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KARTHIGESU SIVATHAMBY

**STUDIES IN ANCIENT TAMIL SOCIETY :
ECONOMY, SOCIETY, AND STATE
FORMATION**

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**Studies in Ancient Tamil Society:
Economic, Society, and State Formation.**

by

Dr. Karthigesu Sivathamby

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Publishers' Note

Dr. Karthigesu Sivathamby needs no introduction to Tamil Nadu. In Tamil research field he has been an acknowledged authority. His articles, essays and books cover an extensive area from the Cankam Age to the Dravidian movement, from Grammar to Cinema.

His magnum opus is "Drama in Ancient Tamil Society" Ph.D. thesis written under the guidance of world famous Scholar George Thomson. Dr. Sivathamby has travelled, as visiting Professor, to a number of Universities and delivered lectures on Tamil history, society, culture and civilization. He was with the Tamil University Thanjavur as Research Fellow and was visiting Professor of Tamil at University of Madras. He was senior visiting fellow at Centre of South Asian Studies, Combridge University and was visiting scholar under the Fulbright scheme at University of California, Berkeley. He was also guest professor at Uppsala.

The present publication is a collection of his articles, written at various times between 1966 and 1990 and published some years ago in reputed journals and magazines. They will continue to have relevance because of the methodology adopted by him. He has desired to publish the collection with a note by Thiru R. Parthasarathy. We are happy to do it accordingly.

Preface

This volume brings together five of my papers dealing with the society of the Cankam period of Tamilnadu, India (c. 100 BC - 250 AD). Except for the fourth one which tries to find how archaeological evidences, (as stood at the time the paper was written-1975) corroborate Cankam literature, all the other papers deal with the development of political, economic and social institutions during the Cankam era.

Even though there are some works which bring together all the references in the Cankam anthologies relating to society and social activities, much has not been written on the "Social history" of the Cankam Age, in the sense the term is understood in contemporary historiography. Social history today implies the history of the social relationships available during the period, of the social institutions that are within that society, and of the totality of its social dynamics. This calls for a multidisciplinary approach.

These papers, by and large, attempt to bring out these view points.

The need for a comprehensive social history of Ancient Tamilnadu has been very great because at the indigenous level, there was a certain amount of romantic idealisation of that period which has now come down slightly. On the other hand there has also been an underplaying of the social specifics of Tamilnadu.

Most of these papers were written to avoid both the extremes and to identify the socioeconomic forces that were at work in the given social formations.

As a student of Tamil literature, the Cankam literary corpus remains my main source and base. It could be said that I have responded to some of the problems in the study of Ancient Tamilnadu as a student of the history of Tamil literature.

While I present these papers in book form, I am aware of the sweeping changes that have taken place in the historiography relating to Medieval Tamilnadu, especially in the study of the Cōla and the Vijayanagara periods of South Indian history. The researches of Burton Stein, Noboru Karashima, Subbarayalu, Kathleen Gough and other eminent scholars have changed our perceptions of the Cōla and the Vijayanagara polities. Unfortunately this is not true of the Cankam period.

While I say this I must hasten to admit the extremely useful role archaeologists and epigraphists have played in discovering new evidences, and integrating them into the overall history of Tamilnadu.

These papers constitute my efforts over a period of thirty years to understand and interpret the historical and social specifics of ancient Tamilnadu in terms of the general laws of human development.

I am fully aware that the paper on Cankam literature and archaeology is out dated and in recent times some very important historical evidences have come out. But my main concern is to highlight the historicity of that literary corpus.

Given the context within which I work now it is not possible for me to take these papers as the base and start working on a presentation of the social history of Tamilnadu bringing within the latest developments in this field. I have to be contented with presenting these papers in the hope that for a serious student of the social history ancient Tamil nadu what have been discussed and highlighted here constitute some of the important problems he/she will be called upon to tackle.

I am grateful to New Century Book House (P) Ltd for taking this up for publication.

My indebtedness to Tiri.R.Parthasarathy is very great. He has, in his introduction assessed these papers and put them in perspective. I wanted him to write the introduction and am glad he had done an exhaustive study of the papers. I thank him for it.

Thanks are due to various scholars with whom I have been associated over the past thirty years. The list would range from Romila Thapar to Kumari Jayawardena, George Hart to A.K.Ramanujan, Subbarayalu to Newton Gunasinghe, Vanamamalai to Kailasapathy George Thomson to Kanapathipillai. and V.I. Subramaniam to S.V. Shanmugam Needless to say that I alone am responsible for the views expressed in the papers.

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K.SIVATHAMBY

Introduction

This introductory note is pretty long. I tender an apology to the learned readers and the scholars for the undue liberty I have taken. It is not to show off my scholarship, to which I can lay no claim, being a non - academic. My aim, in the main, is to bring to focus the originality, the newness, the richness and the merit of the contribution made by the illustrious Sri Lankan Tamil Scholar Dr. Karthigesu Sivathamby to the understanding of the early Tamil society in the Cankam Age, and also to prove that such a qualitative contribution was possible because of the application of the historical materialist method of study.

Cankam texts which reflect the transition from tribalism to settled agrarian society mention five eco-types - mountains, forests and pastures, arid-dry and barren land, the plains and valleys of the great rivers and the coast, named kurinci, Mullai, Palai, Marutam and Neital respectively. These different eco-types were not only characterised by certain birds, animals, plants, flowers, musical tones as well as instruments and behavioural patterns but also by different types of economic activities and social structures as well as manners and customs. Marutam is an agrarian settlement; the cultivable land received in addition to natural irrigation, artificial irrigation by means of canals, tanks, lakes and wells; rice cultivation and production of surplus became possible in this eco-type. Settled agriculture led to growth of population, class formation and social stratification. Wealth accumulated. This attracted the Brahmins from the North who came down south and settled in different parts enjoying unlimited favours from the rulers. Dr.Kailasapathy uses the term "Physiographical regions" to denote the eco-types. (Tamil Heroic Poetry. p.12)

In the coastal - littoral - neithal region people lived by fishing and making salt. Trade was both internal and external. Fish and salt were exchanged for rice and milk products. External trade became, in course of time, very important for the coastal people. Cankam texts not only allude to the flourishing maritime trade but also to a large number of cities. Therefore, it is international maritime trade that served as a powerful impetus to urbanisation. Cankam texts shed light on state formation and emergence of political authority. All these aspects of social evolution and growth are sought to be examined by

the learned scholar with the help of Cankam texts and archaeological finds. His angle is new, approach is scientific and conclusions are strikingly original.

This collection consists of five essays contributed by the learned professor to some reputed journals/magazines: (1) Early South Indian Society and economy: the Tinai concept. (2) Organisation of Political authority in early Tamil Nadu (3) Development of aristocracy in ancient Tamil Society (4) Cankam literature and archaeology and (5) An analysis of the anthropological significance of the economic activities and conduct code ascribed to mullai Tinai.

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The first essay is "Early South Indian Society and Economy: the Tinai concept". Tinai concept is peculiar to Tamil Literature. Dr. Sivathamby rightly considers it as key to the understanding of ancient Tamil society and examines its role in social formation in early Tamil nadu. It is relevant to quote Dr.R.S.Sarma "Changes in social formation are slow to detect, but the failure or the disinclination of scholars to uncover them does not mean their absence. If we go by analogy, stratification in Indian Society should be viewed rather in the geological and archaeological sense than in terms of purity, rigidity and heredity". (Perspectives of social and economic history of early India. p.23). Broadly speaking Dr.Karthigesu Sivathamby has initiated the same line of study, independent of Sarma, with regard to the history of ancient Tamil nadu.

Scholars contended that the eco-type-physio-geographical division of landscape was more a poetic convention, far removed from reality - a figment of imagination of the poets. Scholars like P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar, V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar, M.Raghava Iyengar, Kamil Zvelebil and Xavier Thaninayakam are inclined to believe that physio-geographical division of landscape has something to do with the conceptualisation of the stages of historical evolution of the Tamil race from hunting to seafaring through agriculture. On the other hand Dr.N.Subramanian holds in his "Sangam Polity" "to import it in the historical space of Tamilakham and to suppose that all those changes occurred have in the same historical order may not

be quite correct" (p.247) Dr.K.K.Pillai is of the view that growth of civilisation in Tamilnadu, according to Tolkkappiyam, is from the hills to the forest regions. (A social history of the Tamils - vol. I.p.78). He lends support to the first view. Dr.Sivathamby examines the arguments of both the schools, in the light of dialectical and historical materialism which admits the existence of uneven social development in history, and arrives at the conclusion that in the past, during Cankam period, different stages of development could have existed in Tamilnadu and physio-geographical division of landscape more or less reflected such phases. In this he draws inspiration from the "Rise of Indian civilisation" by Raymond and Bridget Allchin and the "Personality of India" by Bendipudi subba Rao - all outstanding and eminent archaeologists.

Prof.S.Vaiyapuri Pillai is of the view that "Grammatical speculations had crystallised in to conventional terms" and with regard to Purananuru, "it is probable that the tinai and their sub-divisions, turais were added by the commentator about the twelfth or thirteenth century A.D. on the basis of the purapporul venba-malai- a work of the eleventh Century" (History of Tamil Language and literature 2nd Edn. p.41). As this grammatical work is quoted by a number of commentators from the 10th to 14th centuries A.D, it should have been composed much earlier, between the 6th to 8th century A.D. (Ilakkana Varalaru. Soma Ilavarasu p.87) It is safe to conclude that grammatical speculations and crystallisations of ideas of tinai and turai should have had a bearing on reality - manners, customs and usages. Tinai reflects the variations in the life styles of the people of various regions and also the economic organisations which they brought into being. Tinainilai Peyar represents the economic pursuit of the people of the respective region. Mullai was a pastoral region affording opportunities for expanding agriculture whereas the marutham, a growth over mullai, was a full fledged agricultural society flourishing in valleys and along river banks under irrigation facilities. Here there were greater prospects for political and social dynamism. In course of time areas got isolated from one another.

Earlier it was stated that the Cankam texts reflect the transition from tribalism to settled agrarian life. Dr.Sivathamby ably deals with

the early Tamil tribal society also. "Sanga Kala Sirappu peyarkal" by Dr. Dorai Aranganyar is more a descriptive account of the tribes which inhabited the various regions in the Cankam age. Dr. T.V. Mahalingam in "South Indian Polity" outlined only the political institutions in ancient Tamilnadu. But no attempt has been so far made by any scholar to trace tribal formation from a sociological angle. Dr. Sivathamby's attempt is the first in this direction. He has made a beginning. From a study of Tolkappiyam, Cilappatikaram and Kalithokai he arrives at the conclusion that the tribes had well-formed distinct regions distinguished by food, faith, flora, fauna, economic pursuits and 'Tinai nilai Peyar'. Going deeper in to the transitional phase from tribe state, to Dr. Sivathamby draws a distinction between Kurunila mannar, chieftains who ruled small lands or regions and ventar, the three monarchs and finds that in political administration there was decentralization, each monarch ruling undisturbed, independent of the other, and when the small lands / regions were brought under the suzerainty of another ventan economic life remained unaffected. All regions except the developed ones and maritime towns were self sufficient. Commodity production did not disturb the internal balance of economy; and the inter-regional trade relationship helped the continuity of the regional patterns.

As a result of the arrival of the Brahmins from the north, Dr. Sivathamby contends that Sanskritisation of social life turned these regional societies in to caste groups, with their ritual isolation and this helped the continuity of the system. He examines the concept of Kuti - such as family, clan and settlement as indicated by Tinainilai peyar. Marr is of the view that Tinainilai peyar has no similarity in other Dravidian languages but the Tinai behavioural pattern has no parallel but is peculiar to Tamil. In Dr. Sivathamby's view, while Tinais reflect different modes of production and their respective social structures, Tinai mayakkam suggests that one behavioural pattern of one region may take place in different region but patterns do not blend because of uneven development of regions as well as social values. It also suggests mobility of people from one region to another and inter action among the people. Yet, compartmentalized socio economic life would not have permitted free mixing without taboos; this would have helped formation of different castes and sub-castes and later day proliferation.

Dr. Sivathamby discusses the issue of social formation in early Tamil Nadu.

In the year, 1961, the great British Marxist thinker E.J. Hobsbawm brought out, with a long introduction, Karl Marx's "Pre-capitalist Economic formations". This event evoked a world wide discussion on the Asiatic mode of production - a mode hinging on the theory of so called "Oriental despotism" and treated as an exception to the Marxists' classical pattern of primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism. Romila Thapar describes the characteristics of the Asiatic mode of production in her "Ancient Indian's social history" as follows: "The absence of privately owned land, since all land was state owned; predominantly village economy, the occasional town functioning more as a military camp than as a commercial centre; the nearly self sufficient nature of this village economy with each isolated village meeting its agricultural needs and manufacturing essential goods; the lack of much surplus for exchange after the collection of a large percentage of the surplus by the state; the complete subjugation of the village communities to the state made possible by state control of major public works, most importantly irrigation, the extraction of a maximum percentage of the surplus from the village communities enabled the despotic ruler to live in considerable luxury" (P.7). All these would mean that in Asiatic society there was no social class capable of effecting any change. The theories of oriental despotism and unchanging nature of Indian Society popularised by the British administrators held away for more than a century and influenced the greatest thinker Karl Marx also. He believed that the Indian society remained unchanged throughout history till the coming of the British. The concept of Asiatic society was discussed for about three decades by the Marxist scholars all over the world and the Indian Marxists have rejected it giving preference to the classical marxist pattern of social development. They afford at least the status of the first phase of feudalism. Dr. Sivathamby says carefully "an examination of the economic organisation implied in the Tinai system reveals that it is the Asiatic mode operating at a very primary level".

Dr. Sivathamby finds that in Marutham, growth of agriculture gave rise to extensive development of private land holdings and the

division as vinaivalars and others indicates the emergence of a class society and the availability of economic surplus. The basis of the economic power could be deduced from reference to storing of paddy in large quantities. Romila Thapar contends: "The conquest of territory occupied by hunter, gatherers or primitive cultivators would, if brought under plough cultivation, have resulted in the conversion of such groups into castes and the agriculturists would take on a peasant status" (From lineage to state p.105). In this background of economic change affecting status, Dr.Sivathamby brings out that virali became a harlot, and harlotry became a socially acceptable outlet for extra merital indulgence, with the harlot having no property rights in family succession and her relationship with the hero causing ural (உறல்). He is of the view that Tinai concept is a clue to pre-history of Tamilnadu. Tinai began to lose its significance in the later phase of Cankam period and lost its efficacy totally in the Pallava Period.

3

Having exhaustively dealt with certain aspects of pre - history of Tamil nadu, Dr.Sivathamby attempts to investigate in to the problems of state formation, in "Organisation of Political authority in Early Tamilnadu". It is a departure from the conventional approach, and the first study in this field.

There was a time in human history when a society had no state. This society was guided by social codes which were the binding force; many of them were impartial and humane; precisely because of this some survive and continue to have relevance and validity even today despite passage of time and vast social changes.

What exactly is the state? What is its significance as well as importance? How relevant is the study of state formation in Tamilnadu in the bye-gone past to evaluate its cultural heritage? What are the sources for such a study? Dr.Sivathamby throws light on these problems and indicates the direction in which future researches can proceed.

Modern Science was founded by the men of renaissance. It began in Italy in the fifteenth Century with Leonardo Da Vinci

(1452-1519), and later Nicolos Copernicus (1473-1543) of Poland and spread to France, Holland and England from where it travelled to the United States of America. At the same time, Christian tradition laid great emphasis on ideas and ideals. The monarch was considered the symbol of culture and political order. The Roman catholic church was all powerful; it exercised, in the name of religion considerable influence on the monarchs and wanted also to enjoy absolute political power and authority. Thus arose the conflict between the church and monarchy. At a certain stage, the monarch began to assert his independence from the church and the supremacy over his subjects. The secular rulers who wanted to achieve "absolute power needed a symbol" which could negate the authority of the church and inspire awe and be clothed with a corporate 'halo'. Thus arose the interest in state. In the age of absolutism, Hobbes and Pufendorf developed a political theory based on the greater concept of 'Polis' which was considered as an embodiment of the culture of the ancient Greeks. Nineteenth Century threw eminent scientists and thinkers whose works played a great role in shaping the destiny of the world. Henry Morgon wrote in 1877 'Ancient Society' in the USA and it influenced Frederick Engels. Engels wrote "Origin of family, private property and state" which is accepted as the guide for the study of societies by the modern scholars like Morton Fried, Claessen, Skalnik Hindess, Hirst, Krader and many others.

For his study of state formation in early TamilNadu, Dr.Sivathamby relies on Ettuthokai and Pathupattu. He assigns Ettuthokai to circa 100BC - 250/300 AD and Tolkappiyam Porulatikaram, Tirukkural and seven pattus (except Kalithokai, paripatal and Tirumurugarrupada) and Cilappatikaram to circa 436 - 560/590 AD following the illustrious Scholar S.Vaiyapuri Pillai. S.Vaiyapuri Pillai assigned Cilappatikaram to 825 AD; but Dr.Sivathamby assigns it to 5th century AD in his "Ancient Tamil Drama". Dr.V.I.Subramanian wrote in a review article in Indian Express dated 9-6-1990 as follows "In a recent article in the Dravidian Encyclopaedia, K.G.Krishnan formerly the chief Epigraphist, Government of India, Mysore, observes that a line of Cilappatikaram has been referred to by one Tevan Cattan (a painter) on composition of chart in an epigraph dated paleographically to belong to the third century A.D. The Gajabahu synchronism will

be another pointer to fix the date of the work as Second Century AD. This will also help to date Kural, a couplet of which is quoted in Cilappatikaram. Sangam literature too will have an earlier date because of Pugalur and other brahmi inscriptions. The serialisation of the Sangam classics which SVP himself changed in his English work will now have to be changed". Therefore it is evident that the entire periodisation of Cankam literature awaits a complete and thorough revision.

Scholars have contended that society passes from tribalism to settled agriculture and class society. Dr.Durai Aranganar is of the view that the names of the chieftains and kings are often the names of their tribes or clans (The surnames of the Sangam Age - Literary and Tribal p.94) Romila Thapar contends "Tribal society in Indian context is ambiguous and includes a range of cultures from stone age hunters and gatherers to peasant cultivators" (From lineage to state p.18). These statements would imply that the Tamil society remained tribal for a very long period (the survivals of tribalism continue even today in Indian Society).

The state, according to the Frederick Engels, is marked by taxes, territory, public force and public officials. The essential characteristics are territory, public power with adjunct institutions and collection of taxes. Public power does not coincide with the interests of the population: it rises above the population and exercises control over it, in the interest of the economically dominant class. This power consists of armed man, and all other institutions and instruments of coercion, the economically dominant class becomes the politically dominant class and holds down and exploits the oppressed class. (Marx and Engels: Selected works, Vol III p.328.) "The state is needed for the protection of the family and private property. Families having property organise themselves into a class and appropriate a larger share of the resources of production and surplus produce. In course of time they develop a power apparatus to establish, maintain and preserve their privileges and to keep down the dispossessed and disadvantaged sections of society. Government may come and go, but the state remains forever". (R.S.Sharma: stages in state formation in India. Social Science Probings vol.3 No.1.P.1). Dr.Sivathamby examines the opinions of several scholars before accepting and adopting any one, adhering to the scientific formulation of Engels on state, by and large.

Dr.Sivathamby begins his study with Tirukkural as the base and works backwards. The credentials of this great work as the guiding light are truly great, according to him. Tirukkural is an ethical - moral treatise whereas Arthasasthra is devoted wholly to state craft. This accounts for the difference in the treatment of the organs of state. Arthasasthra includes the swamin-the king in the saptanga whereas Tirukkural places 'Arasan' outside the organs of state. Romila is of the view that swamin carries a much stronger meaning of possession and ownership than Rajan or its synonyms such as bhupathi, bhogta, nr pati etc., (From lineage to state p.129). In Tirukkural state is seen in the person of the king, according to Dr.Sivathamby and this aspect is crucial to the understanding of pre and post valluvan Tamil polity. This means that the ethical element of kural dominated throughout Tamil polity in later years. Dr.R.S. Sharma is of the view, "In so far as the practical and concrete nature of the state is concerned, its ancient Indian definition is strikingly similar in several respects to the definition of the state set forth by Engels, who emphasises the class nature of the state". (Aspects of political ideas and institutions in Ancient India - p.39). This applies to Tirukkural polity also despite the above difference.

Dr.Sivathamby points out that kuti is not analogous to janapada but it indicates lineage or extended family. Tirukkural treats it as equivalent to kulam which meant caste in later days and formed the social units within Arasu. Janapada acquired different meanings such as settlement, territory, kingdom, assembly of the inhabitants of the country in the brahminical sources and a corporate body of the brahmin-kshatrya combine in the buddhist sources. On the other hand Tiruvalluvar offers different connotation to kuti and devotes a separate chapter to Nadu.

In Sanskrit kosa means wealth but in Tirukkural kul means food which enables kuti to subsist. It is the duty of the Arasan, in Tirukkural to provide at least the minimum food for bare subsistence to save them from starvation. Hence, Dr.Sivathamby feels rightly "reading kosa in to kul is ultravires of the historical situation". In his opinion Tiruvalluvar places the tribes outside the state limits and brings developed agrarian regions within its compass. Tiruvalluvar speaks of an advanced stratified class society.

Tinai tradition has twin aspects, gender and military and reflects the ecological basis of human life. According to Dr.Sivathamby, in Mullai and Marutam possibility of the rise of complex societies demanding efficient political administration existed. Among the two, Marutam where productive forces were more developed, needed better administration. Thus Kilavans, mannars and arasars rose from Kurinci, Mullai and Marutam respectively and existed side by side. He culls out the words used in the Cankam Texts to denote political authority, like Irai, Ko, Kilavan, Mannan, (mannavan), ventu (ventar) Arasu (Arasan) Kurucil (Kuricil) and korram, discusses the distinct shades of meanings acquired in usage and fixes them in the hierarchical order. Developing the ideas of Marr and Champaka Lakshmi on the role of velir in fostering agricultural prosperity in megalithic sites and offering gifts/ munificence to the learned he says that they could become politically powerful because of the strong economic base developing their own myths of their descent. He traces the origin of mannan - kingship in pillayattu - a ceremony of investiture of political authority in a young man who defeated the raiders and established the authority of the clan.

Dr.Sivathamby notes the steady growth of political authority from mannan onwards; mannan lived in guarded fortification and exercised authority over a territory where he developed agriculture; he was no longer the leader of a group of persons; he performed the distributive duties; he separated himself from the people and the distinction between the ruler and the ruled became a reality. Ventan emerged above mannan; it marks the inchoate stage in the process and evolution of this most powerful and militant personality capable of possessing an army - not a standing army - and assigning tasks. Ventar refers mainly to Muvendar, Chera Chola Pandyas who alone had crowns and territories with chieftains and groups under them. Redistributive duties were performed from 'Irukkai' (Throne); surram is tribal; and avai as well as vettavai is later development. The most important point Dr.Sivathamby makes out is 'ventu' is an indigenous development and arasu is secondary formation. In his view arasu is marked by its association with a standing army and completed only with the four fold divisions of the army.

Dr.Sivathamby's discussion on the origin of the word 'Arasan' is significant. Tamil Lexicon says that it was derived from the Sanskrit

"Rasan". This upset the Tamil Scholars. A serious discussion followed. Apart from Tamil purists, a few reputed scholars also got disturbed. Dr.M.A.Durai Aranganar observes in "Pasippini Maruthuvan" as follows: "A few scholars who were mad after sanskrit used to claim that all Tamil words were of Sanskrit origin. Many reputed Tamil Scholars were silent because of fear or lack of influence; Some even thought that a good admixture of sanskrit words will add to the greatness of Tamil" (p.128) "The sanskrit fanatics contended that the word arasu was derived from the sanskrit word 'Rajan'. They conveniently ignore the fact that in Tolkappiyam and Cankam texts words like Arasan, Arasi, Arasar, Arasiyar are found. Grammatically such derivation is impossible. Canarese and Malayalam, though not Telugu, continue to use this word - Arasu. As such it is preposterous to say that it was derived from Sanskrit" (p.128-141). Dr.Sivathamby is certain that borrowing by direct contact with Sanskrit is not possible. With regard to prakrit sources, arasu and arasan would have existed on the analogy of Murasu and Muraisu, but he cautions drawing attention to the word "Araiya" found on an inscribed potsherd traced at Arikamedu.

Some of the features brought out by Dr.Sivathamby are (1) sporting of tuft by persons with political authority (2) prominent role of the hydraulic system in the agrarian society (3) the hero after separation from the heroine journeying for wealth - Gold in Karnataka. (4) existence of merchant guilds but non availability of information about their actual involvement in society (5) character of the classes differed from region to region and absence of any confrontational hostilities (6) inability of the inchoate authority to develop a thorough administrative machinery and (7) many pre - state features and practices continued due to absence of internal pressures.

Brick built dyeing vats have been excavated at Uraiur and Arikamedu and they belong to 1st - 3rd centuries AD. Textile industry flourished in the towns. Urbanisation and prosperous foreign trade have brought in to existence several classes of workers and artisans like carpenters, wood workers, goldsmith, blacksmiths, weavers, dyers, jewellers, oil mongers, fisherman, ship builders, and perfumers. Technology and production forces should have developed in this background, and yielded greater surplus.

In this period of state formation which stands between the chieftdom and the mature state, inequality should have been intensified, because of 'irrigation' agriculture and urbanisation. To sum up we may quote from Karl Marx: "The antagonism between towns and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilisation, from tribe to state, from locality to nation, and runs through the whole history of civilisation to the present day... Here first became manifest the division of population in to two great classes, which is directly based on the division of labour and on the instruments of production" (Pre-capitalist Economic formation Ed.Hobsbawm London 1964.p.127)

Many of the ideas Dr.Sivathamby sets out in this article deserve to be enriched and carried forward by the future generation of research scholars.

The third article is "The development of Aristocracy in Ancient Tamil Nadu".

Aristotle defines aristocracy as a "government formed of the best men absolutely" - a definition which implies that aristocracy is based on merit, virtue and wealth. In monarchy virtue is centred in one individual whereas in aristocracy it differed among several individuals. Edmund Burke considers aristocracy as a "divinely ordained scheme of governing society". The French Revolution put on end to aristocracy. When Toqueville wrote Democracy in America" in the nineteenth century aristocracy was already on the way out making room for democracy.

Cankam literature provides evidence according to Dr.Sivathamby, "not only for the spatial or regional development but also to place them in some historical sequence". But the task is very difficult. In PURANANURU 43 monarchs (Cera 18, Cola 13 and Pandya 12) and 47 chiefs are mentioned. Many of them should have ruled in succession stretching over a long period. Emperor Asoka's 13th Rock edict mentions the Three Tamil monarchies and Satyaputras (3rd C.B.C.). Hathigumpa inscription of Kharavela (2nd CBC) refers to the one hundred and thirteen year old confederacy of Tamil kings.

From these facts we may infer that states should have come in to being long before and the political frontiers should already have been drawn. The Mauryan state was highly centralised with arms extending to administrative and economic functions. Though Tamilnadu was outside its territorial jurisdiction, the Mauryan state should have exercised considerable influence on Tamilnadu - its economy and polity.

Chieftains were identified by regions and/or profession, on the basis of ecological factors. Tolkappiyam prescribes that only men of property should be sung in praise. Cankam texts speak of kizhamai (right of ownership), Tiraicheri (Treasury) and store house of paddy. Under chieftdom production of surplus assumes greater importance than the techniques of production. In agriculture society had progressed from swidden cultivation in early settlements to advanced stage of plough cultivation of huge and large lands. Chieftains were the distributors of wealth. In Mullai and Marutam social wealth was also in the form of Cattle and it got accumulated by cattle raids and plunder as testified in Tolkappiyam. These are the points stressed by Dr.Sivathamby.

Scholars like Champakalakshmi and Sudharshan Seniviratua are inclined to treat vels and velirs as the earliest agrarian elite in south India. According to Dr.Sivathamby, as political entities the vels ruled small territories and lived in secluded and fortified areas. The muventar ruled from capitals situated on river banks. Chieftains were mostly the feudatories of muventar. Under them agrarian society began to take firm roots. Stressing the agrarian growth Dr.Sivathamby points out rice has been the indigenous crop cultivated in the Peninsula right from the iron age. With growing rice cultivation and foreign trade, the old tribal society got completely shattered and new class owning property emerged. This is reflected in literature also. Institution of harlotry developed. Alienation, isolation and aloofne contributed to intensification of class differences. The rich led a high style of life; they were conferred titles to accord with it. Brahminis exercised considerable influence at high social levels in urban centres

The chalcolithic culture found in the geographical regions of Rigveda indicates pre-Aryan settlements; and Allchins identify the vedic age with iron age in the north. The date of arrival of the

Aryans to the south is uncertain But K.A.N. Shastri is of the view that their major thrust was only after 600 B.C.. By that time the vedic gods like Indira, vayu, Agni etc faded out and gods like Siva and vishnu entered the pantheon of Hindu gods. D.D.Kosambi is of the view that the Aryan advance to south was backed with advanced technique. Bongard Levin and Vigasin are of the view "Great importance is attached to the independent development of southern India where states arose prior to the establishment of close contacts with the north of the country and independently of the Indo-Aryan influence... there is contention about the view of Nilakanta Shastri and other Indian scholars who exaggerate the dependence of Southern India's development on the Indo-Aryan states of the North" (Image of India.p.172)

Dr.Sivathamby traces the economic causes for the rise of the Brahmins in the Royal courts, disgraceful fall of the bards to the position of pimps and the transformation of the Virali/Patini in to a harlot. The agrarian class society provided the background for such changes. According to RS.Sharma Indian feudalism begins with the land grants. D.D.Kosambi is of the view that in the south feudalism could produce only two castes the brahmins and the sudras.

Cankam literature is replete with accounts of maritime trade which Tamilnadu had with foreign countries, with the Far East and Rome. Vincent A.Smith writes: "The Tamil states maintained powerful navies and were visited by ships from both east and west, which brought merchants of various places eager to buy pearls, pepper, beryls and other choice commodities of India and to pay for them with the gold, silver and artware of Europe..... considerable colonies of Roman subjects engaged in trade were settled in Southern India during the first two centuries of our era." (Early History of India P.461-462). Pliny remarked about India "The sole mother of precious stones," "the great producer of costly gems", "no year in which India did not drain the Roman empire of a hundred million sesterces", "So dearly do we pay for our luxury and own women" (quoted in S.C.Jha's Studies in the development of capitalism in India P.64). Most of the 127 finds of Roman coins are in places in Peninsular India. Wine amphorae and glazed arretine wares were found in Arikamedu excavations. Periplus refers to the

employment of condemned criminals in pearl fisheries in the south. In coastal areas naturally ware houses, ship building factories and workshops should have existed and various types of artisans and workers should have been dependent on them. Cilappadikaram makes a reference to this while describing Puhar. Mangulan inscription of 2nd-181 C.BC speaks of merchant guilds. The affluence of the mercantile communities enabled them to compete with kings in acts of munificence as well as benevolence and also making grants to monasteries. None of the artisans, of course, seem to have occupied high places in society. Following the two castes - Brahmins and sudras - theory of Kosambi, Dr.Sivathamby contends that excepting the vellalas of the reverine region all other castes were largely tribal and this factor accounts for the non-Brahmin and brahmin dichotomy and mutual animosity throughout history. Though the vellala occupied, in such a society, the very low second he needed the panchama lower below to work for him in the fields. Artisans like potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, painters, dyers, architects and builders flourished along with the vallalas, but their importance appears to be negligible. According to Dr.Sivathamby men who owned landed property in rural areas and the prosperous traders in urban areas formed the aristocracy in ancient Tamilnadu and among the aristocrats extra - marital indulgence became the commonest activity - a pastime of the exploiting class.

Cirupanarruppatai which mentions the names of the seven chieftains distinguished for munificence and is assigned to the 3rd century AD marks the end of the Cankam Period. It was followed by the Kalabra interregnum, hitherto described as the dark period by some scholars. Latest researches show that kalabras made substantial contribution to Tamil Language and culture and that they belonged to different families which settled in different parts of Tamilnadu. Didactic literature came out in this period. An extensive and popular form of ethical teaching is exemplified by Tiruukkural. According to Tiruvalluvár, state is one which is endowed with inexhaustible supply of produces and men of ability and riches" and "free from internal hostility and warring groups". These according to Dr.Sivathamby indicate the existence of powerful groups exercising control over economic and political affairs.

In the post Cankam period economy underwent thorough changes. Class differences got intensified, as reflected in Cilappadikaram. In addition to Brahmins, the Jain and Buddhist manasteries became recipients of land grants and are brought within the orbit of feudalism, In the words of Romila Thapar "The pallava period witnessed the gradual assimilation of the Aryan pattern with Dravidian culture and "the period of 900-1300 AD marked the ascendancy of the south" (A history of India p.167).

Dr.Sivathamby has traced in this article the economic background for transition from Cankam period to the first phase of feudal Tamil nadu.

5

The fourth essay is "Cankam literature and Archaeology".

Archaeological investigation is a joyous and adventurous journey in to the past of man and his labour on stone, bone, wood, mud and marble. The great works of Gordon childe "Man makes himself" and "what happened in history" brought awakening among historians and chartered a new course. Prof.George Thomson inaugurated the study of ancient Greek society with the help of archeology and Homeric poems. It is quite natural that Dr.Sivathamby, being a student of George Thomson, had ventured to "reinterpret the legacy" of Tamil nadu "in the light of Marxism" as the teacher did to Greek society in his "Studies in ancient Greek society"

The article is on the historicity of Tamil Cankam and the archaeological evidence in support of it.

The story of Tamil Cankam was considered a "fabulising imagination of later scholar", and "a daring literary forgery" (K.N.Sivaraja Pillai in the chronology of early Tamils) and therefore, unbelievable because of the exaggerated account of the work of the three Cankams found in the commentary on 'Irayanar kalavyal'. This roused anger in one section among the scholars and an enthusiasm to investigate and find out the truth in another serious section among them. The debate continued unabated for over two generation of scholars, literary giants and historians. Two articles one by

M.Sundaram and another by V.T.Chellam "Sangam Age" and the "Age of the Sangam - Reassessment" respectively in the "Historical Heritage of the Tamils" (IITS) attempt to set at rest the controversy.

The Cankam literature otherwise known as muventar literature, in the opinion of KAN Sastri contains poems realistic and prima facie trustworthy. Dr.Kailasapathy found that in theme, bardic tradition and techniques of verse making Cankam literature is heroic. Dr.Sivathamby notes that in a society which has reached a considerable degree of state organisation but had no system of writing, transmission of tradition is only oral and this is the case with Cankam literature." "Oral tradition is one important form of historical methodology."

Dr. Sivathamby marks the specific features of Tamil heroic poetry which distinguish it from other comparable and better known heroic literatures. In the age of history, a single hero or a few heroes emerge and replace the collective authority of the tribe marking the dissolution of the tribal authority and the beginning of the feudalistic or mercantalist rule. At that stage the king or monarch becomes the sole owner of all lands. The whole process is reflected in the Cankam literature which contains certain historical data not arranged in chronological order and which has survived because of political causes. In order to establish the historicity of Cankam literature, Dr.Sivathamby is of the view, that not only the corpus of the Cankam literature which stretches over a period of a few centuries, but also archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics should be given adequate importance and that Historical archaeology would be incomplete without epigraphy and numismatics. A critical historian adopts a number of methods and tools to get at the truth or have a fact confirmed.

Among the archaeologists, Dr.Sivathamby relies more on the opinions of Allchins - Raymond and Bridget . Allchins have dealt with the cultural phase of Tamilnadu from early stone age to the iron age in their famous book "Birth of Indian civilisation" Raymond Allchin's admirable work "Neolithic cattle keepers of South India" inaugurates the study of ancient South India from economic angle. They are perhaps the first to bring out the relationship between the metallic iron age - the Roman trade - introduction of writing - and

the Cankam Age. During the last fifty years a number of excavations have been carried out in Tamilnadu - Uraiyur, Korkai, Kaverippumpattinam and the remains have corroborated the economic prosperity, in agriculture and in particular trade found mentioned in the Cankam poetry. In this background Dr.Sivathamby points out that porulvayirpirivu one of the forms of separation in search of wealth by the hero is attested by the archaeological discovery of gold mines in the Deccan, beyond the Venkata hills, which attracted the people from Tamilnadu. He has admiration for Iravatham Mahadevan, Mylai Seeni Venkatasamy, R.Nagasami and R.Panneer selvam who have brought out substantial information from Cankam inscriptions by placing them in historical setting. The information relates mainly to the political, social and economic conditions of Tamil nadu.

Iravatham Mahadevan is of the view that Tamil became a written language adopting the Brahmi script by about the 2nd, CBC; Tamil orthography passed through experimental stages for about two centuries and when once it took roots it spread rapidly leading to literary efflorescence. In this background, Dr.Sivathamby emphasises, "heroic" characterisation of certain Cankam poetry assumes great importance. Dr.Kailasapathy's "Tamil Heroic poetry" speaks about the oral tradition of Cankam poetry. Dr.Sivathamby points out that while Allchins found Roman trade being echoed in Cankam poetry Mahadevan advocates that the rapid development of written language was triggered by the religious and cultural ferment generated by the Buddhist and Jain creeds and the increasing prosperity brought about by Indo-Roman trade.

Nagasamy examines the statement made in the commentary on Irayanar Akapporul to the effect there were three Madurais - all seats of the Pandyan kings and says that archaeological survey could not establish it. On the other hand Clarence Maloney is of the view that the story of three capitals cannot be dismissed as untrue altogether, though in the present state of knowledge nothing categorical can be said. Dr.Sivathamby leaves it to underwater archeology to throw light (as vaigai has changed its course a number of times)

Dr.Sivathamby has left numismatics of the Cankam period untouched. R.Krishnamurthy has done commendable work in

Sangakala Cholar Nanayankal "(1986)", Pandiyan Peruvazhuti Nanayankal "(1987)" on tracing the growth of coinage in the Cankam period and thereafter. Before closing, the opinion expressed by Mylai Seeni Venkatasamy in "Sangakalattu Brahmi kalvettukkal" deserves our attention. He says, "Some scholars say that only after the adoption of Brahmi script literature in Tamil came into existence and before that neither writing nor literature existed. Such a contention is wrong. In fact Tamil script should have existed before Brahmi script came and got sidelined and later destroyed after the coming of the Brahmi script. . . . research seeking truth is a continuous process". (p.8,9, 26 & 27)

6

The fifth essay is "An analysis of the anthropological significance of the economic activities and conduct - code ascribed to mullai tinai".

Dr. Sivathamby assumes the role of a cultural anthropologist in this essay and deals with the activities of the people inhabiting mullai - parkland bordering forest - under ainthinai scheme. He finds support to the classification of ancient Tamilnadu in five ecological regions from modern authorities like Dr.A.Aiyappan and Sir Patrick Geddes. In fact it can be inferred that the latter's "Theory of social causation" has enthused Dr.Sivathamby to restudy the ainthinai concept in this article.

The Cankam age is identified with the megalithic period which is marked by the use of iron. Elliot Smith said that the Phoenicians transmitted megalithic culture in the west in 800 BC. Haimendorf is of the view that the Dravidian megalithic builders migrated to south India by about 500 B.C. from the Mediterranean. D.H.Gordon is of the view that the immigration should have taken place between 322 B.C. and 500 AD. But these contentions stand repudiated by Indian historians. On the other hand, Prof. Gowland, the great metallurgist, expresses the opinion that the smelting of iron may have been hit upon by sheer accident in peninsular India, where according to the best minds, the iron industry is more ancient than Europe. The stone age men were primarily living on hills and mountain fastnesses, and on the fringes of rich forests. Only after the discovery of iron

ore it is reasonable to suppose that primeval man took to the forest and made it his habitat. It was iron culture that permitted the people of the hills to pass on to forest life". (L.A.Krishna Iyer Dating the past in Kerala" in Anthropology on the March p.79). This brings out the fact that "mullai" played an important role in the agricultural development of Tamilnadu as kurinci, Mullai and Marutam mark the ascending stages of such a process.

Cankam poems refer to "slash and burn cultivation" in Mullai and herdsmen becoming agriculturists. (Narrinai). Settlements begin in Mullai and in the opinion of Dr.Sivathamby "This stage marks an important phase in the evolution of private property and the state". Domestication and rearing of cattle preceded agriculture. Agriculture needed settled life. A number of settlements arose and intersettlement rivalry was marked by raids. Storing of agricultural produce, and guarding and fortifying the settlements led to the beginning of kingship. In support of this view, Dr.Sivathamby quotes from P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar and Vittiyanantham. The ayar, the ko, the owner of cattle became the king ultimately.

The conduct code - irutal - signifies the return of the herdsman after a raid or a fight in a battle and the waiting of the lady with patience. Sociologists and historians are of the view that it reflects the first division of labour between man and women and the stage when male domination over female was established. The woman was no longer free but had to wait for the orders from malés. She had to preserve her conjugal fidelity to the husband and protect her karpu - chastity. Patiarachal society emerged. Dr.Sivathamby disagrees with the formulation made by P.T.S. Iyengar that the institution of Karpu form of marriage and the development of private property led to the patriarchal form of society and says that the reverse process that patriarchal form of society led to the institution of karpu is correct.

7

The five essays presented in this collection are original in many ways. The method is historical materialism: the approach is multidimensional - anthropological, sociological, economic and historical. The main theme is that the concept of Tinai is the key

to the understanding of ancient Tamil Society - formation, structure and growth of institutions like family, private property and the state - of the Cankam period. Dr.Sivathamby has accomplished twin tasks: 1) proving the historicity of Cankam with the help of not only literature but also other sources hitherto neglected and 2) outlining in brief the life styles of the people and the growth of institutions under class and state formations.

Traditionalists believe in the story of three Cankams strictly according to the account contained in the commentary on Irayanar Akapporul. Some modernists deny altogether the existence of Cankam and hold that the account is a figment of imagination. Some believe that only one Cankam existed and the period covers a few centuries. Some others believe that three Cankams existed in succession within the period covering these centuries. Latest researches concede that Cankam did exist; may be under different names. Many facts are yet to be brought out and proved. Future scholars will increasingly rely on sources other than Cankam literature. Dr.Sivathamby is rightly the pioneer in this direction.

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Early South Indian Society and Economy

I

The Tinai Concept

The most ancient of the available Tamil literature is referred to as *Caṅkam* literature—literature of the Academies¹. This literary corpus collected in two Anthologies—*Eṭṭutokai* (Eight Anthologies) and *Pattupāṭṭu* (Ten Songs)² is generally taken as belonging to a period from about 100 AD. to 250 A D.³ Being the most ancient non-Sanskritized Indian literature, its literary conventions are rather unique and for that very reason has become the subject of study by scholars who wish to delineate the non-Aryan and pre-Aryan strands in Indian culture.⁴

The literary conventions of this corpus are codified in a grammatical work known as *Tolkāppiyam* (Tol) after the name of the author, Tolkāppiyar. The forms and the contents found in *Caṅkam* literature are given in the third book of this work in the form of prescriptive rules.⁵ The date of this work has been much disputed but one could safely agree with the date assigned by Vaiyapuripillai, to the latter half of the fifth century A D.⁶ Tolkāppiyar has always been considered the ultimate authority on Tamil literary matters and held as the prescriptive authority for linguistic usage and as the fountainhead for literary forms.

Caṅkam literature has a primary thematic classification: *akam* and *puram*. *Akam* (the interior) deals with love in both pre marital and marital life and *puram* (the exterior) deals with military and non-love themes. Each of these themes is given a further content classification. Both love and military affairs are related to the five ecological regions. It is held that a particular love or military activity could be described as characteristic of a particular region. The regions and the behaviour patterns are referred to by the names of flowers peculiar to the regions.

Tolkāppiyar in his attempt to analyse the poetic conventions describes and discusses in detail the literary convention which correlates particular behaviour patterns in love and military matters with the particular ecological regions.⁷ Concerned as he was with only the poetic idiom of the day, he describes in an order of ascending importance the geophysical aspects of each region, the flora and the fauna, the economic activities, the religion and the diet of each region and behaviour pattern peculiar to each region. The love and the military behaviour patterns when schematized and set out by the grammarians seem to emerge as conduct-codes prescribed to each region.

The following tables indicate the regions, the identifying flowers and the particular behaviour:

A. FOR LOVE ACTIVITY

REGION	FLOWER	BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS
1. Hills	Kuṟiñci (<i>Sirobilanthus</i>)	Sexual union and those that lead to it
2. Pasturelands and open terraces	Mullai (<i>Fasminium Trichotomum</i>)	Wife patiently waiting for husband who is away and those that lead to it
3. Riverine agrarian	Marutām (<i>Terminalia Tomentosa</i>)	Wife sulking over husband visiting harlot and those that lead to it.
4. Littoral	Neytal (<i>Nymphae lotus alpa</i>)	Agony of separation and those that lead to it.
5. Uncultivated dry region	Pālai (<i>Mismusops Kauki</i>)	Separation from family and those that lead to it.

B. FOR MILITARY ACTIVITY

REGION	FLOWER	MILITARY ACTIVITY
1. Hill	Veti (<i>Iccova Coccinea</i>)	Capture and recapture of cattle

The action of the defenders is sometimes treated separately and referred to by the flower *karantai* (*Spheranthus Indicus*).

2. Pastureland	Vañci (<i>Calamus Rotang</i>)	Guarding and raiding the settlement.
3. Agrarian	Uliñai (<i>Cardiospermum Halicacobum</i>)	Guarding the attacking the fortifications. The action of the defenders is sometimes restated separately and referred to by the flower Nocci (<i>Vitex Negundo</i>).
4. Littoral	Tumpai (<i>Leucas Asphera</i>)	Fight to finish
5. Dry	Vakai (<i>Abizzia Lebek</i>)	Victory

This tradition of associating each region with a particular behaviour pattern is seen in the Caṅkam texts themselves (AN 274; NT 142; CPA 11, 29-31 and 286; MK 270, 285, 300-1, 314, 326; MPK 330, 335).

The word that is used to denote this concept is "ṭiṇai" (ṭiṇai). Tolkāppiyar himself never defines the term. Ilampūranar (Ilam) of the thirteenth Century A D, the earliest of the glossators, tends to interpret the term as meaning "general theme or content".⁸ Naccinaṟkkiniyar (Nac), another commentator (15-16th Century A D) categorically states that the term "ṭiṇai" means behaviour or conduct.⁹

II

Even a passing glance at this tradition would not fail to register in one's mind the immense importance of this concept in the study of socioliterary relationships. To Tolkāppiyar the literary aspect of the convention is more important than the social and the geographical aspects (Akat 3 and 53). As for the commentators, the social implications of this tradition had no interest at all. Naccinarkiniyar's commentary on Tol. Akat. 3 reveals that there had been no tradition of

sociological inquiry into this problem.¹⁰ All in all, one finds oneself in complete agreement with Raghava Iyengar's comment that "no acceptable cause is shown either in the text or in the commentaries of Tol. for assigning the conduct codes to the respective regions".¹¹

But modern scholars did not fail to highlight the social significance of this tradition. Pandit Raghava Iyengar in his effort to find the relevance of the behaviour patterns and to establish the regional necessity for each of the behaviour patterns, touches upon the contemporary social needs that would have warranted the development of these conventions.¹² That effort does not form a coherent analysis but it is gratifying to note that such a traditional scholar like him was not averse to making sociological inquiries into literature.

Scholars with a western intellectual training have expounded the social and historical significance of the Tinai Concept. P T Srinivasa Iyengar saw in this concept an illustration of the evolution of civilization: "All these five kinds of natural regions are found in the Tamil country, though on a small scale and as the South Indian spread from region to region he developed the stages of culture which each region was calculated to produce."¹³ According to him, the Tinai concept reveals "the spread of the Tamils from the hills and mountains to the low-lying plains."¹⁴

To Ramachandra Dikshithar the Tinai concept was a clue to the pre-history of South India:

"South India, in pre-historical days, was peopled by a number of tribes, of whom five could be distinguished according to the geographical classification of the soil... The Tamil social organisation which had its distinctive characteristics born of environment, as anthropology holds, is unique in having realized the five different stages of human life in pre-historical times."¹⁵

Kamil Zvevabli, in an introductory essay on Tamil literature, expressed this idea using the anthropologists' and the historians' idiom thus:

"It is possible that the division reflects the historical immigration of pre-Dravidian and proto-Tamil population from the hills and jungles to the fertile plains and to the seaboard or in other words the development from the neolithic hunter, through the intermediate stage of the keeper of the flocks, to the settled tiller of the soil and fisherman."¹⁶

Thaninayagam too found that "this five-fold division throws light on human origins and the development of human culture as has been observed by those geographers and anthropologists who have recently written at length on this subject".¹⁷

Singaravelu in an anthropology-oriented discussion furnishes all the details relating to the habitat, the habits and customs of the Tamils of the Cankam period but has not gone into the functional significance of the Tinai division in early Tamil Society.¹⁸

Another recent work on Cankam society emphasizes the geographical reality of the Tinai division but frowns upon the evolutionist interpretation given by Iyengar. The author in the course of denouncing Iyengar makes a rather interesting comment: "This so-called evolution is true in the larger field of world history in its anthropological setting, and protohistorical stage, but to import this into the limited space of Tamilaham, and to suppose that all those changes occurred here also in the same historical order may not be correct".¹⁹ This assertion that features observed at macro-levels are not applicable at micro-levels would indeed surprise even the most devout of the functionalists. Even they do not rule out the general laws of development.

The above mentioned studies deal mainly with an overall interpretation of the entire Tinai complex. The present author, agreeing fundamentally with the unilinear evolutionist concept, made a detailed analysis of one of the regions-Pasturelands (Mullai)-and attempted to establish the social and economic necessity for the wifely virtue of iruttal (Patiently waiting).²⁰

It would be mentioned in conclusion that almost all the explanations implied a unilinear developmental process.

III

With the formulation of the theory of dialectical materialism and its application to the study of society, the processes underlying the development of economic and political institutions became very clear. As a descriptive and general method, various stages of economic growth were delineated. This approach to the understanding of human development known by the name of its founder, Marx, has today become an integral aspect of historiography. Even those who do not accept the political anticipations of this theory respect the validity of its basis. "The erection of stages of development or evolution of culture appears to be quite justified in so far as the enrichment of culture content and the structural evolution of societies occurring in the course of history should be brought into an intelligible system on a purely descriptive basis."²¹

But it would be a gross negation of the law of dialectical materialism that caused the 'erection' of these developmental stages, to consider that the various stages form a necessary sequence in the historical development of all societies. The authors of the theory of historical materialism in their attempt to explain the different rates of growth among the various elements of social life found that uneven development among societies is a feature to be reckoned with and explained fully before they reiterate the law of combined development.

"The mainspring of human progress is man's command over the forces of production. As history advances there occurs a faster or slower growth of productive forces in this or that segment of society owing to the differences in natural conditions and historical epochs and impart varying rates and extents of growth to different peoples, different branches of economy, different classes, different social institutions and fields of culture. That is the essence of law of uneven development."²²

This law is basic to the understanding of historical materialism.

Field studies in social anthropology have brought to light societies with arrested growth. Stunted growth occurs when production does not and cannot go beyond a particular point. Internal

self-sufficiency and geographical and social isolation are some of the factors that contribute towards this.

IV

India with its diverse geographical regions and social groups is a living testimony to the law of uneven development.²³ From archaeologists to economic planners, all who have been interested in India's past and present have observed this important feature. The Allchins summarized the position rather well:

"It is worth stressing once more that in the past, as today, in addition to the normal range of sites of different size and importance by which any particular cultural phase is always presented, throughout the Indian sub-continent distinct cultural groups at very different levels are to be found living in more or less close proximity to one another."²⁴

The late lamented Bendapudi Subbarao, an eminent archaeologist tried to understand the pattern of development in India thus:

"Accepting this fundamental concept of areas of attraction, relative isolation and isolation, the whole pattern of development can be defined as one of horizontal expansion, contraction and isolation of lower cultures in different parts of the country at different periods and at different cultural levels. The divergence in the country is due to the difference in the cultural milieu of the first large-scale agricultural communities in the different regions."²⁵

On the map of India, Tamilnadu is the eastern coastal plain which widens out towards the south, and its immediate hinterland. Subbarao listed Tamilnadu as one of the areas of attraction.²⁶ But a study of the regional geography of Tamilnadu reveals that there are enough geographical diversities to bring about substantial variations.²⁷ From the Palani Hills, the Nilgiris and the Western Ghats to the rich Tanjore delta and from the pasturelands such as the meadows between Trichirapally and Madura, the Salem and Coimbatore districts to the teris of the Tinnevely district, one could see that geographically and socially Tamilnadu is uneven.

V

A more thorough study of the Caṅkam texts demands a revision of the unilinear view of development.

Caṅkam literature reveals that these geographical units were a contemporary physical reality. The āṅṅupaṭai (guide) poems of the Ten Songs Collection are of better use than the short and situational poems of Eight Anthologies Group, in that they very often describe the different regions one has to pass through before reaching the abode of the patron.

Cirupānāṅṅupaṭai in lines 143-202 speaks of the various places the bard has to pass through before arriving at the place of the patron. Lines 143-163 describe Eyirpaṭṭinam which is a littoral region, lines 164-177 refers to Vellore, a hilly tract where hunters live, lines 178-195 describe Āmūr an agrarian village watered by a river and finally from line 196 onwards the hill capital of Naṅṅan is described. In Perumpānāṅṅupaṭai lines 46-392 describe the road to Kāñci and the settlements and the towns that lie on the way. The breakup is as follows:

- Lines 46-145 : describe the jungle region inhabited by people living in food-gathering stages.
- Lines 147-196 : describe the terraced valley where cattlekeepers live
- Lines 196-262 : describe the irrigated agrarian region
- Lines 263- 283 : describe inland fishermen fishing in ponds
- Lines 283- 351 : describe the maritime town of Neerppāyal
- Lines 351-362 : describe the cultivable land in maritime region
- Lines 363-37 : describe the highway that runs through the maritime area
- Lines 371 - 392 : describe Tiruvehḥā

These descriptions reject out of hand a unilinear view of evolution. The descriptions in the guide poems amply prove that this was not merely a literary convention but a geographical reality. Besides it is important to note that in each of these areas we find people living

in different stages of civilization, those living in the hills being more primitive and those of the agrarian region being the most developed. In fact the descriptions illustrate the law of uneven development.

It is equally important to know that the original concept was a division into four regions only. Tolkāppiyar very clearly states that:

*avaṅṅu! natuvan aintṅai naṅṅuvaṅṅu oḷiya
paṅṅu tirai vaiyam pāṅṅi paṅṅē (Akat 2).*

[Of the seven ṅṅais (which include, beside the five behaviour patterns mentioned earlier, those of one-sided love and ill-suited love) the five that come in the middle (the region-based ones) minus the one in the centre (Pālai) are based on the physiographic division of the sea-girt world]. *Maturaikāñci* speaks of 'nanilavar' (123) only. Nāñilam means 'land which has four classifications'.

This raises the problem of Pālai. First of all let us take the question whether Pālai is a later accretion. This is confirmed in *Cilapatikāram* (XI. 62-66). When Kovalan requests the Brahmin to tell him the road to Madurai, the Brahmin, in the course of his reply, refers to the arid forest region thus:

*Vēṅṅalam Kūḷavaṅṅu vēṅṅatir vēṅṅaṅ ṅṅaṅ ṅṅalam tirukat
ṅṅamayṅṅ Kūṅṅi mullaiyum Kūṅṅiñciyum muṅṅaṅṅaiyittirintu
nalliyalpu ḷantu naṅṅukutuyar uṅṅuttap pālai eṅṅpaṅṅor paṅṅivam
koḷḷum kālai eitiniṅ.*

[You have come at the time when Mullai (pastureland) and Kūṅṅi are transformed into distress giving Pālai (arid region) by the excessive heat of the King of Hot Rays - the Sun...] It categorically states that Mullai and Kūṅṅi have taken the shape (note the word paṅṅivam) of Pālai. With rainfall the shape could be transformed to the original mullai and kūṅṅi. It would therefore, be appropriate to treat Pālai as seasonal change. Aṅṅiyārkkunallār, the commentator of *Cilapatikāram* cites *Akanānuṅṅu* 111 as example for mullai transforming into Pālai and Kalittokai 2 as example for Kūṅṅi transforming into Pālai.²⁸

One should also note a certain inconsistency about the descriptions given in *Tolkāppiyam* on Pālai. In *Puṟaiṇai-iyal* in which the author describes military activities of the different regions, Koravainilai and Tutinilai which are characteristic of the Pālai warriors are given as parts of the Kuriñci (Purat 4.) Ilampuranar in his commentary on Akat 5 states that “Pālai has no separate region of its own” and adds that “during the sunny periods all birds and branches except those of the Pālai tree get dried up.”²⁹

Even in the Caṅkam texts we find that description which would suit a Pālai background, are given for Kuriñci. In *Perumpānārrupatai* lines 82-117 describe a hunter family. The family is referred to as an Eyina family—a name spoken of in relation to Pālai.³⁰ Further lines 117-145 describe an Eyina settlement. Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar in his gloss on these lines remarks that this is a description of the Kuriñci region and its background.³¹ In *Maturaikāñci* the lines that describe Pālai (302-314) very clearly show that the region referred to is the hilly region in the hot season of the year: “Nilal uruvilanta venir kunrattu” (313) (The hill in the hot season of the year which has lost that which is responsible for ‘shade’).

The next line (314) categorically states that it is this type of kunram which is identified as having the characteristics of the Pālai tiṇai.³² Thus Caṅkam texts and *Tolkāppiyam* confirm the seasonal character of Pālai.

Now the question arises, why was Pālai treated as a distinct behaviour pattern? The answer would be that it was because of the literary necessity to treat that theme (separation) which took place during that part of the year. Besides, it is also possible that during the hot season, the people of the hilly region, at least certain groups among them, took to highway robbery as a way of livelihood.

Having thus ascertained the original fourfold classification, it now remains to see the character of economic organization in each area and how a general picture of uneven development emerges.

Tolkāppiyar in his analysis of the characteristics of the Tiṇai speaks of the three aspects - *Mutal* (primary aspect) which is the

terrain and the time, *Karu* (organic aspect) which consists of food, the flora and the fauna, the drum, the economic activity, the musical note, and the water source and *Uri* (that one which belongs) the behaviour pattern that is characteristic of each region. A tabulation of the diet, the economic activity and the sources of water is enough indication of the uneven economic development of the regions.³³

A comparison of the type of agriculture done in the irrigable (Marutam) regions and then one done in the hilly region (the Parampu Hills ruled by Pari, for example) also reveals the nature of uneven development.

Region	Diet	Economic Activity	Source of water
1 Hill	Millet, bamboo, rice	obtaining honey, digging for yams, driving away birds that eat the corns of millet	Streams and fountains
2 Pasture land	Varaku, camai and mutirai	Cattle-rearing, weeding the millets, thrashing out the grain with buffaloes	River (in pasture land)
3 Agrarian	Rice	Transplantation, weeding, harvesting, matting the cattle	River, domestic wells, ponds
4 Littoral	Food brought after the sale of fish and salt	Fishing, salt cultivation, the sale of these two	Sandy well pits of saline ate
5 Dry (Pālai)	Things robbed and plundered	Misleading the travelers and plundering them	Wells and fountains

Tolkāppiyar in the cūttiram (aphorism) on the different regional units (Akat 5) uses the word “*ulakam*” (world) to denote each of the regions:

māyōṇ mēya kāṭurai *ulakamum*
 cēyōṇ mēya maivarai *ulakamum*
 vēntaṇ mēya timpunal *ulakamum*
 varuṇaṇ mēya perumaṇal *ulakamum*
 mullai kuriñci marutam neytal eṇac
 colliya muraiyāt collavum paṭumē.

The use of the word “ulakam” implies that each region was a unit by itself different from the other. The regional variations must have been so great that these must have been “worlds in themselves”. In the cūttiram on *Karupporu!* (Akat 18) we find that each region differed from the other in such basic matters like food, faith, flora and fauna and economic pursuit. That there was homogeneity of economic pursuit among the members of particular region is well brought in Akat 20 in which it is said that the names of people of a particular region arise out of (a) the name of the region and (b) the economic pursuit they are engaged in. Such names are referred as 'Tiṇainilaippear' (names arising out of the Tiṇais). In cūttirams 21 and 22 there are attempts to give such names.

At this point, reference should be made to the development potential of each of these regions. Among the four regions, development potential is very much less in the hilly region because increase in production is not possible there without complete mastery over the geographical forces and an intelligent exploitation of the sources. In the case of the littoral tract, too, this is true. The land by its very nature is not very productive, and the economic affluence of the area depends on the techniques adopted for fishing. What we hear of is coastal fishing and production of salt, the latter being a seasonal activity. Development potential is comparatively high in the pastureland because, inspite of the minimal water resources available, two major economic activities are pursued there - cattle rearing and agriculture. A study of the Cankam literature reveals that Mullai was a region of expanding agricultural activities.³⁴ Major economic development which could restructure the entire social pattern was possible only in the riverine agrarian region where the land was plain and irrigation possible. The Marutam regions correspond to the river basins of Kāveri, Vaikai and Periyāru.

And this correspondence raises the question of the political development in the regions. Any student of South Indian history knows that the river basins of Kāveri, Vaikai and Periyāru correspond to the Cōḷa, Pāṇṭiya and the Cēra kingdom. Pennāru and Pālāru are the other two rivers of any significance and it was along these rivers that the Tiraiyars of the Cankam period and the Pallavas of later times held sway. The rest of the country was less developed.

The relationship of economic development to political and social dynamism is an observed fact. Thus we are now able to understand the cause for the isolation of one area from another.

It is in this connection that the study of tribal groups of the Cankam period assumes some significance. As Tolkāppiyar himself says such units were formed on a regional basis or are identified by their group names (Akat 20). Tolkāppiyar himself gives the names of Ayar (cattlekeepers) and Vēṭṭuvar (hunters). That they are each a tribal unit with distinguishing social organization is seen not only in the āṅṅupatai poems but also in *Cilapatikāram*, a work of about late fifth and early sixth century A D.³⁵ The tribal character of these two communities is very clearly brought out in the cantos, *Ācciyar Kuravai* and *Vēṭṭuvavari*. Kalittokai, an anthology of the early post-Cankam era (300-600 A D) too, reveals the tribal character of the āyar community.

Tolkāppiyar does not mention the names of the regional communities which are identified by names (peyar). The commentators provide a list.³⁶ Here we must add to the list the names of the tribes we know from the Cankam literary sources. They are Paratavar, Kōsar, Āviyar, Ōviyar, Veḷir Aruvālar, Aṇṭar, Kaḷavar, Maḷavar, Maṇavar, Pūliyar and others.³⁷ Almost all these tribes lived in non-riverine regions.

The importance of these tribal units in the political evolution of south India is explained by Mahalingam thus:

“In pre-historic times people in South India were divided into a number of tribes, the main difference between them being largely due to their geographical environment. Among them were the agriculturists, pastoralists, hunters, those on the seashore and

those in the desert region (sic). In course of time the social organization among the pastoral and the agricultural groups took a definite shape which led to the emergence of political organization.”³⁸

we should recall here the already quoted statement of Subbarao: “The divergence in the country is due to the difference in the cultural milieu of the first large scale agricultural communities in the different regions.”³⁹

The political significance of the *Tiṇai* division is seen in the concept of “*Kuṟunilamaṇṇar*” (kings of small lands). *Caṅkam* literature makes a clear distinction between the three monarchies and the other political units by using the term ‘*vēntaṅ*’ for the three monarchies.⁴⁰ Those who ruled over small territories were called *Kuṟunilamaṇṇar*. The area ruled by such a small ruler usually corresponded to a geographical unit. In *Puṟānānūru*, a number of such chieftains are mentioned; “poems dealing with chiefs start at PN 27 and thereafter all poems till that numbered 181 praise chieftains”⁴¹ A feature of these minor kingdoms is that even when they came under the suzerainty of another ruler or one of the *vēntars*, their political and regional identity was maintained. This naturally meant the continuity of the social and economic organization of the area. The life of the general mass of the population of the region went on undisturbed.⁴² The continuity of the *Tiṇai* concept must have been fostered by such a system of social isolation and political decentralization.

Except perhaps for the developed agrarian regions and maritime towns which were the centres of foreign trade, all the regions were economically self-sufficient. The essential commodities which most units could not produce were salt and metals;⁴³ and this was exchanged by barter. As in the case of the traditional Indian village economy, commodity production never upset the internal balance of the economy. Thus even the minimum trade relationship that was there between the regions did in fact help the continuity of the regional patterns.

Later, with the coming of Brahmin Influence (the spread of Sanskritization) these regional societies were turned into caste groups with all the ritual isolation that goes with that system. That too might have helped the continuity of the regional unit. It is interesting to note that the major caste groups in Tamilnadu are vocational groups - for instance the *Vellālar* (the farmers), the *Karaiyār* (those of the coast-fishermen) *Paḷḷar* (those of the low-lying area-agricultural serfs).

This is perhaps the best juncture to inquire into the meaning of the word ‘*tiṇai*.’ We have already seen that *Naccaṇārkkīṇiyar* explains it as code of conduct and *Ilampūraṇar* tends to interpret it as general theme or content.⁴⁴ These meanings have been given in the context of the chapter ‘*Akattiṇai Iyal*’ in *Tolkāppiyar*’s *Porulatikāram*. But there are certain other contexts in which this word is used. There are instances in *Caṅkam* literature where this word is used to mean *Kuṭi*-a noun which means family, clan, settlement (PN 24, 27, 159, 373, Prp 14,31, 72, 82, Kur 45). The word occurs in MK (326) and KP (205) and *Naccaṇārkkīṇiyar* explains the term as land in the first instance and as clan or family in the latter. This meaning of settlement or clan is indicated also in the compound form ‘*Tiṇai nilaipeyyar*.’ Thus it is clear that the word had a primary meaning of clan, family or settlement. The most unassailable proof that this word meant ‘class’ or ‘group’ is seen in the employment of this word to denote the different classes of nouns. Tamil nouns are classified into *Uyartiṇai* and *Ahriṇai*. Caldwell translated them as high caste and casteless nouns.⁴⁵ Even if we do not go to the extent of taking *tiṇai* as caste as we understand it today, it is indisputably clear that the word means family, clan, settlement. The word *Kuṭṭi* in *Caṅkam* literature is generally used to denote family or settlement (Prp 59, Kur 95, 100, 184, 228, 234, 322, 355. NT 82, 87, 91, 110, 114, 156, 159, 203, 232, PN 19, 277, 295). It is therefore possible that the word first meant settlement (family and clan are congruous with the settlement) and by the semantic process of extension, later denoted the particular behaviour pattern of the people in the settlement.

Marr’s comment on this problem is vital to the understanding of it. He observed “no *tiṇai* name exhibits relationship with any other Tamil or Dravidian word with the meaning related to

the ideas of union, separation, waiting, anguish and quarrelling. On the other hand several of the *tiṇai* names have cognates in the Dravidian language."⁴⁶ This would make the concept of referring to the behaviour patterns as something conceived at a more abstract level. In such a circumstance the other (original) meaning of the term *Tiṇai* (family, settlement) assumes importance because it explains the whole process as one denoting the behaviour patterns of the people living in different regions.

VI

Students of Marxism and of economic history know that Marx in his attempt to trace the relations between the capitalists and proletarians of his own times "postulated a very early stage of human society in which all men were both owners and workers."⁴⁷ Marx thought that the system obtained in India was one of the primary modes of production and he called it the 'Asiatic mode.' The other forms are the Slavonic, the Germanic and the ancient Classical. "In each of these, individual is a part of a tribal or communal entity."⁴⁸ Marx discusses the internal working of each of these primary systems and highlights those contradictory aspects within the system which leads on to a further development of the system. But when it comes to the Asiatic mode he says. "The Asiatic form necessarily survives longest and most stubbornly. This is due to the fundamental principle on which it is based, that is, the individual does not become independent of the community; that the circle of production is self-sustaining unity of agriculture and craft manufacture etc."⁴⁹ Marx speaks of the different types of organization for purposes of work within this Asiatic form but the basic economic feature of the system is "the combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining and contains within itself all conditions of production and surplus production".⁵⁰

An examination of the economic organization implied in the *Tiṇai* system could also be seen as reveals that it is the Asiatic mode operating at the very primary level. The economic

organization implicit in this system is not very different from that of the organization found in the Indian villages. A closer look would reveal the cause for the ultimate emergence of *Marutam* as the most important of the settlement groups. It is there agriculture proper develops. In *Kuriñci*, the stage is one of food gathering. The food production done there was not capable of changing the setup because there was hardly any surplus. In the littoral region, too, the position was not very different except that they had to get their food by exchange of fish and salt: In *Mullai* the entire manpower of the community was not mobilized for agrarian production. In fact the males went out to tame animals or guard the settlements. At this stage agriculture itself was rudimentary because it could not develop much. But all these handicaps were not seen in the *Marutam* settlement. The agrarian region with its surplus production of rice was able to exercise economic superiority over the other regions. Thus, while the lower organizations like *Kuriñci* and *Neytal* stagnated, *Marutam* expanded. This is a splendid illustration of a feature observed by the archaeologists: "...certain regions have advanced far more rapidly than others and the more backward often preserve many features which elsewhere belong only to a distant part".⁵¹

The different *Tiṇais*, in a sense, illustrate different modes of production. It was perhaps because of this that the pioneer scholars thought that the entire *Tiṇai* complex revealed all the sequences of development.

It is the continuity of the mode of production and the economic relations that go with it that are responsible for the continuity of a particular social structure. The continuity of social structure means continuity of certain behaviour patterns.

It is in this context that the question of '*Tiṇai mayakkam*' should be taken up for analysis. After dealing with the primary aspect of the behaviour patterns, namely region and time, *Tolkāppiyar* speaks of '*Tiṇai mayakkam*'—blending of the features of one *Tiṇai* with those of another.

Tiṇai mayakkuṟutalum Kaṭṇinilai ilavē nilaṅ oruṅku mayān kutaliṅruēṅa molipa pulāṅ ṅaṅku uṅṅṅita pulamaiyore
(*Akat 12*).

[Those learned in the art of poetics say that blending of the *tiṇais* is not inadmissible, but there cannot be blending of the *nilam*—the land (region)]

Iḷampuranar interprets the first line to mean that there could be a change in the 'Time'; Nacciṇaṅkkiṇiyar takes *tiṇai* to mean conduct and proceeds to say that behaviour patterns might differ (one that is peculiar to a particular region may take place in another region) but there can be no blending of the regions.⁵²

As is very expressively stated, this is mainly a problem of poetics. Tolkāppiyar wants to maintain the primacy of the region. Whether *Tiṇai* here means 'Time' or 'Conduct' is of no major significance because the primacy of the region as a unit is maintained. In the next *cuttiram*, Tolkāppiyar categorically states that behaviour patterns do not blend. The reality of physical variation and difference in social mores must have been the compelling forces behind such a literary taboo. Thus once again it is the regional basis of the community and its social order that emerge as the distinguishing factors. This reveals how the uneven economic development has in the end led to different (uneven) social values.

A socio-economic analysis of *Mullaitiṇai* has revealed the social significance of the behaviour pattern assigned to the region. Such analyses have so far not been made for the other *Tiṇais*.

Yet the socio-economic significance of *ūṭal*—sulking as a behaviour pattern in *Marutam* could be seen very clearly. Agriculture in *Marutam* is privately owned. Development of agriculture had given rise to extensive development of private landholdings. It is in the agrarian region that we meet the first non-owning worker. In the course of the description of the agrarian region, poets often refer to "vinaivalar" (those skilled in work) sowing and harvesting (Kur 309, NT 60, 450, PPA 196, 262, PP 7–19). Surplus production, the basis of economic power, could be deduced from those references to the storing of paddy in large quantities (NT 26, 60). Landlordism is clearly implied (PrP 13: 23–4).

In such an economy of affluence, it is no wonder that the *virali* of the heroic age turns out to be the harlot. With the change of the economic base of political authority (from plunder to production) the female artists of the heroic age become the harlots of the feudal age. Harlotry becomes a socially acceptable outlet for extramarital indulgence, for it has the unique advantage of not interfering with the property rights and with family succession. But to the *kilatti* (the proprietress) nevertheless it is a problem that challenges her existence as the beloved wife. *Ūṭal* naturally dominates in such a relationship.

The behaviour pattern mentioned for *Pālai* is wife's anguish over husband's journey. We have already seen how *Pālai* is seasonal change of the hilly region.

In these poems on separation, the wife's concern for the husband is depicted by the description of the forests and hills he had to pass and the fierce marauders he had to encounter on the way. The purpose of the journey is mentioned with a certain terminological exactitude. The terms are *ceyporul* (made or earned wealth) and *viṇai* (effort). *Viṇai* would include royal duty too, but *ceyporul* is essentially economic.

They left their homes by December-January or April-May and returned by August-September. This period between January and August especially from March to August is the hot season in Tamilnadu, and quite understandably the concern for the husband who has gone away during that period becomes the motif in such poems.

The socio-economic significance of the motif in *Kuriṅci* poems is rather difficult to seek. In *Kuriṅci* poems the main theme is sexual union and those that lead to it. Being the most primary of social organizations it is but natural for the hill communities to exhibit mores that befit a primitive community. It is possible that premarital intercourse, an accepted social custom of the region must have had an important bearing on the development of this conduct.

VII

The foregoing regional and socio-economic explanation of the Tinai concept raises a question of importance: When did this tradition start?

It cannot be said that Tolkāppiar, the grammarian was the one who prescribed it. We have already seen that Cankam texts themselves refer to the Tinai concept. The concept of Nānilam (Four regions) and Aintinai (Five behaviour patterns) was already known in that period.

One should not make the mistake of viewing these as grammatical prescriptions. Grammatical recognition only implies the high literary incidence of the concept, and the high literary incidence only shows how deep-rooted these traditions were.

An answer to that question should not fail to highlight the historical antiquity and continuity of certain settlements in Tamilnadu. Commenting on late Stone Age coastal sites (teris) the Allchins say: "Fishing communities on the coasts of India still live in situations of this kind, building their huts among sand-dunes which are far from stable in order to be near their fishing grounds."⁵⁴ This area falls into the traditional Neytal region. Again it has been shown that Cankam references to cattle raiding and so forth should be viewed in the context of cattle-keeping in south India during the Neolithic Age.⁵⁵ Such association reveals that the Tinai concept is in fact a clue to the pre-history of Tamilnadu.

But it is interesting to note that after the Cankam period, the Tinai concept ceases to be an effective literary norm. No doubt it is maintained in tradition but only as a depleted device, not as a mirror of life. This could be seen in the treatment of this theme in Kalittokai. The treatment of the characters in Pālai, Kuriñci and Neytal kalai shows that the conative aspect of the regions is given more importance than the descriptions of life in those regions. In the Kuriñcikkali the hero is one "who owns the forest".

The reason is not far to seek. With the decline of the Cankam age, the character of political authority changes. With the expansion

of monarchical power, intrusion of foreign rule and inflow of Brahmanic influence, the non-Marutam regions fade into the background. Valluvar's definition of state reveals this amply. He defined 'nāṭu' (state, country) as one which has fertile lands that never fail, capable men and unlowly rich men. This definition by its emphasis on the developed agrarian regions implies that the tribes do not fall within the limits of the state. Valluvar considers Kuṟumpu, the basis at one time of Kuṟunilamaṅṅar, as a nuisance.

Cilapatikāram tries to initiate a movement that would make the Tamil country once again homogeneous but the mercantilist class Ilanko portrayed was not capable of affecting a political change in strife-torn Tamilakam. With the rise of Pallava power and ascendancy of Vedic Hinduism, the inhabitants of the non-Marutam regions become outcasts. Thereafter the Tinai concept becomes a matter for poetic convention only.

Even as we use all the data Tol. provides us on the Tinai tradition, we must not lose sight of the fact that for him, it was an effort to understand the processes and the base of a political tradition which was not available to the Sanskrit literary tradition.

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- 30 **Kanecaiyar (Ed.) Tolkappiyam-Naccinarkkiṇiyam 'op.cit., p 61.**
- 31 **U V Caminata Iyer, Pattupattu with Naccinarkkiṇiyar's commentary. (6th edn.)**
- 32 **As for the necessity of the author or Maturaikāñci to speak of 'nānilam' first and then 'aintinai', see later.**
- 33 **Tolkappiyam-Porulatikaram (Nac). pp 58-9.**
- 34 **K Sivathamby, op.cit**
- 35 **For a detailed analysis of the date of the Cilapatikāram, see K Sivathamby, Drama is Ancient Tamil Society, Thesis for the degree of Ph D at the University of Birmingham, 1970, pp 103-119.**
- 36 **Tolkappiyam-Porulatikaram (Nac), p 61**
-do- -do- (Ilampuranam) pp 20-1
- 37 **Turai Arankacamy, Cankakalac Cirappup Peyarkal, Paari Nilayam, Madras 1960, pp 202-341.**
- 38 **T.V Mahalingam, The South Indian Polity, University of Madras 1955, p II.**
- 39 **B Subbarao, op.cit.**
- 40 **Turai Arankacamy, op.cit., 207.**
- 41 **J R Marr, The Eight Tamil Anthologies with Special Reference to Purananuru and Patirrupattu, Ph D thesis (unpublished), University of London 1958, p 202.**
- 42 **It is this anonymity of central power that led to a particular social attitude towards political authority brilliantly enshrined in the proverb "Rāman āntālenṇa Rāvaṇan āntālenṇa" (Who cares whether Rama rules or Ravana rules.)**
- 43 **D D Kosambi, "Development of Feudalism in India", Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol 36, 1955, pp 258-269.**
- 44 **See 8 and 9 above.**
- 45 **R Caldwell, Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages, London 1856. p 172.**
- 46 **Marr, op.cit., p 21.**
- 47 **K Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations edited with introduction by E J Hobsbawm, London 1964. E J Hobsbawm's introduction is a masterly piece of writing on this subject. Also Daniel Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production," Indian Sociology, No IX, 1966.**
- 48 **Daniel Thorner, loc.cit.**
- 49 **K Max, op.cit., p 83.**
- 50 **Daniel Thorner, loc.cit.**
- 51 **Allchins, op.cit., pp 44-5.**
- 52 **Tolkappiyam-Porulatikaram, Ilam, p 14, Nc. pp 35-6.**
- 53 **K Sivathamby, loc.cit.**
- 54 **Allchins, op.cit., p 94.**
- 55 **F R Allchin, Neolithic Cattlekeepers of South India, Cambridge 1963, p 172.**

Organization of Political Authority in Early Tamilnadu

- A preliminary inquiry into the problems of state formation in Tamilnadu based on an analysis of the terms in Cankam literature used to denote political authority

I

An attempt is made in this paper to collate and relate the major evidences available in Cankam literature in terms of the concept and methodology set out in some of the better known works on the problem of state-formation (Martin H Fried 1960, Claessen & Skalknik 1978, Romila Thapar 1984, Hindess & Hirst 1979, Krader 1968), and to identify the contours of the processes that led to the formation of the State in Tamilnadu. In a situation, wherein no major work has been done to throw light on the history of social formation in ancient Tamilnadu this study is intended to bring into focus the need for further investigation. As "the term state gives expression to the existing relations in a society and to ideas pertaining to power, authority, force, justice, property and many other phenomena" (Claessen & Skalknik 1978; 64) it is hoped, that this attempt inspite of its inescapable tentativeness will focus attention also on the problem of social formation in ancient Tamilnadu.

It is a well known fact that quite fruitful explorations have been made into the character of the state, in Cōla and post-Cōla politics (B. Stein 1978 Kathleen Gough 1980, 1981 Karashima 1984) leading to a significant debate on 'the Asiatic Mode of Production, and on the Segmentary State. Nonetheless no definite work has yet been done in terms of historiographical mode to identify the characteristics of the process/processes in the state formation in the pre-Pallavan period. (B Stein 1984; 1971; Sivathamby 1971). As far as the existing better known histories of ancient Tamilnadu are concerned, their sense of historiography has not demanded any analysis of this type and for

hem during the early centuries of the Christian era and even before, known as the Sangam age in South India, "monarchy was a settled institution" (Mahalingam 1967: 12). Reference to the Tamil kingdoms-Cēra, Cōla, and Pantiya-in the inscriptions of Asoka, and by Megasthenes were, adequate (Nilakanta Sastri. 1955, 1963, 1976) for taking them for further historical analysis. Even the work that specifically went into this question did not go into the process of the evolution of the political authority within the period of its analysis, as it argued that anyway the system of government and 'social life depicted in that body of literature (Cankam literature) was the same throughout till the age of religious devotion.....dawned on Tamilnadu, that is, the beginning of the 7th Century (Subramaniam 1980 p. 80) (He took Cankam age as beginning from a period few centuries' preceding the Christian era). Such assumptions deny the very dynamics of history.

The main aim of this attempt is to delineate the process by which political authority evolved in Tamilnadu during the period known as Cankam period (circa 200 BC to 300 AD), on the basis of the literary corpus now taken as Cankam literature (those works in the *Pattupāṭṭu*, *Eṭṭutokai* anthologies minus Tirumurukāṇṇupāṭai in the former and *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* in the latter).

As this is the first attempt that is being made to go into the question of the State-formation that could be gleaned through this literature it has become important to bring together all the terms found in that literary corpus relating to this political process. Such a task necessarily imposes the need to outline the theoretical basis on which the analysis is to be done.

II

"The emergence of a state" as Romila Thapar (1984) argues 'marks a qualitative change in the history of a society since it arises out of and initiates a series of interrelated changes at many levels". The transition from an absence of states to state-like systems and finally to state systems through and amidst processes of transition from an

inchoate one to a fully formed one, responding to the specific needs and demands of that community involves the study of the dynamics of social relations that lead to the formation and graduation of social groups and/or classes. Such an exercise would be as much a socioeconomic exploration, as it is a politico-historical inquiry. But a comprehensive analysis in terms of socio-economic transformation would demand the explication of the features of the period in terms of the mode of production.

As the identification of the exact mode or modes of production at work and the social formation that was sustained by it and was basic to it is one of the ultimate objects of this attempt, it would be more appropriate to use a conceptual model which is strictly 'socio-political' in character. The happy convergence of Anthropology, Sociology, History & Political Science has contributed to studies which have been able to provide such theoretical frame-work.

Morton Fried (1960, 1967) has suggested that a society approaches statehood through a process of social stratification. He posits the hypothetical existence of egalitarian societies, ones "in which there are as many positions of prestige in any given age-sex, grade as there are persons capable of filling them. . . . Almost all of these societies are founded upon hunting and gathering and lack significant harvest periods when large reserves of food are stored". Egalitarian societies function as 'reciprocal economies'. In all egalitarian economies. . . . "there is also a germ of redistribution. It receives its simplest expression in the family but can grow to more than the pooling and redibursing of stored food for an extended family. In such an embryonic redistribution system the key role is frequently played by the oldest female in the active generation". (Morton Fried 1960).

"As societies became larger and more permanent and a new redistributive economy develops a formalized kinship network tends to develop from an egalitarian one in which mythical genealogies serve as the basis for band membership. When a clearly stated descent privilege emerges, genealogical proximity to a particular ancestor becomes significant especially in developing a Kin hierarchy. Ranking is the result " (Elmer S. Miller and Charles A. Weitz 1979: 519-579).

"In the typical ranked society there is neither exploitative economic power nor genuine political power. As a matter of fact the central status closely resembles its counterpart in the embryonic redistributive net-work that may be found even in the simplest societies. This is not surprising, for the system in typical rank societies is based upon a physical expansion of the Kin group and the continuation of previously known Kinship rights and obligations. The kingpin of a redistributive network in an advanced hunting and gathering society or simple agricultural one is as much the victim of his role as its manipulator. His special function is to collect, not to expropriate; to distribute, not to consume. In a conflict between personal accumulation and the demands of distribution it is the former which suffers. Anything else leads to accusations of hoarding and selfishness and undercuts the prestige of the central status; the whole network then stands in jeopardy, a situation which cannot be tolerated.

Despite strong egalitarian factors in its economic and political sectors, the developing rank society has strong status differentials which are marked by symptuary specialization and ceremonial function. While it is a fact that literature abounds in references to "chiefs" who can issue no positive commands and "ruling classes" whose members are among the paupers of the realm, it must be stated in fairness that the central distributive statuses are associated with furs, feathers and other trappings of office. These people sit on stools, have big houses, and are consulted by their neighbours. Their redistributive roles place them automatically to the fore of the religious life of the community, but they are also in that position because of their central Kinship status as lineage, clan or kindred heads. Military consideration serve to institutionalize rank difference only when these are already implicit or manifest in the economy". (Fried 1960) From rank societies, in which a social rank, which at the beginning had only ceremonial significance, but later, begins to throw social advantages to the holders, the

transition is to not easily alterable stratification in which certain people are placed above the others; "Stratified society is distinguished by the differential relationships between the members of the society and its subsistence means—some of the members of the society have unimpeded access to strategic resources while others have various impediments in their access to the same fundamental resources.

..... the movement to stratification precipitated many things which were destined to change society even further. Former systems of social control which rested heavily on enculturation, internalized sanctions, and ridicule now required a formal statement of their principles, a machinery of adjudication and a formally constituted police authority. The emergence of these and other control institutions were assisted with the final shift of prime authority from Kinship means to territorial means and describes the evolution of complex forms of government associated with the State.

The decisive significance of stratification is not that it sees differential amount of wealth in different hands but that it sees two kinds of access to strategic resources. One of these is privileged and unimpeded, the other is impaired, depending on complexes which frequently require the payment of dues, rents, or taxes in labour or in kind. The existence of such distinction enables the growth of exploitation, whether of a relatively simple kind based upon drudge slavery or of a more complex type associated with the involved divisions of labour and intricate class systems. The development of stratification also encourage the emergence of communities composed of Kin parts and non-Kin parts which, as wholes, operate on the basis of non-Kin mechanisms (Fried. *ibid*).

It has been found in certain communities that "the shift to stratification is paralleled in the economic field by the shift to irrigation and terracing ... from swiddens or impermanent fields to plots which will remain in permanent cultivation for decades and generations

..... A point of considerable interest about hydro-agriculture is that it seems to present the possibility of an emergence of stratification in the absence of a problem of over population or resource limitation

..... The hydro agricultural system invariably has a higher degree of settlement concentration than swiddens. Accordingly it would seem to have considerable value in the maintenance of systems of defence, given the presence of extensive warfare. Here then is a point at which military considerations would seem to play an important if essentially reinforcing role in the broad evolutionary development which we are considering".

The 'maturation of social stratification' leads inevitably to a situation in which an organization for the regulation of social relations in the society that is divided into two emergent social classes, the rulers and the ruled' becomes essential. And thus the state is born.

But it is not as easy and swift as is implied here. From a stratified society to a one in which state proper arises as a coercive apparatus "for the maintenance of exploitative relations of production between a class of labourers and a class of non-labourers" (Hindess & Hirst 1975 p. 34) the transition had been a long one. "The fact that many scholars have had considerable difficulty in drawing the dividing line between the state and the non-state is a result of their failure to understand that the transformation was not an abrupt mechanical one, but on the contrary, was an extremely lengthy process, a process characterized by the development of a distinct socio-political organization (called) the EARLY STATE" (Classes and Skalnik-1978 p. 25). Classen and Skalnik brought together twenty one case studies of such Early States and have, on that basis, evolved seven criteria for the early state.

1. A sufficient population to make possible social categorization, stratification, and specialization.
2. Citizenship of the state is determined by residence or birth in the territory.

3. The government is centralized and has the necessary power for the maintenance of law and order through the use of both authority and force, or the threat of force.
 4. The state is independent, at least, de facto, and the government has sufficient power to prevent separation as well as the capacity to defend its external threats.
 5. The population shows a sufficient degree of stratification for emergent social classes (the rulers and the ruled) to be distinguished.
- (A class struggle or overt class antagonism was not found to be characteristic of early state).
6. Productivity is so high that there is a regular surplus, which is used for the maintenance of the state organization.
 7. A common ideology exists in which the legitimacy of the ruling stratum is based.

It was found, within this twenty one case studies, that there were "degrees of transition to the early state, so much so it was possible to distinguish three types of early state".

- (a) "the inchoate (just begun) type with dominant kinship, family and community ties in the field of politics, a limited existence of full time specialists and ad hoc forms of taxation, and social contrast that were offset by reciprocity and direct contacts between the ruler and the ruled.
- (b) the typical early state in which ties of kinship were counter balanced by that of locality, where competition and appointments counterbalanced the principles of heredity, where non-kin officials and title holders played a leading role in government administration and where redistribution and reciprocity dominated the relations between the social strata, and,
- (c) the transitional type in which the administrative apparatus was dominated by appointed officials where kinship affected only certain marginal aspects of government and where the pre-requisites for the emergence of private ownership of the means of production, of a market economy and of overtly authoritative class were already found.

(Claessen & Skalnik 1978—pp. 586–590)

It is important to note that (a) "the early state can be considered as a complex of interacting social processes, rather than as a static phenomenon" and (b) there were pristine and secondary state, meaning that the former arose as a result of the socio-economic pressures occurring and operating within that society and the latter, as having "developed under the influence of similar social structures proceeding them or existing in the same area" (also Fried 1960 p. 729).

III

With this paradigm in view, it is now proposed to go into the Tamil sources firstly for categorization and later, for characterization of the type of authority that was existing. It is important to mention at the outset that this attempt is equally directed at identifying the historical specifics of the Tamilian situation as to finding out how the evolution of the political society in Tamilnadu conforms to a larger historical pattern.

By "Early Tamilnadu", it is meant to refer to the Cankam period (circa 100 BC–250 AD). The dating of the texts is based on what is given in my Drama in Ancient Tamil Society (1981). In that work (Chap.III) starting from an arrangement based on linguistic study, and in consistence with the general laws of social and literary development it has been shown that the pre-Pallavan Tamil literature could be grouped chronologically on the basis of similarity of underlying features as follows:

- I. Eṭṭutokai and Pattuppāṭṭu (except Kalittokai, Paripāṭal and Tirumurukāruppatai (circa 100 BC - 250/300 AD))
- II. Tolkāppiyam (esp. Poruḷatikāram), Tirukkuraḷ, Kalittokai, paripāṭal and Tirumurukarruppatai (circa 300 - 450 AD)
- III. Cilapatikāram (circa 436 - 560/590 AD)

IV

In view of the fact that the sources relating to state formation within the Cankam Corpus have not been fully indexed and

studied, it would be better we start from Tirukkuraḷ and work backwards into the “Cankam age”, with the thread of the dominant features of the polity as pointed by Vaḷḷuvar as the guiding factor in discovering the political relationships and institutions.

The credentials for Tirukkuraḷ as the guiding light for such an exercise are truly great. Reference should be made at this stage to the character of the literary evidences we have for analysis. The Cankam literary corpus, it should not be forgotten, is a collection that was compiled “on commission”. It is selective and deals solely with the ‘heroic’ monarchs and their exploits. Even in the Akam (love) poems references to extrinsic puram matters are too many (Kailasapathy 1968). The anthologies do not throw much light on matters like religion, myths etc. Which would enable one to get a more comprehensive view of that society. One also should not forget the patron–client relationship that permeates the entire corpus. Countering these reservations are the established historicity of the poems which make them excellent source material for a historical study.

As for Tirukkuraḷ it should never be forgotten that it is an ethico–moral treatise. It is not in the mould of Arthasastra and such other texts which had a direct relationship with ‘empires’ and ‘administrators’. Tirukkuraḷ is a moralistic postulation for a polity that would have best met the challenges of the day.

“The ethical and moralistic approach of Vaḷḷuvar. to the study of man as a member of the family and the state, and to the study of the monarchy and those that help in the preservation of its authority, and the great difference between this approach to those of the North Indian writers on polity from whom Vaḷḷuvar is said to have drawn the material, have all been studied by many scholars” (Sivathamby 1981; Sornammal Endowment Lectures on Tirukkuraḷ Madras University – Part I–1971).

The major thesis of Vaḷḷuvar which differentiates him from Kautilya, a crucial point in any study of the development of Tamil polity, is that, whereas Arthasastra considers the King–the Svamin–as one of the Saptangas of the state thus making state as an institution

the dominant factor, kuraḷ makes the King–*aracu*–the pivot of the system and relates the six (*paṭai, Kuṭi, Kōḷ, amaiccu, naṭpu* and *aran*) to him. Vaḷḷuvar states that the ruler who possesses these (the above mentioned six) is a lion among arasar” (Kings kuraḷ 381). One cannot escape noticing the implication that there could be kings who may not have all these in full.

Vaḷḷuvar, therefore, postulates a position in which the state has not emerged as an institution but is seen in the ‘person’ of the King. This is crucial to the understanding of the Tamil polity, both before and after Vaḷḷuvar.

Efforts have been made to equate the six aspects Vaḷḷuvar mentions to those mentioned in Artha Shastra and other Sanskrit texts.

1. Paṭai	Danda (Army)	(6)
2. Kuṭi	Janapada (Country)	(3)
3. Kōḷ	Kōsa (Wealth)	(5)
4. amaiccu	amatya (ministers)	(2)
5. Naṭpu	mitra (allies)	(7)
6. aran	durga (fort)	(4)

(The order of the listing varies. Vaḷḷuvar gives it in the order given on the left. The order of the listing in Arthasāstra is given in the right within brackets. “Svamin” (he who has it) is listed the first).

In this equation, there are a vital differences in the case of two of the ‘organs’ – Janapada and Kōsa.

‘Kuṭi’ in Tamil cannot be taken as connoting the country, Leaving aside for a moment the changes in meaning the term ‘Kuṭi’ undergoes within Cankam period itself, the manner this institution is dealt within kuraḷ itself (96–*Kuṭimai* (state of being kuṭi; 103–*Kuṭiceyal vakai* (How to be a Kuṭi), it is quite clear it refers to the lineage or extended family. In fact *Kuṭi* and *Kuṭumpam* (modern term for family) are used as synonyms (1029). In *Kuṭimai*, Vaḷḷuvar speaks of the characteristics of being born into a good kuṭi. In kuraḷ 956 he equals ‘*Kuṭi*’ with ‘*Kulam*’ the latter day term for caste. It is quite clear that

Vaḷḷuvar takes the lineage/extended families as the social units of existence within the *aracu* (kingdom). The crucial question is whether there was only one kuṭi within an aracu. Evidently not. Vaḷḷuvar seems to argue that each kuṭi must preserve its identity.

Equally serious is the equation of “kūḷ” with kosa (wealth). In Caṅkam literature (Perumpānāṟrupatai-PPA-175-327. Pattinappalai-(PP-) 163), Naṟṟinai 367-5, Kuruntokai (Kun) 221, Patirrupattu (PrP) 90, Akanānuṟu (AN)21, 113, 194, Puṟanānūṟu (PN) 70, 122, 160, 185, 320, 369, 399) the word kūḷ is used to mean ‘food’; in fact a special kind of porridge is called Kūḷ. It has been taken as the basic meal of the common man. In kuṟaḷ itself the word is used to mean food (745, 64). In one case (550) it could mean also the (cultivated) plant. Going through the use of the term in Caṅkam literature, one finds the use of it to denote ‘subsistence’ and not wealth. There are many instances in which there is reference to ‘houses with food’ (NT 367, PrP 90). Equating kūḷ, which could at least mean only ‘subsistence’, with wealth cannot be a permissible exercise. Here again, one is compelled to take that for Vaḷḷuvar given the historical reality that confronted him, what mattered most was subsistence of those who come under aracan—their food—that was important. Reading *Kōsa* (wealth) into kūḷ is *ultra vires* of the historical situation.

Regarding the Kuṭi-country identification it should be said that Vaḷḷuvar has a separate chapter (74) on Nāṭu (the country). Vaḷḷuvar defines Nāṭu (state (?) country) as one which has fertile lands that never fail, capable men and unlowly rich men (731). This definition, by its emphasis on the developed agrarian regions, implies that tribes do not fall within the limits of the ‘state’. Kuṟaḷ 735 affirms this when it declares that a prosperous state should be free from internal factions, strife and external harassment” (Sivathamby 1981). ‘One should not fail to note that Vaḷḷuvar uses the words, *Vēntar* (382, 389, 390) *aracār* (381), *aracu* (384, 385) *maṅṅaṟ* (386) *Mannavan* (388) and *irai* (386) interchangeably as synonyms. He does not distinguish between them. This, again, is an important factor, because at the time of Vaḷḷuvar there seems to have no distinction been made between these terms denoting of political authority.

The most important feature of the polity of Vaḷḷuvar is that the entire ‘role’ of the monarch is woven round a single person—the ‘aracan’.. This should be a very significant factor, for Vaḷḷuvar, with his intimate knowledge of and familiarity with the Sanskrit texts, must have found in reality the dominance of the king in the Tamilnadu context. It is equally important not to miss the reference he makes to *avai aṟital* (knowing the assembly—chapter 72) and *avai aṅcāmai* (not fearing the *avai*—chapter 73). The *avai* (assembly, meeting) referred to here is the assembly of men of learning and age in the King’s Court. This seems to be a tradition flowing from the *nāḷmakijirukkai* / ‘Nāḷavai’ convention (see below for details).

It is quite clear that the ‘kingship’ Vaḷḷuvar postulates is more personality-bound than institutionalized.

One should also not miss the fact that even though Vaḷḷuvar speaks of amaiccu (Ministry), he does not refer to any elaborate administrative machinery which characterises the Kautilyan State. Here again the emphasis is on the qualities that an officer should possess (chapters 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70 & 71) and not on the institutional character of the administration.

It should be remembered here, that in terms of the period in which he lived (circa 300-350/ 400-450 AD), this is the type of set-up Vaḷḷuvar thinks would meet the challenges of the day (post-Caṅkam, pre-Kalabhra phase).

IV

As one gets on to the analysis of the evidences from within the Caṅkam corpus one sees two major types of evidences—one, relating to the military activities connected with the Tiṅai tradition, and the other, the terms used to denote those in ‘political’ authority.

In the tiṅai tradition of Caṅkam poetry, each of the geo-physical regions of Tamilnadu was associated with a particular gender relationship in matters of love and family life and a particular

military undertaking in matters relating to the exhibition of the valour of the 'hero'. The literary conventions of Tinai demanded that, when dealing the region or the 'heroes/heroines' who reside there, the poets should make these 'activities' the theme of their poems

A. for love activity

REGION	FLOWER	BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS
Hill	Kuriñci	Sexual union and those leading to.
Pasturelands & Open terrace	Mullai	Wife patiently waiting for the husband who is away and those leading to it.
Riverinē-Agrarian	Marutam	Wife sulking over husband visiting harlot and those leading to it.
Littoral	Neytal	Agony of separation and those leading to it.
Uncultivated dry region	Pālai	Elopement and separation from family.

B. for Military activity

Hill	Vetci	Capture and recapture of cattle. the action of the defenders is sometimes treated separately and referred to by the flower Karantai
Pastureland	Vanci	Guarding and raiding the settlement.
Agrarian	Ulinai	Guarding and attacking the fortifications.

the action of the defenders is sometimes created separately and referred to by the flower Nocci.

Littoral

Tumpai

Fight to finish

Dry

Vakai

Victory

The type of military activity mentioned for each of the regions indicates the things for which people would fight for in that socioeconomic context. It also reveals the level of subsistence especially in the hilly, pastureland and agrarian regions.

It has been shown already that these geographical units with their characteristic social and gender relationships were a contemporary physical reality and that the phenomenon of diverse life patterns was due to the uneven development of the regions. (Sivathamby 1971 (b).

It could be seen that this tradition denotes the growth of human settlements fully determined by ecological factors. While it is inevitable that each of the settlements would have developed social organizations and forms of administration and of social control befitting its needs and characteristics, the potential for further development is available maximally only in the agrarian region, because of the possibility of the development of irrigation and of several harvests, and optimally in the pasture land-open terrace region. It is in these two regions that there would have been the possibility of the rise of complex societies that demand efficient political management. The richness of the economic resources of the areas and the need to define them are best seen in the Mullai and Marutam regions. The Mullai economy has 'settlements' whereas Marutam has 'fortified' regions. That indicates the need for better and growing political organization in Marutam. At the Kuriñci (hilly region) level it is but natural that there would be a stunted growth because the productive forces there cannot be 'developed'.

The tinai convention, thus indicates the type of social, economic and political growth that is possible in each of these regions.

A breakdown of the localities of the *Kilavans* (to whom the area belongs) *mannars* (those who fit into) and the *aracars* would show that they come largely from the hilly, the pastureland and the riverine regions respectively (Sivathamby 1966). And, as has already been shown, at the time Cankam literature was being produced such political entities were existing side by side.

V

Next, we come to those terms that have been used in the Cankam texts to denote political authority. The important terms are *irai* (இறை) *Kō* (கோ), *Kilavan* (கிழவன்), (Vartation of it கிழான்), *mannan* (மன்னன்), (with its variation *mannavan*). *Vēntu* (வேந்து), and *vēntan* (வேந்தன்), *aracu* (அரசு), and *aracan* (அரசன்), *Kurucil* (குருசில்) also spelt as *kuricil* (குரசில்) and *korram* (கொற்றம்),.

It must be mentioned at the outset that there had been a certain amount of looseness in the use of the terms in the Cankam texts. One could very often see the same political authority being referred to by more than one term. However it should be said that this flexibility in usage is seen only in the case of those who go high up in the ladder of the authoritative position. As far as those in the lower part of the ladder are concerned there seems to be a definiteness which avoids the use of the terms pertaining to the upper part of the ladder. i.e. a *மன்னன்*, would be called *kō irai* but would never be referred to as an *aracan* or *vēntan* and an *aracan* would be referred to by all the terms denoting public authority—*irai*, *Kō*, *mannan* etc.

Before one goes into a detailed analysis of each of these terms, it is necessary to look into the question of the expression of the concepts of 'rank' and 'stratification' in the Tamilnadu context. As the latter could come only in a more developed situation, identifying those social units, as we shall see later, would not be very difficult. How has the concept of 'rank' been expressed in the Cankam corpus?.

There is a term '*varicai*'*, (lit—row, usually meaning 'coming in a line') which recurs in Cankam literature. In the manner it

is used in those texts (Cirupānāṟṟupātai (CPA) 217, Kalittokai (Kalit) 85, PN 6, 47, 53, 121, 140, 184, 200, 106, 331, 398 et al) it means 'status'. The Cankam texts, being largely 'bardic', use this term in relation to the 'gifts' the bards get from the rulers. The references are largely to giving gifts to those bards, taking into count (or knowing) their *varicai*. The majority of the references speak of the bards getting the gifts, according to the '*varicai*'. This clearly refers to the social 'rank' of the bard. It could be said that Cankam society knew of a formalized system of graduated social statuses.

Of the terms denoting political authority *Kō* (also *Kōn*) is better taken first, for according to Srinivasa Iyengar (1929, p 10) this indicates the origin of kingship in Tamilnadu. An analysis of the usage of the term *Kō/Kōn* indicates that the word was used to refer to (a) the Cēras, the Cōlās and Pāṇṭiyas (Pṛp 55, 56, 61, PN 9, 17, 22, 212, 398, 34), (b) to some chiefs like Pēkaeṇ and Āy Antīraṇ (PN 141, 147, 152, 399, 374), and (c) to a potter chief (PN 228, 256). It is a well known fact that among the Pāṇṭiyas, Cēras and Cōlās the word *Kō* has been used more in connection with the Cēras than with others. The significant fact is that it also refers to the (nonroyal) chiefs (Pēkaeṇ & Antīraṇ).

Of these references, Puranānūru 152, a poem on Ori, a chief, by Vanparaṇar is very significant. Lines 13 – 21 run like this

பாடுவல் விறலி ஓர் வண்ணம், நீரும்
மண்முழா அமைமின்.....

.....
.....
.....

இறைவன் ஆதலின் சொல்லுபு குறுதி

The term *வரிசை* survives to the present day. The gifts given to the bride by her parents are known as *Cir-varisai*. At the village level in Jaffna when a person or a group of persons behaves in a manner unbecoming of their Status they are referred to as '*வரிசை கெட்டவர்கள்* -those who have damaged their rank.

மூ ஏழ் துறையும் முறை யுளிக் கழிப்பி
 'கோ' எனப் பெயரிய காலை, ஆங்கு அது
 தன்பெயர் ஆதலின் நாணி.

Calling upon the Virali to sing a rhythm,
 and instructing them (the troupe) to get
 ready for the performance and then
 He being the leader (iraivan) I went close,
 Sang the 21 modes and uttered the word
 "Ko", As he heard it, he felt shy, because
 it was his name.

The implication here is that certain of the 'irais' were called 'Ko'. It must have been an appellation given to them on the basis of some special achievement or attainment. What it was for, it is not quite clear now. But it is very evident that *Ko* is a position higher than *Irai*. But even though *irai* was only the leader of the group/community, he seems to have been a much feared person. Tolkāppiyam in the chapter on Emotions (7) states that along with ghosts, animals and thieves, one's leader (*irai*) is also greatly feared.

Uses of the term *irai* in reference to those in authority (the word has 17 meanings—Tamil Lexicon) – PN 72, 294, 314 NT 43, 161 – clearly indicate that the person referred to in each case is a leader, a superior or master.

So the transition would be from *Irai* meaning leader/superior, to *Ko*. It would be of interest to find out why, when the meaning was extended to 'Kings' it was mostly used to refer to the Cēras. However the name Kōpperuñcōlaṅ reveals that the kings of the major dynasties, were considered the "Big Ko" (Perum ko). There was another Cōla king by the name Perunkokkilli.

The "*Irai*" would be the natural chief of a group. It is significant that this very term *irai* is later used to refer to "god" and "tribute" levy that is paid to the ruler.

The significance of the term *kō* is not clear from what is said about the 'term'. It may imply the headship of a politically organised group.

This would be the proper place to inquire into the nomenclature of those non-royal 'chiefs' who are mentioned in the Caṅkam texts. Marr has enumerated that 47, forty-seven chiefs have been eulogised in *Puṇānūru*. (Marr. 1985 Chap. III). The list includes such famous names as the *Vēlirs*, *Kumanan*, and *Pāri* (himself also a Vel).

Marr's comment on the nature of the panegyrics in *Puṇānūru* on these chiefs is significant. "A striking feature is the extent to which the names of minor chieftains appear in the poems about them when contrasted with those in praise of the *MuVēntar*, in many of which the names of their heroes do not appear at all. In over half of the poems praising chiefs their names appear; names are present in 79 out of 141 poems. But out of the 138 poems in praise of *MuVēntar* the kings' names appear in 45 poems, or in less than a third of the total number It may be suggested that it would have been thought disrespectful to refer by name to kings, while it was permissible to do so in the case of chiefs and lesser persons" (Ibid 1985 p 246-7).

Except for the *Vēlirs* most of the chiefs are described as *Kilavan* (to whom it belongs (PN 129, 131, 152, 153, 155, 163). This might indicate that most of these chiefs were leaders of some groups in an exclusive geographical area.

As for the *Vēlirs*, though they were only chiefs they had the distinction of being counted along with the *Vēntar* (*Pantiya*, *Cōla* & *Cēra*). Four references in *Patirrupattu* speak of "*vēntarum vēlirum*" (*Vēntar* and *Vēlir*) (Champakalakshmy 1976). After an exhaustive analysis of the territories of the different *Vēlir* chiefs and the connections those have with megalithic sites, Champakalakshmy, states that the frequent references to the *Vēlir* and their strongholds as overflowing with rice and prosperity and their generosity to learned men would favour their identification with the founders of the earliest

agrarian settlements in this region (Coonoor in Nilgris, Tirukkovalur in South Arcot, Tagadur (in Dharma puri). The table given above would show the occurrence of megaliths at all important Vēlir sites and occasionally both burial and habitational rites” (Champakalakshmy 1976) This should explain the reason for eminence of the Vēlirs. They were the founders of the earliest agrarian settlements in Salem, Nilgris areas.

The Vēlirs were so politically powerful that they had their own myths connecting them to the rulers of Tuvarai (Dwarasamudra) (PN 201, 202). In the case of ‘irai’ ‘ko’ and Vēlir the references suggest that they were all leaders of homogeneous social groups and that the one in authority has emerged from among themselves.

But in the case of *mannan* we come across a person of political authority who is taken as indispensable to the functioning of the society.

நெல்லும் உயிரன்றே நீரும் உயிரன்றே
மன்னன் உயிரிந்தே மலந்தலை உலகம்

“It is not rice that is the life-soul; nor is it water
The world has its life in the *mannan* (PN 86).
mannan is the singular form and *mannar*, the plural one
[மன்னன்-மன்னர்]

There is no indication in all the references to *mannar* that they were heading only a kin group. They seem to be supra-kin. Who was the original *mannan*? How did he establish his power? We have no direct answers to these in the texts. The etymology of the word provides some indication. “*mannan*” (மன்னன்) is derived from the verb *mannu*-meaning (i) to be permanent (ii) to remain long (iii) to agree (iv) to preserve (v) to be steady and (vi) to abound (Tamil Lexicon). The variation of this term *mannan* is *mannavan* (மன்னவன்). In this word the meaning one who preserves/who is steady etc..... is very clear. As regards the origin of the term *mannan* (the one who preserves/fits in) the ritual referred to as *Pillaiyattu* (anointing/dancing with the child/youth (Purattinai Iyal 60) is important. “Whereas one commentator

explains it as singing the praise of the dead, another – Naccinarkkiniyar –, explains it as the celebration of the investiture of political authority of the young man who had defeated the raiders and established the supremacy of the clan. Philologically the latter seems to be more acceptable interpretation. If so in this cult, we could see the origin of kingship among the Tamils”.(Sivathamby 1971 (a) Pillaiyattu will be useful in the study of how a *ko* or *mannan* was ritually (installed) as the ruler.

It is clear that the office of *mannan* was something lower than a *vēntan*, for we have in PN 319 a reference to a *mannan* going on an assignment sent by the *Vēntu*.

‘சிறார் மன்னன் நெருநை ஞாங்கர்
வேந்துவிடு தொழிலொடு சென்றான்’

“The *mannan* of the small ur has gone off yesterday on an assignment given by the *Vēntu*”.

It is equally significant to note that *mannan* is sometimes referred to *ciṟūr mannan* (*mannan* of the small ūr (village) PN 319, 308 also 299, 197, 299). The distinction between the *mannan* and the *vēntan* is clearly brought out also in PN 333 and 338.

One cannot take the ‘*mannanship*’ as family/clan bound, for we get reference to “new” – meaning perhaps newly emerged–*mannar* (*viruntin mannar* AN 548).

Netunalvātai of the Pattupattu anthology provides another clue to the more established character of the ‘rule’ and authority of *mannan*. Line 78 of the long poem says:

பெரும்பெயர் மன்னர்க்கொப்ப மனைவகுத்து

“Having designed/built houses as befitting the *mannar*”.

This makes it clear that here was an office holder who had his own ‘residence’ quite different from those of others. There is also reference to *mannar* with walls (AN 373, C8A, 247, PP 277–8), suggesting thereby that *mannar* lived within walled constructions. He is also referred to as one who guards (Kāval*mannan*) - PN 371, 331. It is quite possible that “*mannan*-ship” arose in areas where some

development (agriculture) was possible. He would have to guard the newly developing area. Thus the 'mannan who guards'. The territorial extent of the authority seems to be limited.

There are a few telling references in PN (320, 328, 327) which speak of the 'gift-giving', hospitable character of the *mannan* even though he was poor. PN 320 clearly refers to the redistributive role of the *mannan*. In NT 146 there is a reference 'mannar conscious of their duties'.

It is said that sometimes *vēntar* got their brides from these *mannar* PN 336 & 377 refer to *mannar* making 'makatkotai' (gift of daughters) to *Vēntar*. At certain times, some of the *Vēntar* had joined themselves to fight against a *mannan* (PN 345) AN 174.

With the emergence of the *mannan* the territoriality of the ruled area and a structure of relationships both in terms of physical residences and of rights and duties between him as the ruler and the people as those ruled seem to have come into existence. It is also clear that *mannan* was not leading a socially homogeneous group as perhaps the irai and the *Kō* were, but was ruling over an area—a territory—by defending it and 'providing it the things needed'. It is in this sense that the emergence of *mannan* seems to be a turning point in the evolution of the king and state in Tamilnadu. He was ruling over a territory. He was not just a leader of a group of person. The 'pillaiyatu' investiture referred to earlier seems to fit into this type of emergence of the ruler. With the emergence of *mannan* the distinction between the ruler and the ruled becomes a reality.

With *vēntu/vēntan* we come to the most powerful and militaristic personality of the rulers to emerge in Tamilnadu.

Compared with others enjoying political power and authority, *vēntan* is the most militaristic. He is always associated with the army PN 322, 38, 390, 278). In fact, almost all the militaristic exploits which *Tolkappiyam* mentions in *Puratiṇai Iyal* as associated with panegyrics of victory, deal with the exploits of the *vēntan*; the term *vēntan* is quite specifically mentioned (Tol. Purat 2, 5, 6, 10, 14). In fact the term *mannan* does not seem to occur in that section of *Tolkappiyam*. It is in

relation to the *vēntan* that we come across Army Camps (பாசாரை – paçarai), which means that under a *vēntan* fighting has been put on some organized professional basis. This seems to have started at the *mannan* level for we are told they were using horses (PN 299 NT 81). For the professional *paçarai* (பாசாரை) see NNV 18, PN 22, 31, 33, 62, 69, 298, 294, 361, 304 PP 16, 50, 61, 64, 84, 88.

From these it is clear that "vēntan" differed in main from the other 'authorities' in "possessing" an army. It was perhaps at the level of *Vēntar* it was possible to have such a military institution. But we have no evidence to say that it was a standing army. We do not have any reference to the "off-war" lives of these "army-men"

Unlike in the case of the *mannan* in relation to whom we do not have much reference to his administrative set up, in the case of 'vēntan', we have references to people going out on *Vēntu Viṇai* (The task assigned by the *vēntan*) – Aink 426, AN 254, 104). People could be away for months on those missions. But this should not mean that there was anything like an extensive administrative machinery even under the *vēntan*.

Another important feature is that the concept of *Korram* (கொற்றம்) which denotes sovereignty is first associated with this class of rulers (PrP 64, 62, 69 PN 37P, 21, 367, 338). In fact it does not seem to be associated with the *mannan* at all. This 'korram' went along with certain symbols – *muracu* (drum) sword, flag, *parasol*, *rata* (ter).

The term as we shall see later, is also associated with 'aracu' (PN 35, 55) also.

It is a matter of great historical significance that riverbased irrigation as a specific developmental activity is associated with *Vēntar* (PN 18).

Even though there seems to be no specific prescription in the available literary references that the term 'Vēntu' should only be associated with the *Cēras*, the *Cōlās* and the *Pantyas*, it is quite clear that by tradition it was the rulers from these dynasties who have been referred to as *Vēntar*. Tradition refers to them as the *Mūvēntar*. (the three

Vēntars). There is a tradition of referring to the other two when eulogising the third, (AN 96 PN 42). The territories of these *Mūvēntar* when compared with the areas covered by the other class of rulers were 'vast' and were lying along river beds. This implies that each territory would have within it various social groups. The presence of agriculture and the need for a big army thus become explicable. We have references to chieftains coming under Vēntar (PN 179).

The definitive term for the royal assembly "vēttavai" (MPK 39, PN 382) is also associated with the Vēntar. The etymology of the word makes it self-evident. It is the avai (assembly) of the Vēntu. However great care should be exercised to see that this assembly is not understood either as an administrative assembly or permanent administrative machinery. This really must have been the Vēntar-level extension of *surram* (சுற்றம்) of the irai/Ko level. It is said that some of the kings and chieftains had their 'surram'. The 'tribal' character of this is well expressed in the convention of 'nāl Makil Irukkai' in which the ruler sits 'in state' with senior members of his group, drinking toddy (PN 29, 54, 123, 324, 330, PPA 441-7). This hour provided the time for the eulogy by the bards. It was here that redistribution was ritually done. This 'irukkai' (seating), in course of time leads to the 'avai' (assembly) and it is this *avai* which is spoken of as the place where the king listened to the grievances of the people. This has nothing to do with the sabha of the later time. Crown is referred to only at the level of the *Mūvēntar*-mutiyutai Vēntar.

It is significant that while describing the exploits of a *maggan* PN 345 refers to the Vēntar as 'vamba Vēntar' (the newly emerged Vēntar). This implies that from the point of view of that settlement that this poet refers to, this very office was a recent intrusion.

With the emergence of the Vēntar one could safely say Tamilnadu has entered at least the 'inchoate' stage of the Early State'.

With the references to aracu we come to the highest of the institutions of political authority that could be observed in Early Tamilnadu.

The concept of 'aracu' goes with only the "three Vēntus" (PN 34, 55, Pr 159). Whereas 'Vēntu' seems to be an indigenous development marking the emergence of state power. 'aracu' seems to be a secondary formation. Each of the three Vēntar-doms is claimed to be the 'real' aracu. Maturaikkāñci (191) and Patirrupattu (89) have gone to the extent of using the term 'araciya' (nature of aracu; the term is used in modern times to refer to political science). Aracu is associated with a standing army, PN 55 seems to indicate that aracu becomes complete only with the four-fold army (also PN 197, PrP 43).

With the establishment of rule with the might of the military it is logical that voices are beginning to be heard about the need and necessity for a moralistic guideline for the activities of the Vēntu, PN 35, and 55 are very instructive in this regard.

Tolkappiyar in Marapiyal enumerates the emblems of the aracan

'படையும், கொடியும், குடையும், முரசும்
நடைநகில் புறியும் கன்றும் தேரும்
தாரும், முடியும், தேர்வன பிறவும்
தெரிவுகோள் செங்கோல் அரசர்க்குரிய..'

Army, the flag, the Parasol, the drum,
the horse, the elephant, the chariot,
the garland, the crown, and all the other-needed,
belong to the sceptred aracar.

Marapiyal - 72.

It would be useful at this stage to inquire into the origins of the word 'aracu'. It is generally taken as the Tamilised form of the Sanskrit 'Raja'. Linguistically speaking the Sanskrit term 'Raja' would come into Tamil as iracan (இராஜன்) and not aracan/aracu (அரசர்/அரசு) A borrowing of this term through a direct contact with Sanskrit culture is thus not possible. It has to be seen whether it could have come via Prakrit Sources. In this connection, it has got to be remembered that the word 'aracu' has been used as 'araisu' (அரைசு) also in Cankam

literature (P & P 34, PN 26, 42, 354 Cil). (Note a parallel variation in the word முரசு (murasu) (NT 39, Prl 30, 31, 40, PN 17, 26, 29, 60 et al) and முரைசு (muraicu) (AN 36, PN 62 – 9). The significance of this usage has got to be looked into with great care, for the word 'Araiya' has been found on an inscribed potsherd found at Arikamedu. (T.V. Mahalingam 1966).

Before one gets on to have a closer look at the features of this newly "emergent state" it is important that some attention is paid to understand one other term used in the Cankam corpus connected with political authority. The term is 'Kurucil', sometimes referred to also as Kuricil. (MK 151, MPK 186, Aink 306, 471, 473, 480, Prp 24, 31, 32, 53, 55, 72, 88, PN. 16, 50, 68, 161, 198, 210, 285, 290, 321, 333, 341, 377, AN 184). The term has been used in relation to the aracar, the *maṅṅar* and the chiefs. It is generally mentioned along with the spear also with the army. It may be suggested that this term 'Kurucil' had denoted the 'right to rulership'. The etymology of the word is not clear.

It is worth inquiring whether the "Vēntus" wore "crowns". The term for crown is "muṭi". This term also refers to the tuft of hair that is knotted on the top of the head. The word "muṭi" refers also to "one of the five designs in hair do practised by ancient Tamil girls (முட்டிப்பாட்டு 76). In the case of the males the knotted tuft is referred to as Kutumi (குடுமி). One of the Pāṅṅiyāṅ kings, one Peruvaluti, is referred to as "he of the old Kutumi". Mutukuṭumipperuvaluti (முதுகுடுமிப் பெருவழுதி). He is the ruler known by the term "Palyākacālai mutukuṭumipperuvaluti". The doubt that arises is, whether tying the tuft of hair as a knot on the top of the head was at the outset a symbol of heroic leadership. There is a tradition of *uccikkuṭumi* (knot on the top of the head) among Tamil males. It is possible that persons with political authority sported the 'kuṭumi' on the top of the head.*

* The late Dr N.Sanjeevi one time Professor of Tamil, University of Madras drew my attention to the term, I am grateful to him for it.

It should once again be emphasised that this newly emergent state was associated with irrigation. Rice production through irrigation must have increased the output leading to considerable surplus. Early Tamil Kingdoms were located in the major rice producing areas, (Cōlās –Kāveri,Pāṅṅiyas–VaikaiandTamraparni, Cēras–Periyaru (Maloney pp 9–12).

The affluence of the major kingdoms the 'ventar-dom so to say, is also explained by their associations with foreign trade. All the important ports mentioned in the Classical (Greek) sources fall within the three major political units. *Naura* and *Muziri* were in the Cēra region, *Nelcyna*, *Becare* and *Komari* came within the Pāṅṅiya region *Camara* and *Poduca* were in Cōlanaṭu. *Sopatama* was near Kanci. Pattiṅappālai's mention of the organization of the export import trade (184 – 93) is also an indication of the wealth that would have accrued to the Cōlā coffers. Maturaikāñci (321–4, 536–44) indicates the prosperity that commerce provided to the Pāṅṅiyas. Patirrupattu (59, 76) provides an insight into the commercial prosperity of the Cēra Kingdom.

While referring to the benefits the emergent aracus would have had through long distance trade, it must clearly be mentioned that commerce and trade were not royal monopolies. Tamil Brahmi inscriptions of the period refer to the existence of mercantile guilds in Tamilnadu–(Sivathamby 1981 pp 171 – 4)

Coming to the symbols of legitimisation of the aracus, we find that each of the dynasties had developed their own myths of origin and geneologies that reached to mythical kings like Sipi for the Cōlās and the Netiyon for the Pāṅṅiyas. They had even established relationship with Mahabharata War and each of them was credited with a victory in *vatapulam* (North India).

Special mention should be made of the insistence of Yagas by the newly emergent aracar to legitimise their new found status in terms of the Sanskritic traditions (PN 26, 15, 224, 400, Prp 21, 74, 70). It is of interest to note that in the indigenous tradition, the Tamil monarchs did not have a priestly class that would have provided them

with the legitimisation they needed. The indigenous ritual mentioned in the Tamil text is the *Kalavēlvi*. This sacrifice constituted the cooking on the oven formed by the severed heads of the vanquished, the flesh of the killed. The severed arm with its shoulder blade was used as the ladle.....It was believed that *Peymakajir* (female goblins) danced in happiness in the battle ground strewn with the dead bodies, thanking the victor for the feast provided. (PN 356, 359, 371, Prp. 36, 37 CPA 196 – 201 et al) These feasts are clearly indicative of cannibalism. But as time went on *Kalavēlvi* is mentioned along with the vedic yagas. Kings were praised for having performed both” (Sivathamby 1981). The performance of these yagas and the adoption of the Sanskritic rituals must have led to a change in the very ideology of kingship.

It could be said that Tamilnadu’s contact with the North, its knowledge of the vatapulam its aracar and traditions (PN 31, 52, Prp 68) and the familiarity with the yavanas would have led to the secondary formation of State.

The influence of similar state structures preceding them, or existing in the same area seem to have been a very decisive factor in the ‘aracu’ formation in Tamilnadu because we do observe that the internal social stratification in Tamilnadu did not create any confrontationist class hostilities at that time. We have the mercantile class, organized into ‘Nbhikama’s and the land owning ‘Kilāns’. Cankam literature does not provide instances of an actual societal level involvement of the merchants. That type of urban eminence of the merchants is seen only in Cilapatikaram. The beginning of the development of ‘class’ distinctions could be seen also in the references to the storing of paddy in large quantities (AN 44, NT 26,60). Agriculture of the day had ‘*vinaivalars*’, non – land owning, agricultural labourers. There was also an important economic activity in which men, with “juniors” went out of Tamilnadu to earn ‘wealth’. It has been shown that the journey for wealth might be connected with gold mining in Karnataka (Sivathamby 1981 -p. 174-5). Along with rice production, this activity provides for the accumulation of the surplus and the social effects of this wealth is becoming discernible in

Cankam literature. We do not hear of any conflicting interest between these two classes. In discussing questions of class formation in Tamilnadu one has to be conscious of the fact that there were many political units and that the formational character would have varied from one unit to another [Sivathamby 1971 (a)].

The absence of pressing internal pressures on this newly emergent political authority could be seen in the fact that there was no great administrative machinery. There is no reference to any ‘*amaiccar*’ (ministers) in the Cankam works. The ‘*vēttavai*’ (NT 90) / *aracavai* (PrP 85) as has already been shown, should not be mistaken as any supreme administrative or judiciary body. It could be argued that the absence of sharp internal pressures enabled the continuity of many of the pre-state, traditional institutions of Tamilnadu—gifts to bards, *nālavai* etc. in the newly emergent state too. The major change, of course, was from a flexible Kuti system to a developed agricultural landownership in the riverine regions.

One of the important aspects in the newly emergent Aracu in Tamilnadu, is the glorification of the personality of the aracan. This is well seen in the poems of the Patirrupattu anthology. From a situation where the ‘heroic’ king was praised for his bravery and valour, we now get on to a phase where the physical charms and appeal of the King as a person are getting eulogised (PrP 50, 51, 52, 63, 65). It is interesting to note that these features continued till late through Pāntiya, Cōla times to the days of the petty chieftains of the Nayakkar rule..

While on the question of eulogization of the hero/King, it should be mentioned that one of the qualifications for acceptance as the ruler, whether he is *Kō*, *maṇṇaṇ*, or *vētaṇ*, was the personal bravery and valour of the person concerned. One very often finds in the Cankam Corpus, especially the Puram Poems, the extolling of the heroic qualities of the rulers. (Kailasapathy 1968) This was considered almost a necessity for the establishment of this authority. This explains the heroic cult that pervades the entire Cankam corpus.*

I am grateful to Professor George Hart for impressing upon me the need not to leave this factor unmentioned.

It would perhaps be clear now as to how the tradition of a highly personalized monarchy had arisen in Tamilnadu.

Any inquiry into the nature and the course of state formation in Early Tamilnadu should take into account the fact that the great kings of each of the lineages—Karikala (Cōla) Netunceliyan (Pāṇṭiya) and Palyanaicelkelu Kuttuvan (Cēra) were associated with irrigation and more importantly that, after these major kings (in case of the Cēras there was one successor of eminence—Cenkuttu), there was a lack of strong kings. This cannot be attributed to the kalabhra interregnum, as that invasion comes in only around 430 AD (K.R.Venkataraman 1957). The drying up of the monarchical eminence mentioned in Cirupānārrupatai (Nilakanta sastri 1963 p 18 p 155) around 250 AD and the absence of any strong monarchy during that period are important features which have got to be examined.

These show that the inchoate authority had not been able to develop an administrative system that could stand on its own. This perhaps was the reason why there had been no references to an administrative infra-structure. The fact must have been there was none and the whole rule was bound up with the personality of the rulers. 1989

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Development of Aristocracy in Ancient Tamilnadu- a study of the beginnings of social stratification in Early Tamilnadu

An attempt to trace the development of the social institutions of Tamilnadu may yet to be considered too early by some scholars because of the unsettled nature of the chronology and unfamiliarity with history other than dynastic.¹

Adequate material is available for a sociologically oriented study if one is prepared to (a) work out an internal chronological sequence of the texts, (b) relate them to archaeological and inscriptional evidences and (c) set them in an all-India perspective. 'This does not require a search for new evidences so much as re-reading of the sources with a different set of questions in mind.'²

Tamil is perhaps the only non-Aryan language in India which possesses a literature that records the changes that were taking place with the penetration of Aryan influences. No other non-aryan language of India has such a literature.

The earliest available Tamil epigraphic records belong to c. 200 B.C. and the earliest available Tamil literature³ to c. 100 B.C.

A study of the early Tamil texts would enable us to determine the manner in which the North Indian influences both of Hinduism and of Jainism and Buddhism, spread in Tamilnadu and how gradually the norms of a culture which is common to all parts of India were established in this region.

At the outset we should note the salient features of this literary source.⁴

The earliest extant literature is referred to as Cankam literature- literature of the Academies. These are found in two collections. 1. Eight Anthologies 2 Ten Songs.

Each of the Eight Anthologies is itself a collection of poems by different poets, grouped according to varying criteria. It is now an accepted fact that two of these collections Kalitokai (Kalit) and Paripatal (Pari) belong to a period later than the other six ones. Two volumes - Puranānūru (Puram) and Patirrupattu (PrP) contain poems on what is called the 'External Theme'-i.e. war, military activities, political organisation, heroism etc.

Puram contains eulogies on the Three Monarchs, the Kings of small territories, chiefs and individual heroes. PrP in its original form had ten poems of praise each on Ten kings of the Cēra dynasty.

The collection of the poems on the 'Interior theme' i.e. those on love premarital, wedded and extra-marital-is grouped according to the length of the poems.

Kuṟuntokai (Kur)-The Short Collection-4-8 lines.

Narṟṟinai (Nar)-The Good Conduct-9-14 lines

Akaṇānūru (Akam)-Interior 400-15-33 lines

Aiṅkuṟunūru (Aink)-Five Short Hundreds 3-6 lines

The poems reveal a highly conventionalised pattern of verse making.

The Ten Songs⁵ are longer lays and reveal their 'heroic' character much better than the other collection. Except *Kuṟiṅcipattu* (KP) which relates in an ordered sequence the premarital romance mentioned in the above poems and *Tirumurukāṟṟrupatai* (TMA)/Guide to Murukan-in whose cult we notice the syncreticism of the Aryan and the Dravidian religious observances, all other poems are eulogies on Kings. Four are in the form of guide poems

Porunar Āṟrupatai - PA - (Guiding the Troubadour)

Perumpān Āṟrupatai - PPA - (Guiding the Big Harpist)

Cirupāṇārratupatai- PPA - Guiding the Small Harpist)

Malaipatakātām - MPK - (Guiding the Actor-dancer);

Two are woven around romantic situation, (*Mullaippṇṇittu* MP and *Nedunalvatai* NNV); and one is an advice on how to achieve immortality (*Maturaikṇṇīyō*- (MK). *Pattinappṇlai* (PP) eulogises *Karikṇṇai*, the Great.

The importance of these two collections as sources for the political history of Tamilnadu has already been established.⁶ Kailasapathy's study has established that these are Heroic poems and are thus comparable in spirit and character to the Homeric Epic and other Heroic Epics of the world.⁷

As is generally agreed to by philologists and historians, these poems belong to a period from circa 100 B.C. to 350 A.D. Those which are considered late (TMA, Kali and Pari) have been placed severally between 5th,6th and 7th centuries A.D. Thus the entire corpus can be taken to depict a period from about 100 B.C. to 600 A.D.

To these must be added a grammatical work called *Tolkāppiyam* (Tol), one work from another anthology called the 'Eighteen Minor Works'-the ones referred to already being the Eighteen Major Works and *Cilappatikaram* the earliest extant narrative poem. The date of the grammatical work is much in dispute. Of the three sections of the work (Orthography, Morphology and Contents and Forms in Literature) the first is the one relevant to our study. The criteria by which social and literary classifications are made in this section cannot be held good for the social and other classifications made in most number of cases in the poems. This work could be assigned to about 5th century A.D.⁸

Of the Eighteen Minor works one needs special mention and that is *Tirukuraḷ*, an ethical work, which has been hailed by Albert Schweitzer thus: "There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom".⁹ In presenting what has been described as a 'positive' code, *Valluvar* had discarded many of the earlier institutions (*surrām*, *nānmakilirukkai*) given new functions to old ones (family) condemned a few (*harlotry*)

and introduced a few (the concept of state as developed in N.India). This work which is taken as belonging to about 450-500 A.D., serves as an excellent source for the study of social institutions.

The next important literary work is *Cilappatikāram* (Cil)-the Lay of the Anklet. This narrative poem describes the vicissitudes of a very wealthy merchant prince who after living with a courtesan for some time returns to his wife and sets about to start life on his own in another kingdom but was killed there as the thief who stole the anklet of the queen of the Kingdom- a charge levelled against him by the unscrupulous goldsmith of the place. This work assigned to a period between 450-550 A.D. records the role of the merchants in the life of the city. Its description of the capitals is important for the reconstruction of the social and cultural history of the period.

II

In the *Caṅkam* poetry, there operates a thematic classification by which a particular 'romantic' activity is associated with a particular region. The areas are referred to by the most characteristic flower of the region.¹⁰

REGION	FLOWER	LOVE ACTIVITY
(a) Hills	Kuṇṇi	Copulation and Sexual Union.
(b) Pasturelands	Mullai	Wife patiently waiting for the husband who is away.
(c) Riverine Agrarian	Marutam	Wife sulking over husband visiting harlot
(d) Littoral	Neytal	Agony of separation
(e) Uncultivated dry region	Pālai	Separation from family because of elopement.

Each of these divisions is also associated with a distinct type of military activity.

REGION	FLOWER	MILITARY ACTIVITY
(a) Hill	Vectic	capture and recapture of cattle.
(b) Pastureland	Vañci	guarding and raiding of the settlement.
(c) Rivering Agrarian	Ulinai	guarding and attacking the fortifications
(d) Littoral	Tumpai	fight to finish
(e) Dry	Vakai	victory

Of these, the uncultivated dry region (e) was a later addition to an original fourfold division of land. This division strongly reminds the fourfold cosmological division found among many primitive tribes. A later day misconception has led many native scholars to treat the different activities as seen in the life of one couple or one war. But a student of historical ethnology would not fail to observe that the conduct code and the military operation ascribed to each of the physiographic regions correspond to the social and political organisation of the people who that live in those areas.

That each of the geographical units formed separate settlements of people who had common economic pursuits and social organisation and that each of these settlements differed from the other three of four, are well illustrated by the various references we get in the Guide Poems of the Ten Songs Anthology.

This feature of an uneven development has been emphasised by the archaeologists too. Allchins, make this observation: "From the point of view of the archaeologist, the different regions of India have a two fold interest. Firstly many of their distinctive features are capable of being traced back in time and the development and differentiation of regional cultures is the very stuff of archaeology. Secondly certain regions have advanced far more rapidly than others, and the more backward often preserve many features which elsewhere belong only to a distant past".¹²

The resulting cultural variation has also been noted. 'It is worth stressing once more that in the past, as today, in addition to the normal range of sites of different size and importance, by which any cultural phase is always represented, throughout the Indian subcontinent distinct cultural groups at very different levels are to be found living in more or less close proximity to one another'.¹³

And now the earlier statement that the "more backward often preserve many features which else where belong only to a distant past" assumes a special historical significance.

The evidence we have in Caṅkam literature, therefore, is valuable not only for the spatial or regional development but also to place them in some historical sequence.¹⁴

III

The patrons eulogised in Puṛaṇānūru could be classified as follows:

I. Kings of the three Established Monarchies:

- (a) Cēra – 18 Kings.
- (b) Cōla – 13 Kings.
- (c) Pāṇṭiya – 12 Kings.

II. Chiefs – 47

A break-up of the chiefs could be made as follows.

- (a) Ēṇādi—a commander of the army of one of the three Kingdoms.
- (b) Patrons described as 'Kings of small territories'—some of the important tribes likes—Vēls and Āys would come under this.
- (c) Patrons who are referred to as 'owners of areas' Amparkilāṇ Aruvantai, Nālai Kīlavan Mallikilāṇ. Cirukutikilan.

The eulogies are not exclusive to the Exterior Themes. Even the poems on love are subtly worked out eulogies. Some patrons who do not find a mention in the direct eulogies are mentioned in the love poems.

Having taken all such references into count, Turai Aranka-camy makes the following classification:

1. The Three Established Monarchies:— Cēra, Cōla, Pāṇṭiya.
2. Independant Tribes that lived in the Cēra region:— Kutavar, Atiyar, Malayar, Malavar, Puliyar, Villor, Kongar, and Kuravar.
3. Tribes that lived in the Pāṇṭiya region:— Paratavar, Kōsar.
4. Tribes that did not come under the hegemony of the three Established Monarchies:— Āviyar, Ōviyar, Vējir, Aruvar, Andar, Idaiyar.
5. Tribes that lived in the region neighbouring the Tamil area:— Tondaiyar, Kalavar, Vadukar.¹⁵

A detailed analysis of the kings and the chieftains eulogised by Paranar – the much celebrated poet of the Caṅkam period, would reveal the contemporaneity of many chieftains and kings and indicate the extent of the ‘uneven development’.¹⁶

Paranar is the author of the 5th decad of Patirruppu, the poem on Cēra Kings. The King praised was Kuttuvan. He is also said to have sung another Cēra, Perumpūtoraiyaṅ identified as the victor of Kuluvul.

Of the Cōlās, he had sung the praise of the Great Karikala (150 A.D.) and his father Ilancetenni.

Of the Pāṇṭiyas he refers to one Pasumpūtpāṇḍyaṅ identified as the famous victor of the battle of Talaiālaṅgaṅam.

He also mentions 27 chieftains each of whom could be taken as an independent ruler. Some of them were feudatories of the Kings (Arukai) some were allies—thus independent (Miṇṇi and Naṅṅan). Maṭṭi from Kaḷār was the chief of the fisherfolk and Kaḷuvul, chief of the cattle keepers.

Kapilar, a contemporary of Paranar, praises one Cēra King and eight chieftains three of whom were praised by Paranar too.

Now, let us see the characteristic features of the chieftaincies and the emerging political pattern.

As observed earlier, some of the chieftains are described by the name of the region and some by the profession of their group. It is an established fact that people of a particular region, generally engaged themselves in the same economic pursuit. This was mainly due to ecological considerations. Thus it is clear that the primary grouping was a tribal grouping. The express mention of the chieftains of the fishermen and the cattlekeepers, proves this. Tolkāpiyam, the grammatical work, when dealing with the persons fit to be sung about, expressly states that only owners or property holders should be sung and adds that (unlike in the case of the agrarian region) among the cattle-keepers and hunters everyone is called by the name of the group and that among them too, there are some persons who could be called ‘owners’ (Tol. Akat.20 & 21.) This feature of collective ownership was found only among the cattle-keepers and hunters.

It would be interesting to note at this stage, the comments Allchins make on the Late Stone Age tools of South India, generally associated with a group of old sand dunes (teri—a microlithic industry based upon flakes) “Fishing communities on the coasts of India still live in situations of this kind, building their huts among sand dunes which are far from stable in order to be near their grounds”.¹⁷ The territory of Matti, the fisherchief has to be looked for on the east coast, around the area of these excavated sites (Akam 226).

Besides these typically tribal chieftaincies, we hear of chiefs who are described as ‘Rulers of small territories’. The Vēls are an example. Most of these independent chieftains ruled in and around the hills of Tamilnadu. Vel Ay ruled over the Potiyil Hill, the southernmost section of the Western Ghats. He could be identified as the ‘Aioi’ mentioned by Ptolemy as the chief ‘ruling the country which included Cape Comorin and mount Bettigo’.¹⁸ Pari, the celebrated benefactor, ruled over the area around Parampu, identified as modern Piranmalai. Ori, another chieftain, was ruling the Kollimalai.

Many of these chieftaincies, as could be seen, arose in geographically secluded, thus naturally fortified, areas.

Most important of the political units is the Three Monarchies. The Rock Edicts of Asoka (3rd c. B.C.) which mention the southern

boundaries of the empire, refer to Cēra, Paṅṭiya and Cōḷa Kingdoms. These three monarchies must have been quite well established by that time. Megasthenes refers to the Paṅṭiyan Kingdom. The pre-Asokan Arthasastra mentions the special variety of pearls from the Paṅṭiyan kingdom. All these indicate the antiquity of the three kingdoms. In Cankam literature a distinction is made in the reference to these three kings and other rulers. The term 'Vēntaṅ' is exclusively used for the rulers of the three kingdoms.

Cēras ruled the western area. Earliest evidences indicate that Cēras and Cōḷās had at certain times two different families ruling from two different capitals. The two Cōḷa capitals were Uraiyur and Pukār both connected with river Kāveri. Pukār is at the point of the confluence of that river with the Indian ocean. It is the 'Poduce' of Ptolemy. Vāveri is the most important river in Tamilnadu and, understandably, came to be connected with Tamil culture. Next in importance are Palar, and Pennar to the north of Kāveri and Vaikai and Tamraparni to the south of it. Madurai, the seat of Paṅṭiya rule, was sited close to Vaikai.

It is no wonder that the dynasties which controlled the important rivers of the region rose to prominence.

IV

Before we inquire into the development of cities and towns that arose on these river basins, and the social stratification that develops there, it would be appropriate to inquire into the social features of the tribal chieftaincies and groups and the relationship they had with the kingdoms under which they came.

Firstly, the social structure within the group. We do not have any evidence to know of the stratification within each tribe. There is an interesting reference in Tolkāppiyam. While describing the various military operations and activities that could be praised in poems, it mentions an event called 'Pillaiyāṭṭu' (Dancing with the Child or Youth) (Purattinaiiyal 60). Whereas one commentator explains it as singing the praise of the dead hero, another commentator – Naccinārkiṇiyar –

explains it as the celebration at the Investiture of political authority of the young man who had defeated the raiders and established the supremacy of the clan. Philologically this seems to be the more acceptable interpretation.²⁰ If so, in this cult we could see the origin of kingship among the Tamils. The above interpretation gains more support especially in view of the emphasis laid on the security that a ruler has to provide to the ruled (Puram 32, 35).

One important observation has to be made at this point. In Tamilnadu we do not hear of any political oligarchies. 'Sarthu' was the guild of the merchants. It cannot be taken as ever having had political authority. But oligarchy as a political institution had existed in North India. The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha, came from an ancient oligarchy. The Licchavis were another important oligarchy.

It is said that some of the kings and chieftains had their 'surraṅ' (Puram 2, PPA 441-447, MK 227, MPK 76-8). The term 'surraṅ' which means 'those around' today denotes one's relatives. The tribal character of the ruler is well expressed in the convention of 'Nāḷ Makīḷ Irukkai' in which the ruler sits in state with fellow members of the tribe, drinking toddy (Puram 29, 54, 123, 324, 330, PPA 441-447). This hour provided the time for the eulogy by bards. At the start, even the kings of the established monarchies had this institution. (Puram 29, 54). In cities we find the great rich men observing this (441-52) ritual.

This reveals that at the beginning, the three kingdoms did not differ much from the other units.

The chieftains who came under the major kingdoms do not seem to have lost their political authority. Puram songs 319, 322 and 324 refer to hunter chiefs who help the major kings. The area is described as that of the chiefs. This type of political control should have led to the development of feudalism in the more classical sense. From the state of a subordinate ruler, the transition is to one who rules on behalf of the King. This feature noted by Kosambi as 'Feudalism from Above' is one of the important forms of the development of feudalism in India.²¹ In North India, the term 'Samanta' which originally meant a neighbour later denotes a feudatory official.²²

The following are some of the names of the chiefs: Cirukuṭikilāṅ Paṅṅaṅ, Mulli Kilan Kariyati, Nālai Kilavan Nakan. Eenthur Kilan, Toṅ Maraṅ. Vallar Kilāṅ Paṅṅaṅ, Karumpanūrkkilāṅ, Amparkilāṅ Aruntai, Poraiyarrukilāṅ.

The relationship between these feudatory chiefs and the King is brought out well in a poem on Nallai Kilan Nakan (Puram 179) in which the bard states 'This fighter of the Panṭiya King, provides the King with whatever he needs, as swords when the king needs arms, and advice when he seeks it'.

Except in the case of a few chieftains (like Ay Andiran and generally those of the Vēḷ tribe) others did not get much reckoning in the social steup

But it needs be said that there was a consciousness that all these people of the different regions spoke one language. viz., Tamil. This becomes clear in the various references to the tribes that live in the non Tamil speaking areas (Akam 205, 11, 215, 349, Kur 11). They are referred to as people or places in 'a territory where the language is different'.

V

For the beginnings of class formation, we must look at the development of the three kingdoms.

The geographical suitability of the three seats of capital has already been noticed. The major cause for the rise of the three kingdoms should have been the fertility provided by the river basins. The river basins afforded irrigation facilities to a region where rainfall is not very high. In the incidental descriptions of the different physiographic regions, which come in as a background to the romantic action, we get ample information about the type of food of each region and how it was obtained. Guarding the fields full of millet corns (cultivated by slash and burn method) provides the scenario for the boy meets girl episodes. (Akam 118, 188, 192, 242, 302, Kur 141, 142, 193, 198, 217, 219, Nar 22, 57, 102, 108, 128, 134,

Aink 281-90). In the pastoral region, forest clearance and garden tillage is mentioned along with cattle rearing (Akam 334, 394, Nar 121, 266, Kur 279, 221). In the riverine region, irrigation from ponds and rivers is mentioned (Puram 18, 24, 176, PrP 27, PP. 282-9).

The role of irrigation in the development of a centralised monarchy has been observed by many scholars.²³ In early Tamil literature we get references to irrigation only in relation to the three kingdoms. In the case of the other rulers, abundance of food is mentioned, but there is no reference to any major irrigation activity. In PP (283-9) Karikala is credited with having cleared forests for cultivation and constructed reservoirs for irrigation. In Puram 78, Kuṭa Pulaviyaṅār makes a special plea to the greatest of the Panṭiya kings of the Caṅkam era, in this manner: 'What is food but combination of land and water. Those who bring these two together are those whose names will live forever'. MK (85-95) refers to irrigating fields with water from the reservoir by using the well sweep-basket method. As for the Cērās it is clear from Patirrupattu (27) that there were irrigation channels and anicuts with doors to let the water flow. The next poem (28) in the same collection refers to Periyāru a river on the west coast, as one which irrigates the Karampai (unfertile) land even during the worst drought.

It is quite clear that legumes and millet formed the traditional food (Puram 335). Rice seems to be an introduced crop. In fact very often we come across poems in which the whiteness of the rice is praised very much (PA 119, MPK 564). Though we hear of a variety of hill paddy called 'aivanam', it is clear that rice was not cultivated extensively in the hilly and the terraced regions. This confirms the findings of the archaeologists. Referring to the intermediate areas of the N.Deccan and W. India, Allchins say "Rice appears to be an indigenous crop. Otherwise the region witnesses an expansion of wheat, flax and lentils from the west during post-Harappan times and shares some of the legumes and millets with the south. Rice seems to have spread into the peninsula at an early date and is recorded from far to the South by early Iron Age times".²⁴

In this region, even today, cultivable land is classified into 'nancey' and 'puncey'. 'Nancey' is irrigated land and 'puncey' is used only for the cultivation of millets.

The centralised monarchy that arose out of, and helped, this economic development, flourished because of foreign trade. Pukar, the capital of the Cōlās, is the Poduce of the Greeks. PP lists the various items that were shipped from this harbour (184–193). Muziri came under the Cēra domain. Madura, the Panṭiyan capital was another important centre (MK 315–325 and 500–556). The significance of the Indo–Roman trade is too well known to be analysed here.²⁵ Most of the ports mentioned by the author of the Periplus fall within one of the three kingdoms.

Naura–Cannanore–Cēra

Tyndis–Tondi

Muziri–Musiri–Cēra

Nelcynda–Panṭiyan

Poduce–Pukār–Cōla

Sopatama–Eyirpattinam

Rice cultivation and foreign trade created a type of society completely different from the ones that existed in the outlying regions. The most important result was the break up of the old tribal society and the emergence of a class society based on property ownership.

Before dealing in detail with the emergence of this new class, it is important to note that each major ruler had a residence town and seaport.²⁶ The residence town was maintained for military reasons. The descriptions of each of these towns reveal the great amount of care taken in military security (Puram 27, 98, 177, 350; PA 64–68; CPA 203–6; MK 343–366; PP 283–288; MPK 12, 488–91). The militaristic character of the early state and the concentration of settlement in the city which Marx described as the foundation of that early warlike organisation,²⁷ are found, as in other parts of the world, in Tamilnadu too.

Of the many urban settlements that arose thus, the ones that prospered were those where rice cultivation and trade flourished.

It is in relation to the cultivation of rice that we first hear of a non-owner worker in Tamilnadu. In the course of the descriptions of the agrarian region poets often refer to *Vinaivalar* (those skilled in work) sowing and harvesting (Kur 309, Nar 60 and 400, PPA 196–262; MK 230–270; PP 7–19). This employment of workers imply the development of the institution of property. The landowner was called *Kilān* (to whom (it) belongs). The beginnings of the development of class distinctions could be seen also in the references to the storing of paddy in large quantities (Nar 26, 60). We hear of the lady love described as 'the daughter of the rich man of the ancient family' (Kur 336). In *Tolkāppiyar's* prescription that servants and workers are not fit subjects for love themes and that they could figure only in cases of onesided love or abnormal sex, (Tol Akat 23 and 24), we find the beginnings of literary discrimination based on wealth.

There is also reference to the sugarcane crushing machine. (Aink 55, PPA 289–60). Labour must have been employed in sugar production too.

The growing distinction could also be seen in the evolution of the character of the *Tōḷi*—the friend of the girl, from a girl of equal standing to a maidservant. The transition could be seen in poems like Akam 63, Kur 36 and 37, Aink 1, 33 and NNV 151. *Tolkāppiyar* makes her the daughter of the fostermother. (Tol Kalaviyal 125) Incidentally, this character (*Cevili*) seems to have evolved from the tribal matron under whose care came the girls of 'growing up' age.

The development of the institution of harlotry is another example. Women in the bardic troupes turn out to be the 'Parattaiyar' (the other women) and by the time of *Tolkāppiyar* they had become a distinct group. Though the history of the institution of *Haeters* in Tamilnadu has not been fully inquired into, it is clear that the female members of the bardic troupe came to be associated with this group. (Nar 360, 390, MK 563 ff. Pari 20 : 74–5).

Another important feature connected with the emergence of the propertied class is seen in those love poems which deal with the theme of separation. Two activities could take a husband away from his home for a considerable period of time—one when he goes on Royal duty and the other when he goes to earn wealth. This is an important aspect of the economic life of Ancient Tamilnadu which has been overlooked by historians.

In those poems on separation, the wife's concern for the husband is depicted by the descriptions of the forests and hills he has to pass through and the fierce marauders he had to encounter. The purpose of the journey comes with a certain terminological exactitude. The terms are *ceyvorul* (made or earned wealth) and *Viṇai* (effort). 'Viṇai' would include royal duty too but 'ceyvorul' is essentially economic and concerns only the individual.

In some cases the person who goes away to earn money is associated with *Ilaiyar* (Juniors). (Nar 361, 367). *Tolkāppiyar* mentions these *Ilaiyar* as one of the mediators between the husband and wife when there is misunderstanding between the couple. (Tol. *Karpiyal* 170–71). It is said that they should tell the wife about the features of the path and the labour involved in the task. Besides working for the master they have also to be his bodyguards. Thus it is clear that *Ilaiyar* are really his servants. The development of this system is another manifestation of the beginnings of class division. It is clear from Nar 266 that all the males did not go on this errand because on his way back the hero sees the cattlekeepers; those who went were from the urban settlements and the propertied classes.

This along with rice producing, provides for the accumulation of surplus wealth and the social effect of this wealth is becoming increasingly discernible.

With the development of the river basins, we find the gradual isolation of the people of other regions. Very often the hunters and cattle keepers are referred to as the 'uninstructed' or uneducated ones (*Akam* 75, 107, Nar 367, *Aink* 304). A study of the poems indicate the social alienation that was developing (*Akam* 54, 58, Nar 69, 75, 88, 127, 140,

169, 228, 264, 2174, 311, 3211, Kur 335, 346, 358). The situation becomes very interesting, because, by poetic tradition particular regions should be kept as the background for particular love themes. Falling in love and sexual union have to be described against the background of a hill. Earlier poems of this genre had as characters hunters and the girls of the hunting community. But soon this tradition was given up and the lover, instead of being a hunter from the hills, is now the 'owner' of a hill. (*Kalit* 39). This is in agreement with *Tolkāppiyar's* prescription that only owners could be treated as lovers.

This alienation and isolation are very important because, later, when the caste system was applied to make social gradations, the people living in the hills and in the open terraces were completely left out of the gradations and were considered too low for inclusion within the caste framework.

This aloofness also led to the strengthening of the internal ties of the left out community and whenever they were considered fit for inclusion into the fold—such a situation arose only in case of political power of the group—they were taken as one *jāti*.

This isolation is reflected in the varying meaning of the term *Kuṭi*. The term *Kuṭi*, as is used in *Caṅkam* literature means two things 1) a settlement 2) a clan or caste. Later it comes to mean those castes which render service to the agriculturists. The frequent use of the adjectives *Ciru* (small) with 'Kuṭi' (Nar 82, 87, 110, 114—Kur 284, 322, 355) indicates that the settlements of agrarian labourers must have been meant by this term. The original meaning of the term is 'abode', (*DED* 1379). *Puram* 335 brings out rather forcefully the meaning 'clan', for perhaps as a reaction to the emergence of different social groups, it reiterates that these are four clans and four clans only and those are that of *Pāṇaṇ*, *Paṛaiyaṇ*, *Tuḍiyaṇ* and *Kadampaṇ*. The use of the term in *PPA* (197) and *PrP* (13) makes it clear that it has come to refer to the settlements of agrarian labourers. It is interesting to note that a *PrP* song (13) eulogises a King as 'protecting the merchants and carrying the burdens of those who looked after the *Kuṭis*', meaning thereby the agrarian workers.

This dependance of the labourers on the landowner should be taken as the beginnings of "feudalism" in Tamilnadu.

Besides this new landowning class, there existed in the cities other groups which could be considered genuinely urban in their origin,

We find mention of these groups in the descriptions of commercial cities and military capitals. In the course of the description of the city, MK—refers to a class of rich men who dress well and go about in chariots. They are noted for their liberality (431–442). The real identity of these men is not known but it is important to note they observe the ritual of 'Sitting in State in the morning', one which we have already noticed was associated with kings and chieftains.

There is also reference in the same poem to a group of state officers (489–526). They are the members of the judiciary and the members of the Committee of the Big Four.

MK also refers to a group of persons who had been granted the title Kāviti. The ancient Tamil Kingdoms bestowed three titles upon dignitaries. Those were the Ēnāti, the Kāviti and the Etti.

Ēnāti was a title conferred upon the commander of the army. It is interesting to note that Kalit. 80 refers to an Enātipāṭiyam—a colony of the Ēnāti—as the place where the harlots were kept.

The next title 'Kāviti' was conferred upon high officials. The title holders described in MK— (493–99) are men of great learning and knowledge. The symbol of the title was a flower. The 14th century commentator on Tolkapiyam, Naccinārkiṇiyar, states that royal families used to have matrimonial alliance with the families of Kāvitis. (Tol Elut 154).

The third title 'Eṭṭi' was generally conferred on merchants only. The honours were collectively known as 'Mārāyam'.²⁸

The descriptions are clear enough indications to take these officials as belonging to the elite of that society.

But it is important to note that the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (DED) does not mention any one of these terms. We should also note the strong similarity the term 'Etti' (title given to the merchants) has with the term 'ceṭṭi' which refers to a member of the mercantile jati in Tamilnadu.— the chettiyars

Thus we see social distinctions arising due to the very nature of economic and political organisation. The influence of Brahminism at high social levels was seen only in the urban centres.

VI

Now we must turn to the social changes that took place due to the spread of Aryan influence.

The exact date of the coming of Aryan influence into Tamilnad is not known. According to Nilakantasastri, who by his monumental volume on Cōlās and on Paṅṭiyas brought to all-India focus the importance of the history of Tamilnad.²⁹ "History begins in the south of India as in the North with the advent of the Aryans".³⁰ If by history, Sastri means records in contemporary writing he is very right but his very next sentence reveals that it is not so. He says: "The progress of the Aryanisation of South is reflected in literature and legend"

The extent of Aryan influence over Tamilnadu has either been minimised or exaggerated. The problem is an emotion charged political problem. An analysis of most of the Indian writings on the subject reveal a commitment, either for or against. Of the non-Indian scholars not many knew Tamil. They had to depend on accounts which too were coloured.

Perhaps a way out will be not to emphasise the literary sources much. Archaeological evidence as it stands today, reveals that the eastward expansion of the Aryans was a political conquest. The Aryan expansion into the East meant the introduction of the use of iron and of better methods of cultivation. But in the case of south India this

is not so. After discussing in detail the date of Iron Age in India, with special reference to the Burial Complex of the South Indian Iron Age, (commonly ref. to as the Megalithic Burials), Allchins conclude as follows: "Certainly the excavated Settlements do not give much indication of any major change in the way of life accompanying the arrival of iron. One is left with a feeling of remarkable conservatism among the population of South India throughout the period. There can be little doubt that many of the traits already established in the Neolithic period persisted throughout the Iron Age"³¹ But certainly this is not the case in North India. This is what they say of the relationship of the Vedas with Iron Age. "But it is noteworthy all this later Vedic Literature appears to know iron and therefore may be expected to belong to the Iron Age rather than Chalcolithic. Where therefore Chalcolithic cultures are found to the east of the geographical region of the RgVeda, they may either indicate pre-Aryan settlements or settlements of those who had arrived and dispersed before the arrival of those who brought the RgVeda".³²

It cannot of course be said that pre RgVedic Aryans came into South India. Also it cannot be said that the Vedic Aryans were less revolutionising than they were in N. India, if the conquest was a similar one.

Thus we have to accept the conclusion that the Aryan thrust into peninsular India differed in character from the method of their eastward expansion. The character of this new expansion is explained by Kq̄sambi, who had set to himself the task of writing Indian history as 'the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production', as follows. "The next major thrust, into the peninsula proper, was backed by the highly developed northern society with its advanced techniques; in particular a recently acquired knowledge of metals. The new territory was far more varied and therefore not to be settled in the same way as the north. Hence the further development and new function of caste, where the Brahmins write puranas to make aboriginal tribes respectable, while the savage chiefs of the tribe would turn into kings and nobles ruling over the tribe"³³

This major thrust comes in only after 600 B.C. Sastri himself accepts this when he says "Until about 600 B.C. works composed in the North exhibit little knowledge of India south of the Vindhya, but acquaintance increased with progress of centuries".³⁴ The first mention of the countries of the extreme south—Pañṭiya, Cōla & Cēra—comes in Katyayana, a grammarian of 4th c. B.C Even if we accept this as the possible date of the beginning of the 'Aryanisation of the South' we should not fail to take into count all the changes that had radically changed the very process of Aryanisation by this time."³⁵

The extreme ritualistic character of religion and the rigidity in its imposition led to challenges to the system and by the close of 5th century B.C. Buddhism and Jainism had arisen. The earlier Vedic gods like Indra had faded away and gods like Siva and Visnu, in whose worship the syncretism of several local cults are easily identified, have taken their place. The epic, Mahabharata reflects the changed conditions by glorifying a dark complexioned deity-Kṛṣṇa-a Yadava hero-as the supreme god.

Thus it was a much changed Hinduism that came into Tamilnadu. By the time it came in the protestant cults of Buddhism and Jainism too had come in.³⁶

Appreciation of this important factor is very essential to the understanding of the process of acculturation.

Another factor of equal importance is that, at a period prior to the Caṅkam literature, almost the whole of India, except these Tamil states had come under the Asokan empire which had a highly efficient and centralised administration. Almost contemporaneous with Caṅkam period, was the suzerainty of the Satavahanas in Andhra, to the North of Tamilnadu. The impact of such politically strong empires on the political and social thought of Tamilnadu must have been very great. The decisive character of the influence is seen in that Tamil was first written in a script which is a variation of the Asokan Brahmi. Caṅkam literature itself refers to the Maurya invasion of the South. (Akam 69, 281, 375).

Even though there never was political subjugation, North Indian dominance was dominant enough to familiarise the monarchies and chieftaincies in Tamilnad with their political and religious concepts.

An analysis of the various references to the deities worshipped during the period under discussion prove the above contention. Visnu, Balarama, Kāma, Cāma and Siva are mentioned. The process of syncreticism of the incoming cults with the indigenous one is seen in the worship of Muruka. Subramanya of the Aryans (in whose worship in N. India some scholars have detected Alexander cult³⁷) merges with Murukan of Tamilnadu.

The earliest Tamil literature also has reference to Buddhism and Jainism. In fact it is said that 'from about the 4th century B.C. the Jains and Buddhists had begun to come and settle down in Southern India' and that 'in all probability they preceded the Hindu Aryans'. As noted by Pillai, "the epigraphic evidence as well as the names of groups of brahmins who were settled at various stages in different places prove this".³⁸

It is important to bear in mind that the Aryan immigration had brought not only the Brahmins but others too. Akam 279 mentions an Aryan taming an elephant. Kur refers to Āryakūttu—the dance of the Aryans, a professional performance. But except the priestly class others were not able to create any major impact on the social and political life of Tamilnadu.

A study of the various literary references to Brahmins in the Caṅkam literature indicate that not all of them were performing religious rites. Akam 24 refers to a Brahmin making bangles of chank. This makes it clear that Brahmins did not have that unquestioned superiority that is theirs in a typically brahminic society. But it was soon achieved.

The most important sphere in which we note their rise to social significance is seen in the various references which speak of the respect the heroic monarchs pay equally to the Brahmins and to the traditional bard. It need not be stressed here that in Tamilnadu, as among

other peoples who have reached a considerable degree of state organisation but have had no system of writing, the bard occupied an important place in the transmission of tradition, which those rulers valued most.³⁹ Avvayār praises a king who gave away presents to Brahmins and bards (Puram 371). 21st, 24th, and 64th poems of PrP mention a similar situation. On the death of Karikala the Great, poet Karūkuḷal Ātaṅgar and mourns his death by saying that the king entertained bards and performed sacrifices.

There is enough evidence available to show the desire of the rulers to establish their authority with the ritual sanction of the Higher Religion—a feature seen in other parts of India too. In fact there are two kings whose very names indicate that they had performed Vedic sacrifices. Palyākasālai Mutukuṭumi Pervaḷuti and Rāca Cūyam Vēṭṭa Perunaṅkiḷi. As noted earlier the indigenous cults of offering the dead bodies of the slaughtered soldiers to Pei and that of having a communal meal immediately before war have been performed along with these Yagas (Puram 26, PrP 21).

Among Caṅkam poets many are Brahmins and the most celebrated poet Kapilar—on his own admission—is a Brahmin.

In North India, the ousting of the heroic minstrel and taking over of his function and making the epic a priestly preserve had been completed in Mahabharata.⁴⁰ Even though the exact process of the emergence of an epic full of fables designed to emphasise Brahmin superiority was not repeated in the Tamil case, the traditional bard disappears completely from the political and literary scene. Kalittokai, a later work among the Caṅkam Anthologies, chastises them as 'the uneducated singers'. The bard and his group fell from grace. The women in their troupe turn out to be harlots and the bards the pimps. Alongside, we find the rising importance of Brahmin in the court. In a community where there had been no learning in the proper sense of the term, the Brahmin became the royal messenger (Puram 305 and Akam 54). He soon monopolised the entire learning tradition. The word Tolkāppiyar uses for learning is the same word that is used for chanting of the Vedas (Akat.25).

The increasing power and status of the Brahmin in the court and royal circles is well seen in MK. The poet Mānkuti Marutaṅār urges the King Neduñceḷiyān the victor at Talaiālankānam to give up all purposeless, entertainment of the bards and others and emulate Palsalai Mudukuṭumiperu vaḷuti, a king who had performed yagas and Neṭiyōṅ, a mythical figure. Sastri in his 'Paṅṭiyan Kingdom' says that it is rather difficult to identify these two kings. Of the first he says he is almost a mythical figure.

These references could be taken to mean the development of myths that were designed to give the royal dynasties a hallowed past. Another instance of a creation of a myth could be seen in the "Pulikatimal" reference to Iruṅkōvēḷ (Puram 201 and 202). This legend about killing a tiger on the instructions of a saint turns up much later in the case of the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, a fifteenth century Deccani power.

PPA states (297–310) that at Neerpāyal, a maritime town, the brahmins had a separate area for their houses. Paṭṭiṅappālai (42–58) indicates that at Pukar sacrifices were regularly performed.

Tolkāppiyar, the grammarian speaks of the 6 duties of the Brahmins (Tol–Purat 75).

Kapilar, the Brahmin poet, praises the Cēra King Celva Kaṇṅgo Vāli Ātaṅ as 'Oh You have bowed none but Brahmins' (PrP 7th Decad). This sums up the eminence the Brahmins were gaining in the court.

It is said in the epilogue to the 6th decad of PrP that Ātukōṭpattucēralatan made a grant of a village to Kapilar. This is a very significant piece of information. This is the earliest literary reference we have in Tamilnadu of a landgrant to a Brahmin. The economic significance of the land grant is that those holdings were exempted from tax and the entire population of cultivators come under the control of the Brahmin. Thus land grants to Brahmins are important in the study of the history of feudalism in India. According to RamSharan Sharma the origin and development of political

feudalism is to be sought in land grants made to the Brahmins from first century A.D. onwards.⁴¹ Kosambi explains how these grants to the Brahmins led to the preservation of class structure in a rather primitive stage of production and as an example he cites South India and says the south in effect failed to develop more than just two of the original vedic castes: brahmins and sudras.⁴²

Even in those regions where the Brahmin did not own lands his social pre-eminence would never have been in question because of the position he occupied in the aristocratic circles.

The references that appear in some texts to ḷipirappālar (low-born) should be taken as having risen as a result of the influence of Brahmanism which believes in caste by birth. It is the tribal drummer who is first referred to as the low-born (Puram 170, 363). There is also reference Pulayar—meaning the low people. Besides the tribal drummer, the washer-woman too is referred to as low born (Puram 31). Puram 61 mentions certain women as 'Kadaiciyar'—those of the last rank. The commentator explains the term as labourers in the agricultural tract.

Thus we see the beginnings of caste system in Tamilnadu. It cannot be said that the rigidity of the system had set in during the period under discussion. But it is clear that the social division and the glorification of one group has started. This will be the apt place to note a change the grammarian Tolkāppiyar notes. In the section on Morphology he says 'The terms of elevation like the plural form to denote a single person and a plural to denote a single object are found in usage. In grammar such use is not valid' (Tol. Col 27).

This clearly denotes that at a social level certain persons were considered fit for an honorific plural.

As noticed earlier, Kuṭi which denoted an abode, later comes to denote a jati. To this day, this is used as the Tamil parallel to the Sanskrit term jati.

The above analysis also indicates that, except in the case of the farmers of the riverine region (Vellalas), all other castes are largely tribal.

Because of this unique development, we have in Tamilnad a system by which caste grouping is done on the basis of Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The significance of this classification is noted by modern social anthropologists too.⁴³ They have also not failed to observe the traditional animosity of the non-Brahmin toward the Brahmin.

Thus far we have seen the emergence of the Brahmin as the social superior with the Vellala coming a very low second. Others were completely out of the fold. In South India and Ceylon, some of the depressed classes are referred to as the Pancamas—those of the Fifth Rank. I.E. one step lower to the Sudras. The creation of the fifth estate was essential to grant the owner cultivator his dominance.

This does not complete the picture. We have yet to see the important part played by the merchant in the Caṅkam society and the position he had in the social and political hierarchy.

Before we discuss the social effects of the much discussed Roman trade we should know something of the internal trade.

Produces of one region were bartered for the produces of another. In this transaction, the agriculturists stood in an advantageous position in that all other groups needed rice more than the farmers needing others' produces. We hear of persons from the cattle-keeping and the fishing communities going about hawking their produces for rice (Puram 293, Akam 60, Nar 97, 118, 142).

In internal trade, salt figured very prominently. Salt and metals played an important role in the development of inter-regional trade in India "No matter what Marx said, the village economy was not based on hand-spinning and hand-weaving except for some places in Bengal where the spinning and weaving were for the greater part inseparable from the foreign trade and scheme of export, the essential commodities most villaves could not produce were salt and metals.

Cloth was of very little use to the villager himself."⁴⁴ In ancient Tamilnadu the salt trade was in the hands of a community of people called 'Umanar'. They went in convoys of carts. Caṅkam literature has a number of references to these traders and their ox drawn carts (Akam 159, 167, 173, 191, 298, 310, Kur 388, Puram 60, 307, 313). These traders seem to have organised themselves into guilds called 'sattu' (Akam 119). Nar. 330 makes it clear that the salt was produced by the people of the littoral tract and was exchanged for paddy from the trader. The Umanars were not treated with great respect. Kur 269 mentions a fisher-woman getting paddy for salt.

It is interesting to note in this connection that there is a reference to the women from the minstrels' family selling fish (Aink 4).

The Alakarmalai cave inscriptions of 1st century B.C. mention, "cloth merchants, salt merchant, ironmonger who sold iron tip for the plough, trader in sugar cane juice, trader in gold and bullion and dealer or tester in gems".⁴⁵

This takes us to the Indo-Roman trade. PP (184-193) refers to the different items of export and import. It should be mentioned in this context that a recent excavation at Vāveripum-pattinam, a landing quay has been excavated. The excavations remain confirm the description of the same in PP.⁴⁶

Important to this study is the position the export merchant held in Caṅkam society. Mankulam inscriptions of 2nd-1st. B.C. "records the existence of mercantile guilds called the 'nhikama'. The head of the guild enjoyed the title Kaviti. The members of the guild acted in their corporate capacity in making endowments".⁴⁷ A reference in PrP (76) suggests that the ships that were used in the trade were owned by the merchants themselves. 12th poem of that collection informs that the king looked after the interests of the merchants of the city. PP (120-135) refers to the customs officers who seal the export packages with the royal emblem—the tiger. It could now be easily deduced that the rich men mentioned in Maturaikkāñci (431-442) should be members of the mercantile community.

Who were these merchants and where did they come from? The graffiti on the potsherds found at Arikamedu and the Tamil Brahmi inscriptions indicate that these merchants should have been Jains and Buddhists.⁴⁸ The role of the Jains and Buddhists in the development of Indian trade has been recognised by all historians. Basham says this: "We can parallel the rise of Buddhism and Jainism and of the many other smaller heterodox systems of salvation which came into being about the 6th century B.C., with the rise of an important mercantile class needing less expensive and less complicated rituals and demanding a more significant role in the religious life of India than Brahmins would concede".⁴⁹ In fact the very name Arikamedu is a corruption of 'Arukan Medu' meaning 'Mound of the Arahāt'.

The economic independence and social supremacy of these groups of merchants is clearly revealed in the inscriptions of first and second century B.C. which show that "the trading communities vied with the royalty in the endowment of monasteries in the Tamil country".⁵⁰

Descriptions of city life reveal the pastimes of the aristocrats and the conditions of the craftsmen. MK (511-522) mentions chank-cutters, gem-cutters, goldsmiths, painters and weavers. According to the commentators the term Kammiyas (artisans) would include traders too—perhaps small traders. NNV refers to architects and builders. The early Brahmi inscriptions mention *taccan* (mason or carpenter), goldsmith and charioteer. Except the master builder who is referred to as the learned one, the other craftsmen do not seem to have had any important place in society. Each of the professional-groups turns out to be caste groups.

At an agrarian level the blacksmith occupies an important place, but he too is not given any importance. The role of the potter in ancient south Indian life had been very significant. The urn burials of Adiccanallur bear testimony to the funerary significance of urns. Literary evidence amply corroborates the archaeological evidences.⁵¹ and also reveals that the potter though much in demand was not given a high place in society.

Tolkāppiyar says that traders can take up to agriculture. This may perhaps indicate the position of the traders after the decline of the Roman trade.

As for the pastime of the aristocrats various references indicate that extra marital indulgence was the commonest activity. Kalit and Pāri have references to the hero going with the harlots for watersports. Paṭṭiṇappālai in the course of the description of the city of Pukār refers to connoisseurs who admired music and appreciated dance and drama. Cil describes the various forms of enjoyment the rich had during the Indra Viḷā season.

VII

CPA sung by Nalliyakkōṭan is taken as chronologically the last work of the Caṅkam period. It is generally agreed that this was sung on a chieftain who lived in 300-350 A.D. The poet eulogises the chieftain as having become the main hope of the minstrels since the fall of three monarchies.

The causes for this political decline have not been established. But in this period Tamilnadu came under the suzerainty of a tribe called the Kalabhras who had occupied the modern districts of Bangalore, Kolar and Chittore. When they were dislodged from their traditional homeland, the region of Sravanabelgola, in the first half of the fifth century, they marched into the Tamil country by about the middle of the 5th century A.D.⁵²

They established their political supremacy over the entire Tamilnadu. This period has usually been called the Dark Age because of the absence of continuous dynastic history and also because of the great upheaval brought about in the cultural sphere. The Kalabhras did not rule as a single family. We find Kalabhra rulers ruling over different areas. It is evident that the new rulers allied themselves more with Jainism and Buddhism than with Hinduism.

kuṛaḷ which belongs to this period depicts beautifully the political and social set up for the period through its definition of a state.

It defines a state as one which has an inexhaustible supply of produces, capable and rich men, who are not low and mean (735). All these indicate the existence of powerful groups within the state having a hold on both economic and political matters.

The class division in the cities is very well brought out in Cilapatikāram. In the course of the description of the festivities connected with the Indra festival, the poet refers to the lay-out of the city. Maruvūrppākkam, the area close to the shore was the commercial centre and the residential area of the foreign merchants and poor city dwellers like the artisans and others. On the other side in the Paṭṭinappākkam were the houses of the Brahmins, big merchants and agriculturists. The market place was in between these two areas (Cil V), Cil makes pointed reference to the caste system by referring to the guardian deities of each caste but also mentions that at the beach, soon after the festival, was heard the noise of the people of all the four castes. This would perhaps indicate the lack of rigidity of the caste system, because of which people could congregate in places.

An important feature of the Post-Cāṅkam period is the increase in number of land grants made to the Jaina and Buddhist monasteries. Land grants greatly changed the character of both the clergy and the laity in Buddhism and Jainism. As far as the people were concerned they had come under an authority, which unlike the Brahmin was not geared for such an economic overlordship. In the Kalabhra period, donations to Jaina and Buddhist monasteries increased.⁵³ Much of the cultivable land came under their control.

In the following period, known to history as the Pallava period (6th to 9th C.A.D.) we find a great social upsurge in Tamilnadu. The great religious movement, in terms of society and the economy, was also a peasant revolt against the economic overlordship of the Buddhist and the Jaina monasteries. In the fight against the monastic religions, people from all classes and castes joined together. This only shows that though the consciousness of caste was there, it was not rigid enough to prohibit people from rallying together for a common cause.

Once the Hindu supremacy was established the poor peasants who stormed the Buddhist and Jaina monasteries, were shackled to their land and occupation by the laws of caste. From this point of time, South India, becomes the bastion of Hindu culture and Mahendravarman the great Pallava king calls himself 'the one who maintains the fourfold division'. The changing conditions is reflected in the observation of Minakshi in her 'Administration and Social life under the Pallavas'. "We have plenty of reference in epigraphy to Brahmanas and Kshatryas but vaisyas and sudras are not mentioned in inscriptions"⁵⁴ In fact such a situation wherein the sudra was not considered fit for mention, has been forewarned by the grammarian Tolkāppiyar when he declared "By usage, we mean only those of the Higher People because all the events of this world are determined by them" (Tol-Marap-647).

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Notes and Referēnces

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Cankam Literature and Archaeology

Cankam literature is the name given to the earliest extant Tamil literature because of the traditional belief, that this literary corpus emerged out of the works 'accepted' by a literary Academy known as the 'Cankam'.¹ In fact there are scholars who would prefer to refer to this literature as "Literature of the three kingdoms".²

While assessing the importance of this literary corpus as a source for ancient history, Nilakantasastry said; "the poems of the Cankam Age are very realistic and *prima facie* trustworthy and do not share the demerits of the literature of a more fulsome age".³ Its secular character has been emphasized by many and has been, by itself, used as the basic, if not the only, source for the reconstruction of early Tamilian history.⁴

This acceptance should lead us to another enquiry - viz, the reason, in terms of History of Literature in general, why this is so free from literary exaggerations and fictitiousness that characterise the highly ornate literary expressions of later times.

Pursuing the hints provided by Sidhanta and Vaiyapuri Pillai, Kailasapathy made an exhaustive literary analysis of this corpus with reference to the Homeric epics and found that in theme, bardic tradition, and techniques of verse making Cankam literature is unmistakably and genuinely 'heroic' in character.⁵

What does this term "heroic literature" imply to a student of history?

An analysis of the heroic literatures of the world reveals that those were/are all invariably (a) oral literature (b) the literary expressions primarily of bards (later conventionalised) and (c) epics of considerable length. At the outset they originate as expressions of a pre-literate society and flourish in conditions when the art of writing was not fully developed. These are preserved by a near perfect mode of bardic transmission.⁶

Among people who have reached a considerable degree of state organization but have had no system of writing, the bard (the singer of heroic poems) occupied an important place in the transmission of tradition, which the rulers of such state value most.⁷ As Vansina argues, oral tradition is one important form of historical methodology.

This perhaps explains the inherent trustworthiness of the Cankam corpus. In post-Cankam Tamilnadu, especially in the Pallava and the Cōja times royal transmission of tradition was better organized and the role of the poet had changed thoroughly.

But this advantage the Cankam literature possesses is not an absolute one. Kailasapathy's work, significant in terms of Tamil and comparative literary Studies, is yet the only work on the subject and there are many problems arising out of this 'heroic' characterization.

The Tamil heroic literature has certain features, which mark it out rather clearly from the better known examples of heroic literature.

1) There is no heroic epic of any sizeable length as the Iliad or the Odyssey. There might have been certain epics in existence but for the reference to one Takadur Yattirai - we do not hear of any.

2) The extant corpus has been anthologised in a highly conscious literary pattern. We have evidences to show that the extant anthologies were made by poets on royal initiative. The Tokuttan, Tokupittan tradition⁸ raises certain fundamental issues relating to the function of literature as envisaged by the monarchs of that period. It is likely that many poems from the literary genres compiled and that some literary forms in toto would have been left unchosen for preservation. Tolkappiyam, refers in Ceyyuliyal (116-9) to forms of literary expressions like Nūl, Urai, Pici, Mutumoli and Mantiram.⁹ There is also reference to Ankātam (Satire). Of course one could point to a few satirical remarks in Cankam literature. But the major forms mentioned above are all lost to us now.

3) It is significant the highest limit Tolkāppiyar prescribes for akaval, the most employed bardic metre, is only thousand lines, which is hardly enough for a full bardic epic.

4) An over all view of the whole thing tends to suggest that political motivations seem to have played a significant role in the preservation of the Cankam texts. Puram literature is manifestly political and even in akam literature there is a very high incidence of political allusions.

5) We do not have any evidence that could enlighten us on the practice of bardism and the transmission of the bardic act in Tamilnadu.¹¹

Nevertheless, we should note the historical meaning of a heroic age.¹²

Heroic literature, by and large, is the product of an age of history in which collective tribal authority is supplanted by the authority of a single hero (or heroes) and his associates to whom the entire tribe submits itself. The newly formed authority leads to the beginnings of either a feudal or a mercantilist rule. In the rise of the hero who symbolises the virtues of collective tribal authority, we see also the beginnings of the dissolution of that tribal authority and the emergence of the King or the Monarch as the sole owner of all lands (directly or by delegated authority) under him. The hero, starting from a position of primus inter pares emerges as the sun that outshines the lesser stars.

The foregoing discussion reveals that Cankam literature can depict only one aspect - a major one no doubt, of the history of the period.

Thus one has to turn to other forms of available historical evidence to supplement the literary evidences so that a full historical picture of the period might emerge.

Archaeology provides that 'other' necessary evidence. Excavation Archaeology provides, as it were, a 'time-table' of cultures

in sequence giving us an insight into pre-historic and proto historic periods. "Yet even in the study of the earliest literate communities archaeology is bound to play an ancillary, if not a sub-serviant role, where any considerable bulk of inscriptions has survived, since these give an insight into the mentality of early societies more direct than material things can ever do".¹³ Thus for a comprehensive study of the period depicted in Cankam literature we need the assistance of epigraphy and numismatics besides archaeology proper.¹⁴

Archaeological corroboration of literary evidences, especially the one like Cnakam literature, which has not been arranged in an undisputed chronological sequence should enable us to relate the literary evidences to the different phases of the cultural growth of the country. It has already been shown that the Tinai concept which is so basic to the study of Cankam literature does really refer to the pre-historic cultural and ecological organization of South India.¹⁵

It is generally accepted that Cankam literature by and large depicts a period ranging from 100 B.C. to 250 AD.¹⁷

It is possible that while being contemporaneous with certain political developments, it has also preserved memories of a pre historic past. Thus this literary corpus should be viewed against the background of the various phases of culture as given by the archaeologists. The most recent authoritative study on this subject is the work written by Bridget and Raymond Allchin¹⁸ and they indicate the following culture phases for Tamil nadu and India.

The Early Stone Age

The Middle Stone Age

Neolithic Chalcolithic Age

Iron Age (and Beginnings of History)

To scholars whose main speciality is not Early South Indian Society, such an extensive apology for the use of archaeological evidences to corroborate evidences found in a literary corpus indisputably heroic in character, may sound rather unusual. To them, we are forced to confess that there are certain scholars in this area of

study, who feel that one should not start with the assumption that Caṅkam literature needs corroboration for acceptance as history.¹⁹ The foregoing extolling of the virtues of archaeology is for the benefit of such scholars.

Let us first turn towards the more interesting fact of how archaeology helped to settle the date of Caṅkam literature.

Caṅkam literature, does not have much internal clue to its own chronology.²⁰ This put away many scholars from handling it as an indisputable source. The Gajabahu synchronism was at first used to give it a reliable chronological basis. But the reference to Gajabahu was in Cilappatikaram, a work of late 5th or early 6th century AD. It is now accepted that Cilappatikaram, though late must have preserved a correct historical memory of Gajabahu's visit to India; it could not have been a contemporaneous record.²¹ Kanakasabhaippillai then tried to determine the chronology of the Caṅkam texts by highlighting the references to foreign trade found in the Classical works of Geography and Travel. Vaiyapuripillai himself thought that the classical testimony provided a better basis for the chronology of Caṅkam literature.²²

It was the archaeological excavations, which provided unassailable grounds for finally fixing the date of Caṅkam literature. The Arretine ware, which is limited to a period between AD 20-50, found at the arikamedu excavations put to rest the question of any further doubt on the date and the dependability of the Caṅkam texts. The "drama" of the discovery and identification of the Roman Arretine ware at Arikamedu and Virampatnam has been very graphically described by Wheeler in his "Still Digging".²³

Systematic work on the megaliths of South India, which was begun as far back as 1944, also helped to demonstrate the historical trustworthiness of the Caṅkam classics. K.R.Srinivasan's now famous article on "The Megalithic burials and urn fields in South India in the light of Tamil Literature and Tradition"²⁴ brought home the fact that this literature does possess some accurate historical data.

Though Professor Subrahmanian would like to hold on to the sovereign supremacy of Caṅkam literature as the only source of history, much water has flown under the bridge of Indian Archaeology since Casals and Wheeler. It is no longer feasible or profitable for any scholar to view evidences in isolation. The need today, especially for the social historian, is to integrate all these evidences into one historical whole. Such a process of integration would enable us to view the problems relating each of the sources (archaeology and literature) in better light and get an overall picture of the social development of the period.

In this process of getting an integrated history, we have to take, besides literature and archaeology, closely allied subjects like Epigraphy and Numismatics. As Lal has observed "no account of historical archaeology would be complete without a pointed reference to important inscriptions and coins".²⁵

By relating archaeology and allied sources to Caṅkam literature we will be in a position to throw light on the following aspects.

- (a) Archaeological confirmation of the geophysical background depicted in Caṅkam literature.
- (b) Delineation of the literary evidences to fit into the archaeologically determined phases of cultural growth.
- (c) Archaeological corroboration of certain literary evidences.
- (d) The development of the art of writing in the period depicted in Caṅkam literature.

Caṅkam literature is based on the poetic tradition of 'Aintinai' which refers to the five fold classification of the geophysical area of Tamilnadu. In my paper on "Early South Indian society and economy". The Tinai concept".²⁶ It has been shown that this five fold division arises from a basis, of four fold division of the area into hilly region, partoral and plateau regions, littoral region and riverine or agrarian region. It has also been amply demonstrated that this division reflects the pattern of development postulated by the archaeologists. Infact the process could be reversed and an authoritative statement be made that Caṅkam literature provides micro-level proof of the fact that

'throughout the Indian subcontinent distinct cultural groups at very proximity to one another'.²⁷ Cankam literature provides us the information that these geophysical units though lying adjacent to each other, were so varied in their economic and social organisation that they could be described as different worlds in themselves.

The archaeological framework viewed against the background of literary evidences reveal that 'the different Tināis illustrate the literary evidences also reveals the tribal setting of the prehistoric Tamilnadu and shows how centralised monarchs could rise on the river banks of Kāveri, Vaikai and Periyar.

Historically speaking the significance of such a corroboration lies in the unraveling of the uneven character of economic, social and political organisations of Tamilnadu.

The recognition of the uneven development is important because in terms of archaeology, it means that differing culture phases, were existing side by side.

The prehistoric archaeological evidences brought to light so far are material evidences to prove the historicity of the Tināi Concept.

Basing their findings primarily on archaeological evidences and without referring to any of the literary evidences, archeologists have this to say about the early, middle and Late Stone Age in Tamilnadu:

"The Paleolithic tools are found in the Kortalayar basin near Madras and particularly in places like Attirampakkam Vadamadurai, Pundi etc."

Paleolithis men around Madras not only lived on the open river banks but also perhaps on the rock, shelters and caves. A huge natural cave which once served as the habitat of these people had been discovered in the hill ranges near the village of Gudiyam in the Kortalayar Valley. Recently as many as sixteen rock shelters, two of them yielding human tools have been located in the hill-range.

The next two successive stages in the prehistoric culture sequence were the Middle Stone Age and the Late Stone Age ..
..... Tools apparently belonging to the Middle Stone Age have been found recently at a few places like T.Pudupattis, Sivarakottai in Tirumangalam Taluk of Madurai District. They are found on the banks of a stream named Marattar.

"In the Late Stone Age the tool techniques under further specialisation in accordance with the changing pattern of human wants, and smaller and finer tools were made in a variety of shapes like the blades, points, awls or boxers, arrowheads etc. Some of the earliest microlithic sites of India are found in Tirunelveli District. They are found in the sanddunes locally called Teris in places near the coast like Sauyerpuram, Megnanapuram, Kulathur, Nazareth etc. In Tirunelveli district a hunting or fishing people settled in the vicinity of the coastling sometime in the early part of the Holocene i.e. around 4000 BC".²⁹

"... in Southern India the change from Middle to Late Stone Age that is from the flake to the microlithic tradition appears to have been a process of continuous development rather than of sudden change".³⁰

"The dunes (the teri industry referred to in the earlier paragraph) were in the process of formation when the first hunters, or more probably fishermen camped among them..... There is of course no reason to suppose that the dunes were only inhabited when the sea was at a higher level than at present; they provide a sheltered camping place within the reach of the sea and of lagoons and estuaries suitable for fishing and fowling. Fishing communities on the coasts of India still live in situations of this kind, building their huts among sand dunes which are far from stable in order to be near their fishing grounds.....

The Late Stone Age or 'Mesolithic' Industries of India must be associated with people much like the modern 'tribal' groups in more remote regions who live (or lived until less than a century

ago) primarily by hunting and gathering, only sometime. augmenting this by trading with more advanced communities or by going out to work for them".³¹

These descriptions will bring to memory the literary descriptions of the Kuriñci and Neital habitat. Kuriñci was a food gathering civilisation. The Karupporul (environmental aspects) given in the commentaries of Tolkāppiyam for Kuriñci and Naithal are as follows:

Kurinci: Diet : Millet, Bamboo rice
Economic Activity : Obtaining honey, digging yams, driving away birds that perk the corns of millet
Sources of Water : Streams and fountains.
Neital: Diet : Food bought by the sale of fish and salt
Economic Activity : Fishing, salt production and sale of fish and salt.
Sources of Water : Wells and fountains.³²

It has also been established that the primary social organization especially in these two regions with bases on tribal grouping.³³

Archaeological evidences relating to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic phases are also amply corroborated by literary evidence. Raman says the following about the Neolithic culture phase of Tamilnadu:

"The next landmark in the prehistoric sequence of culture is known as the Neolithic or the new Stone Age. This was the period when momentous changes occurred. Man, who was till now a foodgatherer became a food producer and introduced agricultural operations. He began to have settled society, domesticated some of the animals and used earthen vessels. His stone implements underwent a corresponding drastic change to meet the demands of a new economy. Fine polished Stone axes, adzes, grinder, pounders etc. made of black basalt were used. A large collection of such polished stone axes has been made from the region along the shevaroy hills in Salem District. A few stray Neoliths have come from Madurai and Coimbatore districts. But

it is the North Arcot-Salem belt that has yielded a number of Sita yielding Neolithic axes and a pottery of coarse grey ware associated with itThe Carbon 14 test made on the charcoal specimens found in the excavation (at Paiyampalli in N.Arcot District) has placed the Neolithic period about 14000 BC..³⁴

Allchins say this:

"The southern Neolithic culture is associated from the beginning with people possessing herds of cattle (Bos/Indicus), sheep and goats and developing in course of time a stone blade industry.³⁵

Allchins have confirmed the earlier findings of Bruce Foote that the ashmounds excavated at Utnur and Kupgal belong to Neolithic habitations and were really the remains of the burnt cattlepens.³⁶ In his effort to establish the pastoral character of the southern Neolithic culture Raymond Allchin cites Cankam literature as invincible evidence.

"Before we turn to the modern ethnographic evidence, it may be well to mention the remarkable picture of the pastoral groups given in the early Tamil Cankam literature, dating from the opening centuries of this era".³⁷

He quotes the lines 147-196 from Perumpānārupātai to substantiate his thesis.

An anthropological analysis of the conduct code and economic activities ascribed to Mullai Tīnai reveals the fact that Mullai culture had shifting agriculture and pastoralism as its major economic activities.³⁸

Thus we can with no difficulty relate the Mullai culture to the Neolithic phase. But it should be remembered that the Neolithic culture was not spread throughout Tamilnadu..Whilst certain areas were progressing with the Neolithic phase certain other areas were stagnant.

This is what Raman says in his article on "Distribution Patterns of culture Traits in the pre and proto-historic times in Madurai Region".

"So in the present state of our knowledge we can say that the impact of the Neolithic cultural movement on the southern and eastern districts of Tamilnadu was negligible. By and large, this area, like the major portion of Kerala, should be considered to have been in the cultural backwaters when the new cultural impulses and technical advances in the tool making did not penetrate and much less leave an impact. Were they still steeped in the microlithic stage, leading a semi-nomadic foodgathering stage, quite unaware of the new ideas of settled society, pottery making, food production or agricultural operation that swept the westerly tracts? It seems probable that Neolithic people preferred having their habit at near the forest hills and the plateau to the coastal plains".³⁹

This archaeological observation demonstrates once again the already mentioned uneven character of the development of the various regions.

Coming to the megalithic Iron Age phase, we see that K.R.Srinivasan has already shown the Caṅkam literary evidences for the megalithic burials, But with more excavations done it is now becoming increasingly clear that the chief factors that link up the megalithic culture are "the nature of internment or burial, the grave goods, the iron objects, the Black and Red pottery etc...."⁴⁰

The discovery of the use of Iron in the megalithic burial complex had prompted Allchins to call those the Iron Age Graves.

The problem of the megalithic burials led to an interesting discussion on the origins of Dravidian civilization in India.⁴¹ But here our problem is to relate them to a particular culture sequence and to see whether there is literary corroboration for such placing.

Allchins suggest that "the South Indian graves appear as a developing complex with several streams of influence combining in them".⁴² Some like the grave types of Central Asia, Iran and caucuses and the stone cist graves with or without portholes found in levant and south Arabia are external whereas the development of the indigenous Neolithic chalcolithic burial customs of Deccan is purely internal.

While discussing the use of iron in South India, which is associated with this culture Allchins say that iron must have been introduced into South India at a fairly early date. The discussion on the implications of this runs as follows:

"The cultural implications of so great a duration . . . have still to be investigated. The thinness of the occupation levels in the settlements so far excavated is perplexing and leads one to expect that the period saw a steady increase in population and hence a need to extend the area under cultivation. In the earlier, phase agriculture was probably of a shifting kind and it may be that there were a few permanent settlements. The horse-furniture, if it could be assigned to graves early in the series might indicate that the first users of iron in South India were at least part nomadic, Certainly the excavated settlements do not give much indication of any major change in the way of living accompanying the arrival of iron. One is left with a feeling of remarkable conservatism among the population of South India throughout the period. There can be little doubt that many of the traits already established in the Neolithic period persisted right through the Iron Age".⁴³

It is not easy to get evidence within the Caṅkam corpus to infer anything about the foreign influences in the burial complex. But we certainly do have evidence to show that agriculture was a shifting kind and that even in the more fertile regions the pattern of agriculture tended to be stagnant after sometimes Archaeological evidence helps us to place the pattern of cultivation in a truly historical perspective.

The discussion on the iron Age also raises the question of the Roman contact. The excavations at Arikamedu, Kunatur, Alagarai and Tirukkambuliur reveal "that at all these sites a period coinciding with Roman trade imports and producing a predominantly red pottery is preceded by one in which the characteristic pottery is black and red similar to that of the graves".⁴⁵

This archeological finding indicates that the period of Roman impetus stimulates a cultural efflorescence not seen earlier.

Allchins raise the question of the possible impact of this new emphasis on the flowering of the early South Indian civilization which finds its echoes in the Caṅkam poetry. From the point of Caṅkam literature it could be said that the new impetus was seen only in the commercial metropolis like pukar and Maturai. Pattinappālai and Maturaikkāñci refer to the urban affluence and Commercial prosperity of these areas and the commanding influence of the merchants. Within Caṅkam poetry one can easily single out those references which indicate urbanism from the outlying tribalism. The continuity of this urban civilisation could be seen up to the period of Cilapatikāram. Kalittokai and Paripatal, which belong to a period between the Caṅkam works and Cilapatikāram, reveal the salacious urban life seen at the Paṅṭiya capital. In all these important centres it is the commercial class that seems to dominate. There is evidence to show that they controlled entire foreign trade except pearl fishery. It is also interesting to note that trading interests were associated with Jainism and Buddhism.⁴⁶

It is important to mention that much of the information relating to the mercantile activities and affluence comes from the epigraphically evidences...viz from the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions which fall within this period.⁴⁷

Having thus seen how the evidences in Caṅkam literature corroborate the culture phases brought to light by archaeological excavations, we must now turn to some of the archaeological excavations which confirm some of the historical data given in that literary corpus.

The foremost of such archeological evidences come from the excavations done at Kāveripumpattinam, the ancient Pukar. In presenting those facts one cannot do better than quoting Raman extenso.

"The explorations and excavations, conducted by the Archeological survey of India since 1962, have clearly established that, in spite of the constant duel between the land and the sea, the ancient city had not been fully engulfed and atleast few portions of it are still lying buried. Surface

explorations on the beach revealed the vestiges of ancient habitations like the ring wells, pottery, brickbats and beads strewn about the place. The ring-wells were covered by sand habitation-sites going back to the time when the city was at the zenith of its glory, have been plotted at places like vanagiri, Neidavasal and Kilaiyur. Square copper coins bearing the royal crest of the Colas viz the tiger on one side and the elephant on the other, black and potsherds and beads of semi-precious stones were found on the surface of the sites. Rouletted pottery of both grey and black fabric were also found. A Roman coin was found in the site called vellaiyan Iruppu. Several beautiful terracotta figurines were found at places like Melapperumpallam, all showing that these places were once the centres of early culture and activities.

Detailed excavations done at three places resulted in the discovery of three monuments of outstanding importance in the history of Tamilnadu. They are a brick built wharf at Kilaiyur, a water reservoir and a Buddhist monastery.

The wharf was found in a low-lying area and it was built of large sized bricks (24x16 inches) and it was lined with sturdy wooden poles for anchoring the boats. Pattinappalai described such wharfs where the boats were moored to wooden poles for loading and unloading purpose; like a row of horses kept in a stable. Small boats used to ply in the back-waters of Kāverippumpattinam carrying salt to the interior places in exchange for paddy. Radio carbon analysis of the wooden specimens has given its date as third century B.C.

Another important and elegant structure unearthed was a water reservoir at Vanagiri.....⁴⁸

The glories of Pukar are referred to in Akanānūru 110, 181, and 190, Patirrupattu 73, Pattinappalai and Puṛanānūru.⁴⁹ It is important to observe the historical memory preserved in place names such as Vellaiyan Iruppu (the abode a of the Whitemen) perhaps this refers to the Roman Colony at Pukar.

R.Nagasamy in a paper "Archaeology and Epigraphy-A Survey" has brought to light certain archaeological data that confirm literary evidences.

"A brick structure resembling a dyeing vat, also noticed at Arikamedu was found at Uraiyur. It was probably used for dyeing clothes. That Uraiyur was famous for its cotton industry in early times is known both from Tamil literature and foreign notices".⁵⁰

Nagasamy also reports that the excavations at Korkai yielded, besides megalithic pottery a rare piece of polished sherd. "Some experts are of opinion that this sherd is a variety of the Northern Black polished ware associated with the Mauryas. If this is so, it is the first time that an NBP ware has been discovered in Tamilnadu.....But there are other experts who hold this to be a special type of rouletted ware. Since⁴ experts differ, further excavations would probably throw more light on the subject".

It is of course common knowledge today that Caṅkam literature refers to the Mauryan invasion of Tamilnadu. (Akanānuṟu 69,251,281;) The polished sherd, if identified as a form of the NBP ware will only confirm the literary evidence.

Besides these evidences which are strictly archeological, there are many contemporary epigraphic evidences which confirm Caṅkam literary references. The inscriptions are generally referred to as the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions.

While discussing how archeological discoveries have helped to confirm the historicity of Caṅkam literature, it is important to bring to the notice of the world of scholarship that the archeological excavation which have thrown light on "the antiquity and Gold mining methods of ancient India" especially the Deccan to help us to understand in full economic prospective a poetic convention found in this literature.

Akam poems of the Caṅkam corpus speak of the separation of the hero from his betrothed wife. "Separation to earn Wealth"

(Porulvayirpirivu) is one of the forms of separation. In the poems dealing with this type of separation the purpose of the journey that separates the lovers is referred to as "ceyporul" (earned wealth). This is distinguishable from the other cause for separation viz-Viṇai-(Task) which was quite often a military assignment by royal command. "Ceyporul" is essentially economic and has no political associations.

The destination of those who undertook such journeys to make wealth has not been specifically mentioned but the indications are that it was beyond the Venkata Hill, the northern boundary of the then Tamil speaking region. (Akanānuṟu 83, 211,213,265,393). Specific mention is made in some cases that they have gone with a region where a different language was spoken (Akanānuṟu 215, 349, Kuruntokai 11). The 69th poem in Akanānuṟu states categorically that the route taken was the one by which the Maurya armies came. There is of course no specific mention of the type of wealth earned but Akanānuṟu 3 says that the aim of the journey was to bring ornaments for the wife.

Allchin in his paper "Upon the Antiquity and methods of Gold Mining in Ancient India"⁵³ refers to the Ancient Gold mines of Hutti and Kolar. "To sum up the archeological evidence from the Hutti field, the assemblage and c-14 dates combine to indicate that the mines were being worked during the first centuries of the Christian era".⁵⁴ After discussing the literary evidences in works like Arthasastra he concludes thus. "That the high period of mining in South India should correspond with the last centuries of the Christian era is made all the more probable by the great expansion of the local settlements of the period and by their relative dwindling and poverty soon after".⁵⁵

This coincides strikingly with the accepted dates for Caṅkam period. It is also important to note that in post-Caṅkam literatures, 'porulvayirpirivu' was only a conventionalised literary device in Akam literature and never a social reality.

It is probable that the journey for earning wealth in which the hero had to cross the Venkata Hill and go into a different language - region had really something to do with the gold mining at Kolar and Hutti in the Mysore district which was really just beyond the northern boundary of Tamilnadu.

Besides these evidences which are strictly archaeological there are many contemporary epigraphic records which confirm Cankam literary evidences. Reference is made here to the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions. With the general acceptance of the reading of these inscriptions by Iravatham Mahadevan "Tamil Brahmin Inscriptions of the Cankam Age".⁵⁶ Mahadevan brings together all the necessary epigraphic references and shows that these records corroborate much of the information we have had from the literary source. Besides Mahadevan, Mylai Ceeni Venkatasamy, R.Nagasamy and R.Panneerselvam have worked on this field. The Brahmi Inscription found in the caverns of Aranattarmalai near Pukalur in Karur taluk "marks a milestone in the history of the Tamils. The genealogy reconstructed purely on the basis of the literatures is now confirmed by this inscription at least partially The inscription now proves that the historical information found in the patikams and colophons of Patirrupattu are dependable and factually true".⁵⁷ As Mahadevan says "the Pukalur inscriptions dated with the help of Arikamedu graffiti will henceforth serve as the sheet-anchor of the Cankam chronology"⁵⁸. The Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions also help us to get an insight to the political social and economic conditions of Tamilnadu, its relationship with Sri Lanka and to the commercial and religious conditions prevailing during that period.⁵⁹

The discussion on the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions leads us or to the problem of the art of writing in the Cankam period.

Prior to the general acceptance of the reading of the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions scholars used to describe the language of these inscriptions as a hybrid jargon not representative of the literary style language of the period.⁶⁰

Mahadevan's study reveals that the language of the inscriptions is "simple intelligible Tamil not very different in its matrix (that is, the phonological, morphological and lexical structure) from the Tamil of the Cankam period".⁶¹

But he concludes by saying that his "study leads to the following conclusions (1) Tamil became a written language for the first

time in Circa 2nd c.B.C., by the adaptation of the Brahmi script to the Tamil phonetic system. (11) The orthography of written Tamil was experimental during the first two centuries of its existence. Thereafter it settled down to practically the classical system. (111) Once writing was introduced in the Tamil Country it spread rapidly resulting in an efflorescence of literary activity in the early centuries of the Christian era (C.2-3 centuries AD)⁶².

The problem now is to know whether Cankam literature which has a highly stylized poetic convention, could have been written in a language the orthography of which was experimental at the time of writing. It is here that the "heroic" characterization of this corpus became very useful. Heroic literature, by virtue of the fact that it is only transmitted by bardic traditions without recourse to writing. As has been shown by Kailasapathy, Cankam literature reveals amply the techniques of oral verse making through the various formulae and their repetitions. There is also ample evidence for improvisation and substitution.⁶³ Therefore there could have been a great oral tradition in existence which was being committed to writing in and after the Cankam period. The Tokuttan-Tokupitton tradition (the tradition relating to those who compiled and those who ordered the compilation) now becomes meaningful in that it may denote a conscious activity on the part of monarchs to create in writing a treasury of oral verses. And this incidentally settles one of the problems raised at the beginning of this paper.

It is of immense interest to note that while Allchins were raising the problem of the relationship of the Roman trade imports to "the flowering of the early South Indian civilization which finds its echoes in the poetry of the 'Samgam' period"⁶⁴, Mahadevan was providing the answer to it (in the very same year 1968 without knowing that Allchins have already raised it) by stating "the religious and cultural ferment generated in the Tamil country by the Buddhist and Jaina creeds and the enormous, perhaps, sudden increase in prosperity on account of the Indo-Roman trade must have triggered a rapid development of the written language around the turn of the Christian era"⁶⁵. It is a well known fact of history that commerce is an important factor in the growth of the art of writing.

Thus the jig-saw pieces fall into their places; literature and archaeology corroborate each other.

It is perhaps fitting to end this discussion with an inquiry into the historicity of the 'legends' relating to the Caṅkam tradition.

The traditional account of the Caṅkam as given in Iraiyanar Akapporul Urai says that there were three Madurais, all seats of the Paṅṅiyān Kings.⁶⁶ Nagasamy in his paper already referred to says:

"The main aim of the survey at Madurai was to locate the ancient Madurai as there were differences of opinion regarding its location. Avan ipuram, a suburb of Madurai, was held to be the site of Old Madurai by some scholars. We have carefully examined the place at various points and could find no surface indications to justify this claim. We examined another site, now called Old Madurai, near Pandimuni temple... The Magnometric survey conducted at the site proved positively that it could not be the old Madurai..."⁶⁷.

But the problem is that the Kudal of the first Caṅkam and Kapalapuram of the middle Caṅkam were maritime cities. Clearance Maloney suggests that "the legends refer to Uttara Maturai.... South Madurai was probably at the mouth of the Tambraparni river, perhaps near the present village of Korkai" and goes on to say that "the city of Kapatapuram legendary site of the Middle Caṅkam, also must have existed because it is referred to it several Sanskrit works. If it was the same as Alaivoy, it could be identifiable with modern Tiruchendur.... where sites could well have been destroyed by floods, as the legends say, because the Tambraparani river frequently changes its course in the delta, gouging a new channel because of the monsoon rains in the Western Ghat"⁶⁸.

But as it stands, scholars do not tend to take this legend given in Iraiyanar Akapporul as even a remote indication of true historical events.⁶⁹

Perhaps only under water Archaeology could throw light!

1975

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An Analysis of the Anthropological Significance of the Economic Activities and Conduct-Code Ascribed to Mullai Tinai

The literary tradition that governs the Cankam literature, reveals that the ancient Tamilnadu was classified into five ecological regions – hill country (Kurinci), parkland bordering forests (Mullai), arable tracts Marutam), littoral tract (Neital) and the uncultivated dry area (Pālai). Of these the first four were the natural divisions: the last one was formed due to the denuding of the resources of the forests and the arable tracts. To each of these divisions was ascribed a particular conduct code in man-woman relationship. The five regions were known by five different flowers each peculiar to the area it denoted. Later the conduct codes too came to be identified by the names of those flowers.

This ecological division of the ancient Tamilnadu is today praised by anthropologists and ecologists. Dr.A.Aiyappan praises this ecological division as one which has been done “with an insight which reminds us of modern anthropologist geographers”! This five-fold classification can be taken as an ideal example of the river-valley region mentioned by Sir Patrick Geddes in his Theory of Social Causation, the theory which studies human civilisation as a product of regional life moulded by geography (i.e. soil, climate, environment) and history (i.e. human effort, ingenuity and organisation).² The stages of economic evolution outlined by Hans Bobek in his *Main Stages in the Socio-economic evolution from a geographical point of view* demands us to take a more searching look into this ancient classification. According to Bobek. "the following stages of economic evolution will be considered as especially significant from a geographic standpoint:-

1. Food gathering stage.
2. Stage of specialised collectors, hunters and fishermen.
3. Stage of clan peasantry with pastoral nomadism as a subsidiary branch
4. Stage of feudally or aristocratically organised agrarian societies.
5. Stage of early urbanism and rent-capitalism.
6. Stage of productive capitalism industrial society and modern urbanism.

But before we apply these geographical and anthropological findings, we should have a clear idea about the real meaning of *aintinai*.

A bird's eye-view of South India will show that 'the forest-girt hills, arid sparsely populated semi-deserts, parklands adjoining forests well watered and cultivated plains and coastal tracts' go to form the geographical unit that was then the Tamil speaking world.

Were the different culture-regions with their different conduct-codes, existing as parallel cultures or were they different stages in the economic and social evolution of the Tamils?

An examination of *Pattuppattu* and *Ettuttokai* poems reveals that at the time they were written the tradition of identifying the conduct codes with the regions was a revered one. *Pattuppattu* poems, eulogies on monarchs and chieftains, refer to the five different regions and leave the impression that those living in the hilly districts and the parklands were subject tribes living within that principality but far removed from the royalty. In the *Ettuttokai* anthology too the different conduct codes are referred to as established literary traditions. As rightly pointed out by M. Iraghava Aiyangar "no acceptable cause is shown either in the Text or in the commentaries of *Tolkāppiyam* for assigning the conduct codes to the respective regions".⁴ *Naccinārkkiniyar's* commentary on the Sutra on land classification reveals that these five regions and the respective conduct-codes were taken as they were, and there was no tradition of an inquiry into the ecological implications of this division.⁵ His assertion is that no reply can be given to him who wants to know why the different *Tinai*s could not be called by a flower other than the one which already denoted it.

This problem engaged the attention of modern scholars and the general consensus of opinion is that the ecological classification refers to the evolution of the Tamils from the pre-historic times to the historic era. *Dikshithar* says that "The Tamil social organisation which had its distinctive characteristics born of environment, as anthropology holds, is unique in having realised the five different stages of human life in prehistoric times".⁶ It is the considered opinion of P.T. Srinivas Iyengar that "All these five kinds of natural regions are found in the Tamil country, though in a small scale, and as man has continually inhabited South India, since he first appeared on the globe, he successively passed from region to region and developed therein stages of culture which each was calculated to produce".⁷

Dr. Kamil Zvelebil places this whole tradition in a better historical perspective, when he says that "this division reflects the historical migration or pre-Dravidian and proto-Tamil population from the hills and jungles to the fertile plains and to the sea-board or in other words the development from the neolithic hunter, though the intermediate stage of the keeper of the flocks, to the settled tiller of the soil and fisherman".⁸ In this context the study of *Aintinai* assumes special significance.

A critical analysis of all available literary evidences relating to *Mullai* should be made before we proceed with the examination of its anthropological significance.

Almost all the *Pattuppattu* poems refer to *Mullai*. *Mullaippattu* was written to conform to the rigid frame of literary tradition. *Perumpānārruṭai* depicts the *Mullai* pastoralists as a group of people living among many other groups, eking out an existence by selling dairy produces like butter milk. In it we find the reference to the convergence of *Mullai* and *Marutam* signifying the expansion of agriculture. The pastoralists of *Perumpānārruṭai* are not engaged in agriculture. *Maturaikkanji* refers to 'Mullai Canra Puravu'. i.e. the land in the outskirts showing the characteristics of *Mullai*, thereby revealing the dominating influence of the well established literary tradition. In *Netunalvatai* the pastoralists are mentioned as a conventional necessity to create the atmosphere of the 'patient wait' of

the lady-love. The reference to Mullai people in Malaipatuḱatam depicts them as an under-developed community who could not be ranked on par with others. Cirupanarruppatai speaks of "Mullai canra Karpu" thereby making it certain that at the time it was written the very word Mullai had come to mean Karpu (chastity).

Mullai poems found in Naṛṇai, Kuruntokai and Akanānuṛu could be grouped under following heads:-

(a) Those which depict the change of season from summer to winter. In these poems the people of Mullai region are referred to in such an objective way that it is clear that the lovers have nothing to do with them. Under this category would also come those poems which speak of the emotional state of the lady-love who stays at home and most of those poems which speak of the anxiety of the hero who returns after performing the royal duty.

(b) Those which refer to the Mullai region as the place where the lovers reside. i.e. those arose from within the Mullai region. These are the ones which conform to the details given by the grammarians. The number is not large and following are some which could safely be taken as those which were written from the point of view of Mullai region:

Naṛṇai - 5,69, 121, 141, 266

Akanānuṛu- 94, 84, 194, 274, 284, 394

Kuruntokai -64, 73, 155, 186, 188, 190

Mullai is Jasminium Trichotumum, also called the November flower. Its flower is used to denote the love activity in the parkland adjoining the forests.

The details given by Naccinaṛḱḱiniyar and Ilampuranar in their commentaries on the Sutram on Karupporul throws much light on this region. In fact, the details we got in the commentaries are more precise, relevant and expressive than the references found in most of the poems.

Ilampuranar gives the following details for the Mullai region.

Food	:	varaku and mutirai (millet and pulses)
Animal	:	deer and hare
Tree	:	Konrai (cassia), Kuruntu, putal (bushes)
Bird	:	wild fowl
Drum	:	drum for noosing the cattle
Economic	:	
Activity	:	grazing the cattle
Musical Note	:	satari
Water	:	jungle river ⁹

The details given by Naccinaṛḱḱiniyar are as follows:¹⁰

Food	:	varaku. Mutirai, camai
Animal	:	fawn, deer, hare
Tree	:	konrai, kuruntu (Indian wild lime)
Bird	:	wild fowl, partridge
Drum	:	drum for noosing the cattle
Economic	:	cattle grazing, weeding the millets,
Activity	:	thrashing out grain with buffaloes.
Music	:	mullai harp
Flower	:	mullai, pitavu, talavu, tonri
Water	:	jungle river,
Settlement	:	.pati, ceri, palli

The details given by these two commentators indicate the cattle rearing base of the economy in which agriculture was fast developing. The additional details given by Naccinaṛḱḱiniyar show the growing importance of agriculture.

But the true significance of these activities can be fully assessed only when they are read along with the activities that are given for the other regions. Honey combing, digging yams, and slash-and-burn agriculture are the ones mentioned for the hilly region (Kurinci) whereas for the agricultural one (Marutam) the activities mentioned are ploughing, weeding, harvesting, thrashing the grain with the help of cattle.

Mullai is referred to as the settlement that has been cleared from the forest. 59th poem of *Narrinai* calls it *Kattunatu*. This may probably refer to the origin of these settlements.

The first impression we get of the Mullai economy is that it is not entirely a pastoral one. The geography of Tamilnadu is such that there are no features in that area which would make the people nomads. Therefore, in such an area the change from the hunter state to that of the settled farmer will not take long. Daryll Forde in his *Habitat, Economy and Society* says: "In actual fact pastoralism is often a less stable economy than cultivation. In its more advanced forms it exists on the margins of sedentary areas where agriculture could, if developed support a denser and more prosperous population and in such areas, where the settled people have shown solidarity or have been incorporated into settled communities". The ultimate fusion of the Mullai region with the agricultural areas proves this statement. Further, the rising importance of agriculture in pastoral communities is testified to by Thomson. "In many regions where natural conditions are favourable. Tillage and cattle raising have been combined from the beginning in the form of pastoral husbandry or mixed farming"¹² The fact that it is possible for communities to take to agriculture immediately after the hunting stage is accepted by Stephen Fuchs too. He has made a study of tribal India.¹³

Mullai is thus a region where agriculture was slowly expanding, with cattle occupying an important place in the livelihood of the community that lived there. In those poems, which seem to have originated from a Mullai economy, agriculture is mentioned along with herding.

The agriculture referred to in the Mullai is slash and burn cultivation but there are certain references which indicate that the same places were being cultivated again and again. The words 'VITAYAR' and 'MUTAIYAL' in the 121st poem in *Narrinai* show that the herdsmen were also farmers and that they were cultivation the field that was cultivated earlier. The reference to "herdsmen who do garden tillage" (*Kollaikkovalar*) in 266th and 289th poems of *Narrinai* also reveal the truth that herdsmen were becoming agriculturists. *Varaku* (Millet) seems

to have been the most cultivated cereal. We do not come across any references to paddy cultivation. The slash-and-burn method in which irrigation and manuring found no place was perhaps not the best form to cultivate paddy. The use of plough is mentioned in the 194th poem of *Akanānuru*. 394th poem in *Akanānuru* and 266th poem in *Narrinai* describe how cattle rearing and highland cultivation went hand in hand. Cattle rearing formed the important activity in the Mullai region. From a perusal of the Mullai poems. We note that, *Erumai* (buffaloes). *Atu* (goats) and cows and bulls were reared.¹⁴ It also becomes clear that the cattle were allowed to graze in the outer skirts of the settlement.¹⁵ The fact that the herdsmen stayed at the outskirts is clearly brought out in a poem, which refers to a shepherd who comes into the settlement with milk and returns to the grazing ground with porridge (*kū*).¹⁶

The reference to the herdsman as one who stays at the forest (*Katurai Itayan*) too proves this habit.¹⁷ The ranches where the cattle were herded seem to have been near the houses for we hear the lady-loves bemoan that it is the tingling noise of the bells tied round the necks of the cows that keep company with her in her hour of distress.¹⁸ 141st poem of *Narrinai* gives a beautiful description of the herdsman. The herdsman carried with him a pot on a hoop, a leather bag in which there was flint stone besides many other things and a mat made of palmyra leaves. The herdsman's whistle that called his cattle near him is mentioned often, 94th poem in *Akanānuru* mentions the fire lit by the herdsman at night, to drive the foxes away.

Milk is sold.¹⁹ There is also a reference to the sale of flowers. The flowers were hawked by the daughters of the tillers.²⁰

Thus we can trace the slow emergence of the food producing stage. The selling of milk and flowers probably indicate inter-tribal barter which is one of the features that go to break up the tribal structure of society.

This emergence is clearly indicated in the names given to these settlements. The settlements are referred to as *Kattu Natu* (inhabited region in a forest).²¹ *Cirukuti* (village in a hilly tract)²² and *Cirukutippakkam* (village).²³ This stage marks an important phase in the evolution of private property and the state.

As had been agreed by all, the growth of private ownership derived a powerful impetus from domestication of cattle. A settled life with cattle rearing and agriculture means that there was enough food in store. When many such settlements arise, the lesser equipped of them naturally turned towards the more prosperous settlement. Thus there was organised raid and war. Thomson explains this phenomenon with illustrations. "Game is perishable: land is immovable: but livestock is easy to seize, divide or exchange. Being commonly nomadic, pastoral tribes are quick to augment their wealth by cattle raids and war; and since warfare is waged by men it reinforces the tendency inherent in this economy for wealth to concentrate in their hands. These hardy restless tribes plunder one district after another, killing the men and carrying off the women as chattels until eventually they settle permanently in an agricultural region subject to regular tribute which is the first to reducing them to serfdom. Such was the origin of the Kassites who over-ran Babylonia, the Hyskos kings of Egypt, and the Achene pillagers of Minoan Crete".²⁴

Thus we see that in this stage the men had to perform the arduous tasks of rearing the cattle and guarding the settlements. The question of guarding the settlements would naturally have arisen only after the development of those settlements, at which stage it would definitely have been in the best interests of the society to send the best men to guard the settlement and get the lesser able ones to rear the cattle and to do farming.

Stephen Fuchs, when describing the social and family organizations of primitive agriculturists says this: "In agrarian communities developed immediately from the food gathering stage, the family remains the economic unit. The man does the heavy work of preparing the field, while the woman does the sowing, seeding and harvesting. But for mutual protection against raiders and wild animals and for the protection of their stores, the single families often live in compact settlements."²⁵

A look into the Purattinai will reveal how true this was in the evolution of the Tamil civilisation. Purattinai (lit: outside behaviour) is the classification of the military activities undertaken in the

different regions. As in the case of Akattinai, these too are referred to by flowers. Thus each region has one conduct code in terms of love activity and another in terms of military activity. The military activity for the park-lands adjoining the forests, is termed vanci. It is defined as the expedition led by land-hungry kings into other settlements. P.T. Srinivas Iyengar explains it thus. "The forest region adjoining was the primitive first line of defence and was hence called Kavarkadu: chiefs wearing vanci garlands led expeditions into the forest lands. This was called Vanci".²⁶

It is thus clear that in the Mullai phase settlements arose which had to be guarded.

Thus in that early state of the rise of the state, the important duty of the able men was to guard the settlement under the leadership of the merging monarch. Literary convention which was influenced by the later day concepts of monarchy called the leader a full-fledged king and decreed that his camp should be described as the centre of operations.

This activity of guarding the settlement was done in the summer season and was called off during the rainy season because it was difficult for both the raider and the guardsmen to stay out during the season.

It was the return of these guardsmen that has been so over-romanticised in Mullai Tinai.

The conduct code ascribed to Mullai is 'Iruttal'. which means waiting with patience. The traditional explanation is that in Mullai the wife awaits with patience the arrival of the hero who was away on royal duty. Awaiting with patience is clearly distinguished from languishing in separation. It is clear from the 266th poem of Nāṟṟinai that the lady stays at home with a purpose. Ilampuranar, the earliest of the commentators explains Iruttal as "the lady consoling herself and awaiting the return of the hero."²⁷ Naccinaṟkkinīyar explains it as "that characteristic of women who, in accordance with the instructions of their husbands, stay at home performing righteous duties."²⁸

These are all explanations of literary conventions the social relevance of which was not clear to the commentators themselves.

The social relevance of this convention of staying at home when the husbands were away domesticating the cattle and/ or guarding the settlements is explained by social scientists. Hans Bobek says this: "The definitive transition to a farming way of life (of any technical type) must have brought with it first a practical and later necessarily a social depreciation of other ways of life and their cultural concomitants. It is generally considered – but also confirmed by much evidence – that women at this stage because of their probably critical participation in the introduction and the early forms of the new economy receive a great boost in prestige, expressed among other ways in the common matriarchal organization of the family and thus also of land tenure."²⁹

Thomson says this: 'Food gathering led to the cultivation in plots adjacent to the settlement and so garden tillage is woman's work. Then after the introduction of cattle-drawn plough, agriculture was transferred to the men. In parts of Africa where the plough is only a recent acquisition, the changeover can be seen taking place at the present day.'³⁰

Thus it becomes abundantly clear that at the primitive agricultural stage. It was the woman who had stayed at the settlement and was engaged in agriculture. Ehrenfels, the celebrated author of "Mother Right in India" confirms this when he concludes that in India women invented systematic tilling of the soil.

These form an adequate explanation of the 'Iruttal' that was prescribed for the women of the Mullai region. At the time the settlements were being founded, the 'Iruttal' of the woman was an economic necessity.

But we find agriculture developed in the Mullai stage. There is even mention of the plough. All in all, the impression is that at this stage agriculture had already become a man's job. That shows an advanced stage of the economy. How the change to male dominance

is brought about is very clearly detailed by Kosambi. "The first division of labour was between men and women: women were the first potters, basket weavers, agriculturists with hoe cultivation or the digging stick. Like pots and baskets for storage, the query for milling also became necessary when cereals were respectable source of food. But grain had to be produced not merely gathered. The change to male dominance came only when the special property of men developed. Generally this meant, cattle which were first herded for meat, later for milk products and skins (soon used in exchange) finally used as a power in agriculture and transport. During this process people began to live more and more efficiently at the expense of their environment."³¹

We have already seen that the forces which bring about the male dominance like, cattle being used in agriculture, large scale highland cultivation as found in the Mullai Stage. Thus 'Iruttal' at this stage has become only a Survival. In fact we see that Iruttal was being given a new meaning and significance.

From the stage of staying at the settlement to do agriculture, the woman has now come to stay there 'on the instructions of the husband.' This presupposes family and wealth that have to be looked after.

The institution of Karpū chastity is always associated with the Mullai Culture. Caṅkam poems speak of Karpū as an indivisible part of Mullai. For many poets Karpū is synonymous with mullai. 142nd poem in Naṛṇinai refers to "Mullai canra karpin melliyaḷ." 184th poem of Akanānuru speaks of "Katavutkarpū (divine Karpū)."

Before we trace the relationship between Karpū and Mullai, we must get the meaning of Karpū clear. Tamil Lexicon explains it as "I, conjugal fidelity. 2, life of a householder after his union with the bride of his choice had been ratified by marriage ceremonies." Tolkāppiyar defines Karpū as the act of giving away the bride to the bridegroom by those entitled, thus implying that the very wedded state was Karpū, Conjugal fidelity the essential characteristic for the continuity of the wedded state seems to have been connoted by this term later. The references in Caṅkam literature connote fidelity.

Conjugal fidelity becomes an important requisite in succession rights. The development of private property necessitates conjugal fidelity.

In this context it would be necessary to know the origins of chastity, that moral quality which imposes conjugal fidelity. R. Briffault in his contribution to the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences on 'Chastity' says the following.

"In primitive societies there are several factors leading to the injunction of chastity. The biological factor, the repulsion of males by females during pregnancy, the lactate: found among all animals, obtains in the forms of tabus among the majority of uncultured areas. Menstruation commonly ascribed to the influence of the moon likewise gives rise to strict universal tabu.

To this class may be referred the custom of exogamy and prohibition of incest favoured by male wanderings and the female sedentary disposition and perhaps connected with the very young females (younger sisters) in communities where mother and elder sisters are regarded with awe by younger females.

Chastity taboos also arise from proprietary claims. In most uncultured races women's sexual freedom is limited only by marital claims to fidelity often laxly enforced and qualified by those of tribal brotherhood, hospitality and ritual license.

"Feminine chastity lax throughout the lower cultures is stringently enforced when males possess considerable purchasing power as in pastoral societies."³⁴

An application of these principles to the Mullai community would reveal how chastity (Karpu) was indispensable for that culture.

Mullai culture was one with 'male wanderings and female sedentary disposition'

As we have already seen, it was at the Mullai stage that private property was enshrined as an institution and along which the

problem of inheritance too would have arisen. Chastity, which demanded conjugal fidelity, solves the problem. Curiously enough there are many Mullai poems in which children are referred to in very fond terms.³³ 184th poem in Akanānuru refers to the son as "the light of the family."

Thus we see that the concept of chastity which demands conjugal fidelity arises in Tamilnad, as it had been elsewhere, at the time of the rise of private property as an institution.

If we are to take the clues given in the 144th poem of Akanānuru ("oh companion! he has forgotten the tress which has lost its beauty because it cannot be beautified with wearing flowers") and the 42nd poem of Nāṟṟinai ("she does not know that I am returning. Run thither to her with that message. I will then be able to get home as she finishes washing her the tresses, uncleaned till then, and decorating it a few flowers.) We have to come to the conclusion that there were certain restrictions imposed on women beautifying themselves when the husbands were away.³⁴

It was really a misplacement of cause and effect when F. S. Iyengar in his History of the Tamils said that "the institution of Karpu form of marriage and the development of private property led to the patriarchal form of society."³⁵ It was really the patriarchal form of society with its accumulation of wealth and the peculiarity of male wandering that led to the institution of Karpu.

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