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# The concept of *tikai-c-col* in Tamil grammatical literature and the regional diversity of Tamil classical literature\*

Jean- Luc Chevillard\*\*

“திசைச்சொல்” என்ற சொற்றொடர் பழங்காலந்தொட்டு வட்டாரமொழிச் சொற்களைக் குறிப்பதற்குப் பயன்படுத்தப்பட்டு வருகிறது. தொல்-காப்பியம் திசைச்சொல் என்பது செந்தமிழ்நாட்டில் இருக்கும் பன்னிரு நிலப்பகுதிகளில் ஏதேனும் ஒன்றிலோ அல்லது சிலவற்றிலோ வழக்கில் இருக்கும் சொல் என்கிறது.

செந்தமிழ்நாடு என்பதன் வரையறை, பன்னிரு நிலங்கள் என்பதற்கு அளிக்கப்படும் விளக்கங்கள் இவற்றை இலக்கியச் சான்றுகளோடு இக்கட்டுரை விளக்கிச் சொல்கிறது.

பன்னிரு நாடுகள் என அழைக்கப்படுபவற்றில் வழங்கப்பட்டுவந்த குறிப்பான வட்டாரச் சொற்களையும் அவற்றின் இயற்சொற்களையும் சான்றுகளோடு விளக்குகிறது.

தமிழ் அகராதிகளில் இடம்பெற்ற திசைச்சொற்களையும் அவற்றின் தன்மையையும் விளக்குகிறது.

**Abstract:** This article will explore the various conceptions underlying the use of the expression *tikai-c-col* (approximately “regional words”). After describing the role assigned to these by Tamil grammarians and Tamil grammatical commentators, we shall present a sketch of traditional Tamil linguistic

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geography, with its central and peripheral regions, and the way it has been reinterpreted in the course of history. We will also try to examine the actual linguistic data, the differences of opinion about it, and what they tell us about Tamil literature and the movement hiding below its classical surface.

How do the speakers of a language with dialectal variation establish a literary norm? What collective memory does the community retain of the process, once the norm has become a reality? Do the poets have to follow any explicit rules? The Tamil grammars, starting with the *Tolkāppiyam* — the most ancient Tamil theoretical text preserved, the exact date of its composition and/or of its final redaction being unknown<sup>1</sup>— and the Tamil grammatical commentators who explained them provide answers to some of those questions, as we shall see when examining, in this article, what they have to say about the category of *tikai-c-col*, which can be approximately translated as “regional word”, and which requires for its understanding some idea of Tamil traditional geography, fluctuating as it may be, as well as a familiarity with the notion of *cen-tamil*, often translated as “pure Tamil” or as “chaste Tamil”, the oldest evidence of the term being found in the *Tolkāppiyam*, in sūtras TC392i<sup>2</sup> and TC394i.

### **Traditional Tamil geography and the twelve regions (*panniru nilam*)**

The oldest attestation for *tikai-c-col* is also found in the *Tolkāppiyam*, in 2 sūtras, the first one (TC391i)<sup>3</sup> being an enumeration of the 4 categories of words fit for use in poetry (*ceyyul*),<sup>4</sup> each of these four categories<sup>5</sup> having a

<sup>1</sup> The present consensus seems to be that it happened during the first half of the first millennium A.D.

<sup>2</sup> References to *Tolkāppiyam* sūtra-s contain an indication of the book (TE, TC or TP) followed by the sūtra number, and the initial letter of the commentator’s name (i = Iḷampūraṇar; c = Cēṇāvaraiyar; n = Naccinārkkiniyar; t = Teyvaccilaiyār). This is important because the numbering of the sūtras is different in each commentary.

<sup>3</sup> TC391i: *iyarcol tiricol ticaiccol vaṭacoleṇ // raṇaittē ceyyul iṭṭac collē* “Mots simples, mots recherchés, (1a) Mots régionaux et mots sanskrits, (1b) // Voilà tout [ce qui existe] (2a) [Comme types de] mots pour accumulation poétique (2b)” (Transl. Chevillard[1996].)

<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized from the beginning that *ceyyul* “poetry” is the second term in a basic dichotomy between two varieties of Tamil, the first term being *vaḷakku* “ordinary usage”, although not everybody’s ordinary usage (see citation 19 and see TP638i). As

special sūtra (from TC392i upto TC395i) devoted to its explanation. The list of the four categories starts with “plain words” (*iyar-col*), this being a pivotal category, because the following two, *tiri-col* and *tikai-c-col* are defined in opposition to it, the opposition being stylistic for *tiri-col* “recherché words” and geographically specifiable for *tikai-c-col*. More precisely, the difference between *iyar-col* and *tiri-col* lies in the fact that *iyar-col* are naturally understandable to everyone, educated or not, whereas *tiri-col* are understandable only to a learned audience.<sup>6</sup> The difference between *iyar-col* and *tikai-c-col*, on the other hand, is due to the fact that *iyar-col* are understandable everywhere in an area called *centamiḷ nilam*, whereas *tikai-c-col* have their meaning understood only in one or the other of a set of “twelve lands (or regions)” (*panṇiru nilam*). The *Tolkāppiyam* sūtra for *iyar-col* is as follows:

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stated in its preface, the *Tolkāppiyam* generally deals with both varieties of Tamil. Some sūtra-s however deal with *valakku* only (see TC27i) or with *ceyyuḷ* only (see TC18i). This can be compared with Pāṇini’s dealing with *bhāṣā* “contemporary standard language” and with the *chandās* “language of the Vedic texts” (See Deshpande[1993: p. 54]). Keeping the dichotomy in mind, it must be realized that TC391i (see fn.3) explains one of the basic differences between *valakku* and *ceyyuḷ*, namely that their vocabularies, although overlapping, are not identical since words belonging the first category (*iyar-col* “plain words”) are used in both varieties of Tamil.

<sup>5</sup> We shall not discuss here the last category, *vaṭacol* “Sanskrit words”, this being too vast a subject.

<sup>6</sup> The expression *tiri-col* is translated into English neither by S. Ilakkuvanar (p. 142), nor by P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri (p. 280), nor by V. Murugan (p. 344): all of them leave *tiri-col* untranslated. Another translator, D. Albert, has attempted “derivative words” (p. 263) but this does not seem felicitous. I have decided to use the French word “recherché” because the expression “recherché words” appears to combine in itself the values of “difficult words” and of “sophisticated words”, and also because it is sometimes said to be sophisticated (or *recherché*) to use French words in English. The reason for *tiri-col* not being understandable to everyone, is their being polysemic (and therefore ambiguous), or their being the rare synonyms of a plain word, or, according to commentators, their being the result of some morphological transformation (*tiritai*). The sūtra TC393i (alias TC399c) concerning them says: *oru poruḷ kuṟitta vēṟu col-l-āki-y-um// vēṟu poruḷ kuṟitta oru col-l-āki-y-um// iru pāṟṟu eṇpa tiri-col kiḷavi* “It is said that ‘recherché words’ (i.e. sophisticated/difficult words) fall under two cases, EITHER being a variety/plurality of words denoting one [single] meaning, OR being one [single] word denoting a variety/plurality of meaning”. My 1996 French translation was: “Un terme [qui est] ‘mot recherché’ (3b) // [Peut] être de [l’un de] deux types, dit-on: (3a) // Soit que différents mots (1b) // Visent une [même et unique] valeur, (1a) // Soit qu’un [même et unique] mot (2b) // Vise différentes valeurs (2a)” (TC399c).

- (1) *avarṛuḷ,*  
*iyarcol tāmē*  
*centamiḷ nilattu vaḷakkoṭu civaṇit*  
*tamporuḷ vaḷāmai icaikkuñ collē.*

“Among them, the ‘plain words’ are the words which sound/signify, without deviating from their [semantic] value, in conformity with the usage of the land of pure Tamil” (TC392i)<sup>7</sup>

Contrasting with it, the sūtra concerning *ticai-c-col* states that:

- (2) *centamiḷ cērnta paṇṇiru nilattinūm*  
*taṅkurip piṇavē ticaiccor kiḷavi.* (TC394i)<sup>8</sup>

A lot could be said about the wording of these two sūtra-s. They are in accordance with the views expressed elsewhere in the *Tolkāppiyam*, according to which the link between a word (*col*) —when it is heard to sound (*icaittal*)— and its reference/value (*poruḷ*) happens through the *kuṛippu* (lit. “aiming at”).<sup>9</sup> What sūtra TC392i adds as a specification to this process, in the case of *iyar-col*, is the link “without fail” (*vaḷāmai*) with “(ordinary) usage” (*vaḷakku*). And what sūtra TC394i adds, in the case of *ticai-c-col*, is the specifying mention of the twelve lands. There is, however, as well observed by K. N. Ezhuthachan[1975], an ambiguous word: *cērnta*.

- (3) “The question is whether Tolkāppiyar’s statement ‘*Śentamiḷ cērnta paṇṇirunilattum*’ means the 12 lands lying inside the Tamil country or lands adjacent to it; *cērnta* can be construed either way. The first view seems to be correct. [...] Tolkāppiyar might have been thinking of regional dialects inside the Tamil land which included Kerala in his times.” (K. N. Ezhuthachan[1975], p. 71, fn. 12c).

<sup>7</sup> My 1996 French translation was: “Parmi eux, (1) // Les mots simples, (2) // Sont les mots qui se font entendre (4b) // Sans dévier de leur valeur (4a) // Conformément à l’usage (3b) // Du pays du tamoul pur (3a)”.

<sup>8</sup> My 1996 translation, based on Cēṇāvaraiyar’s interpretation, reads thus : “[C’est] dans les douze pays (1b) Qui jouxtent [celui du] tamoul pur, (1a) // [Qu] ils ont leur [pouvoir de] visée, (2a) Les termes [qui sont] ‘mots régionaux’” (2b) (Chevillard [1996, p. 476). An English equivalent would be: “It is in the twelve countries adjacent to the country of pure Tamil that the ‘regional words’ have their denotative power”. However, as we shall see, other interpretations of the sūtra are possible, and translating *cērnta* by “qui jouxtent” (i.e. “adjacent to”) is not the only possibility.

<sup>9</sup> This is said by some commentators to take place in the internal sense (*ma-am*, Skt. *manas*). See Cēṇāvaraiyar’s explanation in TC297c: *kuṛippu ma-attār kuritt-uṇara-p paṭuvatu*.

The *Tolkāppiyam* itself does not give the list of the twelve lands: it may have been a common lore or an allusion to a well known symbol or legend. A possible first step in trying to understand what it was aiming at is to read what the commentators —*Ṽampūraṇar* (11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> c.?), *Cēṇāvaraiyar* (end of 13<sup>th</sup> c.?), *Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar* (14<sup>th</sup> c.?) and *Teyvaccilaiyār* (15<sup>th</sup> c.?), all, however, separated from the composition of the original text by several centuries- had to say about it. *Ṽampūraṇar* says:

- (4) *centamiḷ cērnta paṇṇiru nilamāvāna: (I1) potuṅkarnāṭu, (I2) teṇ-pāṇṭināṭu, (I3) oḷināṭu, (I4) kuṭṭanāṭu, (I5) paṇṇināṭu, (I6) kaṛkānāṭu, (I7) cītanāṭu, (I8) pūḷināṭu, (I9) malaināṭu, (I10) aruvānāṭu, (I11) aruvāvaṭatalaināṭu, (I12) kuṭanāṭu.*

And *Cēṇāvaraiyar* says:

- (5) *paṇṇiru nilam āvāna (C1) poṅkarnāṭu, (C2) oḷināṭu, (C3) teṇ-pāṇṭināṭu, (C4) kuṭṭanāṭu, (C5) kuṭanāṭu, (C6) paṇṇināṭu, (C7) kaṛkānāṭu, (C8) cītanāṭu, (C9) pūḷināṭu, (C10) malaināṭu, (C11) aruvānāṭu, (C12) aruvāvaṭatalai eṇac centamiḷnāṭṭut teṇ-kīḷ pāl mutalāka vaṭa-kīḷ pāl irutiyāka eṇṇikkolka. (TC400c)*

Apart from a variant reading, (I1) *potuṅkar nāṭu* vs. (C1) *poṅkar nāṭu*, the main difference between the two lists lies in the order of the terms. An interesting element is the fact that *Cēṇāvaraiyar* explains the logic of his own order, saying that he starts at the South-East of *Centamiḷ-nāṭu* and stops at the North-East, after making what is apparently part of a clockwise circular movement (a *pradakṣiṇa* ?) around *Centamiḷ-nāṭu*. It is also very important to note that both *Ṽampūraṇar* and *Cēṇāvaraiyar*, followed in this by *Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar*, give us precisely the limits of *Centamiḷ-nāṭu*. *Ṽampūraṇar* says:

- (6) *centamiḷ nilam eṇpatu vaiyaiyārriṇ vaṭakku, marutayārriṇ teṛku, karuvūriṇ kiḷakku, maruvūriṇ mēṛku (TC392i).* “The *centamiḷ nilam* ‘land of pure Tamil’ lies 1. North of [the river] *Vaiyaiyāru*, 2. South of [the river] *Marutayāru*, 3. East of [the town] *Karuvūr*, 4. West of [the town] *Maruvūr*”.

The fourth commentator, *Teyvaccilaiyār*, says, however, that this interpretation is not universally accepted because, in that case, *Koṛkai* (an ancient seaport), which is South of [the river] *Vaiyaiyāru*, *Kāñci* (Modern *Kancheepuram*) which lies North of [the river] *Marutayāru*, and *Koṭuṅkōḷūr* (a town in Kerala), which lies West of *Karuvūr* (Modern *Karur*) would have to be *tamiḷtirinilam* (places of deviant Tamil) and because this restricted

characterization of *Centamiḷ-nilam* conflicts with the characterization found in the preface to *Tolkāppiyam*, which specifies only a northern limit, *Vēṅkaṭam* (a mountain) and a southern limit, *Kumari* (Cape Comorin) for the “good world which speaks Tamil” (*tamiḷ kūru nallulakam*).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, after giving his list of *paṇṇiru nilam*, he explicitly says that “they are inside *Centamiḷnāṭu*” (*ivai centamiḷ nāṭṭakatta*).<sup>11</sup>

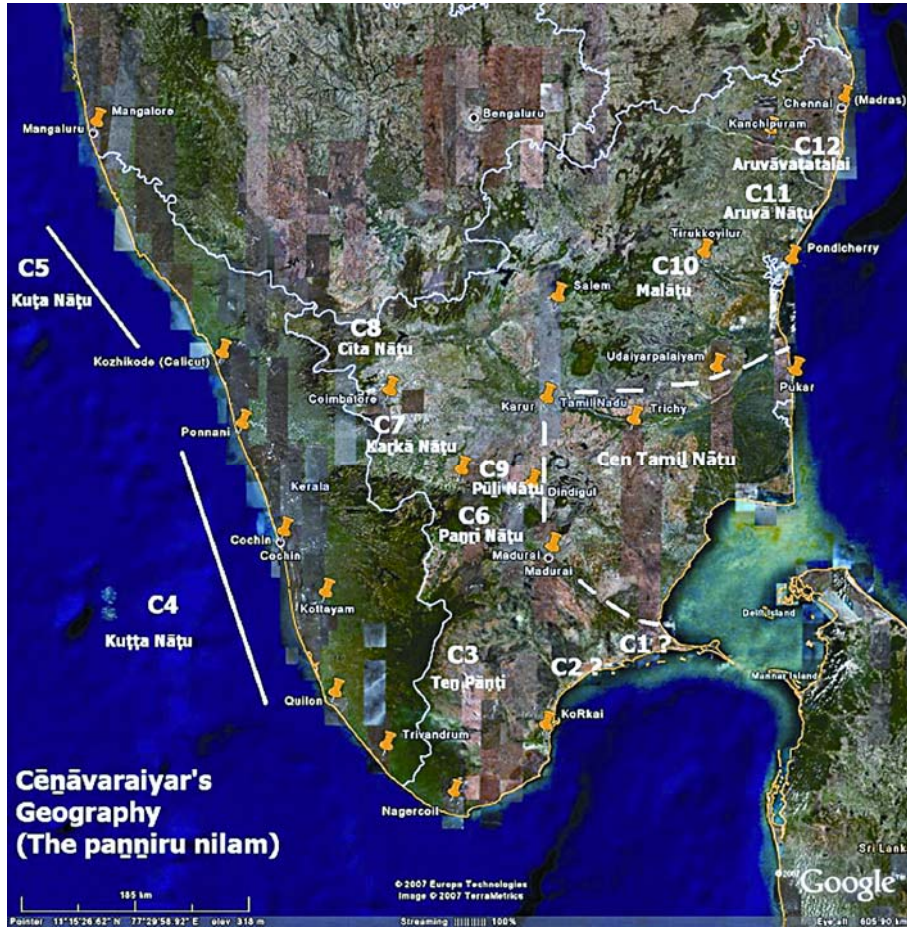
Other opinions concerning the *paṇṇiru nilam* are available, notably in the commentaries of the *Nannūḷ*, a grammar which seems to have been composed at the beginning of the 13th century, and the lists of which differ from those we have just mentioned. Before examining more texts, it will not be out of place to give a graphical representation, in a geographical map, of the information given so far. That graphical representation should be taken as conjectural of what *Cēṇāvaraiyar*’s opinion may have been concerning the *paṇṇiru nilam* and the *centamiḷ nilam*. The locations given for the various *nāṭu*-s —for the commentators do not use the word *nilam* but the word *nāṭu* to refer to the regions— are based on secondary sources, and notably on the Tamil Lexicon (henceforth MTL). However, in two cases, namely *poṅkarnāṭu* (C1) and *oḷināṭu* (C2), no information was found by us,<sup>12</sup> and the positions given on the map for these two are solely based on *Cēṇāvaraiyar*’s statement that his enumeration starts at the South-East of *Centamiḷ Nāṭu*. Additionally, C10 is given on the map as *malāṭu* and not as *malaināṭu*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Teyvaccilaiyār’s argument runs as follows: *centamiḷ nāṭāvatu: vaiyaiyārriṅ vaṭakkum, marutayārriṅ terkum, karuvūriṅ kiḷakkum, maruvūriṅ mērkum eṇpa. ivvāru uraittaṅku ṅ-ilakkaṇaṅ kāṇāmaiyaṅnum, vaiyaiyārriṅ terkākiya koṅkaiyum karuvūriṅ mērkākiya koṅṅkōḷūrum marutayārriṅ vaṭakkākiya kāṭciyum tamiḷtirinilamātal vēṅṅumātālāṅnum, aṅṅtu uraiyaṅru eṅpāruraikkumāru: ‘vaṭavēṅkaṭan teṅkumari // āyitait, tamiḷkūru nallulakattu // vaḷakkuṅ ceyyūḷu māyiru mutaliṅ // eḷuttuṅ collum poruḷu nāṭi’ eṅṅramaiyaṅnum, itaṅṅul tamiḷ kūrum nallulakam eṅa vicēṅittamaiyaṅnum, kiḷakkum mērkum ellai kūṅṅātu terkelḷai kūṅṅiyavataṅṅār kumariyṅ terkākiya nāṅṅukaḷai yoḷittu vēṅkaṭamalaiyṅ terkum, kumariyṅ - vaṭakkum, kuṅṅakataḷiṅ mērkum, kuṅṅakataḷiṅ kiḷakkumākiya nilamcentamiḷ nilameṅṅruraippa (TC394t).*

<sup>11</sup> Teyvaccilaiyār says: *paṇṇiru nilamāvaṅa: vaiyaiyārriṅ teṅkiḷakkākiya potuṅkar nāṭu, oḷināṭu, teṅpāṅṅināṭu, karuṅkuṅṅānāṭu, kuṅṅānāṭu, paṅṅrināṭu, kaṅṅkānāṭu, cūṅṅaināṭu, pūḷināṭu, malāṭu, aruvānāṭu, aruvā vaṅṅatalai eṅṅpaṅa. ivai centamiḷ nāṅṅakatta.*

<sup>12</sup> In the case of *oḷināṭu*, there is a possible reference in *Paṅṅṅinap pālai* (line 274): we have a mention of the *Oḷiyar*, which the commentator explains as being the *Oḷināṅṅṅār*.

<sup>13</sup> MTL, published from 1924 to 1936, explains *teṅpāṅṅi nāṭu* (C3) as “Nāṅṅi Nāṅṅu”, *kuṅṅṅa nāṅṅu* (C4) as “the region full of lakes, corresponding to the modern towns of Kottayam &



Map 1

Quilon in Travancore”, *kuṭa nāṭu* (C5) as “probably a portion of Modern Malabar [district]”, *paṅṅiri nāṭu* (C6) as “the region around Palni hills”, *karkā nāṭu* (C7) as the “rocky portion of Coimbatore district on the eastern side of the Western Ghats”, *cītanāṭu* (C8) as “portions of Coimbatore and Nilgiris”, *aruvānāṭu* (C11) as “possibly a large portion of South-Arcot district” and *aruvāvaṭatalai* (C12) as “possibly Chingleput district”. In the case of *pūḷināṭu* (C9), I have relied on the maps given by Marr and by Auvai Turaicāmiṭṭiḷḷai. MTL notes that *pūḷiyaṅ* “lord of Pūḷi Nāṭu” is listed in the *Tivākaram* as one of the titles of the Cēra Kings, but that it refers to the Pāṇḍya king in the preface to *Cēkkiḷār Purāṇam*. In the case of C10, which should be *malaināṭu*, I have used the designation *malāṭu*, found in Mayilainātar’s list (see chart 1), and relied on the fact that MTL identifies *malāṭu* as “the region around Tirukkōyilūr”. An additional reason for doing so is that it seems to fit into the *pradaḱṣina* movement around *Centamiḷnāṭu*, from South-East to North-East.



## The limits of *Centamiḷ Nāṭu*

As already mentioned, there is a long time gap between the *Tolkāppiyam* and its commentators. If the date of its final redaction is the 5th cent. AD, as some argue (see Zvelebil[1994:705]), and if Ḽampūraṇar’s commentary was composed in the 11th cent. (rather than the 12th), that leaves us with a gap of at least 600 years, during which a great deal of things happened in the political, linguistic and religious spheres. There may have been many reasons for a reinterpretation of the original conceptions. It has for instance been remarked that the author of *Tolkāppiyam* was a Southerner — a Pāṇṭiya king is mentioned in the preface— and that he may even have been from the extreme South, coming from the Travancore area. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai writes that he “was a South Travancorean and some of his sūtras (I, 241, 287, 378) relate to a linguistic usage which survives even today in the current Malayalam language”.<sup>14</sup> If that is the case, he was at quite a distance from the area which is indicated on the map as being *Centamiḷ Nāṭu*. It is of course not impossible that a grammarian could come from the periphery of the area where the language he describes has its roots,<sup>15</sup> but it is also possible that the opposition between a center and a periphery was not the original intended meaning. Tamil was certainly, in the early centuries, a language with dialectal variation, and the two sūtra-s mentioned in (1) and (2) might appear as a recognition of the simple fact that some words (the *iyar-col*) are understood everywhere, whereas others (the *ticaī-c-col*) are understood only in a specific area. The initial statement made in TC391i (*iyarcol tiricol ticaicol vaṭacolen // ranaittē ceyyul ḷṭṭac collē*),<sup>16</sup> about the four categories to be used in poetry, which places *iyar-col* in the first place,

<sup>14</sup> See Vaiyapuri Pillai’s History of Tamil language and literature ( p. 49 in the 1988 NCBH republication), where he relates the name of the teacher Atankōṭṭācaṇ, mentioned in the preface of *Tolkāppiyam*, to the fact that “Atankōdu is a village in the Vilavangōdu taluk in South Travancore”. According to the late prof. Muttu Shanmugam Pillai (personal communication), the illustrations (*paṇiyattuk koṇṭāṇ* [TE241n], *malaiyattuk koṇṭāṇ* [TE287n]) given by commentators for TE241n and TE287n are Malayalisms. Similar remarks might be possible about sūtras TC29c and TC30c, because the distinction between *tarutal* and *koṇṭuttal* is still alive in Kerala but is not respected in Tamilnadu.

<sup>15</sup> This is the case for instance with Sībawayhi, author of the *Kitāb*, the most ancient Arabic grammatical treatise preserved, who was a Persian (see Bohas et alii [2006]). This is also said to have been the case with Pāṇini: See the arguments given by Deshpande[1993, chap. V] to show that “Pāṇini was principally a ‘frontier grammarian’”.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 3.

may appear, from a descriptive point of view, as a recognition of the dialectal variation, but is also, from a normative point of view, a tool for grading texts: the more a literary text contains “recherché words”, “dialectal words” and “Sanskrit words”, the more difficult it will be to understand, which might possibly increase its value on the literary market thus inaugurated. In that conception, the expression *cen-tamiḷ* is not linked to the restricted area defined in (6) and shown on map 1. The interpretation of *cernta* presented in (3) is the correct one and the objections raised by Teyvaccilaiyār are reasonable: how could Koṟkai, (see map 1), that ancient port of the Pāṇṭiya kings, which is mentioned in ancient Tamil literature, not be included in *Centamiḷ Nāṭu*? And the same is true of Koṭuṅkōḷūr, a city connected with the Cēra kings.<sup>17</sup>

However, even though the truths that Teyvaccilaiyār is hinting at are historical truths, rooted in a literary culture which has a classical kernel and grammatical traditions, the historical course of events since the time of the *Tolkāppiyam* has seen Kerala and modern Tamilnadu become two distinct countries, speaking different languages, and it has also seen the advent of a number of poets and grammarians, some of them lucky enough to have had their works preserved which allows us to see how their conceptions were evolving. Among the poets we see, for instance, a young brahmin named Campantar, who possibly lived in the 7th cent., who sang Śiva and whose work is partly preserved in a collection of Śaiva hymns called *Tēvāram*. One of the striking facts about Campantar is his extremely frequent use of the expression *cen-tamiḷ*, which he uses almost fifty times, mostly in signature verses, either to refer to himself as

(7) *centamiḷiṅ campantaṅ* “Campantaṅ, an authority on chaste Tamil”  
(*Tēvāram*, 2-57, 11)<sup>18</sup>

or to refer to his compositions as

(8) *caṅpai ṅāṇacampantaṅa centamiḷ koṅṭu pāṭa* “to sing [the praise of Civaṅ] with the help of [the songs done in] refined Tamil by ṅāṇacampantaṅ of Caṅpai” (*Tēvāram*, 1-57, 11)

or to refer to those who can read them as

<sup>17</sup> See Kesavan Veluthat[2004].

<sup>18</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the translation (or English gloss) given for *Tēvāram* passages is by V. M. Subramanya Ayyar, as available in *Digital Tevaram* [2007].

(9) *cantamāc conṇa centamiḷ vallavar* “those who are able to recite the refined Tamil verses composed by him with rhythmic movement” (Tēvāram, 2-8, 11)

A number of passages show us that Campantar lived in a learned universe, where not only Sanskrit with its 4 Veda-s and 6 Vedaṅga-s was cultivated, but where Tamil too was a cultivated language, as clearly attested by citation (9), but also, of course by the bulk of Campantar’s own work, and its virtuoso character from a metrical point of view. It is to be noted that other specifications can be given to the word *tamiḷ*, as in the following passage, where we meet with *taṇ-ṭamiḷ* (lit. “cool Tamil”), which might simply be a superlative, but could also have been a technical designation,<sup>19</sup> i.e. the equivalent of a registered mark in the collective psyche of the time:<sup>20</sup>

(10) *cantam niṛai taṇtamiḷ terintu uṇarum ṅāṅacampantaṇatu col* “the words of ṅāṅacampantaṇ who has knowledge of refined Tamil full of rhythmic movement” (Tēvāram, 3-77, 11)

That Campantar was fond of using such signature expressions can also be seen in his use of the expression *muttamiḷ*, which has sometimes been connected with the Agastya school of grammar.<sup>21</sup> He uses it several times, as in:

(11) *muttamiḷ nālmaṛai ṅāṅacampantaṇ* “ṅāṅacampantaṇ who knows the four Vedas [and] the three divisions of Tamil” (Tēvāram, 3-2, 11)

He is of course not the only poet to evince knowledge of technical vocabulary; this was already the case, at an earlier period, with one of the authors of *Paripāṭal*, who sang:

<sup>19</sup> The phrase *taṇtamiḷ* appears for instance in the *ciṛappuṇ pāyiram* (line 3) of the *Puṛapporuḷ veṇṇā mālai*. It also appears in *Puṛam* (51-5 & 198-12), in *Paṭiṇṇuṇ pattu* (63-9) and in *Paripāṭal*: see citation (12). It is also noteworthy that a quasi-etymological explanation (or *nirvacana*) is given for the word *antaṇar* in *Kuṛaḷ* 30. That explanation relates *antaṇar* to *taṇmai*. A few centuries later, Parimēlaḷakar was to further explain that *antaṇar* is a *ētup peyar* —i.e. is not an arbitrary designation but a motivated one— and that those called *antaṇar* are *aḷakiya taṇpattiṇai uṇaiyār*. This would be possible grounds for speculating that *taṇtamiḷ* might be a signature expression.

<sup>20</sup> Just as the use of “cool” in the phrase “Cool Britannia” can in 2007 appear both as a pun and as a registered political signature.

<sup>21</sup> See Chevillard[2009]: “The Pantheon of Tamil grammarians: a short history of the myth of Agastya’s twelve disciples”.

(12) *tallā poruḷ iyalpiṇ taṅ tamil āyvantilār* “Those who have not studied [the conventions of] ‘Cool Tamil’, which is inseparable, in nature, from [the treatise describing its] subject matter” (*Paripāṭal*, 9-25)<sup>22</sup>

This would also be the case with Cuntarar, the third author of the *Tēvāram*, who would make a smiling reference to the popularity of Tamil poetics, and its *tiṅai* concept:

(13) *tiṅai koḷ centamiḷ painkiḷi teriyum celvat tiruniṅṛiyūr* (*Tēvāram*, 7-65, 2)<sup>23</sup>

We have dwelt at length on these citations because they show that there was an age when Tamil poets became grammatically, or what we may call ‘poetologically’ learned and could take pride in making explicit references to their learning. Coming back to the topic of dialectal variation, one might wonder what Campantar had in mind when, describing a multilingual universe, he sang:

(14) *teṅcol, viṅcu \_amar vaṭacol, ticaimoli, eḷil narampu eṭuttut tuṅcu neṅcu \_iruḷ nīnkat toḷutu \_eḷu tol pukalūril, aṅcaṅam piṭirntaṅaiya, alaikaṭal kaṭaiya \_aṅṛu \_eḷunta, vaṅca naṅcu \_aṅi kaṅṭar---varttamāṅiccurattārē.* (*Tēvāram*, 2-92, 7)

One recognizes Tamil (*teṅcol*) and Sanskrit (*vaṭacol*), but they are accompanied by a third term: *ticai-moli*. Is this, under a slightly modified form, a reference to the use of regional words in a Tamil text, as V. M. Subrahmanya Ayyar<sup>24</sup> seems to think? Or is it a reference to songs in a

<sup>22</sup> F. Gros (1968, p. 54) translates: “Ceux qui n'ont point étudié le frais Tamoul en son traité des matières qu'on ne peut ignorer”. Interestingly, this passage uses the (possibly technical) phrase, *taṅtamiḷ*, which we have already discussed, and a fragment (*paripāṭal tiraṭṭu-4*) mentions the *terimāṅ ṭamiḷmummaṭ teṅṅam poruppa-* “Montagnard du Sud, dont les trois tamouls excellent et se distinguent” (transl. F. Gros, 1968, p. 158), possibly containing an alternative designation of the *muttamiḷ* notion.

<sup>23</sup> The English gloss by V. M. Subrahmanya Ayyar reads: “Tiruniṅṛiyūr which has wealth and where the green parrots speak chaste Tamil which has the unique classification of *tiṅai*, having learnt them by hearing”.

<sup>24</sup> An explanatory translation of this verse can be obtained by reordering the 4 components of the English gloss provided by V. M. Subrahmanya Ayyar (see *Digital Tēvāram*, 2007). Lines 1 & 2 are a description of the town of Pukalūr while lines 3 & 4 are a description of Śiva who is known there as Varttamāṅiccurattār. The syntactic kernel of the construction is “In Pukalūr, [Śiva is] Varttamāṅiccurattār”. The verse’s long explanation is: “in ancient Pukalūr where devotees wake up from sleep worshipping with joined hands in order to

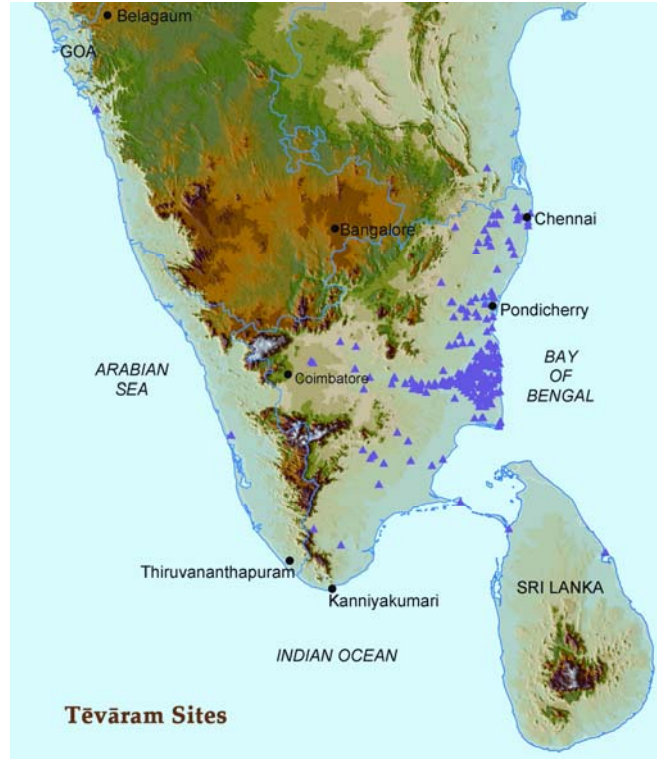
“regional language”, if this is how we choose to translate *ticai-moḷi*? This would not be impossible because, in another song from the *Tēvāram*, Campantar seems to refer to the presence of people from Kerala in a temple which is supposed to be located in what was part of Cōḷa country:

(15) *antaṅarkaḷ āṇa malaiyāḷar avar ēttum [...] paḷuvūr* (*Tēvāram*, 2-34, 11) “Paḷuvūr [...] where brahmins [who are] Malayāḷis praise Aran” (transl. V. M. Subrahmanya Ayyar).

Be that as it may - because it is quite difficult to be sure that the Paḷuvūr referred to in the hymn is the one near Ariyalūr— the striking fact is that if we examine the map (see figure 2) of all the temples sung of in the *Tēvāram* (i.e. the 274 *pāṭal peṇṇa stalam*) by Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar, we see that it gives a “Tamil world” view which is as asymmetrical, in the weight it gives to a center opposed to a periphery, as is the one proposed by ḷampūraṇar and Cēṇāvaraiyar (see figure 1), with the 12 *nilam*-s (or *nāṭu*-s) surrounding the *centamiḷ nilam*.

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dispel the ignorance in the mind which has been staying there for a long time (*tuñcu neñcu iruḷ nūṅkat toḷutu eḷu tol pukalūriḷ*) singing in any one of the languages such as tamīḷ, excellent vaṭacol and words borrowed from the twelve countries bordering the country where chaste tamīḷ is spoken, playing songs on the strings of yāḷ and vīṇai (*teṇṇol, viñcu amar vaṭacol, ticaimoḷi, eḷil narampu eṭuttut*), Civaṇ who adorned his neck with the cruel poison which arose in the moving ocean which is like the collyrium scattered everywhere when it was churned, is in varttamāṇṇiccaram (*aṅcaṇam pitirntaṇaiya, alaikaṭal kaṭaiya aṅṇu eḷunta, // vañca nañcu aṇi kaṅṭar – Varttamāṇṇiccurattārē*)”.



**Map 2**

Of course, it is a world view where the Cōla Nāṭu has the lion's share, with its 191 sites, as compared to the 14 sites of the Pāṇṭiya Nāṭu, but it has succeeded in symbolically retaining at least one site in the Cēra Nāṭu,<sup>25</sup> although this is almost nothing if we compare this map with the one which follows p. 550 in J. Marr's *The Eight Anthologies*,<sup>26</sup> or with the map given by Auvai Turaicāmiṭṭai in his *Patirrup pattu* edition, under the title *patirrupattuk kāṭṭum cēranāṭu*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Kesavan Veluthat[2004]'s remarks on the importance of Tīruvañcaikkaḷam temple.

<sup>26</sup> This map shows towns on the West coast such as Naṟavu, Toṇṭi, Vañci, Muciṟi, and gives the location of Kuṭṭanāṭu and Pūḷināṭu.

<sup>27</sup> This map shows towns on the West Coast such as Toṇṭi, Naṟavu, Karuvūr, Vañci, Muciṟi, Koṭumaṇam, and gives the locations of Kuṭanāṭu, Kuṭṭanāṭu, Pūḷināṭu and Teppāṇṭināṭu. There is also a second town called Karuvūr, at the location of present day Karur. The location given for Naṟavu does not coincide with the location given by Marr.

### Linguistic observations in the *Vīracōḷiyam*

There were many grammarians between the time of *Tolkāppiyam* and the time of its commentators, and some of their works have been preserved. Among the preserved works, which seem to be older than Ḥampūraṇar’s commentary but more recent than the *Tēvāram* (variously dated between the 7th and the 9th cent.), one must mention a grammar, the *Vīracōḷiyam*, attributed to Puttamittiraṇār, a Buddhist, and considered to have been composed during the second half of the 11th cent. This grammar has been transmitted with a commentary, held to have been composed at the beginning of the 12th century by Peruntēvaṇār. The most striking features of the grammar and its commentary are the impact of spoken Tamil and the ubiquitous presence of Sanskrit. They contain many elements relevant to the present discussion. For instance, in verse 7, which lists the letters which can occur at the beginning of a Tamil word, we find the phrase *centamiṭcollin* containing a modified sandhi form of the word *tamiḷ*, which makes one think the word was pronounced “*tamiḷ*”.<sup>28</sup> Concerning the geographical limits of the Tamil-speaking area, they are given in verse 8 as Vēṅkaṭam and Kumari—in accordance with the preface to *Tolkāppiyam*— but the commentator seems to think this is not enough, because he glosses the expression

(16) *vēṅkaṭaṅkumarikkītai* “between Vēṅkaṭam and Kumari” (VC8)  
using the much longer expression

(17) *kuṇakaṭal kumari kuṭakam vēṅkaṭam eṇṇum innāṅku ellaikkullum*  
“between these four limits: the western sea, [Cape] Comorin, the Eastern land and Vēṅkaṭam” (comm. to VC8)

Another notable fact is the presence of other languages, besides Sanskrit and Tamil. Several rules are given for adapting Sanskrit words to Tamil phonology, but verse 59 mentions *vēru tēyac col* “words from different countries”, and the commentator explains that this concerns:

(18) *āriyam, vaṭuku, teluṅku, cāvakam, cōṇakam, ciṅkaḷam, papparam ivai mutalākiya piṛa tēyac corṅaḷ* “the words from these other countries: the Aryan country, the country of Vaṭukar, the Telugu country, Java,

<sup>28</sup> Other verses contain more standard forms: *tamiḷinukku* (VC8), *tamiḷkku* (VC60, VC76), *tamiḷ* (VC83), *tamiḷin* (VC151).

Greece/Arabia(?), Ceylon, the Barbarian country, etc.” (comm. to VC59).<sup>29</sup>

After this, he mentions words from the Aryan country and Ceylon and explains what they become in Tamil. Equally interesting are the remarks on local pronunciation. Verse 82 states that mistakes are committed with respect to the twice-eighth and the thrice-fifth consonants (namely ḷ and ḻ) on the one hand, and with respect to the last and the third consonants (namely r and c) on the other hand. The commentator gives several examples, as for instance using *kōḷi* instead of *kōḻi*, or using *ḷamai* instead of *ḻamai*, and attributes this type of mistake to people from the country surrounding Karunilam (*karunilam curṟiṇa tēcam*).<sup>30</sup> In a similar fashion, he says that some people from the Kāveri basin (*kāviri pāyṇta nilam*) will, for instance, use *muccam* instead of *murram*, and *pirrai* instead of *piccai*, etc. After listing a number of other mistakes, not mentioned by the *Vīracōḷiyam* itself, the commentator concludes that:

(19) *arivillātār tamīḷaip piḷaikka vaḷaṅkuvar. ivaiyellām ulakattārkkku ovvā enru kaḷaika. `ulakamenpa tuyarntōr māṭṭē' enṟarika.* “Those without knowledge have a faulty Tamil usage. Considering that it does not benefit men-of-the-world, avoid [those faults]. Realize that ‘[what is called] world [usage] rests on superior people’” (comm. on VC82).

Coming back now to *ticai-c-col*, the expression does not seem to occur in the VC itself, but there are two places where the commentator uses it. The first occurrence is in the delayed explanation given for the expression *moḷi-vakai* (found in verse VC90).<sup>31</sup> That expression is explained as a set of four possibilities: *ceñ-col*, *tiri-col*, *vaṭa-col* and *ticai-c-col*, and the only peculiarity is the use of *ceñ-col* instead of *iyar-col*. The second occurrence is more interesting because it looks like an extension of the original meaning of

<sup>29</sup> This translation uses some of the meanings given by the *Tamil Lexicon* for these country names. It stands in need of improvement. One of the problems is that the MTL translates both *vaṭuku* and *teluiku* as Telugu country. It is not clear to me whether these are two distinct political entities sharing the same language, or whether the languages are different, as one would expect.

<sup>30</sup> T. V. Gopal Iyer[2005, p. 277] thinks this verse deals with spelling mistakes made by people who do not have the distinction in their local dialect. It could also refer to cases of hyper-correction in the pronunciation of literary Tamil by uneducated speakers.

<sup>31</sup> In T. V. Gopal Iyer’s edition, *moḷi-vakai* is on p. 313 and the explanation is on p. 340, inside the *mullai natāiyiyal*.



*ticai-c-col*. It is found under verse VC60, which extends the notion of *tātu* “verbal root” (Skt. *dhātu*) from Sanskrit to Tamil. After giving examples of Tamil roots and Sanskrit roots, the commentator explains that there are 3 types of roots, the last one being *ticai-c-col tātukkaḷ* and gives two examples: *noṭi* and *kōṭi*, which he declares to be identical with something called *vaṭukac col*, which might be some variety of Telugu.<sup>32</sup>

### The doctrine of the *Nannūl*

The *Vīracōḷiyam* does not seem to have been a very successful book. Its heavy use of Sanskrit terminology and its often cryptic formulations probably made it useful only to those who were interested both in Sanskrit and Tamil. Besides, its attention to the spoken language, although it is of great interest to a descriptive linguist, may not have pleased those who were more interested in cultivating what had already become a living classical language. It was of course not the only “new” grammar. In the centuries preceding it, a number of other grammarians had also composed works which might have superseded the *Tolkāppiyam*, but which were finally lost, except for fragments preserved here and there.<sup>33</sup> But it so happened that there was both a *Tolkāppiyam* revival, thanks to Iḷampūraṇar, and the birth of a new grammar, the *Nannūl*, composed by Pavaṇanti muṇivar, probably at the beginning of the 13th cent. That new grammar, which would become a new standard, would soon be transmitted with the commentary composed, probably shortly after the composition of the *Nannūl*, by Mayilainātar. But new commentators would appear for the *Tolkāppiyam* and would make it their duty to prove that whatever information was available in the *Nannūl*, could also be found in the older grammar. As far as *ticai-c-col* were concerned, the new grammar contained a 3-line sūtra, which read:

(20) *centamiḷ nilaccēṛ paṇṇiru nilattiṇum*  
*oṇpatir riraṇṇiṇir ramiḷoḷi nilattiṇum*

<sup>32</sup> But see fn. 29 and the problem of the distinction between *vaṭuku* and *teluṅku*. The MTL links *noṭi-ttal* with Malayalam *noṭikka*, Telugu *noṭugu* and Kannada *nuḍi*. It links the 7th meaning of *kōṭi*(3) with Telugu *kōḍi*.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, the grammarian Avinayaṇār is said to have almost eclipsed the *Tolkāppiyam*. And we must not forget the elusive Akattiyaṇār (Agastya) already mentioned.

*taṅkurip piṇavē ticaicco lenpa.* (N272m)<sup>34</sup>

It is clear that lines 1 and 3 are almost identical with lines 1 and 2 of the corresponding *Tolkāppiyam* sūtra given in (2). The main difference is the line which has been inserted, which might appear as a legacy of the *Vīracōliyam*. The *ticai-c-col* are now defined as those which can be understood either in the *paṇṇiru nilam*, already familiar to us, or in 17 countries. More precisely, this total of 17 is obtained by removing the Tamil country from a total of nine-(times)-two countries, which must at the time have been well known because the *Nannūl* does not provide it.<sup>35</sup> One finds, for instance, a list of 18 languages (or *pāṭai*) in a traditional (non-alphabetical) lexicon called *Tivākaram* (7th-8th cent.) and the Tamil language seems to be referred to in it as *Tirāvīṭam*.<sup>36</sup> Mayilainātar provides us with a list of 17,<sup>37</sup> which does not coincide with the one in the *Tivākaram*, and which could not be completely harmonized either with the partial list contained in the *Vīracōliyam* commentary and given in (18). Interestingly, Mayilainātar also provides a list of the 12 *nilam* which does not coincide

<sup>34</sup> The references to *Nannūl* sūtra-s follow the same logic as the *Tolkāppiyam* references explained in fn.2. But “m” refers to Mayilainātar and “v” to Civañāna Muṇivar’s *Viruttīyurai*.

<sup>35</sup> We find, for instance, in *L’inde Classique* (Renou and Filliozat, vol. 2, Appendix 7, p. 751) a list (based on the *Bhāvaprakāśana*) of “the 18 speeches of Mleccha in the Dakṣiṇāpatha (Dekkan), that is to say, dramaḍa, kannāḍa, āndhra, hūṇa, himmīra, siṃhala, pallava, yavana, jaina, pārvatīya, pāmara, kaṣa, vardhraka, kāmbhoja, śaka, nagana, vākaṭa, koṅkaṇa.” The content is of course different, but the idea that a list of countries (or languages) must have 18 elements is there.

<sup>36</sup> In the 2 volumes Madras University edition (1990-1993), the *Tivākaram* list of *paṭiṇeṇ pāṭai* is item 2249 and it reads: “*aṅkam, vaṅkam, kaliṅkam, kavucalam // cintu, cōṅakam, tirāvīṭam, ciṅkaḷam // makatam, kavuṭam, marāṭṭam, koṅkaṇam // tuḷuvam, cāvakam, cīṅam, kāmpōti // arumaṇam, papparam eṇṇac conṇavai // paṭiṇeṇ pāṭai ām eṇap pakarvar.*”

<sup>37</sup> His list is: “*ciṅkaḷaṅ cōṅakaṭ cāvakaṅ cīṅan tuḷuk kuṭakam, koṅkaṇaṅ kaṅṇaṭaṅ kollan telīṅkam kaliṅkam vaṅkam, kaṅka makataṅ kaṭāraṅ kavuṭaṅ kaṭuṅkucalam, taṅkum pukaḷttamiḷcūḷpati ṇēḷnilan tāmiyaiyē*”. A more complete study of the topic should also examine the lists of foreign countries given by Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar (TC400n), by Teyvaccilaiyār (TC396t) and the linguistic samples they give for some of those countries: *antō* (Sinhalese) being explained using Tamil *aiyō*, etc. Further explorations are needed and also examination of the lists of 56 countries (*aimpattāru tēcaikaḷ*), such as the one found in MTL (vol. 4, p. 2053). It is to be remarked that MTL also contains a list of 18 countries (*paṭiṇeṇpūmi*, vol. 4, p. 2476).

with the one given by Iḷampūraṇar and Cēṇāvaraiyar, to be found here as (4) and (5). His list, which is not his own but comes in the form of an old verse in *venpā* meter, does not contain the two problematic items C1 (*poṅkar nāṭu*) and C2 (*oḷināṭu*), which were difficult to locate on a map, but it contains two “new” items: *Vēḷ (nāṭu)* and *Puṇanāṭu*. It reads:

(21) *tenpāṇṭi kuṭṭaṅ kuṭaṅkarkā vēḷpūḷi,*  
*panri yaruvā lataṅvaṭakku –nanrāya,*  
*cīta malāṭu puṇanāṭu centamiḷcēr,*  
*ētamiḷcīrp pannirunāṭṭeṅ*

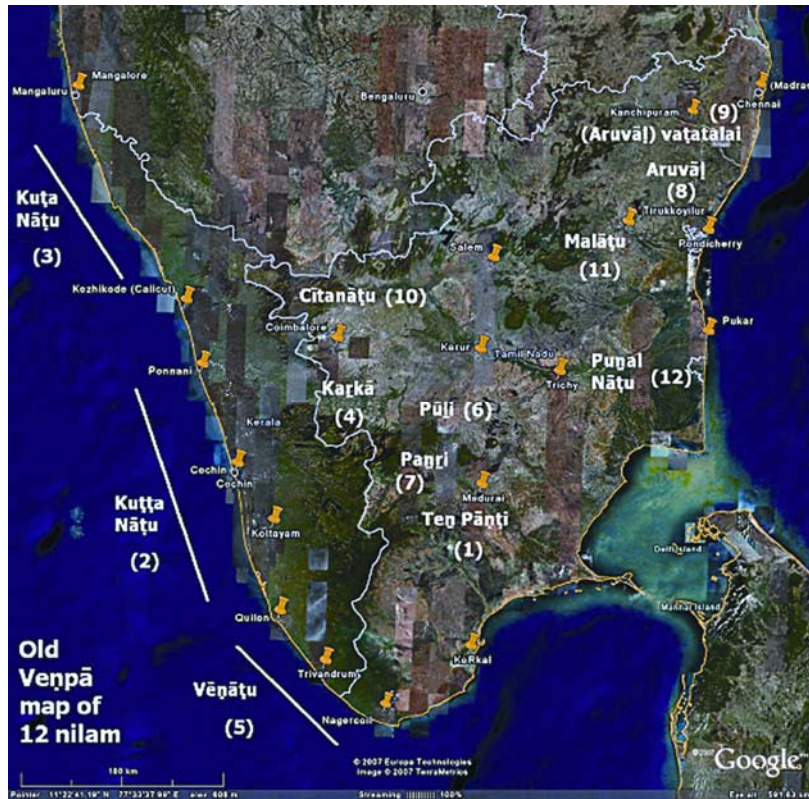
It is not clear how old this *venpā* is but, although quoted by Mayilainātar, it might contradict his own doctrine. The contradiction lies in the fact that Mayilainātar gives a geographic characterization of *Centamiḷnāṭu*, identical with those given by Iḷampūraṇar and Cēṇāvaraiyar (see (6) and map1) and explains that the 12 *nilam* surround it. However, *puṇanāṭu* is in fact a designation of the Cōḷa naṭu<sup>38</sup> and should in fact lie inside the area characterized as *Centamiḷnāṭu*. That would mean that the *venpā* had been composed by someone who intended the word *cēr*, at the end of line 3 to have the same interpretation as the *cērnta* “lying inside” discussed by K. N. Ezhuthachan in (3). And, as far as the item *Vēḷ (nāṭu)* is concerned, it nicely completes the description of Kerala, because, according to K. N. Ezhuthachan (1975, p. 265, fn. 1), who cites Uḷḷūr, *Kēraḷa Sāhitya Caritram*, vol. 1, p. 22, we have the following equations:

<i>Kuṭanāṭu</i>	“north of Calicut up to Kōrāppuḷa”
<i>Kuṭṭanāṭu</i>	“the land lying between Quilon and Ponnani” <sup>39</sup>
<i>Vēṇāṭu</i>	“that part of Travancore lying between Quilon and Nañchināṭu”

The old *venpā* configuration may be represented in the following map:

<sup>38</sup> As stated by Civañāṇa muṇivar’s commentary to the *Nannūl* (N271v).

<sup>39</sup> MTL explains *kuṭṭanāṭu* as “The region full of lakes, corresponding to the modern towns of Kottayam & Quilon in Travancore.”



Map 3

This is certainly not what Mayilainātar had in mind, his own interpretation being closer to Cēnāvaraiyar's, as seen on map 1. And, let it be added, that by shifting the *Teṅpāṇṭināṭu* label (1) which is on map 3 to the South and by drawing a Centamiḷ Nāṭu around the town of Madurai, heart of the Pāṇṭiya kingdom, we would obtain a map representing the opinion of Civañāṇa muṇivar (see N271v). There seem to be as many maps as there are scholars.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> According to MTL (p. 2816), *puṅṅaṇṭan* is the Cōḷa king and *puṅṅaṇṭu* is **1.** the Cōḷa country; **2.** one of the regions where *koṭun-tamiḷ* was spoken; the idea that the Cōḷa country might be peripheral —i.e. that **1.** and **2.** are the same— is obviously unpalatable to a Tamil lexicographer.

## The description pattern of *ticai-c-col* by Mayilainātar

Leaving the world of maps, we shall now examine the way the *panṇiru nilam* are linguistically characterized by commentators as the centuries pass. Ṭampūraṇar is the tersest. He characterizes one region, *Pūlinātu*, by saying that its inhabitants, the *pūlināṭṭār*, use the word *ṇamali* instead of *nāy* “dog”. And he adds that *nāy* is understood in all regions whereas *ṇamali* is understood only in *Pūlinātu*.<sup>41</sup> Cēṇāvaraiyar, the second *Tolkāppiyam* commentator, characterizes another region, the *Tenpāṇṭi nātu*: according to him, the inhabitants of that region, the *tenpāṇṭi nāṭṭār*, use the designation *perṇam* instead of *ā* “cow” or *erumai* “buffalo”, and use *tantuvai* to refer to their step-mother (*tam māmi*).<sup>42</sup> These remarks are interesting, but are much less systematic than the ones we find in Mayilainātar’s commentary on *Nannūl* sūtra N272m. The sentence being very long, we will break it into 12 segments, to be read one after another, vertically, in the 3rd column of chart 1, below. The 12 *nātu*-s are enumerated by him in the order in which they stand in the old *venpā* cited by him:

The general pattern in all these explanations, by Mayilainātar (chart 1), Ṭampūraṇar (fn. 41) and Cēṇāvaraiyar (fn. 42) is always the same: a commentator-lexicographer (D) states that in a specified *nātu* (C) the “regional word” (*ticai-c-col*) A is currently used to refer to that which would normally be referred to using the plain word (*iyar-col*) B. The general formula is:

(22) *C-nāṭṭār B-ai A enru vaḷaṅkuvar* [and this is stated by D]

Chart 1

Old Venpā Order	Old Venpā Name	Linguistic characterization by Mayilainātar under N272m (the sentence is to be read vertically in this column)
(1)	"tenpāṇṭi	<i>avarruḷ, tenpāṇṭināṭṭār āvinaiṇ perṇam enrum cōṇṇinaic cōṇṇi yenrum,</i>
(2)	kuṭṭam	<i>kuṭṭanāṭṭār tāyait taḷḷai yenrum,</i>
(3)	kuṭam	<i>kuṭanāṭṭār tantaiyai accaṇ enrum,</i>

<sup>41</sup> Ṭampūraṇar says: *nāyai ṇamali enpa pūli nāṭṭār, enṇakkāl ac col ellā nāṭṭārum paṭṭāṅkuṇarār; nāy enpatanaiyāyiṇ evvetticai nāṭṭārum uṇarpa* (TC392i).

<sup>42</sup> Cēṇāvaraiyar says: *tenpāṇṭi nāṭṭār ā erumai enpanavarraip perṇam enrum, tam māmi enpatanait tantuvai enrum vaḷaṅkupa. pīravum aṇṇa* (TC400c).

Old Venpā Order	Old Venpā Name	Linguistic characterization by Mayilainātar under N272m (the sentence is to be read vertically in this column)
(4)	kaṛkā	kaṛkānāṭṭār vañcaraik kaiyar enrum,
(5)	vēḷ	vēṇāṭṭār tōṭṭattaik kiḷār enrum,
(6)	pūḷi,	pūḷināṭṭārciṟukuḷattaip pāḷi yenrum,
(7)	paṇṇi	paṇṇināṭṭār ceṟuvaic cey yenrum,
(8)	aruvāḷ	aruvāṇāṭṭār ciṟukuḷattaik kēṇi yenrum,
(9)	[aruvāḷ] ataṇ vaṭakku	aruvāḷvatatalaiyār puḷiyai ekinam enrum,
(10)	[nanṛāya] cīta(m)	cītanāṭṭār tōḷanai eluvaṇ enrum,
(11)	malāṭu	malāṭṭār tōḷiyai ikuḷai yenrum,
(12)	puṇaṇāṭu	puṇaṇāṭṭār tāyai āy enrum vaḷaṅkuvar.

We can now reorganize the data provided by our three commentators-lexicographers, placing all the *ticai-c-col* explained by them in alphabetical order, in the following way:

**Chart 2 (Iḷampūraṇar, Mayilainātar and Cēṇāvaraiyar)**

A (ticai-c-col)	B (iyarcol)	C (nāṭu)	D (commentator)
<i>accan</i>	tantai	Kuṭṭanāṭu	Ma.
<i>āy</i>	tāy	Puṇaṇāṭu	Ma.
<i>ikuḷai</i>	tōḷi	Malāṭu	Ma.
<i>eki-am</i>	puḷi	Aruvāḷvatatalai	Ma.
<i>eluva-</i>	tōḷaṇ	Cītanāṭu	Ma.
<i>kiḷār</i>	tōṭṭam	Vēṇāṭu	Ma.
<i>kēṇi</i>	ciṟukuḷam	Aruvāṇāṭu	Ma.
<i>kaiyar</i>	vañcar	Kaṛkānāṭu	Ma.
<i>cey</i>	ceṟu	Paṇṇināṭu	Ma.
<i>co-ri</i>	cōṟu	Tenpāṇṭināṭu	Ma.
<i>ṭamali</i>	nāy	Pūḷināṭu	Iḷam.
<i>tantuvai</i>	(tam) māmi	Tenpāṇṭināṭu	Cē.
<i>taḷḷai</i>	tāy	Kuṭṭanāṭu	Ma.
<i>pāḷi</i>	ciṟukuḷam	Pūḷināṭu	Ma.
<i>peṟṟam</i>	1. ā, 2. erumai	Tenpāṇṭināṭu	Cē.
<i>peṟṟam</i>	ā	Tenpāṇṭināṭu	Ma.
<b>A (ticai-c-col)</b>	<b>B (iyarcol)</b>	<b>C (nāṭu)</b>	<b>D</b>

### Naccinārkkiniyar’s dissenting point of view

Describing such a feature as regional words (*tikai-c-col*) of a “living classical” language is not an easy task. One has to assume that some speakers in a distant place will stick for centuries, perhaps forever, to a distinct way of speaking, and that, when one meets with an unfamiliar word in a classical text, it will always be possible to find an informed scholar able to pinpoint the regional origin of the word. But the scholar one questions might also choose another possibility and say that the unfamiliar word is a *tiri-col*<sup>43</sup> “recherché word”. This is what happens, for instance, with *ekinam*, which Cēnāvairaiyar declares (in TC399c) to be a *tiri-col*, because in addition to its meaning *puḷimā*, it also means *aṅṅam*, *kavari-mā* and *nāy*. It is not clear to me whether the meaning *puḷimā* is identical with the meaning *puḷi* provided by Mayilainātar (in chart 2). But it seems that *tikai-c-col* can easily be reclassified as *tiri-col*, as soon as they are perceived as polysemic. Another possibility is that two different scholars will agree that a word is a *tikai-c-col*, but will contradict each other regarding the regional origin of the word; this is, in fact, what we see happening when we compare the opinions of the three scholars listed in chart 2 with the opinion of a fourth scholar, namely Naccinārkkiniyar, the celebrated third commentator of *Tolkāppiyam*. Chart 3, which follows, is based on his commentary of TC400n.<sup>44</sup>

Chart 3 (Naccinārkkiniyar’s opinions)

Compatibility with chart 2	A ( <i>tikai-c-col</i> )	B ( <i>iyarcol</i> )	C ( <i>nāṭu</i> )	D
agrees	<i>accan</i>	<i>tantai</i>	<i>Kuṭanāṭu</i>	Nac.
contradicts	<i>ikuḷai</i>	<i>tōḷi</i>	<b><i>Cītanāṭu</i></b>	Nac.
MORE precise	<i>eluvan</i>	<b><i>ēṭā</i></b>	<i>Cītanāṭu</i>	Nac.
NEW	<b><i>kuṭṭai</i></b>	<i>kuṟuṇi</i>	<i>Aruvāvaṭatalai</i>	Nac.
agrees	<i>kēṇi</i>	<i>ciṟukuḷam</i>	<i>Aruvāṇāṭu</i>	Nac.
agrees	<i>kaiyar</i>	<i>vañcar</i>	<i>Kaṟkānāṭu</i>	Nac.
INVERTED	<i>cey</i>	<i>ceṟu</i>		

<sup>43</sup> See fn. 6 for a characterization of *tiri-col*.

<sup>44</sup> He says: *tenpāṇṇi nāṭṭār ‘ā, erumai’ enpaṇavaṟṟaip ‘peṟṟam’ enrum, kuṭṭa nāṭṭār tāyait ‘taḷḷai’ enrum nāyai ‘ṭeḷḷai’ enrum, kuṭanāṭṭār tantaiyai ‘accan’ enrum, kaṟkā nāṭṭār vañcaraiḱkaiyar’ enrum, cīta nāṭṭār ‘ēṭā’ enpatanai ‘eluvan’ enrum tōḷiyai ‘ikuḷai’ enrum ‘tammāmi’ enpatanait ‘tantuvai’ enrum, pūḷi nāṭṭār nāyai ‘nāmali’ enrum ciṟu kuḷattaip ‘pāḷi’ enrum, aruvānāṭṭār ceyyaic ‘ceṟu’ enrum ciṟukuḷattaik ‘kēṇi’ enrum, aruvāvaṭatalaiyār kuṟuṇiyaik ‘kuṭṭai’ enrum vaḷaṅkupa (TC400n).*

Compatibility with chart 2	A ( <i>ticai-c-col</i> )	B ( <i>iyarcol</i> )	C ( <i>nāṭu</i> )	D
NEW (inversion result)	<i>ceru</i>	<i>cey</i>	<b>Aruvāṇāṭu</b>	Nac.
agrees	<i>ṅamali</i>	<i>nāy</i>	Pūlināṭu	Nac.
NEW information	<b>ṅellai</b>	<i>nāy</i>	Kuṭṭanāṭu	Nac.
contradicts	<i>tantuvai</i>	(tam) māmi	<b>Cītanāṭu</b>	Nac.
agrees	<i>taḷḷai</i>	<i>tāy</i>	Kuṭṭanāṭu	Nac.
agrees	<i>pāli</i>	<i>ciṟukuḷam</i>	Pūlināṭu	Nac.
agrees with Cē.	<i>perṛam</i>	1. ā 2. erumai	Teṅpāṇṭināṭu	Nac.
Compatibility	A ( <i>ticai-c-col</i> )	B ( <i>iyarcol</i> )	C ( <i>nāṭu</i> )	D

As we can see in the first column of this chart, the information provided by Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar coincides with the data provided by the three other commentators only half the time.<sup>45</sup> He disagrees with Mayilainātar about the origin of *ikuḷai*<sup>46</sup> and with Cēṅāvaraiyar about the origin of *tantuvai*. He provides two new items: *kuṭṭai* and *ṭellai*. He also provides us, in the case of *ceru* and *cey*, with clear evidence that deciding which are the *ticai-c-col* and which are the *iyar-col* must sometimes have been a very difficult task: when Mayilainātar says that *cey* is a regional word (from Paṅṛināṭu, i.e. the region around the Palani hills) which means the same as the plain word *ceru*, Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar says that, on the contrary, *ceru* is a regional word (from Aruvāṇāṭu, i.e. South-Arcot) which means the same as the plain word *cey*! This looks like a dialogue between a Southerner — Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar was from Madurai— and a Northerner!<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> We consider *perṛam* as a case of agreement because there the slight discrepancy was between Cēṅāvaraiyar and Mayilainātar.

<sup>46</sup> This must be due to the fact that *Malāṭu*, which is on Mayilainātar's list and which according to MTL is the area around Tirukkōyilūr, cannot be identified by Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar with the *Malaiyamānāṭu*, which is on his own list, and which according to MTL is the combination of *nāṭu* with *malaiyamān* "Cēra king".

<sup>47</sup> According to Zvelebil[1995: 433], in the case of Mayilainātar, "internal evidence points to Koṅkunāṭu as his home, his name for today's Mayilāppur (Madras)".



### The use of regional address forms as an enlivening feature: *eluvan* and *ēṭā*

Very interesting too is the case of *eluvan*, which both commentators consider as representative of *Cītanāṭu* (i.e. Coimbatore and Nilgiris), but which Mayilainātar explains using the plain word *tōḷan*, while Naccinārkkiniyar explains it using the expression (or particle) *ēṭā*. This explanation sheds light on a feature of Sangam poetry which is often not translated into English (or other languages) very well, because it is not always realized that it is the equivalent of a phenomenon very present in modern spoken Tamil, namely the use of many address forms.<sup>48</sup> Apparently the particle *ēṭā* which is mentioned by Naccinārkkiniyar is the stand-alone form of the clitic *-ṭā* which is often used in present day Tamil when “addressing small male children and close male friends that are younger than the speaker”.<sup>49</sup> That there was such a group of particles, and that they were considered as impolite forms (if not used in the right circumstances) is further confirmed by the presence in the third book of *Tolkāppiyam* of a very carefully worded sūtra that says

(23) *muṛaiṭṭeyar maruṅkiṛ keḷutakaip potuccol*  
*nilaikkuri marapiṇ iruvīṟṟum urittē* (TP216i alias TP220n)

and according to Iḷampūraṇar (TP216i) the item referred to as *keḷutakaip potuccol* is “*payīrciyār kūṟum ‘ellā’ enpatu*”, i.e. “the expression *ellā*, which is used as [a mark of] familiarity/intimacy”, instead of more specific words which could be *tampi*, *tammun* or *kiḷavan*, *tōḷan*, the context being, for instance, occasions when a father talks to his son (*tantai makaṇai kūṟum polutu*), etc. However, according to Naccinārkkiniyar (TP220n), this also applies not only to *ellā*, but also to *elā*, *ella*, *eluva*, and footnotes in the Ganesh Iyer edition (p. 722) add that these are equivalent to *ēṭa* or *ēṭi*. This is indeed in accordance with the practice of the commentaries of *Kalittokai*<sup>50</sup> and *Paripāṭal*,<sup>51</sup> where there are several occurrences of *ellā* (and alternate

<sup>48</sup> In the case of contemporary Tamil, these address forms are equally difficult to translate into English, French, and other Western languages.

<sup>49</sup> This is quoted from Schiffman[1979: 25]. Schiffman gives examples such as *pōṭā* “run along, kid!” and insists that “these are *non-polite* forms”.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance the passages referred to on p. 1013 and p. 1017 of the *Kalittokai* edition by Aṇantarāmaiyar.

<sup>51</sup> See for instance *Paripāṭal* 8-56: ... *niṇṇi leḷāa* ... The commentator glosses: *ēṭā ! [...]* *nillu nillu* ( p. 84 in UVS edition). F. Gros[1968] translates: “[le temps que je parle], arrête, hé,

forms) which the commentary sometimes replaces by *ēṭā* and sometimes by *ēṭī*. Coming back now to Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar's original remark on regional words which was

(24) *cīta nāṭṭār `ēṭā' enpatanai `eluvan' enrum tōḷiyai `ikuḷai' enrum  
`tammāmi' enpatanait `tantuvai' enrum, [...] vaḷaṅkupa* (TC400n)

whereas Mayilainātar had said

(25) *cītanāṭṭār tōḷanai eluvan enrum [...] vaḷaṅkuvar* (N272m),

we see that Mayilainātar, in his explanation of *eluvan*, uses one of the words (*tōḷan*) which Ḥampūraṇar had used to explain the *keḷutakaip potuccol* which was for him the particle *ellā*, whereas Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar directly uses the particle (or interjection) *ēṭā*.<sup>52</sup> It remains to be observed that the form *eluvan* is not found in Sangam literature. What is found is the form *eluva*, which is seen in *Kuṟuntokai* 129-1, as well as in *Narriṇai* 50-8 and 395-1, and which is generally described as a vocative form. If we accept Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar's characterization, given in (24), we will say that *eluva* is not a real vocative, but an address form<sup>53</sup> indicative of the relative status of the speaker and hearer which, additionally, gives a regional flavor. An additional step would be to examine whether what was stated in (24), about *eluvan* (or *eluva*), could not have been stated about *ikuḷai*.<sup>54</sup>

## Presence/absence of *tikai-c-col* in traditional lexicons and in literature

Having dealt at length with what grammarians say about those items they call *tikai-c-col*, we now briefly examine the problem of their real presence

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là!" (p. 46) and observes that "Hé ! là ! en tamoul *elā* interjection unique, généralement à l'adresse d'un inférieur" (p. 221).

<sup>52</sup> I consider *ellā* and *ēṭā* as particles because they are used with *enpatu*: see the difference between the accusatives *ēṭā enpatanai* and *tōḷanai* in (24) and (25). If we adopt Western terminology, they can also be called interjections (see fn. 51).

<sup>53</sup> The *Tivākaram* seems to acknowledge the existence of address forms. See 328 (*ēṭā enpatu tōḷan munṇilaipeyar*) and 330 (*ellāvum ēṭiyum tōḷi munṇilaipeyar*). However, it is even more difficult in the case of such works to draw any chronological conclusion from the presence of any single element.

<sup>54</sup> In other words, further possible questions are: is *tōḷi* more acceptable (less taboo) than *ēṭī* as gloss for *ikuḷai*? Would it be linguistically faithful to replace the occurrences of *tōḷi* in Sangam Tamil, by the modern clitic particle *-ṭī*, when translating from classical into contemporary Tamil?

(or absence) in traditional lexicons (or nikaṇṭu)<sup>55</sup> and in the literature. The most famous among the lexicons are the *tivākaram*, the *piṅkalam* and the *cūṭāmaṇi nikaṇṭu* and those works apparently began to be elaborated from the 8th century onwards (see Gregory James[2000: p. 62]). The chart 4 (which follows) details the presence/absence in these 3 lexicons<sup>56</sup> of each of the items which have been mentioned in charts 2 and 3. We have:

**Chart 4 (*tikai-c-col* collected in traditional lexicons)**

<i>tikai-c-col</i>	headword in <i>Tivākaram</i>	<i>Piṅkalam</i>	<i>Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu</i>
<i>accan</i>	—	—	—
<i>āy</i>	314 : <i>tāyiṅ peyar</i>	—	2 : 24
<i>ikuḷai</i>	329 : <i>pāṅki peyar</i>	3157 : <i>cuṅṅamun</i> <i>tōliyu mikuḷai yenpa</i>	2 : 42, 53; 11 : 4
<i>ekiṅam</i>	442 : <i>kavarimā</i> ; 463 : <i>nāy</i> ; 568 : <i>aṅṅam</i> ; 664 : <i>puḷi</i> ; 698 : <i>āṅmaram</i> ; 2097: { <i>aṅṅam</i> , <i>kavarimā</i> , <i>nāy</i> }	3221 (6)	3 : 50; 11 : 6
<i>eluvan</i>	324 : <i>tōlan</i>	—	2 : 42
<i>kilār</i>	—	—	7 : 58
<i>kuṭṭai</i>	—	—	—
<i>kēṇi</i>	895 : <i>vāvi</i> ; 899 : <i>kiṅaru</i>	—	5 : 23, 44
<i>kaiyar</i>	238 : <i>kīlmakkal</i>	—	2 : 54
<i>cey</i>	993 : <i>vayal</i>	—	5 : 31; 11 : 119, 193
<i>ceṅu</i>	993 : <i>vayal</i>	—	5 : 31
<i>coṅri</i>	1095 : <i>cōṅu</i>	—	6 : 22
<i>ṅamali</i>	463 : <i>nāy</i>	—	3 : 25, 50; 11 : 136
<i>ṅeḷḷai</i>	—	—	—
<i>tantuvai</i>	—	—	—
<i>taḷḷai</i>	—	—	—
<i>pāḷi</i>	930 : <i>ūr</i> ; 951 : <i>kōyil</i> ; 979 : <i>tuyiliṭam</i> ; 1363 : <i>perumai</i> ;	3823 (7)	5 : 34, 40, 56, 58; 8 : 10, 12, 28;

<sup>55</sup> Mayilainātar calls these lexicons *uriccorpaṅuval*. See his explanations concerning N459m (*piṅkala mutalā // nallō ruriccoli ṅayantaṅar koḷalē*). He says: *avai piṅkalamutalāna pulavarkaḷārcollappaṭṭa uriccorpaṅuvalkaḷuḷ virumpi aṅintu koḷka*.

<sup>56</sup> For *Tivākaram*, references are given with respect to Madras University 2 volumes edition (1990-1993). For *Piṅkalam*, the Kaḷakam 1968 edition has been used. For *Cūṭāmaṇi nikaṇṭu*, the edition used is the Cānti Cātanā 2004 joint edition of the 3 lexicons (which, however, is unreliable as far as the *Tivākaram* is concerned, because it has incorporated many interpolated verses).

<i>ticai-c-col</i>	headword in <i>Tivākaram</i>	<i>Piṅkalam</i>	<i>Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu</i>
	1376 : <i>akalam</i> ; 1402 : <i>vali</i> ; 1908 : { <i>uṟaiyuḷ, ūr, cayanam, vali</i> }		10 : 3; 11 : 249
<i>perram</i>	427 : <i>pacuviṅ potuppeyar</i> ; 429 : <i>pacuviṅ āṅpāl</i> ; 477 : <i>ēṟu</i> ; 478 : <i>pōttu</i> ; 479 : <i>pakaṭu</i> ; 492 : <i>nāku</i>	—	3 : 12, 14, 32 (2), 35, 36, 39; 11 : 242
<i>ticai-c-col</i>	<i>Tivākaram</i>	<i>Piṅkalam</i>	<i>Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu</i>

The first remark to be made on this chart is that some items are completely left out. Three of these items (*accan*, *ñellai*, and *tallai*) are examples which were given for Kuṭanāṭu and Kuṭṭanāṭu. If we add to that the fact that *kiḷār*, which was given as an example for Vēṇāṭu, is mentioned only in the *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*, but with the meaning (“water-lift for irrigation”) which is not the same as the meaning given by Mayilainātar for the regional word *kiḷār*, namely *tōṭṭam* “garden”, we may conclude that none of the regional words that should represent the three parts of Kerala has been kept by Tamil *nikaṇṭu*-s. And the same observation can be made if one peruses the *Index des Mots de la Littérature Tamoule Ancienne*. Neither *accan*, *ñellai*, or *tallai* occurs in the whole of the Tamil classical corpus, and the only occurrence of *kiḷār* is found in the *Cilappatikāram* (10-110), with a meaning which is in accordance with *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*. Apart from these 4 Kerala words, 2 other words (*kuṭṭai* and *tantuvai*) are also not attested, either in the *Nikaṇṭu*-s or in the *Index*. The second remark to be made is that the remaining items seem to fall into two categories: items with only one meaning (*āy*, *ikuḷai*, *eluvan*, *conṟi*, *ṅamali*) vs. items with many meanings (*ekinam*, *pāli*), there being possibly, however, an intermediate category: items with 2 or 3 closely related meanings (*kēṇi*, *perram*), although distinguishing between the categories is often bound to appear arbitrary.

### The dichotomy between *koṭuntamiḷ* and *centamiḷ* and Tamil diglossia

All in all, the category of *ticai-c-col* is more important from a symbolic point of view than from a practical one. For instance, the Tamil *nikaṇṭu*-s that we have just briefly examined do not say which items are *ticai-c-col*, and we have seen that not every *ticai-c-col* mentioned by grammarians finds a place

in them. The memory of their regional origin seems destined to fade and one of the destinies of a *ticai-c-col* is to become a *tiri-col*, i.e. a word properly understood only by the learned, for various reasons (see fn. 6). However, the successive rewordings of the doctrine first formulated by the *Tolkāppiyam*, concerning the *ticai-c-col* as being one of the four categories of words to be used in poetry, seem to show a growing awareness of Tamil diglossia. In contradistinction with the idealistic statement made by Teyvaccilaiyār (TC396t) that the 12 lands (*paṇṇiru nilam*) are “inside Centamiḷnāṭu” (*centamiḷnāṭṭakatta*), we see the rise of another designation for them: they are called the 12 *koṭuntamiḷnilam* by Mayilainātar (N272n).<sup>57</sup> That expression is also used by Cēṇāvaraiyar (TC398c) and Naccinārkkīṇiyar (TC398n). The expression *koṭuntamiḷ* is also seen, associated with *centamiḷ* and probably to make a geographical distinction, but without the word *nilam*, in the *nūrkaṭṭurai* “epitome of the work” (V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, p. 403) which accompanies the *Cilappatikāram*.<sup>58</sup> But the expressions *centamiḷ* and *koṭuntamiḷ* are also used—and this is attested at least from the beginning of the 18th century in the Latin writings of C. J. Beschi—to refer to a distinction, which is no longer geographical, between two varieties of Tamil. C. J. Beschi wrote in 1728:

(26) *Duplex in hac regione Tamulicae Linguae idioma est: sublimem dixerim unam, communem alteram. Aliqui non satis apposte Poeticam vocant, quae a communi recedit [...] ea satius quam poetica lingua, elegantior vel sublimis vocabitur. Tamulenses vero hanc centamiḷ, et vulgarem koṭuntamiḷ nominant, ac si illud elegans Tamulicum idioma dicerent, hoc asperum.* “In this region there are two dialects of the Tamul Language: I would call one the *High*, the other the *Common*. Some, not very correctly, call that which differs from *the Common*, *the Poetical* dialect. [...] that dialect would be better named the *more elegant*, or *high*, than the *poetic*. Tamulians however call this *high dialect centamiḷ*, and the *Common koṭuntamiḷ*: as if they would call

<sup>57</sup> He says that the Tamil speaking area is divided into 13, if we add together the central *centamiḷnilam* and the 12 peripheral areas.

<sup>58</sup> The first 3 lines read: *kumari veṅkaṭaṅ kuṇakuṭa kaṭalā // maṅṅiṇi maruṅkiṇṇi raṅṅamiḷ varaippir // centamiḷ koṭuntamiḷ leṇṇiruru pakutiṇṇi // [...]*. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar translates: “the cool Tamil country bounded by the Kumari, Veṅkaṭam and the eastern and western seas, in its two quarters of pure and impure Tamil [...]”



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