

Tracing the Trajectory of Linguistic changes in Tamil: Mining the corpus of Tamil Texts¹

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Abstract

This paper discusses in detail the linguistic developments that took place in Tamil during the medieval period, especially due to enormous production of religious texts. Formation of many new suffixes and depletion of some of the old Tamil forms took place during the medieval period. It is stated that some of the old Tamil forms that seemed to have co-existed along with modern Tamil forms during the medieval period were mainly due to the grammatical processes such as reanalysis, metaphorization, phonological reduction, elimination of redundancy etc., that underwent rigorously during that time. The development of aspectual forms such as *koṇṭu*, *koḷ*, *koṇṭiru* etc., and the modal forms like *lām* etc., took place during the medieval period primarily because of these grammatical processes. For instance, forms like *peralākumē* 'it is possible to attain', when employed in medieval Tamil poems in multiple number of reanalyzed structures, like *peral ākumē*, *peral āmē*, *peralāmē*, *pera lāmē* etc., the new form *-lām* came into existence. It is argued in this paper how tracing the trajectories of changes, understanding the development of new forms and depletion of old forms require a systematic analysis of the corpus of Tamil data from Sangam to modern Tamil from a historical perspective.

Introduction

Tamil words underwent a major change both connotatively and structurally during the medieval period when heavy borrowings from Aryan languages took place. Simple word forms of the Sangam period transformed into more complex forms with multiple number of suffixes. Many grammatical forms such as aspectual markers, tense markers, modal suffixes etc., were introduced in the language during the post medieval period. As a result, the agglutinative nature of Tamil words with conceptually complex connotations came into existence. With the availability of Tamil literatures from Sangam to modern period in electronic form, it is now possible for one to study and analyze the texts more systematically than ever before, and tracing the trajectory of changes that took place historically from Sangam to modern period has become an easier task than before. I attempt to use the available Tamil electronic texts and employ a set of techniques to study

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the nature of linguistic changes that took place historically from Old Tamil to Modern Tamil.²

Caṅkam Tamil is considered to be a standardized literary language, which exhibits less number of loan words and relatively minimum morphological and syntactic complexities compared to other genres. For the reasons of retaining many of the archaic and indigenous features, this variety of language is also termed *centamiṟ*. In some of the early poems of Caṅkam collections such as kuṟuntokai, aiṅkuṟunūru, puṛanānūru, patirrup pattu and narrinai – and in the grammar of Tolkāppiyam one finds more number of pure Tamil words with unique morphological structures than any other later works. However, in the post Caṅkam works of the Caṅkam classics, as in the epics such as Maṇimēkalai, Cilappatikāraam etc., one notices many vocabularies borrowed from other traditions like Buddhism and Jainism. The other significant genre of Tamil that one can distinguish from Caṅkam Tamil is the medieval Tamil, which is usually the language of inscriptions and religious literatures. Inscriptions are available from Pallava period to Chola period and they contain the variety of language nearer to the spoken language of that time Zvelebil (1970, p. 16).

Linguistic structure of *Caṅkam* Tamil in general and the verbs in particular are found to be much simpler than the structures as one may find in medieval Tamil, otherwise called language of *bhakti*. Development of aspectual forms, modals, causatives and other similar grammatical categories at a later stage contributes significantly to the complex nature of medieval and modern Tamil. Presumably, these categories were developed historically by a number of linguistic processes such as grammaticalization, reanalysis of word forms, metaphorization and so on. One of the significant characteristics of medieval Tamil, unlike the other two genres, is that it retains the features from both old Tamil as well as modern Tamil. What it means is that since it was the period when many of the new linguistic features were developed, perhaps due to the influence of Sanskrit and other traditions and due to enormous amount of textual production, more number of morphological and lexical items were introduced in the language during this time.

Use of Sanskrit loan words, emergence of a Maṇipravāla style of language, and the development of agglutinative nature of word forms are some of the significant characteristics that mark the nature of the language into three periods namely old, medieval and modern. The language of medieval Tamil developed as a separate genre in comparison to Caṅkam and Modern Tamil in many respects. This is mainly because of the influence of religious content as well as the Sanskrit language. There are linguistic characteristics which are unique to medieval texts, both at morphological and lexical levels. Many of the lexical and morphological forms that are less-commonly occurring in Caṅkam texts seem to be occurring in larger proportions in medieval Tamil (Shanmugam 1995). Also, there are many instances where certain lexical items

² The corpus of Tamil text from Sangam to Modern Tamil along with necessary search techniques is made available at the URL: <http://www.thetamilanguage.com/sangam>. Earlier version of this paper was presented at the fourth annual Tamil conference, University of California, Berkeley, 2008.

underwent meaning change in medieval Tamil in accordance with their use in the religious contexts. Some of the prominent features of the medieval Tamil that deserve mention here are as follows. The present tense suffix 'kinr', for example, is developed only during medieval period, particularly in bhakti texts; the palatalized forms such as –cc-, and -ñj- that occur within a verb that ends in the front vowel 'i' are more common in medieval Tamil than in Caṅkam Tamil. At lexical level, one finds many words being understood differently than they were during the Caṅkam time. There are instances where words referring to 'kings', 'palaces' etc., have taken on religious connotations. Eg. the word *kōyil* means 'palace' or 'King's place' in Caṅkam Tamil, where as it means 'temple' or 'god's dwelling place' in medieval Tamil; the verb *vaṇaṅku* means 'bend' or 'yield' in Caṅkam Tamil, but it means 'worship' or 'pray' in medieval Tamil and so on (Shanmugam 1995, p. 55).

The data

The data for analysis in this work is chosen from Caṅkam Tamil texts of eight anthologies, ten songs, eighteen didactic works, five epics and the grammar of *Tolkāppiyam*. The medieval Tamil texts consulted include mainly the Śaiva *Tirumuṟai* of the sixty three Nāyanmārs, the Nālāyirat *tivyap prabandam* text of twelve Ālvārs, and a number of other religious and philosophical works composed until the thirteenth century.³ The five major contributors to the Śaiva canon of *Tirumuṟai* include *Tiruñāna campantar*, *Tirunāvukkaracar*, *Cuntara mūrti*, *Māṇikkavācakar* and *Tirumūlar*. Among these poets, *Appar* is considered to be the earliest belonging to the period during the 7th century C. E.; *Tiruñānsampantar* and *Cuntaramūrti* are believed to be contemporaries belonging to the 8th century C. E. Then comes *Tirumular*, whose work falls during the 9th century and finally *Māṇikkavācakar* who belongs to 10th or 11th century C. E.⁴

Influence of Sanskrit in bhakti poetries of Nāyanmārs:

Although the Sanskrit words that Nāyanmārs use are nativized, one finds the style of the language in their works largely different from the language of Caṅkam, mainly because of their use of Sanskrit words in their poems. In fact, there were also cases where more number of linguistic changes taking place during the medieval period, as a result of altering the morphological structure of the language. Sanskrit influenced the Tamil language in two stages: first during the Caṅkam period and the other during the *bhakti* period (Sundaram 1965, p.173).⁵ Varadarajan (1980, p. 173) states that the

³ The data for this work is sited from online archive of Tamil literature made available at the URL: <http://www.thetamilanguage.com/sangam>. See Zvelebil (1964), Pillai (1979), Sundaram (1965) etc., for a detailed study of Tamil literatures of old and medieval Tamil.

⁴ See Varadarajan (1972) for a detailed study of Tamil literatures and their chronology.

⁵ Emeneau (1954) studies closely the contact of Aryans with Dravidians during the Harappan times. He concludes that there existed a linguistic substratum after the contact of Aryans with Dravidians and it led to borrowing of some Dravidian words into Sanskrit. Some of the Dravidian words that are believed to have borrowed by Sanskrit during that time include *kaṣaṇ* 'battle field' *mayil* 'peacock', *ēlam* 'cardomom' etc. It

amount of Tamil words traceable to Sanskrit was just 1% in Caṅkam; and it grew up to 3 to 5% in epics (around 700 A.D.). Then, the number rose further during the bhakti and later period. This led to the use of new style of language namely Maṅippravāla from the 13th century onwards. The Sanskrit words traceable in Caṅkam period includes mostly words related to kings, palace etc., besides some of the devotional terms. Thus, one finds words such as *cavai* from Skt. *sabha*: ‘assembly’; *arccanay* from Skt. *arcane*: ‘worship’; *īccuran* from Skt. *īśvara* ‘Lord Siva’ and so on. Tolkāppiyar recognizes the existence of Sanskrit words during his time, and gives the name *vaṭacol* for such foreign words. Since the term *vaṭacol* means ‘Northern words’, a generic word, one can assume that he also refers to the other languages such as Prakrit, Pali, besides Sanskrit. Further, it is only during the bhakti period a general fashion or general rule comes to be established for the method of Tamilizing foreign words. Even though one finds these rules documented by Pavaṇanti, author of the Tamil grammar called *nannūl* in thirteenth century, the *Tirumurai* texts show that a regular system of nativization of Sanskrit word had already been established. e.g. *puṇṇiyam* < *punya*: ‘Merit’; *cimmam* < *simham* ‘lion’; *akkam* < *akṣam* ‘eye’ and so on.

Borrowed lexical items from Sanskrit

Many Tamil words are replaced by borrowed words from Sanskrit, and the native words became obsolete during the medieval time itself. Many Sanskrit words became part of the linguistic stock of Tamil during the medieval period, and so the equivalent Tamil words that are used widely in Caṅkam texts are either used in a very minimum context, or not used at all both in the medieval texts as well as in modern Tamil language. Consider below some of the commonly used Tamil words that are replaced by the corresponding Sanskrit words.⁶

Original Tamil word	Sanskrit word	Nativized word	Meaning
cinam	gōba-	kōpam	anger
maṅiṇcci	santōśa-	cantōcam	happiness
ariñan	uttama-	uttamar	noble person
uyantōn	adhipati-	atipati	leader
eṇ	gaṇi	kaṇi	calculate

The nativized Sanskrit words in Tamil made the parallel Tamil words obsolete during the medieval period itself, so their use is blocked. This may be considered as one of the important reasons for why the movement for purism was developed at a later point.⁷

should be understood that as there were no written records for Tamil produced during that time, it becomes not possible to predict what Sanskrit words would have been in turn by Tamil at that point.

⁶ Vaidyanathan (1971) documents the Sanskrit words that were borrowed during Caṅkam time as well as during medieval period.

⁷ See Annamalai (1979, p. 35-59) for a detailed account of the linguistic purism in Tamil.

Present tense marker *-kinr*

Caṅkam Tamil exhibits only past and non-past distinction as far as tense is concerned, and no present suffix is attested. Only the suffixes *-vu* and *-pu* (non-past) along with a set of past tense markers including *-nt*, *-tt* etc., are used widely in Caṅkam Tamil. The present tense suffix *-kinr* occurs in the post Caṅkam works of *Cilappatikaram* and *Paripadal*. But later during the bhakti period it is widely used both in Śaiva as well as in Vaiṣṇava hymns. This suffix was later developed into a more refined form with two other allomorphs namely *-kiṛ* and *-kkiṛ* as in modern Tamil⁸. Thus, it can be stated that the development of present tense marker shows a continuum of linguistic changes from post Caṅkam to bhakti period. It is unknown, however, why and how only the form *-kinr* was attested for the first time, and not the other regular suffix *-kiṛ*. Sundaran (1965, p. 140) suggests that the suffix *-kint* that occurs in Caṅkam Tamil is the source for the suffix *-kinr* in bhakti period. Interestingly, one notices the use of *-kinr* with the conditional suffix *-aal* in Aingurunuru, Ahanaanuru and Kalittohai as shown below.

aiṅkurunūru:

75: alar toṭaṅkinṛāl ūrē malara ‘if the flower blooms, the whole town is happy’

411: kār toṭaṅkinṛāl kāmar puṛavē ‘if the winter starts, the lovers separate’

412: kār toṭaṅkinṛāl poludē ‘if the clouds start, the day dawns...’

akanānūru:

256: kavvai ākinṛāl peritē ini ahdu

‘if it is for the doing, it becomes a big issue’

kalittokai

41: nanṛu ākinṛāl tōzi nam vallaiyuḷ ‘if it is good, friend is within our reach..’

The particle *kil*: The particle *-kil* ‘to be able’ is a new innovation in bhakti literature, and was not found either in old Tamil or in modern Tamil. This means that this verb is only found in medieval texts. Even though its origin is obscure, it is a possible candidate for one to assume that it is a source for the later development of ‘modal’ forms. However, no study is made so far linking this suffix and the equivalent modal form in modern Tamil. Zvelebil (1971, p. 444), for example, hypothesizes that this suffix is the starting point for the development of present tense marker in Tamil. But, it is to be noted that both the verb *-kil* and the suffix *-kiṇṛ* are used distinctively and extensively in bhakti Tamil, and hence considering them as related to one another does not seem to be a plausible hypothesis. Note below the use of the suffix *kil* and *-kinr* in Tiruvācakam in distinct senses:

kirpan uṇṇavē ‘I am able only to eat’

⁸ E.g. nī māḷā vāṅkiṇṛāyē ‘you live without dying’ (Māṅikkavācakar 23)

paṇai piṭittuk kiṭakkinrēnai ‘I am lying here grabbing the stylus’ (31)
Tiruvācakam (14)⁹

The conditional marker -āl

The conditional suffix *-in* is used widely in Caṅkam Tamil, but in the language of bhakti both *-āl* and *-in* are used. As stated elsewhere, only in some instances, the suffix *-āl* is used with the present suffix *-kinr* to denote conditional in Caṅkam. The suffix *-āl* is used both as an instrumental suffix as well as a conditional suffix in both medieval and modern Tamil. The difference between the use of *-in* and *-āl* as a conditional suffix is that the former occurs with any tense suffix, but the later occurs only with past tense marker.

pērkoṇṭa pārppān pirāntannai arccittāl
name-acquired Brahmin god-acc. worship
‘If a known Brahmin worships the God...’ (Tirum: 519).

Negative construction and the use of the suffix -ā

The system of negative has underwent many changes in all of the three stages of Tamil, and in each stage one finds a complex system of features for ‘negation’. The Caṅkam Tamil has the suffix *-ā* as a negative marker and it is added after the infinitive of the verb as in *ceya + a > ceyā*.¹⁰ The form *ceyā* is homonymous to the ‘negative participle marker’ *ceyā* ‘one who did not do’ and *ceyān* ‘he who did not do’. Interestingly, Caṅkam Tamil shows the suffix *-al* being used for negative participle as in *vār-al-an* ‘one who did not come’. But, only the suffix *-ā* is carried over to bhakti period, but not the suffix *-al*. When the suffix *-ā* occurs with the word *utai*, for example, it gives the meaning of ‘the one who is possessed with s.t.’. E.g. *aṭakkamuṭaiyān* ‘one who is possessed with obedience’ (Tirum 554). *Tirumurai* text also contains the suffix *-āta* besides the remnants from Caṅkam i.e., *-ā*. E.g. *kallāta mūtarai* ‘the unlearned fool’ (Tirum 337). The relative participle form is marked in bhakti period with two different suffixes namely *-āta* and *-ā*, where as in Caṅkam period only the suffix *-ā* is used. It is worth mentioning the fact that in modern Tamil only the suffix *-āta* is used as a relative participle marker. Thus, medieval time is the period when both the newly developed grammatical forms, as well as the remnants from Caṅkam Tamil are retained.

Use of the aspectual auxiliary koṇṭu:

It is generally believed that part of the aspectual system, the way it is understood in modern Tamil, was developed in medieval Tamil and most of the complex structures were developed later during the post-medieval period. One example for this is that the

⁹ ‘l’ becoming ‘ṛ’ is a common phonological rule in Tamil. This is the reason why the form ‘kiṛpan’ is attested here, rather than ‘kilpan’.

¹⁰ Notice that the root is not doubled, as it should be in modern Tamil where the final consonant of the single syllable words double when a suffix is added.

reflexive suffix *-koḷ* is used only with its lexical meaning of ‘have/acquire’ in Caṅkam Tamil, but in medieval Tamil it is grammaticalized, and the meaning of ‘self-benefaction’ is evolved. The other semantic nuances of this suffix, such as ‘future utility’, ‘reflexivity’ etc., are not attested in any of the medieval texts. This implies that the grammaticalized verb *-koḷ* with its meaning of ‘self-benefaction’ did not yet move on to the next stage of elaboration during the medieval period, and only must have taken place in the modern period.

The suffix *koṅṭu* occurs only after nouns in most of the Caṅkam Tamil works, giving the meaning ‘have s.t.’, but only in medieval Tamil it is used widely with a verbal participle form. Presumably, this led to the development of the aspectual auxiliary verb. Following examples substantiate the point that the new structure of [participle + *koṅṭu*], was introduced in bhakti period.

tētik **kaṅṭu koṅṭēn**

seek-and find-and acquired ‘I sought and realized (Him within me)’
(Appar Tēvāram: 4.9.12)¹¹

nuṅporu **lāyntu koṅṭu**

deep knowledge research have

‘Having researched the deep knowledge’ (Appar Tēvāram 4.40.2).

Despite very less number of occurrences, especially in Akanānūru, no use of this form in large number, as in medieval texts, is found to be occurring in Caṅkam texts.

vari punai villan orukaṇai terintukoṅṭu

line beauty opponent an arrow having known

‘having understood the power of the arrow from the opponent’ (Akam: 48)

There is a strong reason to believe that *Appar* was the one who used the structure of the form [verbal participle + *koṅṭu*] with aspectual meaning and it spread further among the other poet saints at a later point.¹² Since, the structure: [verbal participle + *koṅṭu*], is not used very much in Caṅkam Tamil, and it is attested largely in medieval Tamil, one can suppose that only during the medieval period the reanalysis of the lexical verb *koḷ* must have taken place in a wider perspective. Since *Appar* is considered as the earliest among all the other poet saints, and we find this structure being used only in his work more than any other saint poets, we may assume that his work contributed to the widespread use of this auxiliary verb at a later stage.

¹¹ The Śaiva saint Appar is the earliest Śaiva poet whose work is included in fourth book of the Śaiva canon Tirumuṟai.

¹² A search in the archive of medieval texts for the use of *koṅṭu* as an aspectual auxiliary shows that only the structure noun + *koṅṭu* is used quite extensively in the Tirumuṟai texts. But, the typical structure of ‘verbal ‘participle + *koṅṭu*’ seems to have been used in a much lower percentage.

When the verb *koṇṭu* is used with another verbal participle form, it loses its lexical meaning and gives a grammatical meaning of ‘acquiring s.t. for one’s own benefit’. This reanalyzed structure led to the use of *koṇṭu* as a grammatical category. The lexical verb *koḷ* also occurs in the language simultaneously. Even though, the combination [noun + *koṇṭu*] is used along with its lexical usage throughout the medieval period, the combination of [participle + *koḷ*] with other tense markers, however, are not attested in bhakti texts. So, it may be assumed that during the bhakti period grammaticalization of this auxiliary verb in its past participle form (*koṇṭu*) was targeted, and it did not spread to other tense forms.¹³

Use of the aspectual auxiliary *viṭu*:

Unlike, the use of *kol*, the completive auxiliary *-iṭu* seems to have been a well developed system both in medieval Tamil as well as in Caṅkam Tamil. Consider below the example sentences taken from Tirumantiram, which shows the use of the suffix *-iṭu* as a completive auxiliary verb – meaning the action stated by the verb happens for sure.

ovvāta manṛuḷ āṭiṭum
 inappropriate assembly dance
 ‘One who would be dancing (for sure) in an inappropriate assembly’
 (Tirum: 130).

vilankiṭu perumaram pōla
 cherish big tree like
 ‘Like a tree that cherishes well’ (Puram: 278).

Note that in modern Tamil only the verb *-viṭu* is used as an aspectual auxiliary, but in medieval and old Tamil the verb *-iṭu* is used in its place. It seems clear that the auxiliary verb **-viṭu** which is conceptually related to *-iṭu*, is grammaticalized in modern Tamil in replacing *-iṭu*.¹⁴

As for the other aspectual markers *kontiru*, *iru* etc., no attestation is found in medieval texts in any grammaticalized context other than their lexical meanings.

Appellative Verbs:

When tense is marked covertly in a verb, it is called an ‘appellative verb’¹⁵. Tolkappiyam calls regular verbs with tense as *vinai* and the appellative verbs as *kurippu vinai*. Both medieval and old Tamil shows many occurrences of appellative verbs, but in modern Tamil, only very few verbs take tense covertly. Tolkappiyar groups two types of appellative verbs, and they are a) appellative verbs of rational class and b) appellative verbs non-rational class. The rational class of verbs take human person, number and

¹³ See Annamalai (1985) and Schiffman (2005) for a detailed analysis of the use of the aspectual auxiliary *koḷ* and their various usages.

¹⁴ The lexical verb *iṭu* means ‘place, deposit or discharge’ (DED 442), ‘hit against’ (DED 443).

¹⁵ It was Caldwell (1961, p. 477) who termed this type of verbs as ‘appellative’ verbs.

gender suffix, where as the non-rational class verbs take the neuter suffixes. Examples for rational class of appellative verbs include *purattanan* ‘outside person’, *nilattanan* ‘one who possess the land’, *allan* ‘non-existent-he’, *ilan* ‘not-he’, *ilaḷ* ‘not-she’, *uḷaḷ* ‘exist-she’, *ular* ‘exist-he’ etc. The examples for irrational class of appellative verbs include *inṛu* ‘not-thing’, *uṭaiya* ‘that which posses’, *uṭaittu* ‘that which possess’ etc. Caldwell (1961) notes that the class of forms such as *nallatu* ‘good thing’, *nallar* ‘good person - epicene’ etc., as appellative nouns (p. 479).

Except for a very minimum number of appellative nouns such as *nallatu* ‘good’, *nanṛu* ‘good thing’ etc., most of the appellative verbs, as cited above, are obsolete in modern Tamil. This implies the fact that there must have been of less use in medieval Tamil than old Tamil. But an attempt to search the corpus of text from these three periods shows that these verbs exist abundantly only in Caṅkam Tamil, but not as many in medieval Tamil text. In this respect, one can conclude that both medieval and modern Tamil do not exhibit much difference as far as the use of appellative verbs are concerned. Caldwell (1961, p. 479) also notes that the appellative noun is more commonly used in the classical dialect of the modern Tamil than in the colloquial dialect.

Participial Nouns

As in the case of aspectual system, the participial noun formation is found to be a well developed system in all of the three stages of Tamil. However, all of these three stages differ from each other in the way the participial nouns are formed. Annamalai (1972) with a detailed study of the participial nouns as used in modern Tamil identifies the participial nouns as the ones with the suffixes *-avan* (*varu-kir-avan* ‘he who comes’), *-avaḷ* (*varukir-avaḷ* ‘girl who comes’) and *-atu* (*va-nt-atu* ‘that which came’). One can further reanalyze these suffixes as having the suffix *-a* with person number gender suffixes, where the suffix *-a* is to be considered as relative participle marker. This structure, however, is not attested either in old Tamil or in medieval Tamil. Rather, in old Tamil the suffixes *-ōm* (*nāṭṭōm* ‘inhabitants of the country’), *-ōr* (*vant-ōr* ‘those who came’), *-ār* (*uṭaiyār* ‘he who possesses’), etc., are used on a very regular fashion, besides some of the very restricted type suffixes such as *-mar* (*irupatinmar* ‘twenty people’) and *-ana* (*pālana* – ‘portion-that’).¹⁶

Also note that in old Tamil these suffixes are also used with nouns, as shown here. Same is the case with medieval Tamil, except for the fact that the modern Tamil suffixes *-an*, *-aḷ*, *-ar* etc., are used in medieval Tamil only with words that do not take tense, like negative participial nouns, adjectival nouns etc. (E.g. *arīyātav-an* ‘one who doesn’t know’, *mārpīn-an* ‘the person chest’). The old Tamil suffixes such *-ōr* (*mitantōr* ‘one who floats’) and *-mār* (*maṭantaimār* ‘those who are illiterates’) are also used widely in medieval Tamil. What it suggests is that medieval Tamil shows some of the features that are current both in modern Tamil as well as in old Tamil. This means that medieval Tamil retains not only the newly developed forms, and also the ones from old Tamil.

¹⁶ Cf. Zvelebil (1970, p. 33-34).

This is similar to what we discussed earlier in the context of the use of the conditional suffixes *-ā* and *-in*.

Case system

Case system is one of the complex structures of Tamil and one finds it more complex in old Tamil than in the other two genres. This is because many post positional forms are used in Caṅkam Tamil in place of case suffixes. In medieval and modern Tamil the case system has underwent many changes both in terms of restricting the number of suffixes to be used for each case, and also in terms of avoiding redundancies. To cite one example, medieval Tamil has a set of suffixes, what are called *cāriyai* by traditional Tamil grammarians. The language of old and medieval Tamil used them along with the case markers, as in **at-an-ai** ‘that-an-obj.’. The suffix *-an* here does not have any function of its own, except for maintaining meter in poems. There are more number of *cāriyais* found in old Tamil than in medieval Tamil. However, in the case system of literary language of modern Tamil, these suffixes are retained in order to maintain the aesthetics of the language. In some case forms, like in genitive, both case suffixes and the *cāriyai* are used to mark the ‘possessive’ meaning. Thus, the word *maratt-in-uṭaiya* ‘tree-in-gen. – of the tree’ can be expressed in modern Tamil either as *mara-tt-in* or *maratt-in-uṭaiya*, thus creating a redundancy. The modern spoken Tamil, however, avoided such redundancies, and all of the *cāriyais* are eliminated altogether. This type of linguistic change had occurred in medieval Tamil in some sense. Medieval Tamil eliminated many of the postpositional suffixes that were used in Caṅkam Tamil. Rajam (1992, p. 306) lists around fifty different case markers and postpositional forms that she claims are used in Caṅkam Tamil. Most of the suffixes that she includes are particles that can occur independently of the case system. For example, one of the locative markers that she lists under case suffixes is *ayal*, which literally means ‘vicinity’. The sentence *malai ayal* means ‘by the side of the mountain’. According to Rajam, it is a postpositional phrase in old Tamil. Agesthalingom and Shanmugam (1970), for example, lists only twenty three case markers and postpositions that they consider are used in the Tamil of the Pallava period, which is the beginning of the language of bhakti.

Phonological Reduction, Reanalysis and formation the modal auxiliary *-lām*:

Development of the modal auxiliary suffix *-lām* in Tamil requires special attention in the sense that it is one of the grammaticalization processes namely 'reanalysis' was responsible for the formation of this suffix in modern Tamil (See Renganathan, 2010). Like the process of metaphorization which is accompanied by the process of reanalysis, cases of phonological reduction of lexical forms also tend to cause the process of reanalysis and subsequently to emergence of new morphological form. Hopper and Traugott (1993:345) illustrate this phenomenon with examples from Turkish, Maori etc., where certain phonological change within lexical words lead to morphologization. Tirumantiram text shows evidences of utterances where probability meaning is

understood at clausal level with a combination of verbal noun with the suffix *-al* and the verb *ākum* ‘s.t. would become’.

āṇavam nīṅkā tavar enalākumē (enal ākumē - original form)

Ego rid of those say become

One might be called those without getting rid of the ego (Tirum: 398:4)

neñcena nīṅkā nilai peralākumē (peralākumē)

Heart –that rid of state obtain become

One might obtain a state with everything rid of from heart (Tirum: 2719:4)

talaipaṭa lākum tarumamum tānē (paṭa lākumē - reanalyzed)

Dominant become faith indeed

Faith might get the dominant position indeed (Tirum: 2666:4)

Correspondingly, the verb *ākum* shows a variant of *āmē* with a phonological simplification of dropping *ku*. Expressions with this variant are deemed to be synonymous to the corresponding forms without phonological reduction.

tānē taṭavarai taṅ **kaṭal āmē** (phonological reduction)

Self realize to self succeed become

Those who can realize themselves can succeed from one’s own self

(Tirum: 10:4)

appari cīcan aruḷ **peral āmē**

(peral āmē - reanalysis/phonological reduction)

That Lord grace obtain become

One might get the grace of the Lord (Tirum: 36:4)

karai pacu pācam kaṭantu **eytal āmē** (eytalāmē - phonological reduction)

Stain soul affinity surpass attain become

One might get a state surpassing sin, selfishness and other worldly affections

(Tirum: 49:4)

While the form *āmē* occurs with a noun, it is understood with a similar meaning of ‘would it become’ as in the examples shown above. As a result of the phonological reduction from *ākum* > *ām*, the process of reanalysis of the structure [verbal noun + *al* + *ākum*] to [Inf. of verb + *lām*] has taken place historically, which presumably pass through the verbal noun construction (ex. *varal* + *ākum*) into an intermediate construction (ex. *vara* + *lām*) after a change from *ākum* to *ām*.

Similar cases of occurrences with *ākum* is found to be occurring in Divyaprabandam, which belongs to medieval Tamil and in Aingurunuru, which belongs to Sangam Tamil.

mukti murra lākumē
Salvation obtain might become
One might obtain the salvation (Divyaprabandam: 830:8)

mararāka lākumē
forget become
One might forget (Divyaprabandam: 831:8)

iṟai nekiṟ cellal ākum annāy
King kind go become, Madam
Oh! Madam! One might reach the heart of the king. (Aing. 25:4)

A search of the forms *ākum* and *ām* occurring with verbal noun form with the suffix *-al* indicates that Caṅkam Tamil does not show any occurrences with phonological reduction. Similarly, only in Tirumantiram among the medieval texts does one find instances of these examples in a relatively larger number of cases. This forces us to conclude that the process of phonological reduction of *ākum* to *ām* and correspondingly the process of reanalysis leading to morphologization of the suffix *lām* must have taken place during the time of Tirumantiram. It is worth to note here that the forms like *pārkkalākum* 'it is possible to see', *koṭkkalākum* 'it is possible to give' etc., along with their synonymous forms such as *pārkkalām* and *koṭkkalām* respectively are still used in restricted contexts such as scholarly writings, historical novels etc. This phenomenon may also be considered as a case of wrong segmentation of morphological form followed by wider popularization in modern Tamil grammars in the sense that instead of segmentation of these forms as verbal noun with *-al + ākum (ām)*, the grammars misrepresented it as infinitive form with *-a + lām*¹⁷.

The trajectory:

The well developed structure of present day Tamil constitutes mainly two types of verb forms in large part namely infinitive based verbs and verbal participle based verbs. Verb forms with infinitive as base are found to be attested more in number only starting from post-medieval period when Saiva Siddanta and Vaishnava religious texts were composed in abundance. However, the forms with infinitive form of a verb and the auxiliary *vēṇṭum* with the meaning 'need' occur more commonly during the medieval period than the other modal forms such as the ones with *muṭiyum* (can) and *lām* (may). Even though the word *muṭiyum* (can) is attested in abundance as a main verb in medieval and Caṅkam periods, its use as modal form is attested in rare numbers only in religious texts. Thus, it may be understood that the structure of Verb + *vēṇṭum* must have been developed first followed by the other modal forms. Perhaps, this could be because the structure with

¹⁷ Caldwell (1961:537-38) recognizes that *-al* is an alternative form of infinitive suffix *-a* in Tamil.

vēṇṭum 'need/should' has more relevance in the context of religious texts than its counterpart Verb + *muṭiyum*, which mainly denotes one's capability. This makes one to believe that 'making a request to god'; and 'asking for favors' by devotees should have been more common than proclaiming god's abilities. Thus, when one attempts to draw the line of progression for the development of modal forms in Tamil, the following may be considered.

- 1) Infinitive form of verb + *vēṇṭum* 'need' - attested more from medieval period onwards.
- 2) Infinitive form of verb + *muṭiyum* 'capability' - attested more in post-medieval period onwards.
- 3) Infinitive form of verb + *lām* 'possibility' - attested only in Modern Tamil and very infrequently in medieval Tamil.

Similarly, development of aspectual forms may be considered to belong to the following sequence:

- 1) Verbal participle + *koṇṭu* - attested in a very few cases in Caṅkam texts and less in number in medieval texts.
- 2) Verbal participle + *koṇṭiru* - attested very rarely in medieval Tamil.
- 3) Verbal participle + *iṭu* - attested largely in medieval Tamil, but not in Caṅkam and modern Tamil.
- 4) Verbal participle + *viṭu* - attested largely in modern Tamil.

Concluding remarks:

Language of bhakti contributes in a large scale to the changes in many of the linguistic forms that were either used less frequently or not used at all in Caṅkam Tamil. Majority of the changes occurred mostly due to the works of poet saints who employed religious content with enormous borrowings from Sanskrit. Excessive use of Sanskrit words and incorporating religious themes, as opposed to the earlier didactic themes, led to both simplification and enlargement of the language. The language was simplified in the sense that most of the redundancies as in the use of case forms, and negative markers were eliminated and it underwent enlargement both at lexical and morphological levels in the sense that many new grammatical categories came into existence, as in the case of formation of aspectual auxiliary *koṇṭu*, present tense suffix *-kinru.*, the modal auxiliary *lām* and so on. Further, the borrowed words in their nativized form led to restructuring of existing lexicon as well as morphological structures. Mining the corpus of electronic texts from Caṅkam to modern Tamil allows us to identify the trajectory of the linguistic changes that occurred through the three genres namely Caṅkam, medieval and modern Tamil.

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