A PROPOS THREE RECENT PUBLICATIONS
ON THE QUESTION OF THE DATING
OF OLD TAMIL CAṄKAM POETRY

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1   Introduction

The question of the dating of Old Tamil Caṅkam poetry has from the moment of the rediscovery of this literary corpus at the end of the nineteenth century been fraught with political motives. Scholars – and politicians – were from the beginning all too ready to see in Caṅkam poetry evidence of an early literary tradition in Tamil independent of that of Sanskrit.[1] Subsequent scholarship can be characterized as an attempt to collect evidence that might support this conclusion. The climate was – and still is – such that scholars who venture to question the early date were made out as "traitors" of the Tamil cause. This in fact has happened only quite recently to the present author after the publication in 2001 of his book *Kāvya in South India: Old Tamil Caṅkam Poetry*.[2] For in this book I try to show that, rather than between approximately the second century BC and the fourth century AD,[3] Caṅkam poetry had its origin with the Pandyas of the Velvikudi and Dalavaypuram inscriptions (eighth or ninth century). Moreover, my study suggests that we would have to do with adaptations of specific genres belonging to the Kāvya tradition of North Indian Sanskrit literature. As these conclusions go against received opinion it was expected that they would be received with a

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1   See IRSCHICK, 1969 and RAMASWAMY, 1997. In RAMASWAMY, 2004 the same author provides many illustrations of the extent to which administrators, politicians and scholars were and still are prepared to go in maintaining and promoting the idea that Tamil is the oldest civilization, if not on earth, at least in India. Literature is part of the package.

2   TIEKEN, 2001. For the accusation of being a traitor (*utpakaivar*) levelled against me, see MARUTANĀYAKAM, 2004:234.

3   It should be noted that the exact dates for the beginning and end of Caṅkam literature (or the "Caṅkam period") may be different with each different author. On one thing most scholars agree, namely that Caṅkam poetry is pre-Pallava. Consequently, N. Subrahmanian's index of early Tamil literature is called *Pre-Pallava Tamil Index* (SUBRAHMANIAN, 1966).

proper amount of scepsis. Since the book came out, several reviews have appeared, ranging from expressing surprise and unbelief to being downright negative. In this article I would like to react to the two most extensive reviews, namely those by George L. Hart[4] and Eva Wilden[5] respectively, which happen to be also the most outspokenly negative. As such, they definitely invite a reply from my side. One particular reason to subject these two reviews to a closer scrutiny is that their authors frequently refer to evidence which has been commonly put forward in support of the early date of Caṅkam poetry but which in my opinion does not prove anything. A case in point are some names of kings mentioned in the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions (see below, 3.9). Another characteric of Classical Tamil studies is the arbitrary way in which facts are used. See in this connection the way in which a reference in *Akanāṉūṟu* 59 to the poet Antuvaṉ of *Paripāṭal* VIII is dealt with, or rather suppressed (4.2). It concerns points which for various reasons have not been expressly dealt with in my book. This "reply" would provide me with a second chance to deal with at least some of them. In this way, it is also a kind of evaluation of the present state of classical Tamil studies.

At the outset it should also be noted that neither review is merely a review. Thus, the one by Wilden seems to be an excuse to delineate *in extenso* how according to her the problem of the dating of Caṅkam poetry should be tackled. As a result part of my discussion of her review has become an examination of the approach proposed by Wilden.

Hart's review does not really deserve the label "review". For instance, in the highly selective way he proceeds, picking out certain of my findings and ignoring others, it is not a review but a defense, a defense of Caṅkam poetry, of its early date and its unique character. The following discussion of Hart's comments consists therefore in part in repeating what I have actually said on a certain topic and in what context.

Before discussing the two reviews I will briefly summarize the main conclusions of my book

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4   HART, 2004.

5   WILDEN, 2002. Other reviews which have come to my knowledge are EICHINGER FERRO-Luzzi, 2001, COX, 2002, MONIUS, 2002, and LALYE, 2004.

2   Summary of *Kāvya in South India*

Kāvya in South India consists of two parts. In the first, the current early dating of Caṅkam poetry is challenged, while in the second an attempt is made to provide a new date for Caṅkam poetry.

Caṅkam poetry has generally been dated in the period it describes, namely an early heroic, bardic society. It was a period situated before the Pallavas, when the influence of North Indian culture and Sanskrit was still relatively small. My argument against this dating starts with the so-called Akam, or love poems. These poems are set in small, backward villages and they present life from the point of view of a sophisticated leisure class living in cosmopolitan towns. The latter people amuse themselves with the pictures of the poor and unhappy villagers, on the one hand, and with unravelling the complicated images presented in the poems, on the other. As such the Akam poems are exact counterparts of the village poems of the *Sattasaī*.[6] The *Sattasaī*, taking its cue from the *Kāmasūtra*, proceeds from the man-about-town (*nāgaraka*) as the intended reader of this type of village poetry.

Akam poetry is thus not a poetry *of* the village but a poetry *about* the village. In the same way Puṟam, or the so-called heroic poetry, is not a poetry from a heroic society but one about such a society. In the Puṟam poems, bards, kings, queens, mothers of warriors and their likes are made to speak in order to evoke a heroic society. At the time of the composition of the poems that society would already have belonged to the past. Consequently, one of the conclusions that may be drawn already at this point is that Caṅkam poetry, rather than in the period described in it, has to be dated in a period after that.

Other points discussed in this connection are the supposed oral composition and transmission of the poems, the process of the compilation of the poems into anthologies, and the function of the colophons to the poems. It has been argued that the poems are not oral compositions but carefully wrought, written poems, which require a considerable effort of analyzing. Their style may be compared

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6   I was not the first to point out the close relationship of Akam poetry with the *Sattasaī*. It has been investigated before by Hart and Lienhard. These studies, however, were mainly restricted to details such as common themes, motifs and objects of comparison but did not touch upon the image of the village projected in the two traditions. See, among other publications, HART, 1975 and LIENHARD, 1976. According to Hart, Akam and the *Sattasaī* would be two independent offshoots of one and the same poetic tradition which he dates back to the neolithic period in South India. The starting point in this scenario was that Akam was slightly older than the *Sattasaī*.

with that of Sanskrit Kāvya, with this difference that while in order to produce long sentences Sanskrit Kāvya employs coordinated phrases Tamil takes recourse to embedded phrases. If we proceed from the fact that the early dating of Caṅkam poetry can no longer be taken for granted, nothing seems to prevent us from assuming that the style of the Tamil poems is an attempt to imitate the style typical of Sanskrit Kāvya.

As to the compilation of the poems, it has been generally assumed that the anthologies contain small selections from a vast reservoir of orally transmitted poems dating from a bardic past. Instead, however, there is evidence which suggests that the poems were most likely composed and written down only at the moment of their inclusion in the anthologies.

Finally, as to the function of the colophons, in the poems, Puram as well as Akam, we are dealing with dramatic monologues. The function of the Puram colophons was to identify the persons speaking in the poems and to set out the circumstances under which they were speaking. In modern scholarship this function has been lost sight of, among other things, as a result of the occurrence in the Akam colophons of some of the names of the bards of Puram in the slot of the poets of the poems.

As said, in the second part of my book an attempt is made to date Caṅkam poetry somewhat more exactly than "after the period described in the poems". In this connection, first, a careful study is undertaken of the literary genres found in Caṅkam with a view to discover if they have any counterparts in Sanskrit literature. While *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, Kuṟuntokai, Naṟṟiṇai* and *Akanāṉūṟu* appear to exemplify the same type of village poetry as found in the *Sattasaī*, the poems of the *Kalittokai* have been identified as specimens of the so-called *lāsya* or *catuṣpadī*,[7] and those of the *Paripāṭal* as examples of festival songs such as the *carcarī*. In each of these three cases we are dealing with a type of text which is typically written in Prākrit (or, what comes to the same, Apabhraṃśa). In the *Sattasaī* the Prākrit serves to represent the rustic speech of the villagers; the protagonist in the *lāsya* is a woman and women do not speak Sanskrit but Prākrit, unless they talk about learned things; and the *carcarī*, which consists of songs sung by the common people, is in Apabhraṃśa, which is meant to imitate the speech of the streets. It would seem that in Caṅkam poetry Tamil is used in the role of a Prākrit.

A similar use of Tamil is met with in the Pandya inscriptions. These inscriptions (Velvikudi, Larger Sinnamanur, Dalavaypuram) have two *praśasti*s,

7   See TIEKEN, 2003[a] and forthcoming[a].

one in Sanskrit and one in Tamil. The Sanskrit *praśasti* provides the Pandyas with an ancestry borrowed from Sanskrit mythology (Pāṇḍya, Budha, Purūravas, etc.). By contrast, the Tamil *praśasti* is a piece of purely local history. The situation in the inscriptions may be interpreted as an attempt to raise Tamil to the status of a literary language alongside with Sanskrit. In this process each language was assigned a domain of its own, Sanskrit that of (North Indian) epic mythology and Tamil that of local history. The use of Tamil in Caṅkam poetry seems to have been determined by similar restraints. That is to say, in six anthologies we are dealing with "Prākrit" genres. The implication is that Tamil was not thought fit to be used for Sanskrit genres such as for instance Mahākāvya. Furthermore, like the Tamil *praśastis* the two historical anthologies *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Patiṟṟuppattu* deal with purely local history. The scenes in them are explicitly restricted to the lands where Tamil is spoken. This use of Tamil, which is found for the first time and exclusively with the Pandyas of the eighth or ninth century, has been the main reason for me to suggest that Caṅkam was a poetry most probably produced under the patronage of these same Pandyas.

The hypothesis that the genres of Caṅkam poetry had been selected in accordance with the Prākritic nature of the Tamil language could be tested with the help of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, a collection of ten longer poems. At the outset it should be noted that this is one of the few early Tamil texts for the existence of which we have external evidence, namely a quotation in the Dalavaypuram inscription. As such it is contemporary, at least according to my late dating, with much of Caṅkam poetry. At the same time, however, the *Pattuppāṭṭu* was not included in the traditional list of Caṅkam works as preserved in Nakkīrar's commentary on Iṟaiyaṉār's *Akapporuḷ*. The reason for this exclusion may have been that the *Pattuppāṭṭu* belongs to the Mahākāvya genre, while the Caṅkam corpus proper consists of works belonging to the *muktaka* genre or genres which include stanzas of the *muktaka* type. The characterization of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* as a Mahākāvya might explain the occurrence in it of descriptions of the worship, mythology and iconography of the god Murukaṉ in the *Murukāṟṟuppaṭai* and of royalty in the *Neṭunalvāṭai* and *Mullaippāṭṭu*. In the latter two texts the village scenes are transferred to the palace where the queen pines away during the king's absence. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, in the *Perumpāṇāṟuppaṭai*, describes the Pallavas as royal patrons, a role which in Caṅkam proper is reserved for the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras. However, compared to Mahākāvya the *Pattuppāṭṭu* is still strikingly local: it includes a god, who is, however, a typically regional South Indian god. Also, the world it describes may be wider than the one described in Caṅkam, but it concerns only the addition of another

local dynasty, namely the Pallavas. This regionalization of Sanskrit Mahākāvya in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* appears to coincide with the use of Tamil and may well be a consequence of that.[8] It might be argued that, while the genres of Caṅkam were selected in accordance with the language, in *Pattuppāṭṭu* the genre was adapted in accordance with the language.

If Caṅkam poetry is indeed to be dated in the eighth or ninth century, the dates of, for instance, the *Cilappatikāram* as well as all Bhakti literature will have to be adapted as well, as these texts are generally taken to be later than Caṅkam poetry. In my book I have tried to show that the basis of the current dating of Bhakti poetry is very weak. I have also argued that the Bhakti poets actually occur in the poems as *personae*, or examples of an ideal type of devotee.[9] As such the poems assume the existence of a cult around these persons, the evidence for which is not much earlier than the tenth century.

The early date of the *Cilappatikāram* in either the second or the fifth century AD, has likewise been based on quicksand, namely on a literary legend (the so-called Gajabāhu synchronism) and on a scholar's linguistic intuitions. A closer consideration shows that the text deals with the adoption by the Cheras of a goddess cult from the Pandyas and Cholas. The *Cilappatikāram* is itself the product of such a process of acculturation.[10] This development in Kerala is otherwise described in relatively late sources, for instance, Nakkīrar's commentary on the *Akapporuḷ*, which was brought from Madurai in the east to Muciṟi on the west coast.

Among the texts of the Caṅkam corpus generally a distinction is made between early, truly bardic poetry (e.g. *Kuṟuntokai*) and late classical poetry (e.g. *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal*). However, with the late dating of Caṅkam poetry the basis of this distinction has disappeared, in the sense that the collection does not include any early, really bardic poetry at all. This is not to say that there could

8   Mahākāvya is, at least in origin, synonymous with Sanskrit Kāvya. Prākrit examples such as the *Setubandha* and *Gauḍavaho* are relatively late texts.

9   This is a point on which Judit Törzsök felt compelled to agree with me (TÖRZSÖK 2004:26). However, she did add a footnote stating that "Naturellement, cela ne signifie pas que nous soyons d'accord sur toutes les propositions que contient l'ouvrage de TIEKEN (2001)". Next, in the text of the article itself she presents out of the blue and without due acknowledgement of her source an idea concerning the language and style of Bhakti poetry, which is basically a paraphrase of what I wrote on p. 224 of my book (TIEKEN, 2001:224).

10   In my book I have also tried to debunk the notion that the *Cilappatikāram* was a Jaina text. In this connection one generally refers to the second part of the name of the author of the text, Iḷaṅkō-v-aṭikaḷ, which has generally been taken to refer to a Jaina monk. Note, however, that *aṭikaḷ* is a common element in the names of the Chera kings of Venad.

not be earlier or later texts. A possibly later addition to the collection is the *Patiṟṟuppattu*. In this connection the curious format of the text should be considered, which resembles that of Bhakti poetry. Furthermore, while the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* divides its attention equally over the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras, the *Patiṟṟuppattu* is exclusively devoted to the Cheras. Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that the present version of the Caṅkam corpus was compiled under the auspices of the Cheras.

3.1   Hart's comments

In his review Hart singles out four points for discussion: 1) the idea that the style of the Tamil poems is an adaptation of the style of Sanskrit Kāvya, 2) the basis for the conclusion that the poems might have been composed only at the time of the compilation of the anthologies, 3) the assumed fictional nature of the colophons to the poems, and 4) the similarity of the use of Tamil in Caṅkam poetry and the Pandya inscriptions. These four points would, according to Hart, be central to my book and if they can be proved invalid, all my other ideas would be invalid as well.

Before discussing these four points it should be noted that Hart completely by-passes the first part of the book in which I discuss the fictitious nature of the scenes of the poems. More in particular I tried to show that the aim of the historical poems was to evoke a heroic past, in which bards wandered from court to court in search of liberal patrons. These poems consequently hail from a period after the one they describe, in the same way as the so-called love poems originated in a milieu far removed, physically as well as mentally, from the little villages depicted in them. All this removes the ground from under the current dating of Caṅkam poetry, which is mainly based on the assumption that the poems describe a contemporary society. However, my discussion of the scenes of the poems and in particular the conclusions I draw from it are tucked away by Hart in the rather offhand observation that I spend "some time discussing the esthetic implications of the *akam* (interior or love) poems, and claim they constitute a condescending and often sarcastic urban and sophisticated take on village life". At the end of the review Hart returns to my interpretation of the urban perspective in the poems, dismissing it, not, however, by tackling it himself but by calling to his assistance A.K. Ramanujan, who "[y]ears ago [had] correctly remarked that in Tamil literature there is nothing corresponding to the *grāmya/nāgarika* opposition of Sanskrit". Hart forgoes the opportunity to go into debate with me on the the nature of the scenes of the poems. All he does is to

create the impression that the evidence put forward by me is simply not worth the effort. If lack of space in the context of a review would have been the cause behind this silence, it is a case of wrong priorities as the point of view of the poems is a vital issue in the attempt to date Caṅkam poetry.

3.2   The common style of Caṅkam poetry and Kāvya

If Caṅkam poetry is indeed not as old as has always been assumed, this should cast a different light on any agreement it might show with Sanskrit literature. One of such points of agreement concerns style. Thus, Caṅkam shares with Sanskrit Kāvya the tendency to paint a scene in one stroke, in the process often producing long, complicated sentences. For instance, *Akanāṉūṟu* 9, a poem of altogether 26 lines, consists of one single sentence. This phenomenon is well-known in Kāvya. In Sanskrit Kāvya (prose as well as poetry) length is achieved through the accumulation, paratactically, of relative clauses (see, e.g., the beginning of the *Kumārasambhava*) or of descriptive compounds (especially in prose texts) qualifying the head noun. In Tamil the same effect is created by embedding, in which a passage is embedded in a second passage which is itself embedded into yet another passage, etc. However, there seems to be a direct relationship between this difference in the way the effect is produced and the structures of the respective language, analytic Sanskrit and agglutinative Tamil. We seem to be dealing with different solutions to the same "problem". Hart's objection seems to concern mainly my next step, namely the suggestion that the style of the Tamil poems is the outcome of the attempt to copy the typical Kāvya style in Tamil. According to Hart, the fact that Tamil would be later than Kāvya, is not sufficient for such a conclusion. However, Hart seems to overlook that style is not the only point of agreement between Caṅkam and Kāvya. Thus, as I have tried to show, both the *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* have counterparts in Kavya literature as well, namely in the minor operatic love scenes, or *lāsya*s or *catuṣpadī*s, and the festival songs, or *carcarī*s, respectively. In connection with the identification of the poems of the *Paripāṭal* as specimen of *carcarī*s it should be noted that the term *paripāṭal* is in the text itself (XI 137) like *carcarī* used to denote a song sung during certain festivals, in case festivals taking place in rivers. As for the identification made by me of the poems of the *Kalittokai* as minor operatic scenes, or *lāsya*s or *catuṣpadī*s, all Hart has to say is that "there is nothing whatsoever in Sanskrit or Prakrit literature that resembles the poem [*Kalittokai* 94] [...] about the dwarf and hunchback making love". Hart is obviously trying to be naive here. For, the fact that the poems of the *Kalittokai* are exam-

ples of the *lāsya*s of North Indian Kāvya literature, does not mean that we should have an exact Sanskrit or Prākrit copy of each specific Tamil poem. However, if we consider the matter on the level of the type of poems, it is possible to see in *Kalittokai* 94, which is an angry exchange full of mutual mockery between two physically incompatible lovers, an example or elaboration of the *uktapratyukta lāsya*.[11] This type of *lāsya* consists of a dialogue (*saṃlāpa*) between lovers, with angry recriminations alternating with soothing words (*kopaprasādajanitaṃ sādhikṣepapadāśrayaṃ*, *Nāṭyaśāstra* XIX 135 and *kopaprasādabahulaṃ* [...] *saṃlāparacitair nityam*, XXXI 365). In addition to that it is important to note that I am not the only one who identified the *Kalittokai* poems as *lāsya*s. As I have tried to show in my book, the same was done by the compilers of that anthology, as becomes clear from the inclusion of the so-called *kuravai* poems (nos 101–107) in the *Kalittokai*. These *kuravai* poems seem to be specimens of the *hallīsaka* of Kāvya literature. As such they belong to the category of festival songs and should rather than in the *Kalittokai* have been included in the *Paripāṭal*. The inclusion of the *kuravai* poems in the *Kalittokai* may go back to the same misunderstanding as found with Bhoja. Misled by a definition of the *hallīsaka* such as the one found in Abhinavagupta's commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra* IV 268, Bhoja erroneously included this minor dramatic type into the same category as the *lāsya*s. The agreement on this point between the Sanskrit tradition on the one hand and the Tamil tradition on the other is striking and can hardly be a matter of coincidence. At the same time, the inclusion of the *kuravai* poems in the *Kalittokai* might be taken as showing that the compilers did indeed consider the other poems of that anthology to be *lāsya* types.

The points of agreement between Kāvya and Caṅkam are thus not restricted to the style of the poems but involve whole genres: village poetry in Akam and *Sattasaī*, minor operatic scenes, or *lāsya*s or *catuṣpadī*s, in the *Kalittokai* and festival scenes, or *carcarī*s, in the *Paripāṭal*. In this situation the possibility of independent origination becomes unlikely. Given the possibility that Caṅkam poetry is dated later than the beginnings of Kāvya, Tamil is more likely the borrower than Sanskrit.

3.3   The compilation of the Caṅkam anthologies

In the *Kuṟuntokai* and *Naṟṟiṇai* the poems seem to have been compiled randomly, at least as far as content is concerned. In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* it is possible to

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11   For a translation of *Kalittokai* 94, see RAMANUJAN, 1985:209–211.

detect some sections but within these sections the order of the poems seems to be random again. While in the compilation of these anthologies content does not seem to have played a role, it was found that each poem echoes certain words from the proceding ones. As an example *Kuṟuntokai* 344 has been quoted:

336					*pirinticiṉōḻē*
337				*mulai nirai*	
338	*aṇṇal ēṟu*	*puṉkaṉmālai*			
339					
340			*kātalar peyar*		
341			*kātalar*		
342		*taṉ puṉkaṉ*			
343	*aṇṇal ēṟṟai*				
344	*aṇṇal ēṟṟōṭu*	*taṉ puṉkaṉmālai*	*kātalar peyarum*	*mulai nirai*	
					pirintu

The echoes are not restricted to lexemes. Occasionally, they involve suffixes, as in *āku-mati* (*Kuṟuntokai* 18) and *iṉai-mati* (19) and in *uṇ-ṭiyar* (27) and *taḻ-ṭi* (29), *mar-ṭiya* (30) and *kuḻ-ṭiya* and *taḻ-ṭiya* (31); particles, as in *kuruk-um* (25) and *kaṭavaṉ-um* (26); and similar phrases, as in *varutalum varūum* (88) and *nuvaṟalum nuvalpa* (89). Also some rare instances involving synonyms have been noted, as in *aruntu* (26) and *uṇ* (27).

As said, according to the current interpretation, the Tamil anthologies contain merely a selection from a boundless reservoir of floating, orally transmitted poems. However, the type of concatenation described above introduces a complication in this scenario. While it may be relatively easy in the case of *Kuṟuntokai* 344 to find in the vast corpus of existing poems another one containing the words *aṇṇal* and *ēṟu*, to find one which in addition also contains the word *puṉkaṉ(mālai)* must have been much more difficult. In addition to that, the poem in question should not be shorter than four lines or longer than eight. My conclusion was that the idea that the compiler selected the poems from a reservoir of existing poems might have to be abandoned. Instead, I suggested that the poems were composed at the very moment of their inclusion in the anthology, if only because it might after all have been easier, starting from words in the preceding poems, to compose a new poem than to search one's memory for an old one.

Hart argues that the chance of identical words occurring in the poems is so great that it is actually impossible to find a poem which does not have one or

more words in common with any other poem. At first sight Hart seems to have a point here. However, this is only so when all the words of the poems are taken into account. Though it is difficult to decide in this connection which words are significant and which are not, I guess that the picture will change considerably when in a sequence of poems only certain words are taken into account. In any case, if we turn to the scheme given above, the word *aṇṇal* occurs only six times in the 400 *Kuṟuntokai* poems, the word *puṉkaṉ* seven times, *ēṟu* altogether nine times and *peyar* (noun and verb together) 25 times. Furthermore, as I have noted earlier, common words – and not only words but also, for instance, certain suffixes – appear typically in clusters of poems.[12] Take the word *nīṅku/nīkku* in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 150-153-154, 247-249-250, 392-393-397-398-400 or the verb *pāy* in 23-24-25-30-31.

The verbal echoes which have been found in consecutive poems in some of the anthologies look like traces of a literary game in which every next participant had to compose a poem varying on the words of a poem of the previous participant. Such a came is reminiscent of *samasyāpūraṇa*, in which the poets had to complete a given *pāda* or a half-line. In fact, traces of this particular game may be seen in the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, in which the poems of each decade share part of a line.

3.4   The nature of the colophons to the poems

It is sometimes difficult to recognize my own conclusions in the way they are presented by Hart. This is, for instance, the case where Hart writes that "the non-historical nature of some of the colophons [of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*] is scarcely proof that they [the poems] were composed in the ninth or tenth century". This is not what I claim at all. The late dating is based on other evidence, such as the similar use of Tamil in Caṅkam poetry and the Pandya inscriptions. My main concern in the passage referred to by Hart was to establish the relationship between the poems and the colophons in particular in the so-called historical poems of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. First, I had tried to show that the scenes in the Puṟam poems, as in the Akam poems, are fictional. Next, I argued that the aim of the colophons was to provide convincing historical settings to the dramatic monologues in the poems by identifying the speakers and addressees. Hart seems to agree with me that in at least a number of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* poems the colophons are clearly fictional. An obvious example is 246, in which we hear the wife of a certain

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12   Tieken, 2001:98, n. 15.

Pandya king speaking to the persons who try to prevent her from mounting her husband's pyre; similarly 255, in which we hear a woman speaking while she is dragging her dead husband's body into the shade. There are many more instances like this, but according to Hart they would not have any bearing on the colophons in general. In this way he implicitly allows for a distinction between fictional and so-called "historically correct" colophons and between fictional and real historical scenes. Hart is clearly not prepared to consider the alternative, namely that all scenes might be fictional. One of the reasons for this reluctance is mentioned in the beginning of the review, where Hart says that he cannot believe that the writers would have used old names and old history in their poems "to accomplish their deception". Apart from the fact that the use of the word "deception" is highly tendentious in connection with the creation of fictional poetry, in the poems hardly any personal names are found. What we do find are mainly titles. It is only in the colophons that personal names are added to these titles. The same applies to the supposedly historical information in the poems: it is very rarely specific.

Hart sticks to the generally held idea that the poems were anthologized several centuries after they were written. In that case, however, he will have to explain how, and in particular why, the poems of the *Puranānūṟu* were preserved and transmitted at all. For one thing we have to do with supposedly occasional, ephemeral poetry. Its memorization and subsequent preservation by later generations are not self-evident. In the second place, as already explained above, the poems have complex structures and are not easy to remember. Admittedly, Hart allows for the possibility that the poems were written down earlier before being compiled into anthologies. However, he does not specify exactly when this is supposed to have happened: at the moment of the composition of the poems itself or at a later stage. Writing was indeed known in Tamilnadu already from the second century BC onwards, as is shown by the presence of the so-called Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions. However, the use of writing for labels on donated caves does not automatically mean that writing was also used for fiction (see also below, 3.8). Thirdly, the bardic poets appear to have been unable to make a living by their profession. There are many descriptions of their starving wives and children. As such the bards do not provide a good example for later poets to follow. So why would people have bothered to memorize and preserve this poetry at all?

The supposed time gap between the composition of the poems and their anthologization does, however, provide Hart with a possible explanation for any deviations or anomalies in the colophons: there had been "plenty of time for

legends and false stories to have arisen". Unfortunately Hart does not inform us which legends and false stories he has in mind here. Probably he refers to colophons such as those of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 246 and 255 here, which do not fit with his interpretation that the person identified in the colophon as the speaker in the poem is also the poet of the poem.

The eccentric interpretation of the colophons of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* by Hart and other scholars, which, by the way, goes against the texts of the colophons themselves, seems to be due to a certain reluctance to consider other literary traditions beside Caṅkam poetry. Thus, similar colophons are found in, for instance, the *Sattasaī*, a text, incidentally, with which Hart used to be quite familiar. Each of the many commentators of that poetry provides his own descriptions of the situations in which the words in the poems are supposed to have been spoken. To define a convincing situation to the poems seems to have been quite an industry. As in Caṅkam poetry, in some versions the poems of the *Sattasaī* are attributed to poets. Interestingly, these names include those of kings, among which the name of the Sātavāhana king Hāla, the reputed compiler of the anthology. What is even more striking is that they include names of kings who lived after Hāla, in particular those of Vākāṭaka kings, that is, the successors of the Sātavāhanas in India immediately south of the Vindhyas.[13] This is precisely the area in which the scenes of the poems of the *Sattasaī* are situated. In my opinion these names are no evidence of an attempt at "deception" but should be considered as the result of an attempt on the part of the person(s) responsible for the addition of the names to underscore the provenance of the *Sattasaī* as from south of the Vindhyas.

3.5   Tamil in Caṅkam poetry and in the Pandya inscriptions

Hart's fourth point of criticism is aimed at my discussion of the use of Tamil in Caṅkam poetry, on the one hand, and in the Pandya inscriptions, on the other. However, his criticism does not deal with my argument at all. All Hart does is to correct some errors in my translations of two passages from the Pandya inscriptions.[14]

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13   MIRASHI, 1945.
14   Thus, he corrects my translation of lines 88–89 from Dalavaypuram (*akattiyaṉōṭu tamiḻ ā[rāy]ntum*) "studied Tamil with the help of the Akattiyaṉ" into "investigating Tamil together with Akattiyaṉ" and that of lines 94–95 of the Larger Sinnamanur Copper Plate Grant (*oṇ ṭamiḻum vaṭamoḻi[y]um paḻutaṟat tāṉ ārāyntu paṇṭitaril mentoṉṟi[y]um*) "corrected and investigated the brilliant Tamil language along with Sanskrit, thus becoming the foremost

3.6   Some other remarks made by Hart

The four points discussed above would according to Hart form the main basis of my late dating of Caṅkam poetry. As noted above, however, in this Hart more or less completely ignores my other findings, in particular those concerning the fictional nature of the scenes in the poems: rather than a contemporary society the so-called heroic poems would evoke a heroic society from the past. This takes away the ground from under one of the main pieces of evidence, if not the main piece of evidence, for the early date of Caṅkam poetry, namely that the poems would describe contemporary events. The four points should be considered with this in mind. As to the typical style of the Tamil poems, once the poems are not necessarily as old as has been assumed the influence of Sanskrit on the Tamil poetic tradition can no longer be denied so easily. It appears furthermore that Hart is completely at a loss with the fictional nature of the scenes of the poems and the function of the colophons in such a type of poetry. His use of the word "deception" in this context is revealing of his unfamiliarity with the world of Kāvya, which is fiction par excellence. Kāvya may go very far in this. It may, for instance, involve the person of the author. Thus, as I have shown elsewhere, the author Bāṇa is made to dy halfway his Kādambarī so that this text, which is, among other things, about sons succeeding fathers, could be divided into two parts, the first part written by himself, the second by his son. A similar "irregular" division is also found in this same author's Harṣacarita.[15] As to my findings concerning the function of Tamil in Caṅkam poetry as well as the Pandya inscriptions, it is not clear to me if Hart has understood the point. In any case, he does not discuss it. All he does is to cast doubt on my knowledge of inscriptional Tamil. Finally, as far as the repetition of words in the poems is concerned, Hart has a point here. It is indeed difficult to find a poem which does not have one or more words in common with any other poem. However, as already mentioned, it may be questioned if all words of the poems should indeed be given equal weight. Furthermore, finer statistics apart, common words are indeed found in clusters of consecutive poems.

Besides the four points discussed above, Hart presents some other evidence which would contradict my late dating of Caṅkam poetry. Below I will deal with it.

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among the learned" into "investigated flawlessly/perfectly the brilliant Tamil and northern language [...]".

15   TIEKEN, 2005:290–291 and TIEKEN, forthcoming[b].

3.7   Hart on the date of the Maṇimēkalai

The relatively late dating of Caṅkam poetry made it necessary to reconsider the dates of, for instance, the *Cilappatikāram* and Bhakti poetry, which were both considered post-Caṅkam but at the same time were dated well before the eighth or ninth century. In both cases, however, the current dates were based on very thin ice. As such, the dates *Cilappatikāram* and Bhakti poetry discussed in my book could stand muster for many, if not most of the dates of Tamil literature. In fact, an additional example is furnished by Hart himself, where he reproves me for not discussing the "possible dating of other important Tamil works such as [...] the *Maṇimēkalai* (which was written when Buddhism flourished in Tamil Nadu – surely not after the ninth century)". In connection with the survival of Buddhism in Tamilnadu Hart seems to be unaware of the many very late, fifteenth and sixteenth-century Buddhist bronzes from Nagapattinam.[16]

Hart does not go into my attempts to finds new dates for the *Cilappatikāram* and Bhakti poetry. However, as far as the date of the *Cilappatikāram* is concerned, he seems to abide by the so-called Gajabāhu-synchronism, which is based on a reference in the text itself to the Ceylonese king Gajabāhu (170–225 AD) as a contemporary of the Chera king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ, the elder brother of the author of the text. As to this particular piece of evidence I like to refer again to Obeyesekere, who has relegated the alleged contemporaneousness of the two kings to the realm of literary fiction.[17]

3.8   Writing and literature

Twice in his review Hart refers to "the great deal of evidence [...] [which] suggest[s] strongly that the poems were composed between the first and the third centuries AD". It is interesting to see what Hart considers as evidence here. In the first place he refers to Mahadevan, who would have shown that in that period writing was used by the common people in Tamilnadu. According to Mahadevan, the editor of the corpus of Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions,[18] these inscriptions would testify to widespread literacy in Tamilnadu at that early period. The inscriptions on potsherd (beside those on caves) would moreover show that literacy was not restricted to the elite but instead had percolated down to all strata of Tamil society. In the introduction to his edition Mahadevan enthusiastically

16   GUY, 2000. See also DEHEJIA, 1988.
17   OBEYESEKERE,1984:361–380.
18   MAHADEVAN, 2003.

wrote: "Tamil-Brāhmī had taken deep roots all over the Tamil countryside well before the turn of the Christian Era creating a literate society which would before long produce literary works of the greatest excellence".[19] Mahadevan clearly mixes up two things here, namely literacy, that is, the ability to read and write, on the one hand, and the development of a (written) literature, on the other. To begin with the first, the inscriptions do not seem to testify to the widespread use of writing (and reading). On the contrary. As I have tried to show elsewhere, stonemasons, or at least some of them, could probably neither read nor write.[20] They simply copied the texts handed over to them on a palmleaf as if they were images. Another question is if we may infer from the grafitti on pottery that the knowledge of writing had spread widely among all strata of the population. What these pottery inscriptions show is that writing was used by merchants to mark ownership. It does not automatically follow that, for instance, the potters could read or write. For all we know, they could merely have been copying from examples. The main question, however, is if the availability of writing automatically leads to the use of writing for literature. As far as we know it did not in Aśoka's time. With all this it is not clear what proof can be derived from the inscriptions concerning the date of Caṅkam poetry.

Mahadevan also draws attention to the fact that while in the northern part of the Deccan inscriptions were mainly in Prākrit, the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions in Tamilnadu were in the local language. He tries to explain these divergent developments with reference to the political independence of the Tamil country, which in contrast to upper South India had never been part of the Maurya empire. As he wrote: "Tamil remained the language of administration, of learning and instruction, and of public discourse throughout the Tamil country".[21] However, "independence" may not be the right word. Another way to put it is that Tamilnadu, which had never been included directly or in any systematic way in the Maurya trade network, was bypassed by certain cultural developments. Thus, while in the northern parts of the Deccan great architectural monuments arose in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, Tamilnadu had only natural caves provided with water ledges.[22] It should be noted again that the adoption of the Brāhmī

19   MAHADEVAN, 2003:xii.
20   See TIEKEN, 2007.
21   MAHADEVAN, 2003:162.
22   Here I would like to quote Shinu A. Abraham: "Indeed, what seems to distinguish Tami-
      lakam material cultural formations during the late Iron Age – Early Historic period is the
      lack of some kind of evidence one finds in neighboring regions; the Deccan region immedi-
      ately to the north, for example, is notable for its large number of both simple and elaborate

script took place, not for writing fictional literature, but only for purely practical purposes, namely for marking ownership by scratching one's (Tamil) name on the objects concerned. The fact that the cave inscriptions are in Tamil would only show that the ambitions of the donors were still largely determined by local circumstances and not yet inspired by the cosmopolitan culture of the north using translocal languages. This happened in Tamilnadu for the first time only with the Pallavas.

3.9   The names of some Caṅkam kings in the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions

The second piece of evidence put forward by Hart is that the names of some of the kings mentioned in Caṅkam poetry have been found in the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions. Hart refers here to the names of three consecutive generations of kings of the Irumpoṟai dynasty found in the *Patiṟṟuppattu* and in the Pugalur inscriptions of the second century. The identification of the two sets of names keeps cropping up, most recently again in Eva Wilden's review of my book.[23] I wonder, however, if anyone has recently cared to have a good look at the two sets of names. Hart and Wilden obviously did not, for if they had, they would inevitably have come to the conclusion that the names are not similar at all. Below the two sets are give as they are presented by Mahadevan:[24]

Inscriptions	*Patiṟṟuppattu*
1. Kō Ātaṉ Cel Irumpoṟai	Celva-k-kaṭuṅkō Vāḷi-y Ātaṉ (7th decade)
2. Peruṅkaṭuṅkōṉ	Peruñ-cēral Irumpoṟai (8th decade)
3. Kaṭuṅkōṉ Iḷaṅkaṭuṅkō	Iḷañ-cēral Irumpoṟai (9th decade).

Another question is what it would prove for the date of Caṅkam poetry if the names had been the same. For we do not date Kalidāsa in the Śuṅga period be-

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Buddhist sites, as well as for the wide array of numismatic finds – examples of locally minted coins that have helped to reconstruct the political dynasties of the early Deccan. Archaeological, inscriptional, and numismatic data indicate that the Deccan followed a different trajectory – it was part of the Mauryan realm until its decline in the third century B.C., after which a cluster of later rulers claimed the territory, the most important being the Satavahanas. So, too, is there a separate story for Sri Lanka, whose Early Historic period is said to have begun with northern Indian merchants settling on the island, followed by the introduction of Buddhism by an envoy of the Maurya king Aśoka in the third century B.C." (ABRAHAM, 2003:217).

23   WILDEN, 2002:124.

24   MAHADEVAN, 2003:117.

cause his *Mālavikāgnimitra* is situated in that period. In fact, the same argument applies to Hart's fourth piece of evidence, namely that the poems refer to trade with the Roman world: similar references are found in the *Daśakumāracarita* of the seventh-century South Indian writer Daṇḍin.[25]

3.10 The coherence of the historical information in the poems

Hart's third piece of evidence concerns the so-called Gajabāhu synchronism, which has already been referred to above (3.7).

Hart's fifth argument (the fourth, the references to Roman trade, has already been mentioned in 3.9) in favour of an early dating of Caṅkam poetry is that

> the poems name hundreds of poets and kings and string them together in a narrative that is chronologically coherent. The names are quite unlike the names of the ninth and tenth century. It would be extremely unlikely that so many names could have been remembered for eight centuries, along with their coherent and plausible historical relationships.

In the first place it should be noted that the names and the narrative referred to by Hart are not found in the poems but in the colophons. For the relationship between the poems and the colophons, see above (3.4). The names of the kings found in the colophons indeed differ from those of the ninth century, but this would be part of the fiction: the contemporary reader was to believe that he was reading about kings of the past. As such the names should be compared with (and are comparable to) the names Palyāka Mutukuṭumi Peruvaḻuti and Kaṭuṅkōṉ in the Velvikudi inscription given to the last Pandya king of the old dynasty and the first of the present one respectively. Secondly, with "chronological coherence" Hart probably refers to attempts by modern scholars to create some kind of history out of the fragmentary information gleaned from the poems and colophons. To characterize the result as a chronologically coherent picture is an exaggeration, to say the least. And even if the picture had been coherent, what does it mean for the date of Caṅkam poetry? Finally, it should be noted that Hart is inconsistent here, for, while according to him it would be extremely unlikely that so many names could have been remembered for eight centuries, he does not make a similar reservation in the case of the presumed transmission of thousands of poems.

25   *Daśakumāracarita*, pp. 106–107.

3.11 The archaic language of the poems

The final point put forward by Hart in favour of an early date of Caňkam poetry is the language of the poems. The language of the poems is indeed quite different from that of the inscriptions of the eighth or ninth century. At first sight it may indeed make an archaic impression. In this connection, for instance, the rareness of Sanskrit loanwords is to be mentioned. Furthermore, the language of the poems is certainly curious with, for instance, its many different, mostly defective, formations of the non-past tense. However, all this does not automatically mean that the language is old as well, that is, old in the absolute sense. In fact this was mostly just taken for granted: the language was taken to be old because the poems were old. A possible explanation for the curious nature of the language of the Caňkam poems which I have explored already elsewhere is that we are dealing with an artificial language in which elements from dialects from different regions were brought together.[26] The administrative language which had developed under the Pallavas was excluded from this process, and Sanskrit words, or what the poets considered to be Sanskrit words, were likewise avoided as much as possible.[27]

3.12 Hart's mission

Hart's review is the latest instalment in a series of four. The first appeared on the Indology list.[28]. At that time, however, my book had only just come out and by his own admission Hart had not yet been able to read the book. He had only found out about it through the publication of the blurb of the book on the Indology list. This did not detain him from writing a lengthy reaction, explaining why my ideas could not be right. The second instalment appeared on Hart's own website in the course of December 2001 as an appendix to his earlier com-

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26   In TIEKEN, 2004 I also discussed some rare present tense forms ending in –(k)kiṟp-: paṭarkiṟpīr and tarukiṟpāy in Kalittokai 39:38 and 144:49 respectively, and irukkiṟpōr in Akanāṉūṟu 387:20. The element –(k)kiṟp- seems to be an accumulation of the present tense suffix –(k)ki(ṉ)ṟ- and the future tense suffix –(p)p-/-v-. As such it may be compared to the Old and Middle Kannaḍa present tense suffixes –tap(p)-, –dap(p)-, –dap- and –dah- (ANDRONOV, 1969:43–44). These suffixes likewise look like accumulations, i.e. of that of the past tense (–t/d-; or is it an ancient form of the present-tense suffix?) and that of the future tense.

27   For other attempts of this type of linguistic cleansing, see Pollock, 2006:432, n. 106.

28   Indology archives of August 27th 2001. <http://listserv.liv.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0107 &L=INDOLOGY&P=R773&=-3>, log-on date 30-3-2006.

ments.[29] On this occasion Hart discussed my interpretation of the concatenation of the poems in some of the anthologies (see above, 3.3). The purpose of the third instalment, which also appeared on the Indology list, seems to be to express once more that he was completely mystified by my interpretation of Caṅkam poetry as a form of Kāvya.[30] Furthermore, Hart writes that "[w]hat concerns him most is that Prof. Tieken's[31] thesis will be accepted by Sanskritists, who have no easy way of judging its validity". Next Hart advises the Sanskritists among us to read his own translation of *Puṛanāṇūṛu* 245 and note "that it does not have any Sanskrit words, uses a native Tamil meter, and that, unlike any Kāvya, it is a report of personal experience". "Note also," he goes on, "that (unlike in later times) the names are pure Dravidian and that the categorization (*tiṇai, tuṛai*) given the poems is entirely foreign to Sanskrit." And finally he adds, parenthetically, "[y]ou might also question whether a literature of thousands of poems of such quality and variety could be easily *forged* by one person" (emphasis added). Hart is obviously a man with a mission.

4.1   Wilden's comments

Let us turn to Wilden's review. One of her main points of criticism of my approach to the problem of dating Caṅkam poetry is the lack of interest on my part in studies on the early history of South India.[32] The point is made almost at the

29   <http://tamil.berkeley.edu/Research/Articles/TiekenRemarks.html>, log-on date 1-4-2006.

30   Indology archives of December 30th 2001. <http://listserv.liv.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa?A2= ind 0112&L=INDOLOGY&P=R2534&1=-3>, log-on date 30-3-2006.

31   I like to declare that I have never claimed the title "professor", since in my country it is reserved for the holder of a chair. In fact, I always feel embarrassed when others use it to re-fer to me, as I suspect it to be an expression of mock respect.

32   Another point of criticism concerns the alleged weakness of my philological work. At one point (WILDEN, 2002:115) she blames me for not adding notes about possible grammatical and interpretational problems to translations by others which I quote. It should be observed that the translations were adequate for illustrating the particular point I wished to make. As another instance Wilden quotes my translation of *Kuṛuntokai* 106 (WILDEN, 2002:116–118). I am indeed not certain if the translation given by me is correct. On the other hand, I find the accusation of philological weakness absurd, coming from a person who herself, when seeing altogether three possible solutions for the problematical passage, opts for the one which is based on a non-existing *sandhi* rule. I thought she had agreed with me that it was unaccept-able to do so; see in this connection WILDEN, 1999, which article is a reaction on an earlier article by me, namely TIEKEN, 1997. Yet another point on which she criticises me is my "as-tonishing lack of aesthetic receptiveness". To be honest I do not know what she means by

very beginning of her review.[33] In this connection Wilden refers in particular to the contributions to the question of the dating of Caṅkam poetry by historians like Chapakalakshmi. I have to admit, however, that I fail to see the point. For as Wilden notes herself,[34] for the literary part of the sources Champakalakshmi as well as many of her colleagues are still almost totally dependent on the work of Zvelebil, who most certainly is not a historian and whose chronology of Caṅkam poetry is no more than tentative. Wilden goes on:

> Thus Champakalakshmi gives an up-to-date picture of the material culture of 300 B.C. – 300 A.D., but a distorted one of the literature (and the 'society' depicted there). Since for her, literature is only an incidental concern, she does not even attempt to insert the Caṅkam anthologies into her frame.

Furthermore, as I have already argued elsewhere, the contribution of historians to the question of the dating of Caṅkam poetry is practically nil.[35] The situation is generally the other way around, with historians freely drawing material from Caṅkam poetry to flesh out their picture of the early history of Tamilnadu. They feel free to do so on the basis of the general consensus that Caṅkam poetry dates some time between 300 BC and 300 AD. In the process historians tend to gloss over the clear and considerable mismatch between the picture emerging from the poetry and, for instance, the results of archeological research.

As already indicated, Wilden's discussion of my book is somehow embedded in the presentation of her idea of how the problem of the dating of Caṅkam literature should be approached. In this context she returns to the historical material again on p. 121 ff. What she presents there, under the heading "external chronology", is evidence from archeology, epigraphy, literature and colophons, and commentaries concerning the Caṅkam era. However, Wilden herself has to admit that the evidence of the first three types has no real bearing on the question of the date of Caṅkam poetry. Indeed, all it shows is that in the period between 300 BC and 300 AD in Tamilnadu people were living who were known as Colas, Pāṇḍyas, Keralaputras and Satyaputras (names mentioned in the Aśoka inscriptions), whose kings had names and titles (Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions) some of which turn up in the poems and the colophons of the Caṅkam poems,

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"aesthetic receptiveness" here. In any case, my interest was, and still is, merely in trying to explain the situations underlying the scenes in the poems.

33   WILDEN, 2002:106.

34   WILDEN, 2002:112.

35   TIEKEN, 2003[b].

and who traded with the Roman world (Pliny). However, there is in the material no indication whatsoever that these same people had anything to do with Caṅkam poetry. In the process we are presented by Wilden with the highly fanciful identification of the title Satyaputra found in both the Aśoka inscriptions and the Tamil-Brāhmī inscription from Jambai with the Kōcars from Caṅkam poetry; with the identification of the three generations of Perumporai kings in the Pugalur inscriptions with three generations of kings mentioned in the *Patiṟṟuppattu* (see above, 3.9); and, again, with the Gajabāhu synchronism (see above, 3.7). Wilden writes that the agreement between the names of the Perumporai kings in the inscriptions and the *Patiṟṟuppattu* has since its discovery in 1968 been celebrated as the new sheet-anchor of Caṅkam chronology, replacing in this function the famous Gajabāhu synchronism. Furthermore, in her presentation Wilden includes the *Pattuppāṭṭu* among the Caṅkam text, at the same time characterizing it as a "late" anthology as if the others are earlier, and calls the *Cilappatikāram* a late Caṅkam epic. Once more: the *Pattuppāṭṭu* – and the same applies to the *Cilappatikāram* – is not included in the traditional lists of Caṅkam works and the text itself does not claim to be a Caṅkam text. And even if it did claim that status, this does not mean that we should include it among the Caṅkam texts. What in that case we should do is to try to understand the implications of the claim, as we do, for instance, in the case of the *Mahābhārata*, when it calls itself the fifth Veda.[36]

4.2   Other external evidence regarding Caṅkam poetry

Next, Wilden turns to the colophons of some of the the anthologies, which provide the names of the compilers and their royal patrons. Her idea is "to correlate this information with other sources and in this way to locate the phase of anthologization in a historical setting".[37] In this connection she mentions Peruntēvaṉār, who is said to have compiled the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, and whom she identifies with the Peruntēvaṉar "who sang the *Bhārata*", the author of the poems in praise of god found at the beginning of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Akanāṉūṟu*. According to Wilden the first and second Peruntēvaṉār are the very same person, but the second, enlarged, name (Peruntēvaṉar "who sang the *Bhārata*") refers to him at a later stage in life after he had made his Tamil translation of the *Mahābhārata*. This Peruntēvaṉār would in his younger days have compiled the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. Later in life, after he had translated the

36   See FITZGERALD, 1991.
37   WILDEN, 2002:125.

Mahābhārata, he would have compiled the *Kuṟuntokai, Naṟṟiṇai* and *Akanāṉūṟu*, and after that, after having acquired the epithet "he who sang the *Bhārata*", he would have added invocations to these four anthologies as well as to the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, which had been compiled somewhat earlier by another person.[38]

In developing this scenario Wilden starts from the assumption that the invocations are linguistically distinct from the poems in the anthologies. Furthermore, they would belong to a different genre and therefore may well be of later origin. Unfortunately, Wilden does not specify the linguistic differences she has in mind. Furthermore, a difference in genre can hardly be a ground for assuming a later origin. For instance, the Caṅkam corpus also includes the *Paripāṭal* and the *Kalittokai*, which, while incorporating *muktaka* stanzas, belong to different genres than, eg, the poems of the *Kuṟuntokai*. And, what is more, the *Paripāṭal* may well be older than the *Akanāṉūṟu*, as follows from the reference in *Akanāṉūṟu* 59 to a poet Antuvaṉ, who sang of the beauties of Mountain Paraṅkuṉṟam, that is, to Nall-Antuvaṉ, the poet of *Paripāṭal* VIII. However, this internal reference is deliberately disregarded by Wilden. According to her this direct allusion in one poem of the *Akanāṉūṟu* to the *Paripāṭal* cannot be taken to mean that *all* the material in *Akanāṉūṟu* is late.[39] She would be right in questioning the implication of the allusion if she could show that the *Akanāṉūṟu* is indeed the result of a gradual process of accumulation and insertion. However, the *Akanāṉūṟu* is precisely one of the few anthologies which seems to show a definite plan in the arrangement of the poems. The poems are divided into decades and within the decades they are arranged according to the *tiṇai*, or "landscape", the uneven poems (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) belonging to *pālai*, or desert, poems, 2 and 8 to

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38   It should be noted that in the edition of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* available to me, edited by Auvai. Cu. Turaicāmippiḷḷai and published by the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society from Tinnevelly, a colophon mentioning, among other things, the name of the poet of the invocation is missing. The name of the poet is mentioned only in the commentary written by the modern editor of the text.

39   Another instance of the arbitrary way in which evidence of this type is dealt with may be found on p. 126 of Wilden's review. There she discusses the identification of the patron of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, the Chera king Yāṉaikkaṭcey Māntaraṉ Cēral Irumpoṟaiyār, with a king who is mourned as dead in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 229. From this it might be concluded that the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is older than the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. Wilden seems to find this conclusion a bit too "daring", preferring to consider *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 229 as simply a later addition to the text. Actually, she need not have bothered, as the name of the king is not found in the text of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* poem itself but only in the colophon, which presents most probably a later tradition anyway.

kuriñci, or mountains, poem 4 to *mullai*, or forest and pastures, and poem 6 to *marutam*, or wet fields. Furthermore, the available editions do not provide evidence of poems being removed and replaced by others, as we can see in the case of, for instance, the *Sattasaī*. The total number of verses available from the various manuscripts and recensions of the *Sattasaī* amount to more than 900, of which only approximately half are common to all manuscripts and recensions. The situation in the case of Caṅkam may be due to the fact that the work of editing these text is still in its infancy. At the same time this does mean that far-reaching conclusions such as made by Wilden with regard to the compilation of the *Akanāṉūṟu* will have to be postponed until better editions are available.

Wilden's convoluted scenario apart, her idea is that all this activity of compiling and adding invocations could be more or less exactly dated through a reference in the Pandya inscriptions to the translation into Tamil of the *Mahābhārata*. It should be noted, however, that the inscriptions do not mention by whom this translation was made. As a result we cannot be certain that it was the one by Peruntēvaṉār. In fact, according to Zvelebil, the latter author composed his *Pārataveṇpā* not under Pandya patronage but under that of the Pallava king Nandivarman III (846–869),[40] that is, a king of a dynasty which had been more or less effectively been written out of Caṅkam poetry.

Another name found in the colophons of the anthologies which Wilden tries to identify with a person mentioned in external sources is Ukkiraperuvaḻuti. This Ukkiraperuvaḻuti was the patron of Nakkīrar, the commentator of the poetical treatise *Akapporuḷ*, as well as Uruttiracaṉmaṉ, the compiler of the *Akanāṉūṟu*. According to Wilden this Ukkiraperuvaḻuti might well the same person as Palyāka Mutukuṭumi Peruvaḻuti, one of the ancestors of Neṭuñcaṭaiyaṉ of the Velvikudi inscription. It is not at all certain, however, if Peruvaḻuti is indeed a personal name. In any case, the word *vaḻuti* in the Caṅkam poems themselves seems to function as a title instead. Wilden goes on by stating that if this identification is correct, the *Akanāṉūṟu* would be later than the *Kuṟuntokai* and *Naṟṟiṇai*, or rather the *Kuṟuntokai* (patron unknown) and *Naṟṟiṇai* (patron: Paṉṉāṭu Tanta Pāṇṭiya Māṟaṉ Vaḻuti, who is otherwise unknown) would be older than *Akanāṉūṟu*. Otherwise we would have been able to identify the patrons of the *Kuṟuntokai* and *Naṟṟiṇai*, because the names and dates of the Pandya kings after Palyāka Mutukuṭumi Peruvaḻuti are known to us. Whatever the identitificaton of Peruvaḻuti is worth, Wilden's claim that a king in the poems or colophons

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40   ZVELEBIL, 1974:142–146.

whose name cannot be identified is therefore early or pre-Palyāka Mutukuṭumi Peruvaḻuti is absurd.

In between all this Wilden alludes to "the hard core of the so-called old anthologies", with which she refers to the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Naṟṟiṇai*, *Akanāṉūṟu* and *Puṟanāṉūṟu*.[41] Unfortunately she does not explain on what this characterization is based. Apart from that, its use does imply that the *Paripāṭal* is a late, marginal text, a conclusion which is contradicted by the allusion, already mentioned above, in *Akanāṉūṟu* 59 to the *Paripāṭal* VIII.

4.3   Internal evidence in Caṅkam poetry relevant for establishing its date

So far, Wilden's attempt to correlate "external" material from archeology, epigraphy, literary texts and commentaries, and colophons with Caṅkam poetry. It should be remembered that this discussion was a reaction to the apparent neglect on my part of sources of this kind. I hope it will be clear that most of the material from these sources has no bearing on the question of the dating of Caṅkam poetry. I did not discuss this type of evidence in my book and at the time the decision not to do so seemed too obvious for words. Apparently, I should have been more clear on this matter than I was.[42] Apart from that, the approach undertaken by Wilden is not new. It is typical of Tamil studies (and unfortunately not only of Tamil studies) and I have to admit that I have become quite allergic to it. Most of the times I consider it counterproductive to try to follow the convoluted and often absurd scenarios suggested, in which generally no distinction is maintained between poems and colophons, unproven claims are made at the author's own convenience and the material is treated in a completely arbitrary way. Furthermore, scholars tend to forget or they ignore what they themselves wrote on the particular topic before.[43] A case in point is Wilden's use of the *tuṟai*s as evidence in trying to establish an internal chronology of Caṅkam poetry.

The discussion was triggered by my suggestion that most internal evidence put forward so far is invalid. When saying this I was referring in particular to the occurrence of Sanskrit loanwords and traces of Sanskrit poetics in the poems. On

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41   WILDEN, 2002:125.
42   As I explained in TIEKEN, 2001:9–10 in the introductory chapter of my book, one of the problems of writing the book was how to deal with the available secondary literature. I had to be selective as I did not want to waste a lot of space with discussing unfounded claims and opinions and did not want to infuriate even more colleagues than I appear to have done.
43   A notorious example is Zvelebil. In one publication he may date a text in the seventh century and in the other in the fifth. What is the difference, it is in any case all tentative!

the basis of the absence and presence of material of this kind the poems are gen-
erally characterized as relatively early and relatively late respectively.[44] This
might have worked if it could be proven that Caṅkam poetry, or rather the be-
ginning of the poetic tradition in question, indeed orginates from the period be-
fore the wholesale introduction of Sanskrit culture in Tamilnadu. If, as I have
tried to show, Caṅkam poetry in its entirety most probably dates from after that
period, the presence of Sanskrit influences is not unexpected. Instead, it is the
absence of Sanskrit words which should surprise us and be questioned

Wilden's use of the *turais* in establishing an internal chronology amounts to
this: each individual poem in the anthologies is accompanied by a colophon,
which apart from specifying the "poet" of the poem and who is speaking to
whom, gives a brief characterization of the situation underlying the scene of the
poem in question. These brief characterizations are called *turais*. Wilden found
that the *turais* of the *Kuṟuntokai*, *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Akanāṉūṟu* present a common
tradition.[45] Those of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, while still close to the former type, have a
number of idiosyncratic features. However, those of the *Kalittokai* would repre-
sent a tradition of their own. Next, Wilden suggests that the *turais* might serve as
a criteria in establishing a chronology of the texts within the Caṅkam corpus.
But the question may be asked what it means that the *turais* of the *Kuṟuntokai*,
Naṟṟiṇai and *Akanāṉūṟu* present a common tradition, for, as noted by Wilden
herself in the earlier publication, there is no evidence that the *turais* were in-
volved in the process of anthologization.[46] In any case, the poems in the an-
thologies in question were not arranged on the basis of the *turais*. So all that the
common tradition of the *turais* in the *Kuṟuntokai*, *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Akanāṉūṟu*
shows is that these texts at some time during their existence were subjected to a
similar commentatorial tradition. For all we know this might have taken place in

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44   This type of criterion plays an important role in Wilden's attempt to discover layers in the
      Tolkāppiyam (WILDEN, 2004). When writing this article Wilden seems to have been un-
      aware of my book from 2001. As result she was unable in connection with her translation
      and interpretation of *Tolkāppiyam* 1.55 to refer to TIEKEN, 2001:163–164. As I argued there,
      the *sūtra* in question gives details about the the *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal*, which, like their
      North-Indian counterparts, are said to belong to the dramatic genre (*nāṭakam*) and to include
      songs. Furthermore, it introduces two important concepts of the theory of Sanskrit drama,
      namely *nāṭyadharmī* and *lokadharmī*, or, in Tamil, *nāṭaka vaḻakku* and *ulakiyal vaḻakku* re-
      spectively.
45   WILDEN, 2000.
46   WILDEN, 2000:269, note 17.

the twelfth or the thirteenth century, to mention just two possibilities. This is clearly not what Wilden had in mind when she brought up this topic.

5   Conclusion

Both reviews, the one by Wilden and the one by Hart, are each in their own ways examplary of the sorry state of classical Tamil studies. As far as I can see, no one, whether literary scholar, linguist or historian, has ever undertaken the task to prove that Caṅkam poetry was that old. This conclusion was drawn first and subsequently all material was interpreted in this light. As I have said at another occasion, it might be an interesting experiment to throw all or most of Tamil studies of the last one and a half centuries overboard and start from scratch again.[47] In any case, it is apparently extremely difficult to distinguish between what is a sound argument and what isn't. For instance, on page 120 of her review Wilden enumerates some of the points from my book "that deserve to be considered seriously". One of them is that "[t]he whole edifice of secondary scholarship [in connection with Caṅkam poetry] is raised on a fundament of inherited and ill-attested *dicta*". However, when setting out her ideas on how classical Tamil should be studied she falls back without any reservation on these so-called *dicta* as, for instance, the supposed agreement between some names in the Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions and the poems and the distinction between a core of old texts and later texts. Hart is worse. Occasionally he seems to leave behind all scholarly pretentions. For him, in dating Caṅkam poetry everything is equally relevant. For instance, in one of the earlier instalments of his review on the internet he mentions as an argument that the poetical theory accompanying Caṅkam poetry is unknown to Sanskrit and Prākrit but fits Caṅkam literature quite well.[48]

As I see it, after approximately one and a half centuries of Tamil studies the burden of proof actually still lies with those scholars who wish to maintain that Caṅkam poetry dates from before the third or fourth century. When saying this I do not claim that therefore the conclusion that the Caṅkam poetic tradition dates from the eighth or ninth century is correct; this dating is only the outcome of a particular argumentation on the basis of a particular set of coincidences. On the other hand, those in favour of a much earlier dating will, apart from much else,

47   Tieken, 2001:9–10.
48   <http://tamil.berkeley.edu/Research/Articles/TiekenRemarks.html>, log-on date 1-4-2006.

have to explain how it was possible for Tamil to develop a literary tradition of its own so much earlier than Kannaḍa (ninth century) or Telugu (eleventh century).[49]

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49   In this connection Pollock's embarrassment with the exceptional situation in Tamil is telling (POLLOCK, 2006 *passim*).

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