‘attachment’. The transfer of sense in *pai* is from its primary meaning of ‘leader of the home, or the country and others’ to the meaning of the ‘leader of the Universe’, i.e. Shiva. The sense transfer in *pacu* ‘animal (in Sanskrit, *mā* in Tamil)’ to mean ‘all living beings’ qualifies as the reimagined *ākupeyar*, though there is no conventional semantic connection between the two. The sense transfer in *pācam* is from ‘attachment, being stuck in the world (cf. *pacai* ‘glue’)’ to specific attributes of the being (like ego, ego’s illusions and ego’s actions with consequences). This is also of the same type. But these must not be considered transfer of meaning, as in *ākupeyar*, but rather as specialization of meaning in a register, which is the philosophy of Saivism. The meaning shifts in these examples are register-governed polysemy. Parimēlaḷakar is likely to consider the semantic shift as an instance of *upacāram*, i.e. meaning enrichment. In essence, to treat them as *ākupeyars* would be the extension of a semantic process of the language to create new meanings of words specific to a discipline. Classical *ākupeyar* is not any shift of meaning of nouns.

3 Modern Period

3.1 Semantic Embellishment in Public Speech

Ākupeyar has lost its relevance in literary analysis in the modern period. It is equated with trope and identified in political speech. Bate, a linguistic anthropologist, discusses trope in Tamil political discourse in public settings. He calls *ākupeyar* the words of ordinary language whose meanings are embellished. This newly reimagined semantic shift equals one kind of trope (Rogahn 2025). Bate (2009, 107) argues that

the semiotic relationship of contiguity (indexicality) in *ākupeyar* is an iconic model of the relationship of powerful leader and hopeful supporter on stage.

The relationship between meanings is built on praise. One of the examples he gives is the address of the leader of a political party as *kaḷakam kākkum itayāt tuṭippē* ‘O! the heartbeat protecting the party’. The heartbeat is the cause (*kāraṇam*) of the protection of life, which is the result (*kāriyam*). This is an example of *kāriyavāku peyar*. This analysis shows that the trope in political discourse is explainable as a semantic transfer of *ākupeyar*. The use of such words with transferred figurative meaning by supporters brings them closer to the leader and this relationship is metonymic and it is an expression of contiguity between the supporter and the leader. Nakassis (2019) shows such a relationship of contiguity through images in films. Treating a trope as an *ākupeyar* removes the restrictions that the semantic shift is not metaphorical and that it does not include semantic shifts in words other than nouns, which Bates’s other examples include. And it makes the meaning of the *ākupeyar* a category of secondary meaning that is intended by the writer or speaker. These are major deviations from the classical theory of *ākupeyar*.

3.2 Secondary Meanings in Classical Literature

There are secondary or suggestive meanings in literary communication relating to *Sangam* literature that are not *ākupeyar* as theorized by *Tolkāppiyam*. *Tolkāppiyam* does not place *ākupeyar* in the same category as of the following two as a means of making secondary meaning. *Ākupeyar* belongs to the domain of grammar or grammar-dependent meaning, and so is described in *Collatikāram*, ‘Chapter on Word’. These two secondary meanings are aesthetic-dependent meanings and are described in *Poruḷatikāram* ‘Chapter

on (literary) Content’.

One of the two secondary meanings is *uḷḷurai*, which is extensively used in the love (*akam*) poems of the *Sangam* and which shifts the meanings of natural objects and actions to human subjects and actions. The verbally unexpressed meaning is intended for the listener to infer, as the heroine talks out her feeling of betrayal, for example, to the hero without offending him with direct words. *Uḷḷurai*’s canvas is larger than that of *ākupeyar*; it is an imagery. There are, however, literary theorists in the modern period such as A.K. Ramanujan (1989), who claim that the expressed and unexpressed meanings are related by semantic contiguity and are therefore metonymic. Ramanujan believes that Indian thinking is shaped more by metonymic association by contiguity than by metaphoric association by similarity (Ramanujan 2011). He relies on the literal meaning of *uḷḷurai* ‘that which resides inside’; the secondary meaning resides inside the primary meaning and is thus contiguous with it. But he does not call *uḷḷurai* an *ākupeyar*.

Another secondary meaning is *iraicci*, which etymologically means ‘that which stands slanting’. Unlike *uḷḷurai*, this secondary meaning is not indexical but rather a flash. Whether it is partially or wholly similar to *toni* is debated by scholars inconclusively (Mennakshisundran 1977; Thamizhannal 1986; 2011; Shanmugam 2009; 2012). The two mechanisms of secondary or non-transparent meaning are sidelined in the analysis of post-Sangam literary texts. There seems to be a disjunction in the conceptualization and analysis of secondary meaning between the classical and medieval literary theories in Tamil. The reasons are that the form, content, and theory of literature changed over this period and *ākupeyar* came to be reimagined as a vehicle of secondary meaning in the medieval period (see 2). Whether the decline of the classical theory of secondary meaning and reimagining of the theory of *ākupeyar* are related is a subject for a separate paper, which should also talk about the role of *lakṣaṇā* and other Sanskrit theories of secondary meaning in its development in Tamil differently from its classical theory.

4 Semantic Shift Expressed by Zero Morph

4.1 Structural Properties of *aṇmolittokai*

The referent in *ākupeyar* as a grammatical category of nouns is a shifter. There is another category of nouns, which is also a shifter. Its shifted referent does not have a formal representation in the noun but is realized through the semantic shift of the formal zero called *an molī* ‘nil word’ or ‘zero word’. This noun with zero is called

aṇmolittokai ‘the compound noun with zero as head’. The zero word or morph is required to account for the shifted referent, which provides morphological marking in the predicate agreeing with the gender and number of the zero referent. The referent shift is required to make the noun compatible with the meaning of the predicate. The above shows that *aṇmolittokai* goes through the same process of shift of referent or meaning as *ākupeyar*. The shift yields a new referent and new meaning out of the primary noun. But unlike the *ākupeyar*, the shift between referents or meanings is outside the template and is restricted to human as the shifted referent. In the sentence *porroṭi āṭiṇāḷ* ‘woman wearing the gold bangle danced’, *porroṭi* in isolation means ‘gold bangle’. The predicate is incompatible with this referent and so it shifts the referent to mean ‘woman’ and the verb is marked with *-āḷ* to agree with the gender and number of the shifted referent; the shifted meaning of ‘woman’ of the noun is expressed by realizing the zero morph as a human referent. This accounts for the human gender and number marking of the predicate. In *porroṭi uṭaintatu* ‘gold bangle broke’ the predicate is compatible with the neuter referent and the agreement marker is for the neuter object. In *porroṭi viḷuntāl/vizuntatu* ‘woman wearing the gold bangle fell’ / ‘gold bangle fell’, the predicate is compatible semantically with both human and neuter referents. There is a shift of referent in the first sentence and zero is realized to mark the shift; there is no shift in the second sentence and so there is no zero morph. The difference between the two sentences is that in the first sentence a zero morph is posited that accounts for the human morphological marking of the predicate. The marking ensures grammatical agreement between the meaning-shifted noun (into a human noun) and the predicate. This noun with zero morph is called *aṇmoli* ‘absent morph’ and the whole construction with its base is called *aṇmolittokai*.

Non-Subject nouns also have the human referent of the zero element, as in *porroṭiyai maṇantēn* ‘(I) married the woman wearing the gold bangle’; the object is an *aṇmolittokai* because the meaning (‘marry’) of the predicate requires a human object. The object in *porroṭi aṇintēn* ‘(I) wore the gold bangle’ cannot be an *aṇmolittokai* because the meaning of the predicate is compatible only with the neuter referent of nouns. The shifted referent of the majority of *ākupeyars* is of neuter gender as indicated by the verb agreement. *aṇmolittokai* differs from *ākupeyar* in this respect. Its shifted referent is restricted to human, and there are no exceptions.

There are, however, exceptions to the property of *ākupeyar* to keep its shifted referent in neuter gender. See examples such as *cirṛūr cirittatu* ‘the small town laughed’, where the Subject as an *ākupeyar* has the shifted human meaning of the referent (‘the people of the town laughed’) but the predicate retains the neuter ending. For the predicate to have grammatical agreement with the Subject,

the Subject does not have zero morphologically; when it has a human morpheme or word, as in *ciṟṟūrār/ciṟṟūrkkārarkaḷ/ciṟṟūr makkaḷ cirittārkaḷ* ‘they of/the people of the small town laughed’, it becomes a different noun. This derived noun ceases to be an *ākupeyar* because there is a morphologically explicit marker of the human referent (-ār) to give its meaning and no shift of referent is necessary to give the human meaning. Absence of the grammatical marker to indicate the referent in the shifted noun and in the predicate is a crucial feature of *ākupeyar*. The presence of the referent in the shifted noun, though as a zero morph, and in the predicate is the crucial feature of *aṇmolittokai*. The reason for the difference between the two is probably that *ākupeyar* is conceptualized as a simple shift of referent while *aṇmolittokai* is conceptualized as a compound (*tokai*) which elides a form (its head), which is recovered to get its meaning.

A modern example of *aṇmolittokai* is *karuppuc caṭṭai kilē viḷuntāṇ/ viḷuntatu* ‘the black-shirted one fell down’ contrasting with ‘the black shirt fell down’. The first of the two sentences is equivalent in meaning to the noun that is a derivative word (i.e. a noun without zero, but with -kāraṇ) such as *karuppuccaṭṭaikkāraṇ* ‘black shirt-er’. The second sentence does not have an equal sentence with a derived noun.

Aṇmolittokai generally as a compound noun has a modifying base of two words (a compound) for its zero head while *ākupeyars* have neither. They have one exception in *irupeyarotṭu ākupeyar* ‘*ākupeyar* of a two-noun compound’ (see 1.2.3.). It is different kind of compound being an appositional construct and it is not the base of the *ākupeyar*, as in *aṇmolittokai*; it is the *ākupeyar* itself. *Aṇmolittokai* is made of a compound plus a zero morph. This is a structural difference and not a difference of one being a simple noun and the other a compound noun (more than one word).

4.2 Getting Meaning from Zero

Tolkāppiyam (Tol Col S. 418) places the description of *aṇmolittokai* along with the description of regular compounds in the Chapter on Remainders (*eccaviyal*), which the commentators explain as the chapter in which grammatical facts that could not cohere with the facts described in other chapters are stated. The grammatical facts of this chapter pertain to deriving the meaning of words of different kinds such as lexical variants (from different regions and sources, and with changes in form), words having a variable number of meanings (synonyms and homonyms), words with elided morphemes, words in unconventionally ordered places in poetic lines. Deriving the meaning of a word includes deriving it when implicit in poetry and in ordinary language (including euphemisms). *Aṇmolittokai* belongs to this chapter, which talks about getting meaning from linguistic forms of different

kinds and it is one kind of compound noun with zero morph at the end as the head. It may be recalled that *ākupeyar* is described in *Tolkāppiyam* in the chapter related to Nouns that describes *mayakkam* between case meanings or markers. *Ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai* differ in the way the shifted meaning is derived; that the discovery of meaning is motivated by the semantics of the predicate and its incompatibility with the semantics of the noun is shared.

The above description of *aṇmolittokai*, in consonance with *ākupeyar* (see 1.5.3), makes the claim valid that the former is a special kind of the latter in that the semantic shift of referent in the former is limited to a shift from neuter to human and the new referent is represented by a zero morph.

4.3 Zero as a Human Referent

The function of *aṇmolittokai* in ordinary and literary language is to foreground the qualifying attributes of a person whose referent is formally zeroed out. The zero morph may be lexicalized into generic words such as *peṇ* ‘female person’ / *āṇ* ‘male person’ or into derivationalal suffixes *-āḷ* / *-āṇ* for female or male respectively. The commentators argue that it is not a simple lexical or derivational formation but a syntactic formation. *porroṭi vantāl*, for example, is interpreted as *porroṭiyai aṇintavaḷ/aṇinta peṇ* ‘she/the woman wearing gold bangles came’. The supplied verb is the one proto-typically associated with the noun and it is not any verb. That is, an *aṇmolittokai* is not ambiguous with multiple interpretations as to the verb expanding the zero morph. The above sentence would not have meanings such as ‘she/the woman selling gold bangles came’ (*porroṭiyai viṇṇavaḷ/viṇṇa* or *viṇṇum peṇ vantāl*). When a case compound is expanded for meaning, the expansion contains a case marker and a prototypically associated verb. *pāl pāṇai* ‘milk pot’ is a case compound (*vēṇṇumait tokai*), which is understood as *pālaik kāyccum pāṇai* ‘the pot in which milk is boiled’, where the accusative case marker *-ai* and the verb *kāy* ‘boil’ are made explicit. This sentence is not understood, for example, as ‘the pot in which milk is fermented’ (which *tayirp pāṇai* ‘yogurt pot’ means). For this reason, *tokai* is explained as *urupum payaṇum uṭaṇ tokka tokai* ‘the compound is where a grammatical marker and a verb (*payan*) are elided’. This is how the zero morph of *aṇmolittokai*

is understood.²⁷

The referent of the zero morph of *aṇmolittokai* is always generic, such as woman or man. There are occasions, however, when a specific person is brought out in the description making *aṇmolittokai* a proper noun. The commentator Aṭiyārkunallār of *Cilappatikāram* (2.3.65) reads the *aṇmolittokai aruntīral* ‘exceptional skill’ as a description of the mythological figure Raman: ‘Raman possessing exceptional skills’.²⁸ The referent of *aṇmolittokai* is not unique per se but the treatment of it as a unique one in the extrapolation by the commentator from the linguistic context, where Raman’s kingdom’s capital Ayodhya is mentioned.

Let me digress into the rationale of *Tolkāppiyam* for the taxonomy of *aṇmolittokai* based on its compound bases, which its commentators struggle to tease out.

4.4 Modifier Bases

The commentators of *Tolkāppiyam* do not describe *aṇmolittokai* in the above fashion; they focus their attention on its compounding nature. *Tolkāppiyam* (Tol Col S. 413) lists three kinds of *aṇmolittokai* based on the modifier compounds that are constituent parts of it. The three are out of the five compounds (not counting *aṇmolittokai*) identified and described by *Tolkāppiyam* (S. 418). This perplexes the commentators and by using the pretext of the order in which the three are listed in the *sutra*, they add to the list the two omitted compounds – *uvamaittokai* (compound of comparison) and *vinaittokai* (compound of verb modifier) and bring up the number of kinds of *aṇmolittokai* to five, the same number as the general compounds. The commentator Teyvaccilaiyār (fifteenth c.) takes a different tack in rationalizing the dropping of two compound modifiers of *aṇmolittokai* by *Tolkāppiyam*. He claims that *aṇmolittokai*’s last component zero morph carries the meaning of both words in the modifying compound of *aṇmolittokai*. For example, the qualifier compound (*paṇputtokai*) *kaṭuṇkōl* ‘harsh scepter’ is an *aṇmolittokai* and it means ‘the ‘king (wielding) the harsh scepter’; it refers to the king holding a scepter

27 One could think of an alternative theory in which *aṇmolittokai* has the form of a derived noun with *-āl* / *-āṇ* as *porroṭiyāl vantāl* from which the suffix *-āl* is dropped. Tamil grammarians did not choose this alternative because the derived noun (which is a morphological phenomenon) is not expanded with a verb as the compound noun (which is a syntactic phenomenon) is; this will not enable a derived noun to get the meaning as *aṇmolittokai* does.

28 *aruntīral pirinta ayōtti: aruntīral – ariya tīraluṭaiya irāmaṇ ākupeyar* அருந்திறல் பிரிந்த அயோத்தி: அருந்திறல் – அரிய திறலுடைய இராமன், ஆகுபெயர். Here *uṭaiya* உடைய ‘possessing’ is the verb (*payan*).

and being harsh; i.e. the attribute 'harsh' for the scepter applies to the king also. On the contrary, in the comparison compound-based *aṇmolittokai tuṭiyiṭai* 'the woman having a waist curved thin in the middle like the hour-glass shaped drum', *tuṭi* 'drum' does not integrally relate to the woman in the same way as *iṭai* 'waist', which is just one body part of her. Hence this whole compound does not qualify as a comparison compound-based *aṇmolittokai*. So is the verb modifier compound *tālkuḷal* 'hanging tress', where *tāl* 'hanging' does not relate to the woman. For this reason, these two kinds of compounds do not qualify to be *aṇmolittokai* and *Tolkāppiyam*'s exclusion of them from the category of *aṇmolittokai* is justified empirically, according to Teyvaccilaiyār (commentary on Tol Col S. 418). For him, *tuṭiyiṭai* is an *ākupeyar* without the empty head and has the referent 'woman' through a referent shift from the waist (part) to woman (whole). So is *tālkuḷal*.

But Teyvaccilaiyār's rationalization applies equally to *aṇmolittokai* that is based on case compounds such as *porroṭi* 'gold bangle'; when this is an *aṇmolittokai* and refers to a woman, *pon* 'gold' does not integrally relate to the woman. Teyvaccilaiyār dismisses this counterexample with an ingenious explanation. Gold is indicative of the woman's wealth and thus relates to the wealthy woman. This reasoning is far-fetched. The same behavior of the case compound in *aṇmolittokai* makes his inclusion of the case compound and exclusion of the two other compounds as bases of *aṇmolittokai* unconvincing.

Teyvaccilaiyār is not right about his explanation of exclusion based on a property of comparison compound and verbal compound. Contrary to his explanation, the comparison compound *matimukam* 'moon-like face' as an *aṇmolittokai* to mean 'the woman having a moon-like face' has the simile *mati* 'moon' related to the woman to refer to the brightness of her appearance. That is, the brightness that relates to her face extends to her overall appearance.

It is the same for the verb modifier compound-based *aṇmolittokai*. One example is *tiricaṭai* 'braided plait'. As an *aṇmolittokai*, it refers to a girl having braided hair; *tiri* 'twist' relates to her hair, which she displays, and to her as a person. This is clear when the same compound refers to Shiva meaning 'the one with matted hair' 'matted' here applies to the hair on the head of Shiva and to his whole appearance.

There is a better interpretation of *Tolkāppiyam*'s exclusion of two compounds from being the base of *aṇmolittokai* that can be offered. The exclusion is not about the number of compounds that modify the empty head. It is about the number of modifying relationships of the five compounds. The compounds can have only three modifying relationships with the empty head. By definition, any compound expands with its elided element (case maker is the elided element in

case compounds, to give an example) and a prototypical verb to link the two components of the compound (see 4.3).

Aṇmolittokai is a compound word with three components, of which the zero is the third component at the end. Expansion of it with the preceding compound of which it is the head should also have the elided element and the referent of the zero morph. In the *aṇmolittokai* of *porroṭi vantāl*, the second component *toṭi* expands with the verb 'wear' and with the instrumental case. *Tolkappiyam* (Tol Col S. 418) calls the last *anmozitokai* in his list as *vērrumai tokka peyar vayiṇ ṭṛru niṇru iyalum anmozitokai* 'the zero-head compound that is at the end of the noun has an elided case'. The same is true of all *anmozitokais*. The quality compound based *aṇmolittokai*, viz., *vellāṭai vantāl* 'the woman wearing a white sari came', where the elided elements are the verb 'wear' and the accusative case marker. This quality compound is identical with the case compound (*porroṭi*) as far as the relation with the zero head is concerned. The compounds preceding the empty head are its modifiers and they expand with *uṭaiya* 'possessing', which expresses possession of a quality and it is elided. *karuṅkuḷal vantāl* expands to *karuṅkuḷalai uṭaiya peṇ vantāl* 'she who has dark hair came'; the possessive verb goes with the empty head. The compound expands externally with *uṭaiya* as it does internally with the modifying noun of quality: *karuṅkuḷal* 'dark hair' = *karumaiyai uṭaiya kuḷal* 'the hair that possesses darkness'. The above sentence is equivalent to *karuṅkuḷali/karuṅkuḷalāl vantāl* 'she of dark hair came' (*kuḷali* and *kuḷalāl* are derived nouns with female gender derivative marker *-i* and *-āl*); any syntactic explanation of these, if the theory of derived nouns requires a formal explanation, would be the same. The examples for conjunctive compound are *ceṭikoṭikaḷ* (from *ceṭikaḷum koṭikaḷum*) *vāṭiṇa* 'the plants and creepers withered', *āṭumāṭukaḷ* (from *āṭukaḷum māṭukaḷum*) *mēyntaṇa* 'the sheep and cows grazed'. As an *aṇmolittokai*, they refer respectively to vegetation and cattle. The conjunctive compound of species within a genus has the genus as its zero head.

The two excluded modifying compounds of *aṇmolittokai* have the same characteristics functionally as the three included compounds but they have a semantically disallowed and syntactically incompatible relation with the empty head. So the two, the comparison compound and the verbal compound, are excluded from constituting *aṇmolittokai* and do not find mention in the *Tolkāppiyam sūtra* of *aṇmolittokai*. Their exclusion (Tol Col S. 418) follows from the rules of formation of nominal compounds with zero head. *Matimukam* 'moon face' is a comparison compound. It will have the relation of case compound (not comparison compound) with the zero head and would expand as *matimukattai uṭaiyavaḷ* 'she who has the moon face'. Just like the *aṇmolittokai* *porroṭi* has the relation of case compound with the zero head. *Pūṅkoṭi* 'gentle creeper' is a qualitative compound. As an *aṇmolittokai* in *pūṅkoṭi vantāl*

‘the gentle creeper came’, it would expand as *pūṇkoṭi pōṇṇavaḷ vantaḷ* ‘she who is like a gentle creeper came’. It is a metaphor (*uruvakam*). Since the metaphoric sense relation does not constitute an *ākupeyar* (see 2.5), the compound does not constitute an *aṇmolittokai*; so *pūṇkoṭi* with zero head in the above sentence does not count as an *aṇmolittokai*. The compound of verbal modifier is excluded from *aṇmolittokai* because the modifying compound is a noun and as such it cannot be said to modify the empty head as a verb. Hence the *aṇmolittokai* of verbal compound is excluded.

Leaving aside the taxonomy of *aṇmolittokai*, there is an important question of differentiating it from *ākupeyar*, both of which share the problem of lexical semantics to get the meaning of nouns from their compounding and predication respectively.

4.5 Differentiating *ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai*

The question that remains to be answered is why the first component of *aṇmolittokai* must be a bi-lexical compound and not a single word, as all commentators of *Tolkāppiyam* and later grammarians hold. The rule of thumb that structurally differentiates *ākupeyar* as single nouns and *aṇmolittokai* as triple nouns, the last of which is formally zero, breaks down if single-word *aṇmolittokai* are attested.. We saw earlier that there are *ākupeyars* with two nouns (*irupeyarotṭu* ‘binominal compound’, though the nature of this compound is different (see 1.2.3). Their existence, especially the compound that is not only appositional, would show that there is structural overlap between *ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai*

The interpretation given above of *Tolkāppiyam*’s *sutra* (Tol Col S. 418) shows, contrary to the interpretation of commentators, that this requirement is not absolute. This requirement of *aṇmolittokai*, however, is empirically vouched all over Tamil literary texts. The question is whether *aṇmolittokai* of a single modifying word and an empty head is empirically attested. An example of its existence would be *koṭi tuvaṇṭāḷ* ‘the creeper-like she wilted’. But this is metaphorical and not metonymic and so does not qualify to be an *aṇmolittokai*, like *pūṇkoṭi* discussed earlier (4.4). The same sentence with its literal meaning would be *koṭi tuvaṇṭatu* ‘the creeper wilted’ with neuter ending of the verb. *koṭi* as a metaphor could have human referent: ‘she like a creeper wilted’. It is not a permitted transfer of meaning in *ākupeyar*. The classical concept of *ākupeyar* of *Tolkāppiyam* does not have a place for *uvamaiyāku peyar* (see 2.2). It is true of *anmozitokai* as well (see 4.4). It is the classical theory of *ākupeyar* that prohibits *aṇmolittokai* from having of a single word (or two words) whose semantic shift is metaphorical even when they are attested.

The difference between metaphor and metonymy is that in metaphor the morphological agreement between the predicate and the Subject noun is warranted and semantic coherence between the predicate and the semantic class of the Subject is warranted. In metonymy, both are not warranted. Recall (1.5.3) that in *ākupeyar* the semantics of the Subject plays no role in verb agreement. In spite of this difference in the role played by semantics of the Subject noun in verb agreement, *ākupeyar* and *aṇmoḷittokai* share the restriction that their sense shift is not metaphorical.

It should be noted that the transfer of referent/meaning in *ākupeyar* is mostly between non-human referents, though there is human to non-human transfer between the doer/maker to product as well as non-human to human as between the place and the people of the place (see 2.2). The referent/meaning in *aṇmoḷittokai* is mostly human (see 4.3) but it could be non-human also as in *koṭuvari* ‘curved stripes’, *vallukir* ‘strong claws’ referring to the animals, tiger and bear respectively. They will expand as *koṭuvariyaḷi uṭaiyatu* ‘one possessing curved stripes’, *vallukirai uṭaiyatu* ‘one possessing strong claw’. These *aṇmoḷittokais* could be equally treated as *ākupeyar*; in the present examples, the transfer is from the body part to the whole animal (*ciṇaiyāku peyar*).

Ākupeyar and *aṇmoḷittokai* are two grammatical processes through which words acquire additional meanings that are related in specific ways and they assume different lexical forms and functions. They do not form a parallel line but cross each other in actual use. Their historical development differs as regards their new uses with broadened definitions. *Ākupeyar* may extend to words other than nouns, but *aṇmoḷittokai* does not have this development and always remains a noun. The nominal function of *aṇmoḷittokais* to be human nouns is taken over by derived nouns in modern Tamil (see 4.1). As derivatives, the referent descriptive function of *aṇmoḷittokai* is taken over by a referent identification function.

4.6 Comparative Perspective with Sanskrit

The concept that is similar to *aṇmoḷittokai* in Sanskrit grammar is the concept of *bahuvrīhi*. One example is the Sanskrit equivalent of ‘the spinach’ meaning ‘lover of spinach’. This needs be a compound noun, and may not have the syntactic characteristics of *aṇmoḷittokai* discussed above (see 4.4). *Ākupeyar*, in its history in Tamil, moves from being a denotational phenomenon of nouns (i.e. referents) to becoming a semantic phenomenon of words of any class. This is not the case with *aṇmoḷittokai* in its history in Tamil; it remains both a nominal and a denotational phenomenon. This may be true of *bahuvrīhi* in Sanskrit, but it may have grown in its semantic function.

Theoretical comparison of *aṇmolittokai* with *bahuvrīhi* remains, however, superficial to my knowledge. The above description of the syntactic and semantic issues of *aṇmolittokai* and their similarities and differences with *ākupeyar* probably are not relevant to compare *bahuvirīhi* and *lakṣaṇā* in Sanskrit. This is a topic for future investigation.

4.7 Functions of Language Communication

Ākupeyar and *aṇmolittokai* serve different functions, the former being the need to keep the number of nouns in check by avoiding the need for a distinct noun for each referent. In the example cited earlier (see 1.5.1), *paccai kuttiṇāṇ* ‘got tattooed’, the availability of *ākupeyar* helps express the meaning of ‘tattoo’ with *paccai* ‘green’ without requiring a separate word for tattoo. *Ākupeyar* helps communicate meanings through a single word that would otherwise need to be coded through phrases. It thus helps the economy of expression. In the example cited earlier (see 1.5.1), *kāñcipuram kaṭṭiṇāl* ‘she wore *kāñcipuram*’ suffices to mean *kāñcipuram puṭavai kaṭṭiṇāl* ‘wore a sari woven in the town Kanchipuram’. Similarly, *pulī tiṇṇāṇ* ‘ate tamarind’ will do for *puliyampalam tiṇṇāṇ* ‘ate tamarind fruit’. The same is true for nouns of measurement cited earlier: *kāl liṭṭar ākku* ‘cook quarter of a liter’ in place of *kāl liṭṭar arici ākku* ‘cook quarter liter of rice’. Poets exploit *ākupeyar* to draw attention to the secondary meaning and meanings that are contextually significant in the poem by the use of *ākupeyar* instead of the literal noun as in the interpretation of the noun *cerukku* ‘self-assurance’ above (see 2.11) in a *Tirukkuraḷ* by the commentator *Parimēlaḷakar*. This opens up poetry for readers (and commentators) to look for *kurippup poruḷ*, the secondary meaning that is not transparent, through the concept of semantic transfer by the theory of *ākupeyar*.

Because it is a compound, *aṇmolittokai* is able to convey the vividness of the qualification of the referent more than a single word. Unlike the sentential attributes such as the relative clause, the compound form gives cohesion of the word to the description. Such a way of describing a person (or a thing) in poetry is more evocative than mere denotation; it highlights, in ordinary language, the identity of a person (or a thing) distinctively. *Aṇmolittokais*, from this functional perspective, are snapshots of longer qualifying descriptions.

4.8 Contentious Debate About the Relation

Whether there is any difference between *ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai* has been a contentious issue for one millennium in grammatical and imaginative literature from medieval to modern times among grammarians, though not in the theoretical framework of the above discussion. The debates were carried out in grammatical commentaries from *Iḷampūraṇar* (eleventh c.) to *Civaṇāṇa muṇivar* (1753-85) and beyond. Contemporary grammatical commentators such as Arasan Shamukanar and his critic Ganesayyar and many other Tamil scholars continued the debate in modern journals of Tamil scholarship (*Tamiḷ-p poḷil*, *Centamiḷ*, and *Centamiḷ-c celvi* had special issues on the debate).²⁹ The perennial and intensive scholarly debate on this question is fueled by their theoretical considerations as well as the contextual meaning of expressions in literary texts being edited and taught in those times. One conclusion, for example, of Cēṇāvaraiyar is that *ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai* are the same lexical category (in spite of their preferred base of single noun and a compound noun respectively); the latter is, at best, a sub-category of the former. This conclusion is shaped by the fact that both perform the same function of giving a meaning different from the meaning of the primary form. The different meaning of *ākupeyar* may be obtained without any clue of a syntagmatic overt form (as Parimēlaḷakar does, as shown above (2.11) with the reimagined *ākupeyar*) and in *aṇmolittokai* it is obtained through the clue of a non-phonological form (zero morph). The adherents of this view explicitly highlight the fact that the base compounds of *aṇmolittokai*, especially the compound of quality, could be *ākupeyar* by the shift of the meaning of possession to possessor, which ends up similar to the *aṇmolittokai* interpretation of it as ‘one having the object’. *Porroṭi* is an *ākupeyar* when the gold bangle refers to its possessor (shift of meaning from the possessed to the possessor) and when the condition that it must be a single noun is suspended; it is an *aṇmolittokai* when it refers to the wearer of the gold bangle. Another theoretical view, for example, of Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar is that both are different conceptual categories because meaning making from the internal source is conceptually different from making it from the external source. This would be the crucial differentiating factor if the lexical property of the form (the former is monolexical and the latter is bilexical) is discounted as empirically untrue.

²⁹ 515 issues of *Tamiḷ-p pozhil* (April 1925 to March 1979) are available in digital form at www.tamilheritage.org maintained by Tamil Heritage Foundation International. There is an annotated index of the later issues of *Centamiḷ* (Subramanian 1980). Digitized issues of *Centamiḷ-c celvi* can be searched at the site <https://share.google/AaAfPsj1edWtJIB63> (Digital Library of Tamil Virtual Academy).

The structural possibility of interpreting the same word or compound either as *ākupeyar* or as *aṇmolittokai* adds fuel to the debate. *karuṅkuḷal* ‘dark hair’, a compound of quality (*paṇput tokai*), could be identified as *ākupeyar* when the referent of *kuḷal* ‘hair’ is shifted or transferred to a person having the hair of the quality as from part to whole (*ciṇaiyāku peyar*).³⁰ The template would be quality – possessor of the quality transfer by extending the possession to having a quality (*paṇpāku peyar*). The same compound could be identified as *aṇmolittokai* by assigning the referent of a female possessing dark hair to the empty head. The choice of identification is thus ambivalent.

The ambivalence of choice has led literary commentators to conflicting identifications of the same compound. A celebrated example is the expression *kaṇaṅkuḷai* ‘solid earring’ in *Tirukkuraḷ* 1081.

aṇaṅkukol āymayil kollō kaṇaṅkuḷai
mātarkol mālumeṇ neṇcu

அணங்குகொல் ஆய்மயில் கொல்லோ கனங்குழை
மாதர்கொல் மாலுமென் நெஞ்சு

Is (what I see) a bewitching celestial, or a choice peahen, or a lovely girl wearing solid earrings? My heart yearns.

If punctuation is forced, there will be a question mark after the words ‘celestial’, ‘peahen’ and ‘girl wearing solid earring’, and an exclamation at the end. Commentators differ in the physical placement of *kaṇaṅkuḷai* in the first line and its grammatical role when the verse is glossed. If it is placed where it is in the verse at the end of the first line, it is a modifier of woman that follows it in the second line and it marks the fact that the woman is wearing an earring but not the other two (peahen and bewitcher), who are not capable of wearing it. In that placement, the compound *kaṇaṅkuḷai* functions as *aṇmolittokai* in an appositional construction of noun (*mātar* ‘woman’).³¹ This is the position taken by many commentators of *Tirukkuraḷ*. Parimēlaḷakar and a few others place *kaṇaṅkuḷai* at the beginning of the couplet, which

30 The difference between the two sentences *karuṅkuḷal nāṇiyatu/nāṇiṇāl* ‘the dark hair blushed’, where the noun in the first sentence is an *ākupeyar* and in the second one is an *aṇmolittokai*, is that the semantic shift in the latter ensues a morphological marker on the predicate while not in the former. In addition, the latter expands as *karuṅkuḷalai uṭaiya peṇ* ‘the woman having black hair’. The noun in *karuṅkuḷal utirintatu* ‘the black hair fell off’ has no semantic shift and it is neither of the above two; it has the literal meaning. A modern Tamil example is *karuppuṇ caṭṭai (eṇṇaiṇ pārttuc) cirittatu/cirittāṇ* ‘the black shirt smiled (at me)’; the *aṇmolittokai* in the second sentence expands as *karuppuṇ caṭṭai aṇinta āl (eṇṇaiṇ pārttuc) cirittāṇ* ‘the man wearing the black shirt smiled at me’. There is no semantic shift of the noun in *karuppuṇ caṭṭai kiḷintatu* ‘the black shirt tore’.

31 Recall (1.2.3.) the oppositional construction of *ākupeyar*.

otherwise will be without a subject. It is an *ākupeyar* with referent shift from the earring to its wearer as a referent; it is a semantic shift (from object to possessor) with no gender marking. If it is an *aṇmolittokai* in the subject position with female gender marking of the empty morph, it has the problem of predetermining the identity of the figure seen by the hero as a woman, which would eliminate the ambivalence of identity and the resulting confusion for the hero -the essence of the verse. This is because the meaning of *aṇmolittokai*, ‘she who is wearing earrings’, provides the clue that it is a woman. As an *ākupeyar*, it says only ‘earring wearer’ without any indication that it is a human. Note that *ākupeyar* exhibits, though less commonly, a shift to human (an example *ūr* ‘town’ getting the meaning of ‘people of the town’ with certain predicates (see 4.1). In the above couplet, there is no predicate to give the meaning of *ākupeyar*, but the commentator has a choice to make a grammatical point. Most commentators do not exercise this choice and leave *kaṇaṅkūlai* where it is in the couplet and let it function as an *aṇmolittokai* and also let the couplet to be subjectless.

This debate over the distinction between *ākupeyar* and *aṇmolittokai* has lost its relevance in contemporary Tamil scholarship because the two phenomena themselves are not relevant in the analysis of contemporary Tamil grammar and literature, except in the pedagogical study of medieval and early Tamil grammatical treatises, literary texts and their commentaries, and to school textbooks.

5 Conclusion

Ākupeyar is the name of a process in the theory of multiple senses of a word or compound. These senses are dynamic in that they inhere in a living text, rather than remaining static and frozen in a dictionary. The multiple senses of a word in the text arise to ensure grammaticality of sentences, to get a meaningful interpretation of the text and to account for the meaning of an expression that is left unsaid. From a theory explaining lexical meanings that are syntactically bound, it broadens the ways of making words acquire secondary meanings beyond the process of shifting the transparent meaning of a noun to another meaning. Exploration of the existence of this process and its use and existence is extensive in grammar and literature. Its use in philosophical debates remains unexplored in Tamil, as in Sanskrit (Tzotar 2018). It has undergone a long historical development of its conceptualization and analysis in grammar to its use and its theorization in literature in Tamil over two millennia.

The development stems from the broad-based nature of the concept of synchronic semantic shift of nouns fueled by the development of new literary genres and literary culture in Tamil and the consequent transformations in literary theory, particularly anchored on the

employment of secondary meanings and the ways to keep them implicit. The conceptual development of shift in lexical meaning goes through the inter-related paths of transforming from a phenomenon of grammar to that of literature/communication, from referent shift to sense shift, from denotation to connotation, from syntagmatic to paradigmatic, from rule-based prediction to taxonomic proliferation, and from Tamil-specific to approximating Sanskrit.

The last-mentioned development of *ākupeyar*, in the second millennium, contributed to the theorization of secondary meanings away from their theorization in classical Tamil literature (*uḷḷurai* and *iraicci*). The transformation of a grammatical analysis to literary analysis dispensed with the requirement that semantic transfer be conventionally rooted in the language and accepted it to be individually created in literature, which may or may not become conventional. The taxonomic proliferation of the kinds of shift loosened the shift from restrictions on the naturalness of the relationship between the shifting meanings. The paradigmatic nature of the shift made the shift not specific to nouns and opened it to words of all categories. Interaction with comparable concepts (*lakṣaṇā*, *upacāra*, *bahuvrihi*) of shift in Sanskrit grammatical and literary theories eliminated the distinctiveness of *ākupeyar* in Tamil grammar.

The sister concept *aṇmōḷittokai* represents a process of synchronic shift of meaning from non-human referent to human referent involving modifying compounds to provide special descriptions of the human referent represented by zero. This paper concentrates on the historical dimension of the two concepts, *ākupeyar* and *aṇmōḷittokai*, in Tamil and their similarities in the process of synchronic semantic transfer and their differences in formal composition. It awaits a comparative study of these two concepts theoretically and historically that goes beyond the generalized superficial similarities drawn by scholars specialized in the intellectual traditions of both Tamil and Sanskrit.³²

32 When I read *Ilakkaṇakkottu* of Cāmināta Tēcikar (seventeenth c.) with the team NEEM in Jerusalem in 2022, David Shulman suggested that I write on *ākupeyar* and *aṇmōḷittokai*. The writing was completed for the keynote of the workshop on reading *Civatarmōttiram* and related texts organized by Florinda de Simoni and Margherita Trento in Naples in 2025. This paper is the revised and expanded version of the keynote. I am grateful to Shulman for the challenging suggestion. I had some helpful online exchange of ideas on these two concepts with K. Nachimuthu, which gave me confidence that I could write about them. I acknowledge the help provided by Jackson Cyril in getting me the citations of *ākupeyar* identified by literary commentators including Parimēlaḷakar and for providing digital or scanned copies of descriptions of *ākupeyar* in grammars and their commentaries, when I didn't have access to library sources. M. Gothavari provided me the reference to the *Tirumanṭiram* verse cited in the paper. There would have been no comparison with Sanskrit in the paper if Whitney Cox, Andrew Ollett and Naresh Keerthi had not answered my questions arising from my reading of secondary materials in English and had not suggested for me to read books in English on the topic discussed in Sanskrit grammars.

Comparison with contemporary theories of semantics of words in modern linguistics and philosophy of language with regard to referent may help see how the relevant issues were treated in Tamil (and Sanskrit) grammatical tradition. Two significant questions for comparative exploration are synchronic semantic shifts in words circumscribed by the grammar and the synchronic development of secondary meanings that have various communicative effects.

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