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On Words & What They Mean

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Abstracts

The Making of a Tamil Manipravalam Dictionary

Suganya Anandakichenin (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondicherry)

This talk explores the remarkable work of the late Pandit Varadadesikan, who spent over a decade enhancing the entries of what would later be published as Santi Sadhana's Glossary of Tamil Vaishnava Terms. His efforts included correcting errors, transliterating entry words, providing preliminary English definitions, and suggesting improved textual quotations. Notably, he added approximately 19,000 words, including 2,000 from Jain Manipravalam and 1,000 from Śaiva Manipravalam. Both these Manipravalam traditions are largely uncharted territory in the field of Manipravalam studies, making their inclusion particularly significant.

Unfortunately, Varadadesikan's work was not incorporated into the published Glossary, and his project appears to have been abruptly halted. This talk has two main objectives: 1) To showcase specific examples of Varadadesikan's improvements, demonstrating his exceptional grasp of theology and related fields; and 2) to illustrate how some of his incomplete entries can be refined to create a more comprehensive reference work for Tamil Manipravalam.

Does 'epic' Tamil exist?

Neela Bhaskar (Universität Hamburg)

Iona Macgregor (Universität Hamburg)

Does 'epic' Tamil exist? Iona and Neela discuss strategies for translating rare words/hapax legomena in the *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. They will examine a few rare words that are first attested in these poems. They will analyse them in the context of the poems themselves, as well as in the light of the ancient and medieval commentators on the *Cilappatikāram*, U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar's glosses to both poems, later parallel passages, and — where relevant — archæological evidence. They will use their close analysis of the lexis of the poems to draw some preliminary conclusions as to the relationship and relative dating of these two fascinatingly intertwined works, whose close relationship is so tantalizingly hinted at in the *patikam* of both poems, and yet has never been examined in serious detail by scholars.

On the source material and organizational principles of the சாந்தி சாதனா 2000 'திவாகரம் - பிங்கலம் - சூடாமணி அகராதி அட்டவணை'

Jean-Luc Chevillard (Universität Hamburg / HTL, Paris)

The TPCAA (*Tivākaram Piṅkalam Cūṭāmaṇi Akarāti Aṭṭavaṇai*) is a 381-page index, accompanied by a preface (*mukavurai*) and an *amaippu murai* ('methodological introduction', full title being *irājam tamil nikaṇṭu akarātiyiṅ amaippu murai*), which was published in the year 2000 by Cānti Cātaṇā, which is technically the name of of a charitable trust based in Chennai, but from the scientific point of view, is the collective name of a group of scholars, who have united their efforts since the 1950s, under the impulsion of the well-known 'Murray S. Rajam', in order to create scholarly instruments, such as text editions, dictionaries, etc. which would make financially accessible to everyone, poor or rich, the basic limbs of Tamil classical literature. The books which this group of scholars have produced bear, with a few exceptions, a collective signature, and this is the case here. Such a practice of collective authorship is also seen in many of the publications of the TTSNK (*Tirunalvēli Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūṛpatippuk Kaḷakam*), alias Kaḷakam, and is also seen in France with Nicolas Bourbaki's 20th century mathematical treatise.

The TPCAA itself, which contains 15550 entries, is an entry point giving alphabetical access to the content of three ancient Tamil *nikaṇṭu-s*, or rather *uricol paṇuvalkaḷ*, if we stick to their original designation. Their names are *Tivākaram*, *Piṅkalam* and *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*, and they have their roots in the *Uriyiyal*, which is the 17th among the 27 chapters of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the most ancient Tamil treatise.

This presentation will concentrate on the formal aspect of the TPCAA, clarifying the origin and the intended interpretation of the various textual elements (words, compounds, expressions and enumerations) which appear as entry heads or inside entries, and of the numbers which accompany them, in simple or in complex entries. Even though explanations are found in the *amaippu murai* section of the TPCAA, decoding the nature of that information is probably not obvious to someone unfamiliar with the structure and practical use of a Tamil *nikaṇṭu*.

Measuring the Minute: An Examination of the Fractional System in Tamil Epigraphy

Renato Dávalos (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris)

Vigneshwaran Muralidaran (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondicherry)

This study examines the application of an elaborate system of minute fractions that accountants (*kaṇakkār*) adopted during the Cōḷa administration. These fractions, while not originally devised by the accountants themselves, reflect an assimilation of advanced mathematical concepts that were applied with the aim of ensuring a high degree of precision. The employment of fractions in linear measurements indicates a considerable degree of mathematical sophistication, although this same precision must have presented significant challenges in terms of conceptualisation and practical implementation. Furthermore, the system for denoting smaller fractions could be expressed either with a technical term, a special symbol, or as the product of other fractions with the same properties.

The practical implications of these mathematical practices, and, most crucially, the logic that facilitated their transmission have received little scholarly attention during the period encompassing the Cōḷa administration. Accordingly, an analysis of selected Tamil inscriptions will be conducted with two objectives in mind. The first will be to elucidate the mathematical significance of the terminology and symbology employed in measurements. The second will be to propose a provisional mathematical approach for understanding the relationship between minute fractions and the administrative requirements of the period, thereby illustrating the implications of such practices at the time.

From sheep to bird: The semantic history of the word *varuṭai*

Roland Ferenczi (Universität Hamburg)

Based on the available sources, my presentation aims to summarise the semantic history of a rare and fascinating Tamil word, *varuṭai*. At first glance, examining the word in Early Old Tamil texts may not reveal anything particularly remarkable: it primarily refers to a wild mountain sheep. However, when we turn to the poetic vocabularies and lexicons of later periods (*Piṅkalam*, *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*), *varuṭai* takes on a far more intriguing meaning, also denoting a mythical eight-legged bird — a concept that occasionally appears in the commentaries of modern scholars. But how did a sheep become a bird? To answer this question, it is insufficient — or even primarily necessary — to focus exclusively on Tamil texts relating to *varuṭai*. Instead, we must delve into the glosses provided in the vocabularies, such as *carapam* (< Skt. *śarabha*) and *cimpuḷ* ('lion-bird'). Among these, the semantics of the Sanskrit word *śarabha* proves to be the most compelling, as it seems intricately linked to the developments we observe in South India. My presentation will explore these connections along with a bunch of other mythical creatures and attempt to shed light on this semantic transformation.

Semantically vague noun modifiers in Old Tamil: can they be classified as intensifiers?

Nikolay Gordiychuk (Universität Hamburg)

Old Tamil has several polysemic nouns ubiquitously used in formulaic expressions as noun modifiers with somewhat vague semantics, largely determined by their collocations. The list of such words includes *arumai*, *kaṭumai*, *koṭumai* etc. While it is possible to analyze these words as metrical fillers too, in my presentation I will discuss the scope of their possible contextual meanings, and will argue that, semantically, their role is similar to those of intensifiers: they convey very little (if any) propositional meaning, but rather emphasize the emotional aspect of the poetic expression.

The poetics of doors in Old Tamil and beyond

Charles Li (Universität Hamburg)

In both *akam* and *puṛam* poetry, doors are often portrayed as thresholds of desire — either opening to its fulfillment or standing in place of its denial. But what does a door look like, in reality and in the poet's mind — what are its parts, and how do they fit together? In the extant poems, there are precious few attestations of words pertaining to door architecture. This paper will consider some of these words and their import within the Caṅkam poetic imaginary, using comparisons with terms in other languages to help better understand their function, architecturally and metaphorically.

Words, Grammar, Meaning and Implicature in the *Tirukkura!* In light of Parimēlaḷakar's Commentary

K. Nachimuthu (Emeritus Professor, Central University of Tamilnadu)

Among the old Tamil classical texts, only a few have old commentaries, and they provide invaluable evidence to the modern lexicographer who is preparing a larger descriptive or historical lexicon for mapping the semantic fields of words used in them based on the glosses given to these words by the commentators. These glosses and interpretations assume importance for the lexicographer for fixing the lexical and grammatical meaning of free words, lexicalized constructions and bound forms like particles, clitics and similar grammatical forms and for giving citations or illustrations because of the fact that they are evidences for the real usage of the words in their contexts.

In addition to the lexicographic insights these commentaries offer to the lexicographer, they also offer invaluable evidence for reconstructing the hidden semantic and pragmatic aspects of the discourse and for a broader understanding of the epistemology of the text.

Learned commentators like Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar, Aṭiyārkunallār, Parimēlaḷakar and others, with their hermeneutical skills and sophisticated knowledge in the areas of syntax, semantics, intertextuality and pragmatics, paid greater attention to the proper identification of the lemma, grammatical aspects of them, giving appropriate glosses to them, explicating and contextualizing the text, considering the usage of them in their textual and historical contexts.

This paper examines briefly the way in which the commentator Parimēlaḷakar in his commentary to the *Tirukkura!* illuminates the pragmatic nuances of the discourse with his rare understanding of the grammatical and linguistic aspects of the *Tirukkura!*, especially with reference to the form *enīṇ* with its lexical and grammatical manifestations. Parimēlaḷakar's ingenuity in identifying the lexical meaning and grammatical meaning of such forms illuminates the intertextuality and pragmatics of the text.

What we talk about when we talk about *mukkaṭ kūṭṭam*

Leo Rishi Nelson-Jones (Universität Hamburg)

U. Vē. Cā., in his introduction to the *Tamiḷneri Viḷakkam*, notes that the phrase *mukkaṭ kūṭṭam* in *cūttiram* 21 is no longer fully understood. This *cūttiram* is the most important in the *Tamiḷneri Viḷakkam*, so far as any systematic analysis of *akam* theory is concerned. The key distinction between the two main schools of *akam* poetics lies in determining the point at which *karpu* begins within the prescribed sequence of romantic situations, and this *cūttiram* defines *karpu*.

Mukkaṭ kūṭṭam appears other times in grammatical commentaries, where it has been interpreted in different ways. By examining its occurrences, this study explores the significance of the term to clarify its meaning within the *Tamiḷneri Viḷakkam*. Understanding what it refers to within this context also has a wider relevance — it provides insight into the analytical school to which the text belongs while also addressing the contextual and semantic ambiguities that complicate translation and interpretation of texts on Tamil poetics.

இலைமறை காய்

(unripe fruit hidden behind the leaves)

T. Rajeswari (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondicherry)

மாமரம், புன்னைமரம் போன்றவை கொத்துக் கொத்தாய்க் காய்த்துக் குலுங்கும். அவற்றைப் பறிக்கும்போது மரத்திலுள்ள எல்லாக் காய்களும் கீழே விழுந்து விடுவதில்லை. கீழே விழாமல் சில காய்கள் ஆங்காங்கே இலைகளுக்குப் பின்னால் மறைந்து கிடக்கும். அவைதாம் 'இலைமறை காய்' என்று சொல்லப் படும். அதுபோல் ஓர் இலக்கியத்தை ஆய்வு செய்வார் இலக்கியத்தின் கண் உள்ள அனைத்தையும் சொல்லிவிடுவதில்லை; சொல்லவும் இயலாது. ஏதேனும் செய்திகள் அவர்கள் அறியாமலே விடுபடக்கூடும். அத்தகையவற்றையும் இலைமறை காய் எனலாம்.

இத்தகைய சில செய்திகளைக் கலித்தொகை, பதிற்றுப்பத்து ஆகியவற்றில் காணமுடிகிறது. இவை சமூகச் செய்தி, சொற்பொருள், எழுத்துப் போன்றவையாகும்.

Sonorant Gemination in Old Tamil and other Dravidian languages

V. Ramprashanth (Madurai Kamaraj University)

Old Tamil exhibits two kinds of sonorant gemination, which were previously explained by two separate, linear phonological rules. We postulate that the rules explaining both these 'separate' phenomena are part of the same conspiracy. This study is devoted to exploring the optimality theoretic analysis of the phenomenon of morphologically derived geminates in Old Tamil, as depicted from Sangam poetic texts and the traditional Tamil Grammars (*Tolkāppiyam* and *Nanṇūl*). We use optimality theoretic markedness or well-formedness constraints like Prosodic Word constraint (ProsWd) and faithfulness constraints as part of the explanatory apparatus. This study also dwells into the sonorant gemination as seen in other sister Dravidian languages.

Introduction and Semantic Evolution of Selected Words in the *Kalittokai* in Caṅkam Literature

S. Saravanan (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondicherry)

The Eight Anthologies (*Eṭṭuttokai*) and the Ten Idylls (*Pattuppāṭṭu*) are collectively known as the Caṅkam literature (CL). Among these, some texts are classified as *aka-ilakkiyaṅkaḷ* (literature primarily focused on love), while others are categorized as *puṛa-ilakkiyaṅkaḷ* (literature mainly centered on war). The *Kalittokai*, an *akam* text, is one of the works included in the Eight Anthologies. Based on its linguistic style and vocabulary, the *Kalittokai* is considered a later text compared to the other works in the Eight Anthologies. It is often regarded as being on par with *Paripāṭal*, another later text within the collection.

Introduction of Certain Words

The primary aim of this study is to highlight certain words that appear exclusively in the *Kalittokai* within the CL, which includes the Eight Anthologies and Ten Idylls, regardless of their later usage in post-Caṅkam and subsequent literature. For instance: *kaḷakam* (gambling), *koṛri* (goddess of victory), *māṅkāy* (unripe mango fruit), *ciṛumi* (girl), *acōkam* (*Saraca indica*), *uttariyam* (clothes), *mōtiram* (finger ring), and so on. In addition to these nouns, the *Kalittokai* also introduces some new verbs and particles. As mentioned earlier, these words may also appear in later literature.

Semantic Evolution

Commentators note that, while these words are commonly used with their conventional meanings in other texts of CL, in the *Kalittokai*, they have undergone semantic shifts, acquiring new meanings unique to this text. For example, the word *naku* is typically used to mean 'to smile'; however, in one instance in the *Kalittokai*, it is used to mean 'to cohabit'. Similarly, several other words in this text display comparable semantic shifts. However, it remains to be investigated whether this semantic evolution is carried forward into later literature.

The polysemy of the verb *kēḷ* ‘to hear’, ‘to ask’ in *Narriṇai* and in Modern Tamil

Anna Smirnitckaya (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

This paper is dedicated to the semantics of the polysemous Tamil verb *kēḷ* ‘to hear’, ‘to listen’, ‘to ask’ and the reflection of its meaning in Old Tamil translations. Within the framework of modern linguistic typology, it is known that some cases of polysemy (the coexistence of two meanings within a lexeme, e.g. M1 and M2) can be considered as a stage of development from the meaning M1 to the meaning M2 (see Traugott & Dasher 2002). Such cases of historical development are a manifestation of the cognitive-semantic link between the meanings. In other languages, the same cognitive connection can be expressed in morphological derivation, see (Zalizniak et al. 2024) for examples. In this paper, I consider the meanings contained in the polysemy of the lexeme *kēḷ* in different time periods: Modern Tamil and Old Tamil of the ‘Sangam’ period, based on the text of *Narriṇai* in the translation by Eva Wilden (Wilden 2008). I also construct a semantic map of the meanings of the semantic field TO HEAR-TO ASK and show how the implementation of the meanings was arranged in Tamil, Old Tamil and English. The methodology of semantic maps is a modern method for the visualization and analysis of meanings in both grammatical and lexical semantics, see (Georgakopoulos & Polis 2018). With the help of semantic maps, it is possible to see the relationships between meanings in Old Tamil and English. Although in modern Tamil the verb *kēḷ* means both ‘to listen’ and ‘to ask’, the latter especially with a sentential actant, in Old Tamil its use seems to have been much more restricted. The analysis with the help of semantic maps will also provide more optimal solutions for literary translation.

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On the Use of *ini* ('now') with the So-called Past Tense

Eva Wilden (Universität Hamburg)

After recent debates with colleagues on the adequate designations for the Old Tamil basic verb forms which are generally classified as 'past' and 'non-past', it may be time to demonstrate in more detail why this classification does not sit well with the material. Everybody reading Old Tamil is aware of the fact that many 'past tense' forms are not past at all. They may describe an action that started in the past and continues into the present and even future: *aṇintā*, she put on her jewellery and is now wearing it, or *curam irantōr*, he who has started to traverse the desert and is still doing that, for all we know. They may describe an action that is just finished, but its result is pertinent now: *aṇintēṇ*, I have understood and now I know.

What is less on the radar is the use of such forms for hypothetical constructions, be it in combination with conditional clauses or by the use of certain adverbs. One particularly frequent and puzzling combination is the use of the 'past' with the adverb *ini*, 'now'. This presentation will have a look at this combination in the three old Akam anthologies, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Narriṇai* and *Akanāṇūru*.