HEGEMONY OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF TAMIL RITUAL SYSTEM CALLEDTHAMIḺ ARCCAṈAI

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Abstract

Priesthood and the use of religious texts in South Indian temples have undergone immense politicisation on various stages, and the evolution of related hegemonic traits into particular ritual systems has been fully dependent upon the dialogue produced by this politicisation process. As a result of this textual phenomenon, the Sanskrit and Tamil priesthoods emerged as two heterogeneous communities that under went representation and 're-presentation with enormous challenges by engaging in a discourse of Subject versus subject. Representations of Tamil priests originated mainly from Tamil nationalists, through re-presentations of Tamil bhakti texts, whereas their Sanskrit counterparts, which had been patronised heavily in the past by both the British colonisers and India's kings,used hegemonic ritual texts – written in Tamil grantha script, but in the Sanskrit language – as the primary source of ritual process in South Indian temples. The main objective of this work is to study the discourse of Tamil nationalism and its development, focusing on the hegemony of religious texts of the past and how this shaped the current ritual system in the temples of Tamil Nadu. In particular, an attempt is made to show how indigenous methods of worship from the ancient Tamil era,featuring predominantly bodily performance, folk songs and the art of divine/spiritual possession,conflicted with the later development of a Hindu ritual system instigated by Vedic concepts of a North Indian source.

Introduction

Rituals, priesthood and liturgical texts are integral elements of religion, and have played a vital role in shaping the Hindu way of life since the Vedic period.'Priesthood was the important carrier of intellectualism, particularly wherever scriptures existed, and it would make it necessary for the priesthood to become a literary guild engaged in interpreting the scriptures and teaching their content, meaning and proper application' (Weber 1992, p. 118).Religious texts with diverse forms, such as poems composed in praise of God, liturgical texts, *bhakti* songs expressing poet saints' devotion to God and philosophical writings on a set of unique themes from monism, dualism, *meypporuḷ,*the 'doctrine of denotation', *Śaiva Siddāntā,*the definitive knowledge of Lord Śivaand other related theological doctrines, not only shaped a strong community affiliation with divinities, but also created diverse belief systems among religious practitioners, especially in the South Indian religious landscape. This system of religious edifices should be differentiated from earlier conceptions of a Sangam landscape, predominantly modelled on poems of war, love

and nature, didactic poems and to a lesser extent religious poems on Tamil folk deities.

As priesthood and methods of using religious texts in South Indian temples have undergone immense politicisation on various stages, the evolution of any related hegemonic trait into a particular ritual system has been fully dependent on the dialogue produced by this politicisation process throughout history. A nationalist consciousness surfaced with the main objective of reconstituting the past based on both religious and non-religious Sangam literary texts – a process similar to that described by Uma Chakravartias follows: 'perceptions of the past are constantly being constituted and reconstituted anew' (Chakravarti 1990, p. 26). As a result of this exclusive textual phenomenon, the two predominant linguistic groups, Sanskrit and Tamil,were polarised, producing heterogeneous priesthood communities that underwent representation, 're-presentation' and politicisation and overcame challenges by engaging themselves in a discourse of what Gayathri Spivak terms a 'S/subject dichotomy' (Spivak, 1988, p. 280).Representations of Tamil priests arose from Tamil nationalists' re-presentation of the relevance of Tamil *bhakti* texts, whereas their Sanskrit counterparts were represented by the hegemonic texts of Āgama scriptures, mainly transcribed in Tamil *grantha* script, but composed in the Sanskrit language, which have the greatest scriptural authority and form the basis of ritual systems in almost all major South Indian temples (see Spivak 1988, p. 70on the senses of 'representation' and 're-presentation' in the context of Deleuze's arguments).

The notion of Tamil nationalism emerged largely through a combinationof the hegemony of Tamil religious texts of the past with the transformative effect of the formation of a new ritual system through Tamil religious poems.

It can thus be said that Tamil nationalist sentimentarose from adesire to defend against the growing tendency to choose one text over another. What had emerged as Dravidianism turned into Tamil nationalism with a focus on the hegemony of the Tamil language, Tamil literature and subsequent religious developments based particularly on texts from the beginning of the Christian era. The aim of this work is to show how Tamil literary and religious developments, more than the charisma of the poet saints or any other related group,were instrumental in forming a discourse of Tamilism, Tamil nationalism, Tamilhood and Tamil *bhakti* – popularly known as Tamilar *madham* ('the Tamil religion') – relative to their Sanskrit counterparts.

In Michel Foucault's (1983) terminology, the power relations between the two contesting sects created a discourse designed to exert power over the underprivileged class in the context of the religious mode of representation. 'Hegemony denotes a transformation from within, both the subject and of its environment. Moreover, it implies a change in the critical perspective of the theorist, who is solicited to look at political emancipation from the point of view of the most subordinated' (Urbinati 1998, p. 370).The Tamil mode of religious representation is assumed to be in a subordinate position,relatively powerless, with the celebrated Tamil nationalist movement solely responsible for deriving a discourse that generated a sense of Tamil hegemony. It is necessary to determine whether this discourse should be acknowledged as a prevailing feature of the Tamils, to be attributed to – in a Gramscian sense – the hegemonic groups in society.

The efforts of the British to understand and interpret the Vedas and the *Upanishads were* largely circumstantial, based on the belief that such texts represented authentic local

knowledge and thus needed to be incorporated into the colonial process of constructing a state. 'A version of history was gradually established in which the *Brahmans* were shown to have the same intentions as (thus providing the legitimation for) the codifying British' (Spivak 1988, p.255). But neither the *bhakti* tradition nor the localised cult practices of the Tamils became part of this process of colonial production. Subsequently, the spiritual and devotional engagement of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tamil traditions, developing mostly from 7 to 9 AD, along with traditions belonging to the early Christian era in the form of cult practices,had very little impact on the process of knowledge production by the British, especially compared with the impact of Sanskrit Āgamic texts. Along with the British, the Pallava and Cōḷākings sought to patronise the *paṭṭars,* Brahman priests, offering them power and scriptural authority. This is apparent from many Tamil stone inscriptions. One such inscription records the Pallava king Peruñciṅka's establishment of an estate called MūvāyiraVaḷākam, '3,000Regions',around the Naṭarājā temple of Chidambaram, and his designation of the temple as under the sole ownership of its Brahman priests *(paṭṭars)[1]*. This inscription may be of particular interest to those seeking to understand how the legendary tradition of MūvāyiraDīkṣitarkaḷ, '3,000Diksidars',came to belong to the Chidambaram Naṭarājā temple.

In parallel with the Sanskrit tradition, those who mastered Tamil religious texts and approached God mainly through praise poems composed in Tamil were variously called *otuvārs* (those who chant Tamil hymns), *paṇḍārams* (Tamil priests)and *pūcāris* (priests of the Tamil clan gods). They also positioned themselves as the carriers of religious intellectualism in South India, but with less emphasis than their Sanskrit counter partson their recognition and authority. *Paṇḍārams,*

according to Thurston (1975),were non-Brahman priests recruited largely from the Veḷḷāḷa and Paḷḷicastes; they were Śaivites, vegetarian and celibate. Despite their self-perceived religious intellectual standing, as noted by Weber, they were constantly engaged in contest with their Sanskrit super ordinates. In some cases, they were obliged to follow certain restrictions on their devotional practices to ensure that the scope of these practices did not exceed that of Sanskrit rituals and customs. For example, some temples, especially Śiva temples, as in Chidambaram, had an ongoing custom that permitted only Sanskrit priests to begin rituals, while Tamil priests had only the right to end them (cf. Ishmatsu 1994, p. 21).

Tradition of Chanting Śaiva Hymns in Śiva Temples of South India and Evidence from Stone Inscriptions

The chanting of Śaiva Tirumuṟai hymns in temples as part of rituals is attested to in many inscriptions from the Pallava period onwards,confirming that a dialogue between the two contesting methods of religious practice had occurred historically. Although this tradition was in place from the composition of the Śaiva hymns by the 63Nāyanmārsuntil recent times, references in inscriptions to the establishment of permanent grants by both the Pallava and the Cōḷā kings indicate that the Tamils' method of ritualisation with a community of hymnists involved the use of Tamil texts as well as poet saints' expression of their devotion to God. An inscription made on behalf of Raja Rajendra Cōḷā, for instance, records the king's order to assign a daily allowance of paddy to each of 48 persons *(piṭārarkaḷ)* involved in reciting the *Tiruppadiyam (Śaiva hymns of the 63 Nāyanmārs)* in the Śiva temple of Thanjavur, along with the two persons providing a drum accompaniment.

...rājarāja tēvarkku yāṇṭu irupattoṉpatāvatu varai uṭaiyār rājarājīsvarasrī uṭaiyārkkut tiruppatiyam viṇṇappañceyya uṭaiyār rārājatēvar kuṭutta iṭārarkaḷ nāṟpatteṉmarum ivarkaḷilē nilaiyāy uṭukkai vācippāṉ oruvaṉum ivarkaḷilē koṭṭimattaḷam vācippāṉ oruvaṉum āka aimpatiṉmarukkuppērāl nicatam nellu mukkuṟuṇi... (SII2 No. 65).

King Rajaraja Devar's order in his 29th regnal year is hereby to perform the *Tiruppatiyam* to Rajarajiisvarasri Udaiyar. All of the 48 men *[piṭārarkaḷ]* who perform the *Tiruppatiyam*, as well as the one who plays the hand drum and the one who plays the stick drum, totalling 50 people, must be offered three quarters of the paddy.

It is unclear whether the performance of *Tiruppatiyam viṇṇappañceytal*, 'chanting of the hymns', by a group of people called *piṭārarkaḷ* was the main event of the temple worship or supplementary to the principal form of ritual carried out in Sanskrit. Yet the subsequent lines in this inscription record the donor's command that this custom be perpetuated down the generations, with donations issued to all who engaged in the process; in the case of a lack of hymnists, according to the inscription, the heir of the tradition should be forced *(āḷiṭṭutTiruppatiyamviṇṇappañceyvittu)* to continue. If the lineage were to end, it would be the utmost responsibility of those who managed *(niyāyattāre)* the ritual process to find an appropriate hymnist *(yogyarāyiruppār)* to maintain the tradition and dispense the donations accordingly.

Ivarkaḷil cettārkkum aṉātēcam pōṉārkkuntalaimāṟu avvavarkku aṭutta muṟai kaṭavār annelluppeṟṟut tiruppatiyam viṇṇappañceyyavum avvavarkku aṭutta muṟai kaṭavār tāntām yogyarī allātu viṭil yogyarāyiruppārai āḷiṭṭut tiruppatiyam

viṇṇappañceyvittu annelluppeṟavum avvavarkku aṭutta muṟai kaṭavāriṉṟiyoḷiyil anta niyāyattāre yogyarāyiruppāraittiruppatiyam 'Viṇṇappañceyya iṭṭu iṭṭa avaṉe avvavar perumpaṭi nellup peṟavum āka ippaṭi uṭaiyār srīrājarājatēvar tiruvāymoḷintaruḷiṉapaṭi kallil veṭṭiyatu. (ibid.)

Among these, aside from those who are dead and those who have left the town, subsequent generations of people who chant Tamil Śaivā hymns should be offered the aforementioned amount of paddy. In the case of a lack of subsequent generations capable of chanting Tamil Śaivā hymns], the people incharge should appoint those who are able to chant hymns and offer them the same amount of paddy. This is the writing made on stone by the order of Udaiyar Sri Raja RajaTevar.

The determined efforts of India's medie valkings to promote the use of Tamil religious texts can be taken as evidence of the perceived authenticity of Tamil religious poems as part of the Tamils' religious life. However, as mentioned elsewhere, the kings consistently patronised both traditions, Sanskrit and Tamil, and hence became responsible for the continued coexistence of the two competing ritual practices from the medieval period onwards. This is further substantiated by a reference in an inscription made at the order of the same king, Rajarajatevar, on the north wall of the Tiruppundurutti temple Tanjore Taluk. This inscription, part of a very long Meykkīrtti, 'praise of God', mentions the prosperity of the two main religious groups, Tamil and Sanskrit, along with those from diverse other regions, such as the Kuccarar, Āriyar, Kōcalar, Koṅkaṇar, Vaccirar, Kāciyar, Cōṉakar and Vantiyar.

Nāl vētat tarumaṟaiyo raivveḷvi yāṟaṅkamuṭaṉ ciṟappa varuntamiḻu māriyamu maṟu camaiyat taṟa neṟiyun tiruntu maṉuṉeṟiyun

tiṟampāṭu taḻaittōṅkak kuccararumāriyarum
kōcalaruṅ koṅkaṇarum vacciraruṅ kāciyaru
māttararu....rumaṉaruñ cōṉaka vantiyaru
mutalāya virunila māmuṭi vēnta riṟaiñci niṉṟu
tiṟaikāṭṭavum. (SII5. No. 459: 4).

Let the four Vēdas prosper, with all five types of fire ritual (Vēḷvi) in order; [let] the precious Tamil along with Āryam and other religious doctrines such as Manu's prosper without fail. The kings of the Kuccarars, Āriyars, Kōcalars, Koṅkaṇars, Vaccirars, Kāciyars, Cōṉakars and Vantiyars, who belong to two regions, should also achieve great prosperity and richness.

It can be inferred from this inscription that the religious rituals of diverse doctrines were treated equally during the medieval period, with no contest over their relative domination or power. Therefore, conflict between the diverse belief systems must have arisenat a later period, especially during the post-medieval and colonial periods.

What is explored here, therefore, has more to do with how the Tamil nationalist movement (as developed by the members of the Dravidian group during the colonial and post-colonial periods) and the hegemony of Tamil religious nationalism (as developed from the medieval period onwards by a group of charismatic saint figures from the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects) countered the Sanskrit tradition developing concurrently with a similar scope and momentum and using mainly the Sanskrit versions of Āgamic scriptures. The Sanskrit *Āgamas* proposed a system of worship of Śiva in temples that closely followed the rules established in the *Kriyāgramadyotikā* by Agoraśiva, Kāmikāgama, Rauravāgama and others (cf. Ishimatsu 1994). Therefore, this study has the three main following purposes: a) to study closely the devotional practices of the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions in relation to their

close connection with Tamil religious texts; b) to define the positions of political and non-political agents during the colonial and post colonial periods to characterise the priesthood and their intellectual involvement with the application of liturgical texts; and finally c) to hypothesise as to how the descendants of the once religiously popular Tamil *bhakti* saints, namely the *ōtuvārs, paṇḍārams* and *pūcāris,*took up a 'subaltern' position that made their religious intellectualism less conspicuous than that of their Sanskrit Āgamic counterparts.

Mutual Responsibilities of Brahman Priests and Clans *(kuṭi)* of the Sangam Period

The hegemonic position of Sanskrit and the Brahmanic tradition can be traced back to the Sangam period, when the legacy of the Tamil textual tradition prevailed over its Sanskrit counterpart. Sanskrit doctrines and the involvement of Brahman priests during the Sangam period were restricted exclusively to the performance of rituals and Vēdic rites on special occasions. This is evident from Sangam poems, in which many references can be found to the participation of Brahman priests, with such expressions as *antaṇararumaṟaip poruḷ,*'Brahman's sacred doctrines' *(Kalitokai* 127);*antaṇararaṉ,*'Brahman's virtue' *(Paripāṭal* 5);*antaṇarvēḷvi,*'Brahman's sacrificial fire' *(Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* 2); and so on. Similar references to Sanskrit tradition and the significance of its role in preserving linguistic information can be found in the *Tolkappiyam.* One of the sutras in the *Tolkappiyam* states that the details of articulated sound and its quantity are clearly discussed in the scriptures of the *brāhmaṇās – takatteḻuvaḷiyicaiaril tapaṉātiaḷapiṟkōṭ alantaṉ armaṟaittē*(Tolkāppiyam. Eḻuttatikāram. 102-3). Meenakshi (2007) addresses the relationship between the Tamil and Sanskrit grammatical traditions, especially in terms of the assimilation of Sanskrit grammatical knowledge into Tamil grammar. Based

on a number of references to traditional Sanskrit grammar as adapted in many Tamil grammatical manuals, she notes that almost all of the Tamil grammarians 'appear to have been well-versed in Sanskrit as well'(*ibid*., p. 155). It is important to note that during the Sangam period, the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions did not enter a process of textual contestation, nor was either dominant over the other. Instead, the priestly duties and other forms of involvement of Brahmans during the Sangam period were treated akin to the duties of any other clans *(kuṭi)*, who were known to have been assigned to perform specific tasks of their own. This is evident from references to the duties *(toḻil)* of these clans in many Sangam poems – *vēntutoḻil*, 'duties of a king' *(Puṟanāṉūṟu* 285);*aṟutoḻilantaṇar*, 'duties of virtue of Brahmans' *(Puṟanāṉūṟu* 368); and so on. It is also apparent from the following poem from the *Nālaṭiyār*, one of the didactic works of the Sangam period, that these clans were under a categorical obligation to carry out their duties *(kuṭipiṟappāḷar)*.

Uṭukkaiulaṟiuṭampaḻintakkaṇṇum
kuṭippiṟappāḷartamkoḷkaiyilkuṉṟār
iṭukkaṇṭalaivantakkaṇṇumarimā
koṭippulkaṟikkumōmaṟṟu. (Nālaṭiyār 141)

Even if they lose their clothes from their bodies,
the clans must never fail to fulfil their duties.
Despite the dreadful nature of hunger,
lions never consume grass.

Clearly,the originally mutual and peaceful relationship between the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions transformed into a much-debated relationship of conflict from the medieval period onwards, especially after parallel religious texts by the Nāyaṉmārs and the Āḻvārs emerged in Tamil to become carriers of religious intellectualism alongside the Sanskrit *Vēdas.*

Aryanism and Dravidianism: Discourse on Contest for Religious Hegemony

Under enormous pressure from components of the Tamil nationalist movement, such as the Justice Party and the Dravidian parties, the state's intervention in religious matters became inevitable in both the colonial and the post colonial period. The politicisation of religion was constituted by a discourse that involved both domination by elites and a struggle for power by the oppressed. The late 19th and early 20th centuries created an appropriate environment for the development of both anti-caste sentiment and revivalist and nativist sentiment, which took the form of a politically dominating 'self-respect' movement in 1920 (Irschick 1986, p. 3).The purpose of this movement was to create an imagined Tamil community tracing back to an era popularly known as the Sangam period, dated between ca 3 BC and 4 AD. This period saw limited Sanskrit involvement with the Tamils, with the exception of the performance of rituals of fire (commonly known as *vēḷvi*) for kings by Brāhman priests, whom Sangam texts described variously as *aṟavōr*, 'righteous people'; *ācāṉ*, 'teachers'; *antaṇar*, 'Brahmans'; *andpārppāṉ*, 'Brahmaṇa'.[5]

The most notable aspect of textual production in the Sangam period is that most indigenous and unique classical Tamil literature on a number of distinctive topics, such as love, warfare and ethics, evolved without much consideration of religion. The Tamils' indigenous thought processes appear to have divided human life into *aham* (internal, of the heart, relating to love) and *puṟam* (external, social, political), and landscape into another five major types. Several similar mindsets was advanced through the much-revered Tamil literature of the Sangam period. In sum, these original and conceptually native traditions played an influential role in determining the

nature of the imagined Tamil community, and also suggested a position for contestation for the Tamil nationalists, largely to claim their authority. From the 18th century onwards, the aspiration to achieve a native Tamil ideology affected the way in which the Tamil hegemony took its new shape, and also constructed a discourse based on the interaction of the two contending agents, namely Aryans and Dravidians, throughout history.[6]

Discourse on the two concurrent ritual patterns based on these two distinct textual traditions generated many bipartite positions on the subjects of authority, power, dominance and dignity; in most cases, the underlying impetus was to safe guard the rights of each tradition—both religious and cultural. In particular, many types of literature and scripture from both traditions were used to create a dialogue that played a significant role in the contest for domination. In response, the British, with inputs from the Justice Party, formed the Hindu Religious Endowment Committee in 1926, constituted by a number of governing bodies, whose primary function was to control the priest community in temples. Consequently, the government was able to reform temple culture, including its most acclaimed step of allowing the untouchable Harijansand low-caste Nāḍārsto enter temples (Fuller 2003, p. 3).

In 1951, this committee was reformulated as the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department. One of the major innovations resulting from this change was the implementation of a new method of worship known asThami$l_{arccanai}$,'Tamil worship', which involved the chanting of Tamil religious poems from the medieval period, alongside Sanskrit *mantras*. As mentioned elsewhere, accounts of Tamil worship were very similar to the medieval kings' descriptions of the chanting of Tamil

hymns in temples, using such terms as *Tirumuṟaipāṭutal* and *Tiruppadiyamceytal*, 'singing the *Tirumuṟai*'. Therefore, a 'voice' continued to be raised in favour of this shadowed culture, which was mostly understood through poet saints' experience, bodily performances and spiritual possession. However, control of the HR&CE Department was later taken over by the rival party All India Anna DMK, whose sympathy for the Tamil version of ritual performance did not stretch to a willingness to engage in conflict on its behalf. Understandably, the changes subsequently made to temples and temple worship reflected sentiments more in favour of Brahman priests and their Āgamic mode of worship than of Thami$l_{arccanai}$. In addition, Āgamic schools were established by the government to train priests inĀgamic scholarship, so their roles in the temples were further cemented. Interestingly, however, although these schools were restricted to Brahmans, both Āgamic Sanskrit texts and Tamil religious texts were included in the schools' curriculums. Notably, Āgamic Sanskrit texts were taught to Brahman scholars by Brahman priests and Tamil texts by non-Brahman *paṇḍārams*(Fuller 2003, p. 95). Importantly, these schools had begun to challenge 'priestly competence', which according to Husken, was put into question at the end of the 19th century and publicly discussed throughout the 20th century (cf. Husken 2013, p. 77).

Therefore, conflict between the hegemonies of Sanskrit and Tamil can be understood at both a linguistic and a religious level. At the linguistic level, members of the Tamil nationalist and revival movements subscribed to the use of 'pure Tamil words' and avoided the use of borrowed words from Sanskrit; and at the religious level, they promoted the practice of Thami$l_{arccanai}$alongside of

Sanskrit-based rituals. This dual mode of knowledge production with in the Tamil and Sanskrit societies led to the formulation of two hegemonic contenders, each using religious texts as their primary source of contention.

Bhakti, **Rituals and Divine Possession**

Despite the domination of a single elite group, Tamil society had always been pluralistic in its practice of religion and culture. Burton Stein, for instance, notes three levels of ritual affiliation observed in Tamil Nadu over time.[7] The first level of religious activity comprised domestic rituals pertaining to clan and place tutelaries, usually led by the non-Brahman *pujāris,* also known as*paṇḍarams*; the second level involved pilgrims worshipping Śivāor Viṣṇu, led by Brahman priests and strictly following Āgamic practices; and the third level was dominated by guru networks culminating in any of the premier temple centres in South India. The domestic rituals at the first level can be linked with two distinct textual patterns: one performed by *pujāris,*who chanted folk versions of Tamil poems ascribed to the clan gods Vēlaṉ, Aiyaṉār, Māriyammaṉ and MaduraiVīraṉ; and the other performed by *paṇḍaram*s and *ōtuvārs,*who mostly chanted Tamil religious poems chosen from the works of the 63Nāyanmars. The former predominantly involved bodily performances on the part of the devotee, such as frenzied dancing, fire walking and tongue piercing, which generally occurred in a state of trance with accompanying folk songs and the passionate playing of drums. The latter type of worship, however, was extremely formal, as Tamil literary poems were sung to the accompaniment of melodious and coordinated music, fervently heightening the Tamil religious mood.

The liturgical texts used for worship by *paṇḍarams*were commonly chosen from the scriptures of medieval Śaivā saints (Thurston,

1975, pp. 45-46, cited in Stein, 1978, p. 32). The 63 Śaiva Nāyanmārs who lived during the medieval period between the 5th and10th centuries AD were primarily responsible for formulating a new monotheistic ritual basis for Tamil religious nationalism. Mandelbaum (1966, p. 1174)links the Brahmanic and domestic ritual patterns identified by Stein with transcendental' and 'pragmatic' functions, respectively. Among the crucial characteristics of ritual's pragmatic function, as noted by Mandelbaum, are 'being possessed' and 'speaking through the deity'.The unique features of divine possession in Tamil religious tradition can be traced back to the Sangam period, especially via the unique Tamil expression *cāmiāṭi,*'god dancer'. In parallel, the poet saints of the medieval period expressed a relatively similar spiritual experience in line with their obsessive engagement with God through textual encounters, which is termed *āṭkoṇḍār* ('one who took over the body') in Tamil poems. Nammāḻvār,one of the 12 Vaiṣṇava saints,primarily composed verses expressing the most fervent and sincere love for Viṣṇu. He was the first to use the Tamil term*āṭkoṇḍār,* describing a state of mind constituted by complete subjection to the divine,to express his love for the Lord. His 1,102 verses (*Tiruvāymoḻi,*[9] meaning 'utterance of the holy/sacred'), composed somewhere between 880 and 930 AD (Ramanujan 1981, p. xi), are, like the other saints' works, believed to have been uttered by Viṣṇu through the poet. 'Anyone who engulfs in his poems can immediately realise why the poems are at once philosophic and poetic, direct in feeling yet intricate in design, single-minded yet various in mood' (Ramanujan 1981, p. xi). The name *āḻvār* (lit. 'immersed ones') links the Lord's joyful sleep in an ocean of milk with the saints' profound enjoyment of the Lord's love; so does the term *bhakti,* a blissful state experienced by the saints in which the mind is totally filled with the love of the Lord. A.

K. Ramanujan interprets this state of mind as that of saints 'taken over' by the love of God (Ramanujan 1981, p. 83).

Notably, the 'indigenous' attribute of possession by God,*āṭkoṇḍār,* which was unique to the Tamil ritual mode, legitimised the argument for the development of a separate method of worship in the Tamil language,using specifically Tamil religious texts and folk songs; that is, approaching God through the Tamil textual traditions of *bhakti* and music, rather than through the Sanskrit method of integrating the Āgamic texts with the *varna* form of worship. Strikingly, Mandelbaum (1970, p. 412) who describes the practice of possession as a shaman's calling, observes that 'being possessed had no hereditary features. Nor was this practice attributed to any specific caste group; instead,it was regarded as analogous to Dravidians, their clans and subsequently the folk beliefs surrounding them. Therefore, the assumption that the *varṇa* system, as Dumont (1980, p. 73) claims, provided a universal model for worship throughout India is questionable, especially if such a model had any implications for Hinduism in a religious sense. In addition, on the grounds that caste has no bearing on 'communion with God', it is reasonable to assume that the system of caste division was associated only with profession, not religion. This is supported by Sangam texts that categorised people exclusively using the term *kuṭi.*

> *tuṭiyaṉpāṇaṉ paṟaiyaṉ kaṭampaṉeṉṟu*
> *innāṉkallatukuṭiyumillai.*
> *..... (Puṟam. 335).*

warrior, singer, drummer and carpenter
are the best among all the divisions of people *[kuṭi].*

'Communion' with God, as Mauss(1979) notes in his work on 'body techniques', represents the divine potential of the human body. The human body, according to Mauss, should not be viewed simply as the passive recipient of 'cultural imprints', but regarded as a developable means of achieving a range of human objectives, from styles of physical movement through modes of emotional being to kinds of spiritual experience (e.g., mystical states such as 'possession' and 'takeover').The inability to enter into communion with God is a function of untaught bodies, according to Mauss (quoted in Asad 1993, p. 76). The concept of possession, a fundamental notion of Tamil bhakti and the associated folk tradition, is comparable to the idea of 'communion with God', tapping the divine potential of the human body. The idea of 'God' in the context of 'possession' may also be linked with the world of 'spirits', normally termed *āvi* in Tamil. Tamils tend to comprehend the act of possession as the capture of human body by spirits, using the unique expressions *āvipiḍiccirukku* and *cāmipiḍiccirukku,* meaning 'the spirit/deity detained (the body)'. This phenomenon is addressed from the perspective of Tamils' indigenous ritual practice from ancient times to the present.

Music, Ōtuvār Tradition and Search for Method of Indigenous Worship

Āḻvār texts have been passed on from generation to generation with an emphasis on music *(icai)* and mime *(avinayam)* rather than poetry (Ramanujan, 1981, p. 135). The *Tiruvāymoḻi* and similar Tamil religious texts are regularlysung in temples by *ōtuvārs.* It is often believed that their style of singing with rhythm and melody is more appealing than a simple rendering of the texts, and better conveys the texts' spirit than their meaning. The idea of *antāti,[10]* denoted by a Sanskrit term describing a return from the end to the beginning, and regularly found in Āḻvār poems, facilitates recitation with an aesthetic appeal.

Another relevant point to be drawn from Ramanujan's work on Tamil hymns is his account of shifts' that took place during the *bhakti* period. He argues that the compositions of both the Vaiṣṇavā (Āḻvārs) and the Śaivā(Nāyanmārs) during the *bhakti* period caused shifts 'from hearing to speaking; watching to dancing; a passive to an active mode; a religion and a poetry of the esoteric few to a religion and a poetry of anyone who can speak…. From the sacrificial-fire rituals *(yajñā* or *hōma)* to worship,*pūjā'.¹* In addition, the ritual methods of 'singing of the Lord', dancing and *pūjā*have continued to date in temples and other sacred places in Tamil Nadu, keeping these changes alive; similarly,ĀṇṭālTiruppāvai rituals continue to be performed with an abundance of mysticism and devotional commitment.

Whereas Āgamic manuals became the basis for all of the rituals conducted by Brahman priests, the Śaiva textual canon,the *Tēvāram,* and the Vaiṣṇavā textual canon,the *Prabhandams,* became the basis for the traditions of *paṇḍārams* and *otuvārs,* respectively. According to Davis (1991), the Brahman priests who perform these rituals claim that they have understood the Sanskrit *Āgamas* either directly from the Āgamic texts – composed either in Sanskrit or in Tamil Grantha script – or from a long tradition of *gurus*(Davis, 1991; Ishimatsu, 1994). The same is true of the co-existing Tamil tradition: saints' devotional experience was originally rendered in*bhakti* poems, and later transmitted orally from generation to generation by *paṇṭārams* and *ōtuvārs.*

Therefore, the output of the medieval saint poets was delivered by *paṇḍārams* with a shift from composition to recitation, without affecting the texts original transcendent spirit. This transformation became the foundation for the development of a new method of worship called Thamiḻ*arccanai,* as noted elsewhere.

Indeed, Ramaswamy (1992) states that this revivalism had its origin in 1920,in the then Tamil revivalist movement called neo-Saivism, whose proponents in turn believed that the practice of using Tamil rather than Sanskrit for divine worship started during the Pallava (ca 6th to 9th centuriesAD) and Cōḻā (ca 9th to 11th centuriesAD) dynasties.

Therefore, the two legitimate groups contending for religious hegemony, domination and power were associated with the following traditions, respectively: the practice of Thamiḻ*arccanai*rituals as performed by paṇḍārams and others by chanting songs from the Tamil *bhakti* texts of *Tēvāram, Tiruvācakam* and *Tirumantiram;* and the Sanskrit rituals performed by Brahmin priests, otherwise known as*āryappaṭṭarkaḷ* and strictly following the rules of the *Āgama*scriptures. However, it is evident from Fuller's account of these two competing traditions in Tamil Nadu that the practice of Thamiḻ*arccanai*had never been successfully implemented in temples in Tamil Nadu, and that the Brahman priests continued to conduct their worship in Sanskrit, disregarding the efforts of the government led by the Dravidian political party (Fuller 2003, p. 116).

A popular form of resistance to the proposal for a mode of worship in the Tamil language came from Dakshinamoorthy Bhattar, a Brahman priest who challenged the government's orders on the groundsthat the efficacy of ritual depended on the particular sounds of Sanskrit, and that there would be a 'disaster' if he 'dared to perform the *arccanai* in Tamil' (Presler 1987, p.117; see also Harrison 1960, p.130). The focushereseems not to be the relative authority and power of Sanskrit and Tamil priests, but solely the hegemony of the respective languages and scriptures. Accordingly, the hegemony of the literary genres of both the *bhakti* tradition of the Tamils

and the corresponding Āgamic tradition of the proponents of the Sanskrit language continued to develop throughout history in terms of their religious engagement within society.

Colonial and Post-Colonial Modes of Knowledge Production

The Brahmanic religious tradition probably took precedence over the Tamil *bhakti* tradition in part because the British chose Brahmans and their scriptures, such as *Arthasastra,* as local agents in their formation of the colonial Indian state. Eugene F. Irschick notes that this behaviour was part of astrategy forest ablishing a hold on local regions and gaining political legitimacy;accordingly, the British attempted to re-establish and repair religious centres such as temples in local areas. He further highlights an attack by the Kaḷḷars (a non-Brahmin caste group) on the British armed forces after Colonel Heron took images from the Kaḷḷartemple inKōvilkuṭiin 1755 (Irschick1994, p. 20). Irschickgoes on to say that the Britishgave Brahmans the sole jurisdiction over handling images in temples. This clearly suggests that the British implicitly authorised the Brahmans to perform their religious duties, and this authority seems to have remained in place to date. Lloyd L. Rudolph and Susanne HoeberRudolph (1967) also confirm that the British completely ignored local customs and habits, instead dependingheavily on Brahman *pandit* stomake final decisions (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, pp. 279-93). 'The English began with the clear intention of applying, for most purposes, Indian law to Indians. Governor General Hastings in 1772 had ordered that 'in all suits regarding marriage, inheritance, and caste and other religious usages and institutions [succession was added in 1781] the laws of the Koran with respect to Mohammedans, and those of *Shaster* [sacred law texts] with respect to the Hindus shall be invariably adhered to

Pandits and Shastris [traditional specialists in the sacred texts, almost invariably Brahmans] were assigned to share responsibility for judgments by signing the final document' (Derrett, 1961-2; cited in Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, p. 282).

The colonial method of knowledge production through the Brahmanic approach obviously closed the door to the customs, habits and cultures of the local *bhakti* tradition of the Tamils for almost two centuries, at least until the evolution of the neo-Saivite movements formulated by Śaiva saints such as Ramalinga Aṭikaḷ and Maraimalai Aṭikaḷin the second half of the 19th century. Therefore, the impetus for the post-colonial mode of knowledge production emerged with the propagation of Dravidian and Tamil nationalism by the neo-Saivites, followed by the Justice and Dravidian political parties.

Implicit versus Explicit Agents in Contest over Hegemony

From the point of view of the Tamils, the explicit agents in the conflict over the idea of an indigenous mode of knowledge representation were the intelligibility of the ritual text and intimacy with God in one's own language. From the perspective of the Sanskrittradition, these agents were the sacredness of the sounds of Sanskrit and the authenticity of the Agamic scriptures. The implicit agent in the conflict was the safeguarding of the indigenous Tamil *bhakti* tradition, which is claimed here to have lost its voice due to the domination of Sanskrit practices. 'Social scientists would say that it was precisely these kinds of village and temple contestations that had formed the basis of the previous system – no single group could dispense with any other group. In this structure, consensus and balance were realised through conflict; everyone knew that there were others who would enter the

contest' (Irschisk 1986, p. 23).

The origins of this conflict between the indigenous Tamil system and the Brahmanic system of ritual practice can be traced back to the medieval period, especially between the 6th and 10th centuries AD. Evidence can be found in the songs of Tirumūlar, a Tamil Saivite who founded the yogic ritual system of worship in a text entitled *Tirumantiram*, 'sacred mantras', in the 6th century AD. Among the much acclaimed practices of Śiva *bhakti,* according to the *Tirumantiram,* was the exercise of devotion to Śiva by revering Śaiva saints (non-Brahman saints), who were popularly known for their dedicated and untiring performance of worship to Śiva. Many legends tell us how the practices of Śiva *bhakti* were carried out by kings and elite groups simply through the respectful treatment of and admiration for Śaiva saints. Tirumūlar devotes a separate section entitled Maheśvara', *'Pūjā*to the great Lord',to the significance of Śiva *bhakti* and them portance of admiring Śaiva saints. According to Tirumūlar, making offerings to God in temples has no potential, but making offerings to Śiva *bhakti* is much like offering to the divine directly (verse 1857) (Velupillai 1995). The chapter goes on to say that when a Śiva *bhakta* consumes the food offered by a devotee, the pleasure he receives is indistinguishable from that received by any other agent in the three worlds (verse 1858) (Renganathan 2014) (see Appadurai 1981 and Dirks 1987).This idea is very similar to the custom of *annadānā* (offering food to the poor) performed during the ritual of *homa* in Vedic culture. In the latter case, however, offerings are made only to Brahmans; no others, according to custom, are entitled to receive it.

However, Tirumūlarclaims that the value of an offering to one Śiva *bhakta*cannot by matched–either by making offerings to 1,000 Brahmans or by building 1,000 temples (verse 1860) (see Appadurai 1981 and Dirks 1987). Throughout this chapter, Tirumūlar reiterates his claim that the ritual practices of Śaiva devotees and Śiva *bhakti* are far superior to the ritual practices of *hōma (vēḷvi)*performed by the Brahmans. This clearly indicates that the conflict over religious hegemony between the Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic traditions had begun as earlyasTirumūlar's compositions,in the medieval period. This conflict continues to date, as discussed earlier in reference to the neo-Saivite and Dravidian movements (see Ramaswami 1992, p. 138).

Cōḻā Temple Architecture and Evolution of Indigenous South Indian Temple Culture in the Pre-Colonial Period

South Indian historiography has always defined a power relationship between temples and the imperial kingdom. Nicholas Dirks and Arjun Appadurai discuss the autonomy and sovereignty of temples in the context of pre-colonial India (see Appadurai 1981 and Dirks 1987). Dirks notes that the most significant characteristic of temple culture in pre-colonial India is that sovereignty is essentially procured in temples, where the deity is the paradigmatic sovereign. However, this sovereignty was re-created in colonial and post-colonial India through the establishment, as mentioned earlier, of endowment bodies such as the Hindu Religious Endowment (later the HR&CE Department). As explained by Franklin Presler, bureaucracy began to play a major role in determining power. This section shows that unlike the role of bureaucratic context, the earlier mode of procuring sovereignty for a deity protected the indigenous characteristics of texts.

The polarisation of Sanskrit and Tamil rituals and priesthood can be extended further, to the consummation of images in temples in

pre-colonial South India. The Liṅgā and the dancing form of Śiva representdistinct patterns of worship in Śiva temples, originating in the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, respectively. It is claimed in this section that this polarisation of images and their co-existence in Śiva temples of South India evolved as a consequence of Sanskritisation. Turning from the few rock-cut examples of the Pallava dynasty (600 AD to 800 AD) (Barrett 1974, p. 16) to the structural temples of the Cōḻā kings (from 866 AD to 1280 AD) (Balasubramaniam 1979; Barrett, 1974, p. 17), these images show an enormous scope and are extraordinarily complex. One of the notable features of Dravidian temples is the development of outlying elements such as circumambulatory paths and *maṇḍapās* (halls).

After the Pallavas initiated their enterprise of building stone-cut temples, forms of worship and the perception of God in the Dravida region under wentradical transformation with changes in dynasties, kings and patrons. As patrons indifferent periods made changes and additions to existing temples, the temples' symbolic vocabularies became ever more complex.[12] Tamil hymnists and kings played a significant part in shaping temple architecture and image worship during the Cōḻākingdom, which lasted from approximately the 10th to the 13th centuries AD.[13]

Despite some minor differences in their depictions of Hindu mythology, gods and sculptures, the Hindu temples of the Cōḻāperiod generally manifest the decorative veneers of *gopurās* (gateways), maṇḍapās (halls), prakarās (circumambulatory paths) and tanks. The divine space extending from the garbagraha to the urban space through the gateways is attributed the symbolic meaning of a Temple town' by George Michell (Michell 1993, p. 13).

One exception is the Nataraja temple of Chidambaram, which is believed to have a much longer history than any other Śaiva temples of the Cōḻā period. This temple exhibits an unusual way of representating Śiva: in a dancing posture, in contrast with the usual Liṅga form. The Brahadiswar temple in Thanjavur, constructed between ca 995 AD and 1010 AD by Rajaraja I,offers a representative example of Cōḻāarchitecture. Here, the Liṅga is the main deity, and the subshrines are housed in individual *mandapas,* such as the dancing image of Śiva, which is housed in the northeast corner of the courtyard (Pichard1995, p. 101). The Sanskrit term 'Naṭarājā', meaning 'King of Dancers', is frequently referred toin the inscriptions carved on the walls of the temple by the Tamil term *aḍavallān,* meaning 'one who is capable of dancing'. This conception of Śiva in His dancing form is unique to the South Indian architecture of Śiva temples.[14] This distinctive representation of Śiva is well attested to in the Tamil hymns of the *Tirumantiram* composed by Tirumūlar, but nowhere in this work does Tirumūlardiscuss the worship of Liṅgā. This gives sufficient reason to believe that Tamil hymnists developed the relevant conceptions and their symbols, and the Tamil kings gave a form to them. Therefore, the intentions of the kings of the medieval period should be kept in mind when discussing the development of a dialogue over contesting hegemonies.

Rūpāand ArūpāForms of Worship in the Naṭarājā Temple of Chidambaram: A Subject for Tamil Nationalism

The dancing image of Śiva is a perceivable 'form', known as*rūpā* in Sanskrit.[15] This image housed in *Cit-Sabhā* is, as observed by Smith (1996, p. 82), the heart of the world and the heart of the individual self —*cit* means 'consciousness' and *sabhā¹* means 'hall' (thus 'hall of consciousness'). To the right of Naṭarājā is an empty space called *rahasyā.*

This space designates the formless nature of Śiva, and is referencedby the Sanskrit term *arūpā,* the opposite of *rūpā.* The *arūpā* form of Śiva is also called *ākāśā,* indicating that 'space' is the other manifestation of Śiva in Chidambaram (see Smith 1993, p.62; Smith 1996, p. 83). The ritual of worshipping 'space' developed a new architectural vocabulary: that ofChidambara*rahasyā*('Secret of Chidambaram').

The third form of worship is Liṅgā, which neither conforms to any conceivable object[16] nor represents formlessness. Liṅgā, then, is a form without a conceivable form, and can thus be understood as *rūpa-arūpa,*'form and formless'. Substantialevidence of the former two types of worship of Śiva in Chidambaram,*rūpa* and *arūpa* respectively, can be drawn from the *Tirumantiram.* In many of his verses,Tirumūlaremphasises that the Lord emerges in Chidambaram as aform *(uru),* as formless *(aru)* and in all-pervading divine form *(Para Rūpam)*[17]. As shown below, textual evidence of the manifestation of Lord Śiva in these distinct forms in Chidambaram can also be found in the works of the much later Śaiva hymnists Appar, Māṇikkavācakar and Cuntarar,who are generally assumed to have lived between the 8th and 9th centuriesAD.[18]

Image of Dancing Śiva and Origin of Emblem of Victory of Tamil Kings

There is evidence that the image of dancing Śiva gained currency in southern India even earlier than the 8th century AD, during the Sangam period, which fell between ca the 3rd century BC and the 5th century AD.[19] One Sangam epic,*Silappathikaram*, composed inapproximately the 5th century AD, makes reference to the dancing form of Śiva in the context of Śiva's celebration of the destruction of demons.[20] Although no mention is made in this work of the city of Chidambaram, the latter reference can be taken to indicate that an understanding of the dancing form of Śiva existed prior to its materialisation in temples. However, the earliest attested statues of the dancing Śiva are found in Śiva temples, mostly in the niches of temple walls in the Chalukya period (ca 6th to 8th centuries AD), the Pallava period[21] (ca 6th to 8th centuries AD) and the Cōḻāperiod(ca 9th to 12th centuries AD).[22] A Kanchipuram Kailāsanāta temple built during the Pallava dynasty also exhibits icons of the dancing Śiva, but in the pose of *ūrdhva-tāṇḍava,*[23] 'fierce dance' (ca 700-728 AD), which is believed to have a North Indian origin. The well-known Chidambaram dance *ānandatāṇḍava,* 'dance of bliss', is discussed in detail in the Tamil hymns of the Śaiva saints. With the progression from the Pallava dynasty to the Cōḻā dynasty, many new forms developed in and around the temple complex, resulting in the evolution of complex symbolic vocabularies commensurate with the radically changing rites of patronage and personal devotion.[24]

Based on textual and inscriptional evidence, Kaimal (1999) and Zvelebil(1998) observe that for the later Cōḻās,images of the dancing Śiva with a tiger, a skull, a drum, snakes, fire and Apasmara, the demon of ignorance, became emblems of victory over rivals. The use of the image of dancing Śiva as a symbol for victory by the patron Cōḻā kings may explain the practice – popular from around the 9th century AD to the 10th century AD– of attributing to this image the status of the main deity in the Naṭarāja temple of Chidambaram. Coomaraswamy's summary of the essential significance of the image of the dancing Śiva and Kaimal's account of this image as an object of victory offer evidence of the development of a new practice.

In *Māṇikkavācakar* (ca 9th century AD), we find an explicit reference to the idea of the

Chidambara*rahaśyam* of the Chidambaram Naṭarāja: *'aṟiyānēyāvar kkumambaravā ambalattemperiyōn'* ('My majesty! No one knows your Formless Form in *Ambalam* – Chidambaram', *Tiruvācakam, Māṇikkavācakar,* verse 22) (Veluppillai 1993, p. 99).Other uses of this vocabulary of formlessness *(arūpa)* can be found inTirumular's*Tirumantiram*.[25] One is quoted below.

Uruvinṟiyēninṟuuruvampuṇarkkum
karuvanṟiyēninṟutānkaruvākum
aruvinṟiyēninṟamāyappirānaik
karuvinṟiyāvarkkumkūṭaoṇṇātē. (2840:6)

Form, there is none; He befits all of the forms.
Cosmic Egg, there is none; He prevails all.
Him, the elusive Lord without a Form,
Impossible for anyone to reach,
without His quintessence – the *karu.*

As this verse occurs in a chapter of the *Tirumantira*mentitled 'Corūpautayam', 'Genesis of the magnificent form' (verses 2835 to 2846), it is reasonable to assume that the conceptualisation of Śiva in the form of Chidambar*arahaśya* was in practice from the time of the inception of this temple between the 7th and 9th centuries AD – a period attributed to the Tamil saints Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar.Although the dates of these texts are debatable, it cannot be denied that the patterns of belief reflected in images of Śiva had a definite impact on the architecture of Śiva temples – mainly in the way in which the image of dancing Śiva,*sabhās* and the Ether are manifested and conceived in parallel with the textual manifestations and their subsequent architectural representations. It may not be an overstatement to conclude that the Tamil poet saints conceptualised Śiva's new forms in their texts and the kings materialised them in their architectural construction. The new forms developed by the medieval Tamil poet saints undoubtedly reflect the process

of Tamilisation of Aryanbeliefs in the medium of Tamil, especially to avoid the use of the unfamiliarand incomprehensible Sanskrit language. However, the immense effort made to use Tamil religious texts featuring the Aryan ideologies of Śivā and Viṣṇu to assimilate the foreign with the native were still futile in the context of the rituals of South Indian temples.

Therefore, the conceptualisation of Śiva in His concrete 'blissful dancing form' instead of the abstract form of Liṅga constitutes yet another indigenous idea that emerged exclusively from the south, and the hymns that designate them confirm the existence of a unique mode of worship that, as discussed earlier, is nothing other than *bhakti* and was later attributed to the indigenous worship method of Thami*ḻarccanai,* principally determined by such processes as *Tirumuṟaipāṭutal* and *Tiruppatiyamceytal,* praising God using the hymns of the celebrated Tamil poets. Presumably, this suggests that the object of worship as well as liturgical texts from the *bhakti* hymns are unique to Tamil, and that they constitute and authenticate indigenous religious culture – a topic of enquiry for research on Tamil nationalism and support for the religious customs of the Tamils, who attempt to perceive or approach God through their native experience of divine/ spiritual possession by chanting Tamil religious poems, particularly with music.

Concluding Remarks

The influence of the Sanskrit language on the Tamil tradition and the very frequent use of Āgamic rituals in South Indian temples made the legacy of the medieval bhakti poets and their poems ineffectual in temple worship. Not only priests but also religious scriptures and their hegemony were brought into focus in Tamil nationalist sentiment. Soliciting support from superordinates became inevitable for the contending DMK, resulting

in a gradual transformation of extreme superordinate-subordinate relations between the communities into more equal ones (see Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, p. 79).As a result of the weakening of direct conflict with super ordinates, Tamil nationalist efforts began to concentrate on the distinguishing features of the textual traditions of the past, rather than defending their position exclusively based on ritual methods in temples.

Therefore, the failure of attempts to popularise Tamil hymns in temple rituals under the name of Thamiḻarccanai, as Fuller notes, indicates the continued dominance of the colonial and pre-colonial processes of Sanskritisation over the Tamilisation efforts made by poet saints. In other words, the weakening of anti-Āgamic rituals reflects not only the failure of Tamil nationalism, but also the continued subalternity of Tamil priests. Therefore, the weakened hegemony of Tamil religious intellectualism can be inferredfromthe status of medieval Tamil religious texts and from the folk customs of the ancient past. As already stated, one reason for this state of affairs was the enormous attention paid by the state to developing Āgamic schools to educate more Sanskrit priests inĀgamic texts, without any parallel effort to educate Tamil priests in Tamil religious texts to exercise Thamiḻarccanaiand promote the traditional methods of worship, dominated by types of bodily performance such as divine/spiritual 'possession'. Therefore, although from Foucault's standpoint, adiscourse was produced by Tamil nationalists(the subordinates), a Tamil hegemony did not evolve due to the continued dominance of superordinates. The emergence of Tamil nationalist sentiment, but not Sanskrit nationalism, positioned Tamil as subordinate and Sanskrit as superordinate. Subsequently, the formation of a new method of worship called Thamiḻarccanaiin conflict with Sanskrit rituals suggests that although the

Tamil religious tradition had gained power, it is still in a thoroughly thriving position.

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1. Iṉnilattukkuvanta ṉaūrileerṟiiṟ ukkavumiṉ nilaṅka ḷoḷuku mmaṭakkumpiṟakkumiṭ attutillainā yakaccarup petimaṅ kalattukṣ asyaṉ apaṭṭarkaḷ periltillai muvāyiraviḷ ākameṉṉ umperālee ḷutakkaṭ avarkaḷ ākavumippa ṭikkutirumā ḷikaiyilekalv eṭṭikkoḷḷ akkaṭav arkaḷā kavumka ṭavatākavumco ṉṉom. 'The proceeds of these lands and other related properties in the town are hereby offered to the paṭṭars of the god TillaiNāyakam of Caruppedimangalam, and this is exclusively presented under the auspicious name of TillaiMuvāyiraviḷakam. The right is hereby granted to document this fact in stone inscriptions' (SII.8.43.6). See also SII.7.7 for donations offered in conjunction with duties assigned to priests in theŚiva temple at Tirukkovilur, Krishnagiri Taluk, Selam district.

2. An account of the traditions of *ōtuvārs* and *paṇḍārams* can be found in Stein (1978), Breckenridge (1978) and Thurston (1975).

3. *Tirumuṟaiotuta ṟkuriyakōyilma ṇṭapattukkuvi ṭṭanivantam….* 'Offerings made to temples to chant Tirumuṟai hymns…' (SII.12.231).

4. See Ramaswamy (1997, pp. 24-29) for a discussion of the emergence of neo-Śaivism and its impact on colonial narratives.

5. Cf. *māmutupārppāṉ maṟaivaḷ ikāṭṭiṭa…,* 'with aged Brahman pointing to the path of the *Vētas…*' (*Silappatikaram 50)*; and *'aṟampuriarumaṟ ainaviṉṟanāviltiṟ ampurikoḷkaiantaṉīr',*'vocally talented are the Brahmans who engage in the virtue and chant the celebrated *Vētas'(Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 387).

6. Ramaswamy (1997, pp. 68-78) constructs a bipartite division between Dravidianism and Hinduism, and argues, following Harrison (1960, p. 127), that this division led to the notions that Tamils were not Hindus and that Hindus were mainly Aryans.

7. Stein (1978, p. 28) bases his descriptions on Buchanan's report of 1800.

8. *Periyapuranam,* composed by Sekkilar, in 1100 AD, provides biographical sketches of all 64 Tamil Śaiva saints. The most notable are Tirumūlar, Māṇikkavāsakar, Appar, Cuntarar and Campantar. The three Śaiva canons, *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar, *Tiruvāsakam* by Māṇikkavāsakar and *Tēvāram* by Appar, Cuntarar and Campatar, along with a later 13th-century work by Meykkaṇḍār, constitute the basis of the Tamil Śaiva Siddāndā tradition as developed during the medieval period.

9. The term tiru means 'sacred' or 'divine'. This prefix is commonly applied in Tamil to names of places with historical relevance due either to visits from renowned saints or to the places' special mention in religious literature; names of popular religious works; names of people with divine qualities, etc. The Śaivā saints celebrate 274 holy places and the Vaiṣṇavās celebrate 108 places, such as Vaikuṇḍam, 'Heaven'. Terrestrial places are usually called *pāṭalperrapatikaṅkaḷ or pāṭalperrastalaṅgaḷ,* 'places that have received a mention in poems'.

10. All of the *Tiruvāymoli* poems are sung such that the last word of each poem becomes the first word of the next, creating a garland of poems to offer to the Lord.

11. See Renganathan (2014) for a detailed account of the Tamil rituals performed exclusively based on the Vaiṣṇavā text of the Āṇṭāl*Tiruppāvai.*

12. 'None of the present structures in the Naṭarājā's temple complex can be dated before the later Cōḻā period (1070-1279 AD). The accession of Kulōttuṅka I to the Cōḻā throne in 1070 AD seems to have given a new impetus that led to the reconstruction of previous and erection of new structures in the ancient temple site' (Mevissen 2002, p. 61).

13. See Balasubrmaniyan (1971, 1975, 1979) for the chronology of Cōḻā kings and their efforts to build and renovate temples.

14. One of the references to Naṭarājā as Āḍavallān in the inscriptions is as follows: 'taṭṭamoṉru Āḍavallāṉeṉṉuṅ kallālniṉrēnāṟ patiṉkaḷañceykāl...'. 'On the 14th day of the 26th year [of his reign], the lord ŚriRājaRājaDēvā gave one sacred diadem *(tiruppaṭṭam)* of gold, weighing 499 *kaḷañcu* by the stone called (after) *Āḍavallān'* (Hultzsch 1891, p. 3).

15. See Renganathan (2008) for a detailed account of the three forms of worship of Lord Śiva in the city of Chidambaram.

16. Although the form of Liṅga has been interpreted in various ways, we confine ourselves to its concrete form, which cannot be compared with any perceivable object.

17. *Tirumantiram* (2790, p. 69, ninth tantra).

'For Rishis Patanjali and Vyagrapada
In the splendid Temple of Chidambaram
He danced as a Form, a Formless and a Cosmic Form,
With the Divine Grace of Sakti He danced,
He, the Citta, the Ananda; gracefully stood and danced' (unless otherwise noted, translations of Tamil hymns in this work are rendered by the author based on consultation with Smith 1996, Peterson 1989 and Shulman 1980).

18. See Zvelebil (1998) for the dates and works of the Śaiva hymnists.

19. By the 3rd century BC, three of the four great dynasties *(mūvēntars)* were already known. However, the Pallava dynasty was not mentioned in the Sangam literature, and the Cōḻā dynasty emerged in full strength only

from 866 AD to 1014 AD (Barrett 1974, pp. 16-17).

20. The Tamil epic *Cilappatikaram,* composed in about 450 AD, refers to Śiva's dance to celebrate his destruction of the three cities of demons (*Cilappatikaram,* 6.4.44-5).

21. Fergusson (1899, p. 326), calls the stone-cut temples of *Māmallapuram* 'raths', and states that they are the oldest examples of their class known.

22. See Kaimal (1999) for a discussion and examples of the image of dancing Śiva in the Chalukya and Pallava dynasties and early Cōla temples.

23. Kaimal's illustrations from Badami temples show Śiva with multiple hands and in a fierce mood (Kaimal 1999, p. 395). Similar gestures are given in pre-Aryan sources to Rudra-Śiva, whose occurrences can be traced back to the Indus Valley and Harappa culture. 'Rudra appears primarily as a fear-inspiring deity whose shafts of lightning slay men and cattle' (*Rigveda* 1.114.10) (Yocum 1982, p. 16). However, no dancing form was attributed to Śiva at this time.

24. Meister's argument for a complex and evolving symbolic vocabulary of temple architecture reflecting characteristics of the changing dynasties (Meister 1986, pp. 33-50) is substantiated by evidence from Cōḻā architecture; the *rūpa-arūpa* method of worship is one example.

25. See Zvelebil (1998, pp. 40-43) for the dates between the 7th and 11th centuries AD of important references to both the dancing Śiva and the Citambaram site by poet saints such asMaṇikkavācakar, Tirumūlar,

NambiyāṇṭārNambi, Cēkkiḻār, Appar and Campantar. See also *Tirumantiram.*

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