

Some Remarks on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu Cult in Early Tamil Religion and Literature*

—With Special Reference to the Tirumāl Odes of the *Paripāṭal*—

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The aim of this paper is to throw light on the religious phenomena centring round Māyōṇ-Tirumāl, a god of great antiquity and popularity in Tamil Nadu, South India, by the use of the literary materials in ancient Tamil. In order to have a clue to the problems concerning this deity and his cult in the religious history of the southernmost part of the subcontinent, we will analyse how the cult of Māyōṇ-Tirumāl as seen in the classical texts coincides with, or differs from, that of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Northern religious tradition, and examine the significance of the worship of this god in Dravidian India.

I. A Brief Note on the References to God Tirumāl Prior to the *Paripāṭal*

References to Tirumāl, one of the important gods in the Southern Hindu pantheon traditionally identified with Viṣṇu, abound in the *Caṅkam* or early Tamil literature of the pre-devotional period, although such references are much limited in number than, for instance, those to Lord Murukan, the God *par excellence* of the Tamils⁽¹⁾. Tirumāl's eminence contrasts strikingly with the inconspicuous role played by Lord Śiva, another important god of the Southern devotional tradition, in the *Caṅkam* corpus⁽²⁾.

In the *Tolkāppiyam* (*poruḷatikāram* 5.1), the earliest extant Tamil grammar treatise, four deities are named as the guardians of four different tracts (*tiṇai-s*). They are Māyōṇ, Cēyōṇ Vēntan and Varuṇan,

who preside over *mullai* (forest or pasture), *kurīñci* (mountain), *marutam* (countryside) and *neytal* (seashore) respectively. These gods are traditionally identified with Viṣṇu, Murukan, Indra and Varuṇa in the orthodox Hindu or Brāhmaṇical pantheon in the Tamil land⁽³⁾. Other lists of four guardian deities are found elsewhere in Tamil literary sources. While Tirumāl/Viṣṇu as well as Murukan/Subrahmaṇya appears in all those lists, the two other gods found in the famous list of the *Tolkāppiyam*, viz. Vēntaṇ and Varuṇaṇ, are replaced by Śiva and Rāma in later works. Apart from this set of deities, temples dedicated to five major gods find mention in the *Cilappatikāram* also. Here, the five gods are Viṣṇu, Murukan, Śiva, Rāma and Indra⁽⁴⁾. From the above literary evidences, it is inferred that Tirumāl as well as Murukan has been predominating since the early ages of Tamil literature.

Aiṅkurunūru and *Kuruntokai*, two old anthologies of the *akam* genre of the *Caṅkam* corpus, are both silent about Tirumāl, while they often refer to Murukan under such names as Cēy, Muruku, Neṭuvēḷ and Vēḷ⁽⁵⁾. Only *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, *Perumpāṇārruppaṭai*, *Mullaipāṭṭu*, *Maturaikkāñci*, *Neṭunalvāṭai* and *Paṭṭinappālai* of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* (“*Ten Idylls*”) collection make mention of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu or his consort Śrī-Lakṣmī and give some information about them. Among these works, the *Perumpāṇārruppaṭai* touches on them in several passages. In the verses 28-30 of this idyll, Toṇṭaimāṇ ḷantiraiyaṇ, the ruler of Kāñcīpuram, is said to trace his descent from God Tirumāl. The Tamil text runs as follows: ‘Nīyirum irunilam kaṭanta tirumaṇu mārpīṇ munnīrvaṇṇaṇ piṇākaṭai’ (“You trace your descent from one who has the sea-hued skin”). It is obvious that Viṣṇu’s aspect as *Trivikrama* and the sacred tuft of hair called *śrīvatsa* on his chest are alluded to in this passage⁽⁶⁾. Both are the characteristics of anthropomorphised Viṣṇu in the Northern-Sanskritic mythology of this god. The verse 272 of the same idyll refers to the god lying on a serpent bed (‘pāmpu anaippaḷḷi amarntōṇ’). From the context, it is evident that this god is none other than Tirumāl/Viṣṇu

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in his Nārāyaṇa form otherwise known as Śeṣaśāyin. The serpent is presumably a well-known Nāga variously called Śeṣa, Ādiśeṣa or Ananta in Sanskrit myths. According to the commentators⁽⁷⁾, this passage hints at Tiruveḥkā⁽⁸⁾ in Kāñcī, one of the 108 holy sites (*tiruppati*) of Lord Tirumāl in those days. The verse 402 calls this god by the name of Neṭiyōṇ (=the Tall One), a common epithet ascribed to Tirumāl⁽⁹⁾. The verses 402-404 of the *Perumpāṇṅarruppaṭai* state that he is a dark-skinned one and has a lotus-navel from which Brahmā, the Four-faced God, emerges⁽¹⁰⁾. The celebrated legend of the Churning of the Ocean (*samudramathana*) by Viṣṇu is implied in the verse 487 ('pāl kaṭal vaḷ-aikaṇṭanna vāl uḷaip puravi'). The last verse (v.500) of the *Perumpāṇṅarruppaṭai* mentions a mountain which is, according to a commentator⁽¹¹⁾, nothing but Vēṅkaṭamalai, the famous hill sacred to Lord Tirumāl /Viṣṇu geographically identified with today's Venkata Hills of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

The verses 1-3 of the *Mullaippaṭṭu*, another idyll of the *Pattuppaṭṭu*, liken the thundering clouds gathering and moving swiftly to gigantic Māl (=Tirumāl/Viṣṇu). In those lines, he is depicted as having a disc (*nēmi* parallel to Skt. *cakra*) and a right-whorled chank (*valampuri*) in his both hands and bearing Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī (*mā*) on his chest. According to Naccinārkkiniyar, a reputed commentator of the fourteenth(?) century, Māal (=Mal) is mentioned at the beginning of the *Mullaippaṭṭu* because he is the god peculiar to *mullai* or the sylvan tract ('itanāṇē mullaikkuriya teyvāṅkūrinār')⁽¹²⁾. The verses 590-591 of the *Maturaikkāñci*, one of the *Pattuppaṭṭu* idylls, speak of the festival celebrating Māyōṇ's birth who gained victory over the cruel demons (*avuṇan*-s, perhaps cognate with Skt. *asura*)⁽¹³⁾.

The *Puranānūru*⁽¹⁴⁾, a representative *puram* anthology, provides some information on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. *Puranānūru* 56 (5,6,9) of the *pūvainilai* genre, for example, portrays Tirumāl/Viṣṇu endowed with the banner (of Garuḍa) and the complexion resembling the colour of sapphire as the

Protector of the entire universe⁽¹⁵⁾. *Puranānūru* 57 (2-3), on the other hand, mentions Māyōn, to whom Nanmāraṅ, a Pandya king, is compared⁽¹⁶⁾. ‘Viṇṭu’, the noun which appears in *Puranānūru* 391.2, may perhaps mean Tirumāl⁽¹⁷⁾.

Akanānūru and *Narrīṅai*, two of the *akam* anthologies of the *Etṭuttokai* (“Eight Anthologies”), also make mention of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu and his incarnated forms. In *Akanānūru* 175 (13-17), a rainbow is figuratively identified with the garland on the chest of God Tirumāl having a discus-weapon (*nēmi*)⁽¹⁸⁾. *Narrīṅai* 32 (1-2) likens a black mountain and a shiny waterfall to Māyōn and Vāliyōn (=Baladeva) respectively⁽¹⁹⁾. G. L. Hart notices an allusion to the well-known story of Kṛṣṇa and the Gopī-s in *Akanānūru* 59 (5-6)⁽²⁰⁾.

With regard to Śrī-Lakṣmī, reference is made in the *Malaipaṭukaṭām*, *Paṭṭinappālai*, *Mullaippāṭṭu* and *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* of the *Ten Idylls*. *Mullaippāṭṭu* 3 touches upon the Śrīdhara aspect of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu embracing Śrī-Lakṣmī. In the *Malaipaṭukaṭām* 355-356, it is said that Tiru (=Śrī-Lakṣmī)⁽²¹⁾ is seated on the chest of a king (‘panmāṅ cerumikkup pukalum tiru ār mārapan’)⁽²²⁾. *Paṭṭinappālai* 291 admires the town walls of flourishing Uraṅtai in which Tiru remains (‘tiru nilaiya perumanneyin’). A similar account is given in *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* 70, which makes mention of the faultless streets where Goddess Tiru dwells (‘tiru vīrṛirunta tītutīr niyamattu’). It is noteworthy that, in these verses, Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is found inseparable from the ideas of prosperity and auspiciousness, the concepts closely associated with this goddess in the Northern tradition. Besides *Pattuppāṭṭu*, the *Akanānūru* (316.13) in the *Etṭuttokai* collection, for example, refers to Śrī-Lakṣmī under the epithet of Ceyyōl (“the Red Woman”)⁽²³⁾. *Puranānūru* 358, too, adverts Tiru.

The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, a long poem with religious flavour dedicated exclusively to Lord Murugaṅ, contains several passages which refer to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu and Śrī-Lakṣmī. The verses 148-151, for instance, speak of a god holding a banner of Garuḍa, the celebrated snake-killer in

Hindu mythology. This god proves to be none other than Tirumāl/Viṣṇu⁽²⁴⁾. In the verses 164-165 of the same idyll, just as in *Perumpāṇāruppaṭai* 402-404, the emergence of God Brahmā from the lotus-navel of Tirumāl is alluded to, although the proper noun denoting Viṣṇu (for example, Māl or Tirumāl) appears nowhere⁽²⁵⁾. The verse 159 may be understood as an allusion to Śrī-Lakṣmī (Tirumakal)⁽²⁶⁾. *Tirumurukāruppaṭai* 160 hints at Four Deities. Naccinārkkiniyar regards them as the group of Intiran (=Skt.Indra), Yaman (=Yama), Varuṇan (=Varuṇa) and Cōman (=Kubera)⁽²⁷⁾, whereas Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaranār (1909~1972), a reputed contemporary commentator, considers them as Piraman (=Brahmā), Tirumāl or Ari (=Viṣṇu), Uruttiran or Civan (=Rudra-Śiva), and Intiran (=Indra). In *Tirumurukāruppaṭai* 162 too, Three Gods are referred to. They are identifiable with Ayan (=Aja, namely Brahmā), Ari (=Hari, namely Viṣṇu) and Aran (=Hara, namely Śiva), according to Naccinārkkiniyar; while Tirumāl (=Viṣṇu), Uruttiran (=Rudra-Śiva) and Intiran (=Indra)⁽²⁸⁾ constitute the triad, according to Cōmacuntaranār. Though the identity of these groups of deities has not been convincingly established, Tirumāl/Viṣṇu should be included here as it is almost beyond doubt that some idea of *trimūrti* is implied in those lists⁽²⁹⁾.

II. Tirumāl in the *Paripāṭal*

The *Paripāṭal*, one of the *Eṭṭuttokai* anthologies, is the collection of odes in praise of various things, such as Tirumāl, Cevvēl, Korraivai, Vaiyai and Maturai. According to legends, the original *Paripāṭal* consists of seventy long poems. But all of them are not available now. Of those available, some remain only in fragments (*tiraṭṭu*)⁽³⁰⁾.

The extant *Paripāṭal* contains six odes (I, II, III, IV, XIII, XV) dedicated to Lord Tirumāl by different poets. Besides these six integral odes, there is a fragmental hymn of unknown authorship which is composed of eighty-two lines.

A. Mythological Elements in the Tirumāl Odes

It is true that the Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* are relatively abundant in mythological information on Tirumāl. The descriptions themselves, however, are rather fragmentary and, in most cases, are found only in allusion. Any systematic account of this deity and his worship cannot be expected in those odes. An attempt has been made here to reconstruct the ancient cycle of Tamil Tirumāl myths by making full use of the available materials of the fragmental descriptions given in the *Paripāṭal*.

1. Antagonism between Tirumāl and the Antigods

Investigating the struggles between Tirumāl and the antigods known as *avuṇan*-s in the *Paripāṭal*, a traditional theme as early as the Ṛg-Vedic times, would be the better way to start discussions, since such a conflict forms the backdrop for various myths around this god and his exploits. The *Paripāṭal*, too, knows the heroic stories of the extermination of demons attributed to the Descents (*avatāra*-s) — the mythical episodes recurring in Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (cf. Viṣṇu's aspect as 'Śatrughna', "Destroyer of Enemies"). The conquests of Tirumāl over the demons is referred to or, at least, implied in not a few stanzas of this anthology. All the references as well as allusions to this tale in the Tirumāl odes are illustrated in Table I.

As illustrated in this table, it is expressly narrated in *Pari*. I 20-27 that Tirumāl won a victory, wielding arrows, and "without touching a plough" ('alantoṭā'). This description is likely to afford a negative proof of the participation of Balarāma armed with a plough in this battle, although Tirumāl is clearly mentioned along with his Balarāma aspects in the preceding passage (viz. *Pari*. I 3, 4, 5)⁽³¹⁾. Tirumāl's victory gained by his powerful arrows is touched upon in the verse XV 60 also.

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TABLE I

Verse	Outline	Weapon mentioned	
I 22-27	Tirumāl wins a victory over <i>Asuras</i> by the use of arrows which fly swifly like a whirlwind.	arrow (<i>kaṇai</i>) (not plough)	Cf.XV 60, for the victorious arrows of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu's aspect as Balarāma?)
I 39-40	Tirumāl the source of extraordinary brave, is the source of fear as well for those who are opposed to him.		
II 36-49	Cut off by Tirumāl with his discus-weapon, the heads of <i>Asuras</i> fall off as if coconuts are dropped from palm trees.	discus	'Discus' is given only in allusion.
III 31-32	Tirumāl subdues <i>Asura</i> Kūntal (Skt.Keśin) in the form of a maned horse.		Viṣṇu's aspect as Kṛṣṇa.
III 54-56	When Tirumāl measures the earth (in three steps), <i>Asuras</i> tremble with fear and escape into the sea.		Viṣṇu's aspect of Vāmana
IV 9	Tirumāl has a discus-weapon with which he brings the lives of his enemies under control.	discus (<i>nēmi</i>)	
IV 47	"O the One (=Tirumāl) who unnerved the opposing powers!"		

Verse	Outline	Weapon mentioned	
XIII 15	“O King of Battle (=Tirumāl)who massacres!”		
XIII 30-33	Tirumāl has a plough with the curved blade with which he ploughs the chest of his enemies just as one ploughs the soil with a spade.	plough (<i>nāñcil</i>)	Viṣṇu’s aspect as Balarāma
XIII 58	Tirumāl is the chief (<i>celvan</i>) who scores a triumph with his discus-weapon in battles.	discus (<i>tikiri</i>)	
XV 44-45	Iruṅkuṅru has the colour of (Māl) who subdued and killed those who fought against him.		

The verb ‘kaṭa’ in *Pari*. I 26 may imply his grand victory without using artifice over the *avuṇan*-s, the opponents of gods, who were entirely dependent on tricks⁽³²⁾.

The word ‘Kūntal’ as the name of an *avuṇan* cited in *Pari*. III 31-32 is the literary Tamil translation of a Sanskrit noun *keśin*⁽³³⁾. Therefore, *Avuṇan* Kūntal parallels Keśin, a horse-shaped demon who is slain by Kṛṣṇa in Northern mythology. It is evident that there lies the Kṛṣṇa cycle of Sanskrit myths at the background of this Tamil legend on Tirumāl’s battle against Kūntal⁽³⁴⁾.

The account given in III 54-56 is no doubt an allusion to Viṣṇu’s Three Strides (*trivikrama*), a well-known theme as early as the Ṛg-Vedic period. As in the Ṛg-Veda⁽³⁵⁾, however, such names as ‘Vāmana’ (Dwarf) and ‘Mahābali’ (alias ‘Bali’, a demon chief) never appear in this passage. The dwarfish form of the Lord is nowhere mentioned in

this paragraph.

The verses XIII 30-33 describe Balarāma's aspect of Lord Tirumāl in his fight with the demons. Here he is found to be armed with a plough (*nāñcil*), as known in the Epic-Purāṇic literature in Sanskrit tradition⁽³⁶⁾.

The verses II 36-49, IV 9 and XIII 58 appreciate the power of the discus-weapon (*tikiri* or *nēmi* parallel to Skt.*cakra*) used by Tirumāl in his battle with the *avuṇaṇ*-s. Similarly, the verse III 87 pays tribute to the chank (*kōṭu* synonymous with Skt.*śaṅkha*) as one of the five weapons (*pañcāyudha*) of God Tirumāl.

Apart from these, the verses III 87, 89-90, IV 47, XIII 15 and XV 44-45 lay stress on Tirumāl's aspect as a brave warrior in antagonism against the *avuṇaṇ*-s, although detailed descriptions of weapons are conspicuous by their absence. It is noteworthy that, in those passages which portray him as a divine fighter, Tirumāl is known under the appellations otherwise applied to kings and warriors⁽³⁷⁾.

With reference to Garuḍa's arrogance as seen in *Pari.* III 59-61, Parimēlaḷakar, a mediaeval commentator, cites the mythological plots of the conflict between Viṣṇu and *avuṇaṇ*-s and the subsequent victory of the former over the latter. It is not quite natural, however, to detect the implication of that effect in the original Tamil text.

2. Birth of God Brahmā

The emergence of God Brahmā from the lotus springing up from Viṣṇu's navel is known to the *Paripāṭal*. For example, *Pari.* III 13 describes Brahmā as the One who was born from the lotus-flower ('tāmarai pūvinuḷ piranton'). Other two passages (*Pari.* IV 60-61; XV 49) refer to the lotus-navel (*pūvvattāmarai*) of Lord Tirumāl/Viṣṇu⁽³⁸⁾. One of the Cevvēl odes in the *Paripāṭal* (VIII 3) mentions "God on a (lotus-) flower" (*malarṁmicai mutalvaṇ*), who is none other than Lord Brahmā. 'Pūvan', an appellation of Brahmā cited in I 46 of the same anthology, reflects the myths of his birth from Viṣṇu's lotus-navel. In this verse,

the subsequent evolution of the universe from God Brahmā is compared to the diffusion of the fragrance (*nārram*) of the (lotus-)flower⁽³⁹⁾. The verses of *Pari.* III 91-94 introduce Tirumāl/Viṣṇu in his Nārāyaṇa aspect sleeping on the cosmic ocean between the periods of dissolution and creation, as well as his bloomed lotus-navel in which Lord Brahmā (called 'Vāymoli-makaṇ') is contained⁽⁴⁰⁾.

3. Churning of the Milk-ocean

The spectacular story of *samudramathana* ("the churning of the milky ocean"), one of the most famous tales in the Viṣṇu cycle of mythology, is suggestively related in the verses II 69-72, where a mass of gods (*amarar*, apparently from Skt.*amara*) and their ambrosia (*amirtam*, *amirtu* or *amiltu*, all derived from Skt.*amṛta*) are mentioned⁽⁴¹⁾. References to *amarar* and *amṛta* are also given in *Pari.* III 15 and 33. Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa lying on the cosmic serpent Ādiśeṣa in the midst of the milk-ocean (*pārkaṭal*) is expressly referred to in *Pari.* XIII 26-29. The most exhaustive description of this episode is to be found in Fragment I 64-71. That paragraph pictures Lord Tirumāl as one who carries a mountain (equivalent to Mt. Madana) on his head, fixes it on his back in the milk-ocean (in the disguise of a turtle), then transforms himself into a huge serpent, and rotates the mountain as the churn-stuff with the serpent-rope for the period of one *tōla*, so as to brew the nectar for the sake of gods (*deva*-s) and antigods (*asura*-s). In this myth, unlike the Sanskrit version given in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, etc.⁽⁴²⁾, Tirumāl performs a triple role of a turtle (known as Kūrma in Sanskrit Purāṇas), a cosmic serpent (named Vāsuki) and the person who draws the serpent-rope⁽⁴³⁾. It is highly probable that a jewel (*maṇi*) cited in *Pari.* I 8-9 as one of Tirumāl's iconographical attributes indicates *kaustubha* (*kauttuwam* in Tamil), the celebrated gem obtained from the bottom of the ocean⁽⁴⁴⁾. The expression 'kaṭal taru maṇi' ("the jewel given by the sea") in *Pari.* I 15, too, most likely points to the *kaustubha*

produced from the milk-ocean when it was churned. It may presumably be true of *tirumaṇi* in *Pari.* I 52 and IV 6. Mōhinī, the female form assumed by Viṣṇu in order to get back the nectar from the *avunāṅs* by seducing them, is suggestively introduced to in verses III 33-34⁽⁴⁶⁾.

4. The Descents (*Avatāra-s*) of Tirumāl

The Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* recount several Descents or divine Incarnations (*avatāra-s*) of Lord Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. In Sanskrit literary tradition, only very lately, viz. in the twelfth century A.D.⁽⁴⁶⁾, the familiar list of the Ten Incarnations (*daśāvatāra-s*)⁽⁴⁷⁾ of this god was systematically established. Before that, the identity of the members and the number of the *avatāra-s* vary according to different lists. In the central part of the *Mahābhārata*, for example, only four or six incarnated forms of Viṣṇu are enumerated⁽⁴⁸⁾. The Great Epic does not offer any systematic account of the *avatāra-s*.

In the South, the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* is known to attribute ten Incarnations to Tirumāl⁽⁴⁹⁾. The *Paripāṭal* also seems to be aware of Incarnation, since a verse (IV 32) probably hints at the concept. The text runs as follows: ‘Niṅ, varutalum oṭukkamum maruttiṅ uḷa’ (“Your arrival and retreat consist in wind”). Parimēlaḷakar annotates this ‘varutal’ (“arrival”) as ‘avatarittal’ (“to incarnate”). The extant *Paripāṭal* introduces seven divine Incarnations in all, some of which coincide with those which are given in the common list of the *daśāvatāra-s* of the Northern tradition. But neither the number of the *avatāra-s* nor the proper name of each one is found anywhere in the original text. The identities of the different Incarnations are given only in allusion. (For example, instead of *varākam*, apparently derived from Skt.*varāha*, a word *kēlal* or *kīḷaru* meaning “boar” is employed to denote the Varāhāvatāra.) The extant text of the *Paripāṭal* contains no references to Viṣṇu’s divine Incarnations such as Matsya, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Buddha and Kalkin. Nor is the explanation of each *avatāra* presented in a

systematic manner. The descriptions are scattered in all the six odes and one fragment dedicated to Tirumāl. The entire list of the references and the allusions to Tirumāl's *avatāra*-s in the extant *Paripāṭal* are given in Table II.

It is appropriate now to embark upon a detailed examination of the references of respective *avatāra*-s.

TABLE II

Name of Avatāra	Verse
Kūrma (Tortoise)	Fragment I 64-66
Varāha (Boar)	II 16-17, 32-35
	III 21-24
	IV 22-24
	XIII 34-36
Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha (Man-lion)	IV 10-21
Vāmana (Dwarf)	III 18-20, 54-56
Kṛṣṇa	III 31-32, 83
	XV 10-14, 27-28
Haṃsa (Swan)	III 25-26
Balarāma or Baladeva	I 1-5
	II 20, 22
	III 83
	IV 38-40
	XIII 30-33
	XV 13, 19, 28, 55, 57-58

a. Kūrmāvatāra

Kūrmāvatāra is hinted at in a paragraph which gives an account of the famous mythological episode of the churning of the milk-ocean

(*pārkaṭal*). Here, in order to churn the milk-ocean, Lord Viṣṇu fixes Mt. Mandara as a churn-stuff on his back in the ocean in which *makara*-s, the mythical fish, swim around⁽⁶⁰⁾. It would not be difficult to detect the implication of the Kūrmāvātāra in this passage, though the word “tortoise” or any other name corresponding to Skt.*kūrma* does not appear in the text⁽⁶¹⁾. No other passages in the *Paripāṭal* make mention of, or an allusion to, this Incarnation.

b. Varāhāvātāra

As for Varāha (Boar or Swine), the third Incarnation of Viṣṇu, reference is made in five places in the *Paripāṭal*.

The first reference appears in the verses II 16-17. In this passage, instead of narrating the adventures of Varāhāvātāra, the period called ‘Varāha’ is introduced in the cosmological explanation of the Creation of the universe (‘*kēlal tikaḷvarakkōlamōṭu peyariya ūḷi*’, which is rendered as “the period named after the shining figure of the Boar”). In Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, the Varāha-kalpa is understood as the period of the Boar Incarnation during which Viṣṇu assumed the divine form of a boar. Therefore, there is no room for doubt that the verses II 16-17 are suggestive of the legend of Varāhāvātāra of Lord Viṣṇu⁽⁶²⁾.

The second reference to this *avatāra* is given in II 32-35, where the marriage between the earth and the Boar (*Kaḷiru*) endowed with the shiny sharp tusks washed by waves is narrated. The paragraph itself would be hardly comprehensible without the help of the commentaries. According to Parimēlaḷakar, this passage is a covert allusion to the theme of Varāhāvātāra saving the earth from the Deluge. The mediaeval commentator compares this mythical theme to the marriage of the earth with the Boar Incarnation (*ātivarakam*)⁽⁶³⁾.

The third reference is seen in III 21-24. In this passage, Tirumāl in the form of a beautiful boar (*kēlal*) draws up the earth from the ocean at the beginning of the Creation which comes after the Catastrophe of

the previous age (*ūli*). This story resembles the Vedic motif of the boar which restores the earth from the underground⁽⁶⁴⁾.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned theme of the marriage between the earth and Varāha (II 32-35), Parimēlalakar interprets 'irunilam' ("the wide earth") as 'nilamakal' ("Goddess of Earth")⁽⁶⁵⁾. With the background of such an allusion, there may perhaps be the Purāṇic image of Viṣṇu as Bhūdhara⁽⁶⁶⁾. It might be possible to trace the association of this subject with Viṣṇu and his consort named Bhūdevī or Bhūmidevī⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The fourth reference to Varāhāvatāra is to be pointed out in XIII 34-36. In these verses, Varāha is cited as one of the three metamorphoses of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, the other two being Nārāyaṇa and Balarāma. He is depicted as a boar (*kaḷiru*) having the decorated tusks supporting the earth.

The point to observe is that, in the *Paripāṭal* odes, the story of Varāhāvatāra is narrated only in the cosmological context of the Creation. The theme of Hiranyākṣa who throws the earth into the ocean, the well-known tale in Sanskrit Purāṇas which lays an underplot to the Varāhāvatāra myth, is nowhere to be mentioned⁽⁶⁸⁾. From this, it does not automatically follow, however, that the author/authors of the *Paripāṭal* did not know Hiranyākṣa, for Demon Hiranyakaśipu, Hiranyākṣa's younger brother, is alluded to in the reference to Nṛsiṃhāvatāra in IV 10-21.

It is to be noted in this connection that the Boar Incarnation seemingly enjoyed considerable popularity in Southern India as revealed by Chalukyas and Vijayanagar rulers who are said to have had a boar as the emblem of their banners, being the devout worshippers of this particular *avatāra*⁽⁶⁹⁾.

c. Narasiṃhāvatāra

As regards this Incarnation, a single reference is to be pointed out in the extant *Paripāṭal* odes, namely *Pari.* IV 10-21. The description is

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comparatively more concrete and exhaustive than those of the other *avatāra*-s. The plot of the verses in question is as follows:

Demon Iraṇyaṇ (<Skt.Hiraṇyakaśipu) showed a strong hatred toward the ardent devotion of his son Piruṅkalātan (<Skt.Prahlāda) toward Lord Tirumāl. Iraṇyaṇ, with the sandal paste on his chest drying with burning anger, tied up his son and tormented him violently. On becoming aware of the harsh persecution given to his devout worshipper, Tirumāl swiftly manifested himself from a nearby pillar along with the thundering beat of drums and defeated Iraṇyaṇ, the persecutor, by tearing up his mountain-like chest with the sharp claws.

Although such name as 'Naracimmaṇ', the Tamil equivalent for Skt. Narasiṃha, and the detailed account of the antagonism between Lord Viṣṇu and Hiraṇyakaśipu are virtually absent in this paragraph, we can say with fair certainty that this passage is underpinned by the Narasiṃha legend of Viṣṇu which appears recurrently with some variation in Sanskrit Purāṇic literature⁽⁶⁰⁾.

d. Vāmanāvatāra

Vāmanāvatāra is alluded to in two places in the third ode of the extant *Paripāṭal*. The first reference appears in the passage which pays tribute to Tirumāl's divine feet (III 18-20). The text runs as follows: 'Niṇ cēvaṭi toḷārum uḷarō avarruḷ kīlē ēḷ ulakamum urra aṭiyinai.' These original verses, which are not easily understandable, are probably an allusion to Vāmanāvatāra of Viṣṇu in view of Parimēlalakar's commentary and so on⁽⁶¹⁾.

As the reference to Vāmana Incarnation in *Pari*. III 54-56 was already taken up in this monograph, it is not to be detailed here. No Tamil term derived, for example, from Skt.*trivikrama* appears in this

passage.

e. Kṛṣṇāvatāra

Four references or allusions to Kṛṣṇāvatāra are to be seen in the *Paripāṭal*. The verses III 31-32, the first reference to this *avatāra*, are allusive to Kṛṣṇa's victory over *Asura* Keśin. The verse III 83, which goes 'iṭavala kuṭavala kōvala kāvala', deserves our attention. The description of this verse is too ambiguous to interpret explicitly, but it might be duly translated as "Left and right, pot and plough, O cowherd, O protector!" According to Parimēlaḷakar's commentary, this is a brief allusion to Tirumāl who performs the *kuravai* dance in company with the shepherdesses attending him on both sides⁽⁶²⁾. Modern scholars like F. Gros and F. Hardy agree with this identification⁽⁶³⁾. Kṛṣṇa's dance with the milkmaids (*gopī*-s) forms one of the typical themes of his mythology. In this simplest verse, it would not be possible to detect an allusion to Kṛṣṇa's beloved Pinnai or Nappinnai⁽⁶⁴⁾. It would be quite natural that the vocative word 'kōvala' in this passage should remind us of 'Gopāla', the pastoral aspect of Kṛṣṇa in Sanskrit myths. There is no doubt that Tamil *kōvalan* is derivative from Skt. *gopāla*⁽⁶⁵⁾. It is noteworthy that the young Kṛṣṇa's erotic exploits well-known in Sanskrit myths, which are interpreted as symbolic of the love of God for the human soul in the devotional context, are totally absent in the *Paripāṭal* odes. However, this does not flatly exclude the possibility that the poets of this Tamil work were familiar with Kṛṣṇa's erotic myths in his cycle of Sanskrit mythology.

Two more passages, XV 10-14 and 27-28, are suggestive of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The former (XV 10-14) refers to a pair who performs one and the same duty and, at the same time, are differentiated from each other in essence just as a word and its inherent meaning. The latter verses (XV 27-28) speak of a black-coloured person wearing a golden dress called *pītāmbara* and accompanying his elder brother. These two references

are obviously to two brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarama (alias Baladeva), both of whom are believed to abide in Iruṅkunram, the hillock sacred to Lord Tirumāl.

f. Haṃsāvatāra

Besides the above-mentioned *avatāra*-s, the *Paripāṭal* refers to Haṃsāvatāra, a less popular Incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. One ode of this anthology (III 25-26) narrates that Tirumāl, in the disguise of a boar, lifted the earth sunk into the sea at the Catastrophe and then, in the form of a swan (Skt.*haṃsa*, Tamil *am̄nac-cēval*), dried the earth by fluttering its wings⁽⁶⁶⁾.

Haṃsāvatāra is known in Sanskrit Purāṇic lore too. As Gros points out⁽⁶⁷⁾, however, Haṃsa in Sanskrit mythology appears for the revelation of the Vedas to the human race, while in the *Paripāṭal* its appearance is associated exclusively with its heroic exploits. In this, one may well recognise the originality of Tamil version of Haṃsāvatāra.

g. Balarāma (alias Baladeva)

Balarāma is an incarnated aspect of Lord Viṣṇu who is most frequently mentioned in the *Paripāṭal*. The reference to this *avatāra* is to be found in six odes of this anthology. This may bespeak the popularity gained by this Incarnation in those days.

In the *Paripāṭal*, as in the Sanskritic tradition, Balarāma is known as an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. Balarāma is, above all, “the one armed with a ploughshare” (*Pari*. XV 19) (cf. Skt. epithet ‘Harāyudha’). His attribute, plough, repeatedly appears in the *Paripāṭal* (I 5; III 83; XIII 30-33; XV 57). The verses XIII 30-33, in particular, stress the matchless power of his plough (*nāñcil*) with which he digs the chests of his enemies to slay them. In *Pari*. XV 58, he is endowed with a club (*taṅṭu*) as his attribute, which is in conformity with the Sanskrit tradition⁽⁶⁸⁾.

The *Paripāṭal* ascribes the banner of palm to Balarāma as his attribute,

as in Sanskrit Purāṇas (cf. Skt. *Taladhvaḥja*). This is the reason why Balarāma is sometimes called ‘Panaikkotiḥyōṇ’, “the one who has the palm-banner”. Apart from this, in the same anthology, he is also depicted as possessing three kinds of banners: a banner of plough, a banner of elephant, and a banner of Garuḍa (*Pari*. I 4; IV 38-42).

In the *Paripāṭal*, Balarāma is said to wear ear-jewels (Skt. *kuṇḍala*, Tamil *kuḷai*) in only one ear (*Pari*. I 5; XV 55). This is an attribute originally ascribed to Sanskrit Balarāma⁽⁶⁹⁾.

As in the Northern Purāṇic tradition, Balarāma, in contrast with his younger brother Kṛṣṇa, is believed to have whitish hue⁽⁷⁰⁾, and, in view of that in Tamil he is called ‘Vāliyōṇ’⁽⁷¹⁾ or ‘Veḷḷaiyōṇ’, either of which signifies “the White One”. In the *Paripāṭal*, Balarāma’s white complexion is likened to the colour of white shells (*vaḷai*)⁽⁷²⁾.

With reference to Balarāma’s complexion, the topic of the colouring of his clothes is sometimes brought up. While their colour is traditionally prescribed as red, blue, etc. in Northern iconography⁽⁷³⁾, *Paripāṭal* II 22 describes his clothes as “garments of darkness” (*iruluṭukkai*), which suggests a darkish colour. (Incidentally, Kṛṣṇa is dressed in yellow or golden clothes known as *pīṭāmbara* in Sanskrit. Cf. *Pari*. XV 28.)

It is historically proved that the worship of Balarāma was in vogue in so-called *Caṅkam* period⁽⁷⁴⁾. Here, it is worth noting that he is referred to in the company of some other gods, particularly Kṛṣṇa.

(1) Balarāma and Śeṣa (alias Ananta)

As in the Sanskrit Purāṇic literature, in the *Paripāṭal* too, Balarāma, who is otherwise known by the name of Baladeva, is closely associated with Śeṣa or Ananta, the Cosmic Serpent. *Paripāṭal* XV 19 narrates that Kṛṣṇa’s brother, namely Balarāma, has a shiny (or leaning?) soft head (‘arāvaṇar kayantalait tammun’). It is almost obvious that the image of Śeṣa is overlapped with that of Balarāma in this passage. The same may be true of the verses I 1-5, where Balarāma is portrayed

as having thousand heads which are awesome as well as fear-inspiring⁽⁷⁵⁾.

(2) Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa

The closest association between Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa observed in Sanskrit literary tradition⁽⁷⁶⁾ is firmly maintained in the odes of the *Paripāṭal*. In the verses XV 10-13, the close companionship of the two brothers is compared to the inseparable relationship between the seashore washed by waves and the forest along the beach, and to the combination of a word with its inherent meaning. The passage of *Pari*. XV 23 might be properly understood in the same context. In an above-quoted verse, *Pari*. III 83, which is allusive to the *kuravai* dance, the image of Kṛṣṇa is to be found overlapped with that of Balarāma because a plough, the weapon peculiar to Balarāma, is here attributed to Kṛṣṇa.

(3) Balarāma and Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva

The vague distinction between Balarāma and Viṣṇu is observed at the very beginning of the *Paripāṭal*. In the first stanza of this anthology, namely in the verses I 1-5, all such things as thousand flat heads, the chest inhabited by Śrī-Lakṣmī (*mā*), the complexion as white as a sea-shell, a banner of elephant, a plough and one of a pair of ear-rings are found to be the attributes of one and the same god. Among these things, Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī on his chest and thousand heads⁽⁷⁷⁾ are commonly ascribed to Lord Viṣṇu, while the others are well-known attributes of Balarāma.

Likewise, the verses XV 55-61 enumerate various things ascribed to one and the same god. They are brilliance, one of a pair of ear-rings (*oru kulai*), a banner whose emblem is Garuḍa, a plough (*nāñcil*), a club (*taṅṭu*), a conch-shell (*valampuri*), a discus (*nēmi*), a bow (*cilai*), an arrow (*ampu*), a boomerang(?) (*vaṭṭam*)⁽⁷⁸⁾ and a sword (*vāḷ*). This enumeration may exhibit a confusion of attributes between Viṣṇu-Vā-

sudeva and Balarāma, though the expression “two separate gods”, who are most probably identical with Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and Balarāma from the context, occurs in the following passage (XV 66)⁽⁷⁸⁾.

5. The Emanations (*Vyūha*-s) of Tirumāl

Not only the doctrine of Incarnations (*avatāra*-s) but also that of Emanations (*vyūha*-s) is found established in the well-organised Sanskritic Vaiṣṇavism. The doctrine of *vyūha*-s, which first appeared in the Nārāyaṇīya chapter of the Great Epic *Mahābhārata*, came to form the basis of the Pāñcarātra philosophy⁽⁸⁰⁾.

The *Paripāṭal*, though there is no direct reference to *vyūha*-s, may perhaps touch upon this idea in metaphysical passages in the third ode (vv. 81-82). The text runs as follows: ‘Ceṅkaṭ kārī karuṅkaṅ veḷḷai/ponkaṭ paccai painkaṅ māl/’ (“O Black One with red eyes! O White One with black eyes! O Green One with golden eyes! O Māl with green eyes!”). Following the usual order of the enumeration, we might be able to identify these four with Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha respectively⁽⁸¹⁾. Parimēlaḷakar also considers this passage to be the reference to four *vyūha*-s (*nālvakai viyūkam*)⁽⁸²⁾.

In spite of a probable allusion to *vyūha*-s, it is questionable whether the *Paripāṭal* was acquainted with the Pāñcarātra doctrines. This will be discussed later in this paper.

We also come across a description of the three aspects of Lord Tirumāl in *Pari*. XIII 26-27. According to this account, Tirumāl is the Single One (*oruvanai* ..., XIII 37) who is divided into three forms, viz. Śeṣaśayin (=Nārāyaṇa) adorned with the *tulasī* garland and sleeping on the serpent between Creations (XIII 26-29), Balarāma armed with the plough with which he slays his enemies and pierces their chest (XIII 30-33), and Boar endowed with the decorated shining tusks (XIII 34-36)⁽⁸³⁾. It is not at all certain, however, whether this description itself is allusive to the well-systematised notion of *avatāra*-s and *vyūha*-s.

6. Ādiśeṣa, the Cosmic Serpent

In connection with Tirumāl myths, Ādiśeṣa, the Cosmic Serpent otherwise known under the name of Śeṣa or Ananta, is frequently taken up in the *Paripāṭal* odes. But the Tamil names equivalent to Ādiśeṣa, Śeṣa, etc. as such do not occur anywhere in the original text.

The myth of Ādiśeṣa's exploits appears in Fragment I 72-78. The verses 72-73 accord high praise to Ādiśeṣa who surrounds Mt. Meru with its hood to protect the mountain from the severe attack of Vāyu, the God of Wind⁽⁸⁴⁾. In the verses 74-75, Śeṣa, as in the Sanskrit legend, is said to support the earth as if it wore the earth as its crown. Further, in the verses 75-78, Śeṣa is said to have been the string of Śiva's bow at the time of his *tripurasamhāra*, the destruction of three cities. The celebrated thousand heads of Ādiśeṣa are referred to in a few passages, viz. I 1-2, III 59-60, and Fragment I 79. Ādiśeṣa as the couch of Viṣṇu-Narāyaṇa ('Śeṣaśāyin') appears in XIII 26-29.

It is interesting to note that, in the *Paripāṭal*, Ādiśeṣa is found to be an independent object of devotional worship. The existence of the temples of his own is proved in the *Paripāṭal*. One passage of Fragment I 79-82 creates a devotional atmosphere, by singing the praise of Ādiśeṣa⁽⁸⁵⁾. As regards the worship of the temples (*nakar*)⁽⁸⁶⁾ dedicated to Ādiśeṣa, the reference is made in the verses I 30-49, where his temple constantly crowded with the devotees (I 30-45) is likened to the paradise (*turakkam*) (I 47). This passage is found to be well permeated with the emotion of *bhakti*. A temple of Ādiśeṣa is also mentioned elsewhere, e.g. in Fragment I 58-59. The verses of Fragment I 63-64 speak of an Ādiśeṣa temple located in a place called Kuḷavāy⁽⁸⁷⁾. It might perhaps be possible to interpret these temples as those dedicated to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu identified with Ādiśeṣa, rather than as the temples solely dedicated to the serpent god⁽⁸⁸⁾.

Apart from Ādiśeṣa, Vāsuki, another mythological serpent, is alluded to in a passage (Fragment I 64-71) which refers to the rope and the rod

with which Tirumāl churns the milky ocean.

7. Garuḍa

In the Purāṇic lore, Garuḍa, the king of birds, is often depicted as Viṣṇu's vehicle (Skt. *vāhana*, Tamil *ūrti*). This aspect of Garuḍa is widely known to the *Paripāṭal* (III 16, 59-60). Garuḍa serves Lord Viṣṇu not merely as his *vāhana*, but also as the emblem of his banner. (That is why Viṣṇu is otherwise called 'Garuḍa-dhvaja' in Sanskrit myths.) This aspect of Garuḍa too is known to the *Paripāṭal* (I 11,57; II 60; III 17-18; IV 36-37,42; VIII 2; XIII 4,38-39,41; XV 56). Garuḍa, the implacable enemy of serpents, is portrayed as being fully ornamented with snakes and pecking at them to prey in the verses IV 43-48.

Garuḍa's mythological aspects independent of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu may be presented in III 15-16. The passage runs as follows: 'Ēer vayan̄ku pūṇ amararai vaḷaviya amiltir/ payantōḷ iṭukkaṇ kaḷainta pullinai/' ("You [=Tirumāl/Viṣṇu] have [as your vehicle] the bird [=Garuḍa] which brought its mother's suffering to an end by plundering the gods decorated with brilliant ornaments of ambrosia"). It would not be quite difficult to comprehend in the allusive expression of this passage such well-known themes of Sanskrit mythology as the antagonism between Kaśyapa's two wives, Vinatā and Kadrū, the subordination of the former (=Vinatā) to the latter (=Kadrū) as the result of a bet on the colour of the tail of Indra's horse (known by the name of Iccaiḥśravas), and Garuḍa's freeing his mother Vinatā from thralldom by taking *amṛta*, the heavenly beverage (from Indra)⁽⁸⁹⁾.

Parimēlaḷakar reads a mythical implication about Garuḍa and Viṣṇu in an indistinct paragraph of *Pari*. III 59-61. The text runs as follows: 'Ayiravaṇar talai aravu vāȳk koṇṭa/ cēval ūrtiyuñ cēṅkaṇ māal/ ōvenak kiḷakkuñ kāla mutarvaṇai/' ("O red-eyed Māl having a vehicle of the bird [i.e. Garuḍa] keeping a snake [i.e. Ādiśeṣa] of thousand raised heads in his mouth! You are the chief of time crying 'O'").

Parimēlalakar annotates this portion as follows:

When Lord Viṣṇu gained the victory over *asura*-s, Garuḍa, the sacred bird as Viṣṇu's attendant, was so arrogant that he ascribed his master's triumph to his participation. In order to admonish him for his arrogance, Viṣṇu put one of his fingers on Garuḍa, saying, "What you said may be true if you can bear the weight of my finger". Then, under the heavy load of the finger, Garuḍa descended into hell, where he praised Viṣṇu for long, becoming conscious of his fault.

This may be exclusive to Tamil myths since the parallel theme is found nowhere in the Sanskrit counterparts.

The name Karuṭan, the *tadbhava* of Skt.*garuḍa*, as such does not occur in any reference or allusion to this mythical bird in the *Paripāṭal* odes⁽⁹⁰⁾. He is only called either *Cēval* "the Cock" (I 11?; III 18, 60; IV 36, 37; XIII 41), *Puḷ* "the Bird" (I 57; III 16, 17; VIII 2; XIII 4; XV 56), or *Uvaṇam* "the Kite" (II 60; IV 42)⁽⁹¹⁾. In *Pari*. XIII 38, he is called under the epithet *Pāppup-pakai* "the Enemy of snakes".

8. Śrī-Lakṣmī

The *Paripāṭal* is lacking in detailed accounts of Śrī or Lakṣmī, Tirumāl/Viṣṇu's divine consort. Except for one passage (Fragment I 17) in which she is referred to independently of her spouse, this goddess is always found to remain subordinate to Lord Tirumāl. In many verses (viz. I 3, 8, 36; II 31; III 90; IV 59; XIII 12), she is said to reside on Tirumāl's chest. (Needless to say, Viṣṇu in this aspect is called 'Śrī-dhara' in Sanskrit and 'Cītaran' in Tamil.) Among these references, *Pari*. I 36 and IV 59 may be allusive not to Śrī-Lakṣmī, but to the *śrīvatsa* symbolic of the goddess, an auspicious mark or curl of hair on the chest of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. Goddess Lakṣmī as well as the mark of *śrīvatsa* on

Tirumāl's chest is coincident with the iconographical findings. Moreover, 'tiru varai akalan toḷuvōr' in verse XIII 12, which has a twofold meaning, can possibly be interpreted to denote either "those who worship the chest (of Tirumāl resembling) a sacred mountain" or "those who worship the chest (of Tirumāl) on which Tiru (i.e. Śrī) abides".

In the verses III 90, Tirumāl is called "the Husband of Śrī" (*tiruvin kaṇavan*). The expression "the field fit to be preferred by Śrī" (*tiru nayattakka vayal*) appears in Fragment I 17. Here, as in *Paṭṭinappālai* 291 and *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* 70 quoted above, Śrī-Lakṣmī is found to be accompanied with the clear concept of prosperity or auspiciousness. In the *Paripāṭal*, as in other classical Tamil works, Śrī-Lakṣmī does not form an independent mythology of her own. Śrī-Lakṣmī, who is often called 'Tiru'⁽⁹²⁾ (I 8, 36; III 90; XIII 12; Fragment I 7) in the Tirumāl odes of the *Paripāṭal*, is addressed as 'Mā'⁽⁹³⁾ in I 3 of the same anthology, as in *Mullaippāṭṭu* 3. The verses II 30-31 liken Śrī-Lakṣmī in Tirumāl's arms to the macula of the moon (*matimaru*). Here she is called 'Ceyyōl' ("the White Lady")⁽⁹⁴⁾. In IV 59, Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī or the *śrīvatsa* mark is alluded to by the word "blemish" (*maṇu*).

9. Tirumāl's Kinship

The *Paripāṭal* is not rich in the systematic accounts of Tirumāl's kinship. First of all, Māl is defined as "father of the two" (*iruvar tātai*) in I 28. Parimēlalakar does not gloss this verse. Cōmacuntaranār, a modern commentator, takes these "two" for Kāmaṇ (son of Rukmiṇī) and Cāmaṇ (son of Jāmbavatī), the two brothers born of different mothers⁽⁹⁵⁾. Here, Māl should be understood as Kṛṣṇa rather than Viṣṇu from the mythological point of view. Gros suggests the possibility to consider the "two" as the pair of Brahmā and Kāma⁽⁹⁶⁾. Tirumāl as the father of Lord Brahmā is proved in the verse III 13, which runs: 'tā-maraip pūvinuṭ pirantōnum tātaiyum' ("the One who was born from the

lotus-flower [i.e. God Brahmā] and also is his father [i.e. Tirumāl]”). In this case, Viṣṇu in his Nārāyaṇa aspect may be referred to. As already introduced above, Tirumāl in III 90 is called “Husband of Tiru”. The *Paripāṭal* is aware of the two brothers, Balarāma (same as Baladeva) and Kṛṣṇa (XV 10-14, 19, 27-28). In spite of their striking contrast in their complexion and attributes, these two brothers somehow lose their own identities and mingle with each other to such an extent that they sometimes look as if they were one and the same god⁽⁹⁷⁾. This may be because of the close companionship, or rather the inseparability of the two deities⁽⁹⁸⁾.

In a Cevvēḷ ode of the *Paripāṭal* (XIX 57), Murukan is called Māḷmarukan (or Māṅmarukan). If Tamil ‘marukan’, a word with a double meaning, here indicates “nephew”, Goddess Pārvatī who is the mother of Murukan and the sister of Viṣṇu may be implied. Otherwise, the existence of Devascā, Viṣṇu’s daughter, might be brought to the fore, since the other sense of ‘marukan’ is “son-in-law.”

From the above discussion, it is evident that the genealogy of Tirumāl shown in the *Paripāṭal* is found to mostly follow that of the Sanskrit Purāṇic lore and to contain no specific element of indigenous origin whatsoever.

B. Iconographical Descriptions of Tirumāl in the Tirumāl Odes

The *Paripāṭal* is comparatively abundant in the data regarding the iconographical attributes of Tirumāl, even though they are not fully detailed. Viṣṇu’s well-known attributes common in the Northern Epic-Purāṇic legends, viz. the Garuḍa banner, the Garuḍa vehicle, discus-weapon, conch-shell, the tulasi⁽⁹⁹⁾ garland and Śrī-Lakṣmī (or the *śrīvatsa* mark) on his chest are found in the *Paripāṭal* as well⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

It seems likely that this anthology was well aware of the idea of *pañcāyudha*, the five kinds of weapon typical of Lord Viṣṇu⁽¹⁰¹⁾, since discus, chank, bow, arrow, club and sword are collectively enumerated as

Viṣṇu's weapons in the verses XV 59-61.

In III 33-43, Tirumāl is exalted as having various numbers of arms. It is noteworthy, however, that there is only a bare mention of Tirumāl with four arms⁽¹⁰²⁾, the most familiar image in his iconographical representations⁽¹⁰³⁾ in Sanskrit tradition.

The ornament on his chest mentioned in I 8-9, 14-15, II 52 and IV 6 may possibly indicate the famous *kaustubha* which, according to the Purāṇic lore, originated from the ghee in the sea of milk⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. Gros finds two expressions, "a brilliant ornament" (I 28: 'ilaṅku pūṇ') and "the ornament of pearl" (II 29-30: 'nittila matāṇi'), as allusions to vaijayanti, Viṣṇu's celebrated necklace⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. According to Parimēlalakar, the garland mentioned in III 87 is none other than the *vanamālā* peculiar to this god⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

Tirumāl's complexion is likened to various things: the colour of *pūvai*-flower⁽¹⁰⁷⁾, a gem (*maṇi*; most probably *nīlamaṇi*, sapphire), rain clouds, darkness and the ocean⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. The verse XIII 26 adds that Tirumāl's hue contrasts well with the colour of the Milky Ocean ('tan uru uraḷum pārkaṭal'). All these comparisons are found to probably point to one and the same colour, namely dark blue, in consideration of such passages as "You have a brilliant, beautiful body whose colour is similar to that of these five things: a cloud, *pūvai*-flower, the ocean, darkness and sapphire"⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ and "You have a body resembling a rain cloud, darkness and a dazzling jewel"⁽¹¹⁰⁾. Elsewhere, Lord Tirumāl is said to "have a black body" (IV 7, 8: 'māmey') and to "resemble a black mountain" (XV 54: 'karuṅkuru anaiyavai'). Obviously, blackish colour may also be ascribed to him. By the aforesaid examination, it can safely be inferred that, as in the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, in the Tamil literary convention too Tirumāl is characterised as having either blackish or deep blue complexion.

Though it is rare, Tirumāl is compared to a lotus. In XIII 50-51, he is portrayed as having a reddish face (like a lotus-flower) and a dark (or greenish?) body (like a lotus leaf)⁽¹¹¹⁾. It is interesting to note that,

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with all his usual complexion of dark colour, his feet are defined to be reddish (*cēvaṭi*: III 2, 18-19; XIII 50-51?), as in the case of Murukan. Tirumāl's divine, red feet is found to be accompanied with some idea of *bhakti* or devotional sentimentalism wherever they are mentioned⁽¹¹²⁾.

Tirumāl is said to have either red eyes (*ceṅkaṅ*: I 6 in allusion; IV 10; XIII 57) or lotus-like eyes (II 53; IV 60-61; XIII 50-51; XV 49)⁽¹¹³⁾. As far as the expression "lotus-like eyes" is concerned, a parallel simile is known in Sanskrit literary tradition as well, where Viṣṇu is called Puṅḍarīkākṣa, Kamalākṣa and the like, which mean "the one who has lotus-like eyes"⁽¹¹⁴⁾.

Tirumāl is believed to be clad in golden colour. A golden robe (*ponpunai, ponpunaiyutukkai, pon okkum utai, polampuriyāṭai*) (I 10, 56; III 88; IV 8 in allusion; XIII 2?; XV 28) seems to indicate famous *pītāmbara*, the cloth peculiar to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa⁽¹¹⁵⁾.

As already pointed out, in the odes of the *Paripāṭal* Tirumāl is sometimes portrayed without clear distinction among his *avatāra*-s, particularly from Balarāma/Baladeva. This fact is reflected on his iconographical representations. For example, the shell-like white colour, which is occasionally ascribed to Tirumāl in *Paripāṭal* (I 3; II 20; III 88), is originally a marked characteristic of Balarāma too⁽¹¹⁶⁾. Likewise, a plough (I 5; III 83; XIII 33; XV 58) is commonly known to be a celebrated weapon of Balarāma. A club mentioned in a single passage (IV 30-40) suggests that the *Paripāṭal* was aware of the idea of Balarāma with his three flags. An ear-ring (*kuḷai* equivalent to Skt. *kuṇḍala*) in only one ear (I 5; XV 55) is quite symbolic of Balarāma⁽¹¹⁷⁾. "The veil of darkness" (*iruḷutukkai*) mentioned along with the palmyra-flag in verse II 22 is also a distinguishing mark of this deity⁽¹¹⁸⁾.

C. Cosmological and Philosophical Ideas as Revealed in the Tirumāl Odes

1. Time and Space

Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* exhibit their cosmology, in most cases, in connection with the accounts of *avatāra*-s. The cosmology shown in those odes makes no great difference from the Sanskrit Purāṇic accounts and does not represent anything unique. According to the *Paripāṭal* view of the universe, the world is subject to the periodical change of the Creation (Skt.*sr̥ṣṭi*; Tamil *paṭaiṭṭu*), the Preservation (*sthiti*; *aḷippu*) and the Destruction (*pralaya*; *aḷippu*) (I 43-46; III 71). The verses III 1-19 elucidate the Ages (*ūli*) which thus undergo changes. The *varāha-kalpa*, the oldest Age according to Purāṇas, is mentioned in II 16-17⁽¹¹⁹⁾. It is no doubt that the *Paripāṭal* is well aware of the Four Yugas (*nālvakai ūli*), viz. Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali, quite common in Sanskrit Purāṇas, though it does not enumerate them all (III 80). In the verses III 21-26, in the context of the heroic deeds of Varāhāvatāra and Haṃsāvatāra, the *Paripāṭal* narrates the catastrophes brought by the destructive heat caused by the incorporation of the suns and the deluge, and the succeeding period of the Creation which begins with the recovery of the earth from the cosmic ocean (by Varāha) and the drying of the ground (by Haṃsa). The verses III 91-93 relate the earth which remains under the water before the Creation, a lotus and the birth of Brahmā (probably from Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa). In the *Paripāṭal*, the cosmological account of the Creation from Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, whose active agent is God Brahmā, harmoniously coexists with the Sāṃkhya explanation of the world to be discussed later⁽¹²⁰⁾.

As regards space, the outlook on the universe shown in the Tirumāl odes is found quite similar to that of the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition. According to the odes, the universe contains twenty-one worlds (*mūvēl-ulakam*) (III 9, 75; XIII 23), which are further divided into three groups⁽¹²¹⁾.

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It is obvious that the expression “seven lower worlds” (*kīlēlulakam*) seen in III 20 is associated with the above cosmological ideas. The verses XV 1-14, which chant the eulogy of Tirumāliṛuñcōlaimalai, make mention of “Imperishable Circle” (*tolaiḷanēmi*) presumably comparable to the Sanskrit idea of *cakravāla* (Tamil *cakkaravāḷam*), the mythical range of mountains supposed to coincide the orb of the earth⁽¹²²⁾. In XV 10 appears the name *kulavarai* which apparently corresponds to the Purāṇic idea of *kulagiri* or *kulācala*, the chief mountain-range, any one of the seven principal ranges which are believed to tower in each division of the continent.

TABLE III

verse	text	Parimēlalakar's commentary	note
III 77	pāl(emptiness) kāl (wind)	puruṭaṅ (puruṣa) ākāyamutar pūtaṅkaḷaintum (pañcabhūtas such as ākāśa, etc.)	pañcatanmātras
	pāku (part)	kaṅmēntiriyāṅkaḷ aintum (pañcakarmendriyas)	
	onru (one)	ōcai (sound)	
III 78	iraṅṭu (two)	ūru (touch)	
	mūnru (three)	urupu (form)	
	nāṅku (four)	cuvai (taste)	
	aintu (five)	nārram (smell)	
III 79	āru (six)	nānentiriyāṅkaḷ aintum manamum (pañcajñānendriyas plus manas)	
	ēlu (seven)	akaṅkāram (ahaṅkāra)	
	eṭṭu (eight)	mān (buddhi)	
	toṅṭu (nine)	mūlappakuti (mūlaprakṛti)	

From the above examples, it can safely be said that, though the accounts are fragmentary and not detailed enough, the *Paripāṭal* was familiar with the mythological ideas of the world which had been established in the *Mahābhārata* and had become general knowledge in the Sanskrit Purāṇic literature⁽¹²³⁾.

Interestingly, the Sāṃkhya ideology is alluded to here and there in the Tirumāl odes in connection with the cosmological explanation of the world. In III 77-80, for instance, not a few principles are symbolically enumerated. Following Parimēlalakar's interpretation, we may understand these principles from the Sāṃkhya point of view. In his commentary, Parimēlalakar offers the above list of correspondence of the principles given in *Paripāṭal* III 77-80 to the twenty-five *tattva*-s of the Sāṃkhya doctrine⁽¹²⁴⁾.

Similarly, Parimēlalakar takes 'mūlam' mentioned in III 24 along with 'vicumpu'(ether), 'kārru'(air) and 'kaṇal'(fire) for 'mūlappakuti', namely mūlaprakṛti in Sanskrit terminology, in which three components (*sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*) maintain equilibrium. He further takes 'vali' in III 49 for *ahankāra* in Sāṃkhya philosophy⁽¹²⁵⁾.

2. Other Philosophical and Religious References

Besides the references cited above, such philosophical disciplines as five elements (*pañcamahābhūta*: III 4, 66; *bhūta*: XIII 18-22)⁽¹²⁶⁾, five cognitive sense organs (*pañcabuddhīndriya* or *pañcajñānendriya*: VI 1; XIII 16, 25)⁽¹²⁷⁾ and five objects of senses (*pañcaviṣaya*: XIII 14)⁽¹²⁸⁾ are mentioned in various contexts in the Tirumāl hymns. There is no doubt that these concepts have infiltrated well into Tirumāl odes of the *Paripāṭal*.

The idea of rebirth or transmigration is also commonly found in the Tirumāl hymns. The devotees worship the chest of Tirumāl and pray it to liberate them from the bondage of rebirth. According to the *Paripāṭal*, devotion to Lord in this life is nothing but the product of penance

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(*tavappayam*) performed in the previous life (XIII 63-64)⁽¹²⁹⁾. Penance (*tavam*, apparently derived from Skt.*tapas*) is also referred to elsewhere in the same work (XIII 63; Fragment I 18).

In practical life, *aram* or *aran* (the performance of duties), a virtue comparable to Sanskritic *dharma*, is extolled in several passages (I 38; XIII 24; Fragment I 18, 21). A verse (IV 1) makes an allusion to the four practical virtues which help one in purifying his mind. Parimēlaḷ-akar identifies these four with *maittiri* (Skt. *maitrī*, “friendship”), *karuṇai* (*karuṇā*, “compassion”), *mutitai* (*muditā*, “pleasure”) and *ikal-cci* (*upekṣā*, “neglect”)⁽¹³⁰⁾.

What the devotees expect as the fruit of their devotion, penance⁽¹³¹⁾ and virtues is, needless to say, the state of mind free from the darkness of ignorance (*maruḷ*, *iruḷ*) (I 30; IV 1), in other words, the removal of illusion (*mayar*) (XV 37) and the extinction of displeasures (XV 52). This state of mind is made possible solely by the Grace (*aruḷ*, *ali*) of Tirumāl, the Lord who indwells Iruṅkuṇṇam.

The notion of Paradise is also dealt with in the Tirumāl hymns. Though the commentators associate the paradise with Vaikuṇṭha, the Heaven identified with Viṣṇu’s abode, the original text cites it only as ‘*turakkam*’ (XIII 13; XV 16-17; Fragment I 47). ‘*Turakkam*’ in those hymns is, above all, the abode of Lord Viṣṇu (XIII 13), and, at the same time, it is open only to those devotees who enjoy Grace of the Lord as the result of their virtuous deeds (XV 15-16; Fragment I 46). The Paradise, which would be otherwise difficult to attain (XV 17), is sometimes likened to the mountain sacred to Viṣṇu called Tirumāl-iruṅcōlaimalai (XV 17-18) and to an Ādiśeṣa temple on a hill (Fragment I 47-48).

C. Vaiṣṇavism in the Tirumāl Odes

1. Metaphysical Aspects of God Tirumāl

It may be concluded from the above discussion that the accounts of the iconographical representations and various manifestations of Viṣṇu given in the Tirumāl odes of the *Paripāṭal* do not differ much from what is presented in the other *Caṅkam* works. It is evident that the *Paripāṭal* rightly distinguishes itself from others by its clear awareness of, and the emphasis on, the metaphysical phases of God.

The verses III 46-47, which follow the enumeration of the incompatible, great features of Lord Tirumāl, are given below:

Ninnaip purai ninaippin nī allatu ṇartiyō/
munṇai marapiṇ mutumoḷi mutalva/

“Even if we want to extol you, (we are at a loss how to do,
wondering who else, except you, may know (your greatness).
O the foremost one in the old saying (=Vedas)
of ancient nature!”⁽³²⁾

The purport of this passage may be that nobody else can truly know Tirumāl because he is far beyond the realm of our intelligence.

The above-cited passage is followed by another metaphysical paragraph (III 48-50):

Ninakku virintu akanṇa kēlvi anaittinum/
valiyiṇum maṇattinūm ṇarvinūm ellām/
vanappu varampu aṇiyā marapiṇōyē/

“You have the nature, whose excellence and limit
cannot be known by any of the widespread Vedas,

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by power⁽¹³³⁾, by mind, by sense organs or by anything!”

God, who thus transcends our knowledge, has nothing to be compared to and stands unparalleled. Tirumāl is really beyond comparison. After being identified with various great things in the preceding paragraph (I 37-48), he is praised as follows (I 49-55):

Ataṇāl/ innōr aṇaiyai inaiyai yālena/
annōr yām ivaṇ kāṇāmaiṇ/ ... /
ninnōranaiyai niṇ pukaloṭuṁ polintē/
niṇ okkum pukaḷ niḷalavai/

“Therefore, because we do not see here those (who are comparable with you) in order to say that (you) are like these or those ... , (we can only say that) you glow with your own glory and you are like those who resemble you. You have the brilliance of fame which resembles you”.

What is meant in the above passage is that Tirumāl is such a transcendental one that he could be compared only to himself.

In this transcendental aspect, Tirumāl is identified with God who presides over the Destruction and the Creation, or even with the Destruction and the Creation themselves. It is in this sense that he is the source of the whole universe (III 1-10)⁽¹³⁴⁾.

Lord Tirumāl is thus transcendental and is regarded as the source of everything in the world, but on the other hand he is also conceived of as being omnipresent and immanent in each and every object. In I 37-48, he is identified with various things—abstract principles such as moral (*aran*) and grace (*ali*), celestial bodies such as the moon and the sun, major deities such as Śiva and Brahmā⁽¹³⁵⁾, the Destruction and the Creation attributed to these gods, and the Nature such as the earth, the

atmosphere, the Himālayas, etc. It may implicitly mean that all things existing in the universe are none other than Tirumāl himself.

The theme of Tirumāl's ubiquity is crystalised into the most beautiful expression in the verses IV 66-70:

Aḷalpurai kuḷaikolu nīlararum palacinai/
ālamuṅ kaṭampum nalyār̥ru naṭuvum/
kālvaḷakku aruṇilaik kuṇramum piṇavam/
avvavvai mēya vēruvēru perarōy/
ev vayinōyum nīyē ... /

“O the one who has different names
suitable to different places (you pervade)
— an *ālam*-tree with flame-like young sprouts
as well as many branches giving abundant shade,
a *kaṭampu*-tree, a sandbank of a good river,
a mountain whose towering obstructs the wind in the course,
and others.

O you who abide in everything!”

Tirumāl, who thus pervades all the things⁽¹³⁶⁾, is said to have such innumerable bodies that one cannot express him as, so to say, “this many” (*inaittu*) even with such a big numerical unit as *ampal* (III 44-45).

Tirumāl dwells in everything as its essence or nucleus. The theme of his immanence, which can be found in IV 66-70 quoted above, is beautifully versified in III 63-70:

Tiyinuḷ teral nī pūvinuḷ nār̥ram nī/
kallinuḷ maṇiyum nī collinuḷ vāymai nī/
arattinuḷ anpu nī mārattinuḷ maintu nī/

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vētattu maṛai nī pūtattu mutalum nī/
veñcuṭar oḷiyum nī tiṅkaḷuḷ aḷiyum nī/
anaittum nī anaittin uṭpuruḷum nī ātalin/
uraivum uraivatam ilaiyē uṇmaiyum/
maṛaviyil cirappin māyamā anaiyai/

“Heat in fire are you; fragrance in a flower are you.
Brilliance in a gem are you; truth in a word are you.
Love in a good conduct are you; strength in bravery are you.
Secret principle in the Vedas are you;
 the first one of the elements (i.e. *ākāśa*) are you.
The beam of the scorching sun too are you;
 the coolness of the moon too are you.
Everything are you; what is inside everything are you; therefore,
(To you) there is neither abode nor (the act of) abiding;
 (your) existence alone is.
An illusion which has unforgettable eminence,
 you are like that”⁽¹³⁷⁾.

Another famous passage of IV 25-35 also ultimately offers the same notion. In particular, three verses IV 33-35 are remarkable:

Ataṅāl, ivvum uvvum avvum piravum/
ēmam ārnta nīr pirintu/
mēval cāṅraṅa ellām/

“Therefore, (all things such as) this, it, that and others
are eminent (because they are internally) united with you
(even) when they are (externally) separate from you
who abide (within) as their protector”.

According to Parimēlalakar, the above passage purports that the origination, the maintenance and the retreat of the world and the living things (or, the living things of the world) all occur within yourself (=Tirumāl)⁽¹³⁸⁾. In spite of his interpretation, this may possibly be understood otherwise as below:

Even after all things in the universe, which had been created by Tirumāl, became to have different names and forms, they are all united into one by Tirumāl who is immanent in them as their protector, i.e. inner controller.

Parimēlalakar notices the philosophical idea of *antaryāmin* (Tamil *antariyāmi*) in the verses II 24-25, which runs as follows: ‘Uyarntōr āynta keṭuvil kēḷviyuḷ naṭu ākutaḷ’ (“You are the core of the faultless Vedas which the noble studied”)⁽¹³⁹⁾. A more explicit statement which may probably express the concept of the “inner controller” is found in a phrase ‘Ēvvayinōyūm nīyē’ (“O you who rest in everything!”) in II 59. Parimēlalakar paraphrases this into ‘Epporuḷiṅ akattāyūm nī’ (“You who are the inside of everything”). Moreover, we may refer to Cō-macuntaraṅār’s commentary on the same phrase, which goes: ‘Ēṅaip poruḷkaḷiṭattum uṭporuḷāy uraipavaṇum nīyē ākinrāy’ (“You are the one existing as the hidden meaning in the other things”). Viewed in this light, it can be inferred that, though we have not come across the word *antaryāmin* as such or its Tamil cognates in the original texts, the *Paripāṭal* is likely to be well aware of the philosophical concept of the “inner controller”.

From the above examples it is known that the important thesis of transcendence and immanence of the Supreme, the principle which is detectable even in the Vedas and is later systematised in Vaiṣṇava theology in particular, is presented somewhat fragmentarily but expressly enough in the *Paripāṭal* hymns. Gros thinks that, in the

Paripāṭal, this Vedāntic proposition of transcendence and immanence of the Absolute, which is seemingly self-contradictory in essence, is somehow overcome (or rather sidetracked?) in the direction of the *bhakta*'s devotional confidence in Tirumāl as the Savior⁽¹⁴⁰⁾. The phrases of the earnest worship of Tirumāl seen in the *Paripāṭal* hymns are to be discussed in some detail in the following section.

The foregoing examination points to two different aspects of Tirumāl: (i) a concrete, anthropomorphic aspect easily accessible to anyone through mythological accounts, iconographical representations, etc., and (ii) an absolute, metaphysical aspect approachable only by way of divine inspiration or philosophical speculation⁽¹⁴¹⁾. With regards to the descriptions on the various attributes of Tirumāl, Hardy remarks, "Such descriptions are clearly inspired by iconography and the concrete *vigraha* in the temple"⁽¹⁴²⁾. Hardy further argues that the icon or divine image in the temple is the symbolic representation of the transcendental, unapproachable, incomprehensible Absolute, the idea of which was basically foreign to the Tamil land⁽¹⁴³⁾. It is indeed hardly deniable that there existed temples and hence icons or images in the age of the *Paripāṭal*. However, is it proper, as Hardy does, to unconditionally assume all the descriptions on Tirumāl's attributes to be inspired by the temple *vigraha*-s? It would seem safer to me to hold that the iconographical accounts on Tirumāl in the *Paripāṭal*, which are mostly found to be ideomatic, formulaic, stereotyped or given, so to say, in a cut and dry manner, simply followed without vital modifications the conventional accounts in Sanskrit Epic-Purāṇic literary traditions, and therefore did not necessarily require presupposed concrete objects like temple *vigraha*-s. In other words, we need not postulate an idol or anything iconic with well-defined anthropomorphic features at the background of the *Paripāṭal* accounts on Tirumāl's attributes, since those explanations are mostly accompanied by mythological details and hence should be understood differently from the rituals of the actual

vigraha-s in temples.

The same is true of the recurring descriptions on the devotional adoration of Tirumāl's feet. Here also Hardy emphasises the temple statues in the backdrop of this kind of descriptions⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. However, there would seem to be no need to preconceive such actual statues or images installed in a temple, in order to interpret the formulary expressions as the utterance of the natural devotional sentiments of the *bhakta*-s⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. Moreover, the origination of temple *vigraha*-s in Tamil Nadu should be understood not only as the result of the harmonious syncretism of the Northern idea of the transcendental Absolute and the Southern notion of the divine within the confines of a concrete reality as is interpreted by Hardy, but also in a wider context of the Southern religious tradition in which the sacred, the potentially dangerous force immanent in an object, is not necessarily given anthropomorphised representations so that it is occasionally symbolised merely by an enclosure or an object expressive of the divine presence at the particular spot.

2. The "Tirumāl-*bhakti*", or the Devotional Worship of Tirumāl in the *Paripāṭal*

The *Paripāṭal* is distinguished from the other anthologies not merely by its metaphysical awareness, but also by its devotional lineaments. The Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal*, whose period of compilation is considered by scholars to be anterior to the dawn of Southern *bhakti* literature, the age of Ālvār-s and Nāyanār-s, already overflow with religious sentiments clearly marked with ardent devotional feelings. This is also true of the Cevvēḷ hymns of the same anthology and the Nakkī-rar's *Tirumurukāṅṅuppaṭai* of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* collection⁽¹⁴⁶⁾.

All the *Paripāṭal* odes dedicated to Lord Tirumāl are without exception imbued with indisputable sentiments of *bhakti*. Because of the dominating devotional nature of the hymns, it is no wonder that Tirumāl is often portrayed as the Protector (III 74-76, 84-85; IV 28, 34; XIII 49) or the

Saviour (XV 37, 52) who shows the right path of faith to the devotees (IV 1-2), bestows Grace (*aruḷ, aḷi*) on them and liberates them from the bondage of transmigration, than as the Creator or the Presider of the universe. He is believed to utter the words of Grace (*aruḷ*) (XIII 45) and to be filled with Love (*anpu*) (XV 53), and sometimes even identified with divine Grace or Love itself (I 38; III 65)⁽¹⁴⁷⁾. The devotees entreat him for his Grace and Love⁽¹⁴⁸⁾. Comparing it to the clouds charged with rains (IV 27)⁽¹⁴⁹⁾, the devotees chant the eulogy of Tirumāl's generosity in bestowing a favour. His Grace is likened to a parasol he holds up for the protection of the twenty-one worlds (III 74-76)⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ and to the cool, refreshing full moon (XIII 5-6)⁽¹⁵¹⁾.

Tirumāl's both feet, which are sometimes called 'cēvaṭi' ("red feet"), are symbolic of his Grace. They are believed to bring liberation to the devotees (III 2)⁽¹⁵²⁾ and are the object of their worship as well as admiration (I 65; II 72-73; III 18-20; IV 62; XIII 47, 61-62; Fragment I 5-6, 81). The devotees aspire to attain his feet, at which they will reside together with their kinsfolk (I 62-64; Fragment I 45)⁽¹⁵³⁾. In a similar way, they worship Tirumāl's chest, another symbol of his divine generosity (XIII 12)⁽¹⁵⁴⁾. It would not be impossible to recognise in those passages devotees' clear consciousness of their helpless inferiority and incapability, the awareness peculiar to, and characteristic of, the devotional tradition of the South (I 34; IV 3-5)⁽¹⁵⁵⁾.

A long reference to the episode of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda in connection with Narasiṃhāvātāra found in IV 10-21—the passage which is exceptionally elaborate and detailed in comparison with the references to the other Incarnations—may casually bespeak the sympathetic feeling of the poet Kaṭuvan ḷaveyinanār toward Prahlāda, the God-fearing, devout *bhakta* of Lord Viṣṇu.

As is evident from the above-mentioned, the *Paripāṭal* makes note of the paradise (*turakkam*) as the abode of Tirumāl (XIII 13; XV 16-17; Fragment I 47). By help of Tirumāl's Grace, the devotees can finally go

to this heaven which would be otherwise impossible to attain (XV 15-16)⁽¹⁵⁶⁾. It is quite interesting to note that Tirumāliṛuṅkuṅṛam otherwise styled Tirumāliṛuṅcōlaimalai, a celebrated mountain sacred to Lord Tirumāl, is occasionally drawn into comparison with heavens. The verses XV 15-18 thus proclaim, “By Tirumāliṛuṅkuṅṛam, Lord Tirumāl helps people secure the celestial world which would be hardly attainable by their own efforts”. In this aspect, Tirumāliṛuṅkuṅṛam may be paralleled by Tirupparaṅkuṅṛam, Paradise on Earth (*tarai-vicumpu*) for the worshippers of Lord Murukan⁽¹⁵⁷⁾. Along with the fact that Tirumāliṛuṅkuṅṛam, the Vaiṣṇava counterpart of Tirupparaṅkuṅṛam and an Ādiśeṣa temple are likened to the holy body (*tirumēni*) of Tirumāl (XV 19-23, 33, 48) and the celestial world (Fragment I 46-49)⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ respectively in different contexts in the *Paripāṭal*, the above-cited comparisons turn out to be quite noteworthy in view of the Tamil notion of the sacred that the divine, when visualised, manifests itself in a particular concrete reality⁽¹⁵⁹⁾.

Apart from the passages cited above, Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* contain many verses in which devout sentiments of *bhakti* toward Tirumāl are effused (I 33; II 19, 74-75; III 46; IV 49, 52, 70-73; XIII 48; XV 66; Fragment I 82, etc.). We would be right to say that the Tirumāl odes of the *Paripāṭal* on the whole exhibit more devotional lineaments than, for example, the odes dedicated to Cevvēḷ-Murukan which also produce an indubitable mood of devotion⁽¹⁶⁰⁾.

As we have already seen above, it is evidenced by ample references in the *Paripāṭal* hymns that Tirumāl was already established as an object of the monotheistic, devotional worship in the Tamil land prior to the so-called *bhakti* period⁽¹⁶¹⁾, accompanied by the concepts of *avatāra*-s and *vyūha*-s. It is to be noted here, however, that the erotic and emotional elements, the elements of great import distinctively pertaining to the Tirumāl-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa devotion in general, are totally absent in the *Paripāṭal* odes⁽¹⁶²⁾. The emotionalism of worship, which Hardy takes note

of as an “undercurrent”, as well as the erotic aspects attached to the Sanskritic Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa cycle of myths, has not yet come up to the surface so far as the Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* are concerned. This does not necessarily mean that the poets of this anthology were totally unaware of the life of Lord Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, for, as we have already discussed, the verse III 83 may be allusive of the *kuravai* dance performed by Kṛṣṇa and milkmaids. Parimēlaḷakar also speaks in favour of this interpretation⁽¹⁶³⁾. From this, it may follow that the poets of the *Paripāṭal* preferred to ignore, or rather, sweep off the erotic and emotional elements of Kṛṣṇa myths rather than simply adopt them as they were in their own anthology. Such an attitude of the *Paripāṭal* poets proves to parallel that of the Tamil poets of pre-*Paripāṭal* works who showed a considerable interest in depicting the mythological as well as iconographical features of the Lord on the one hand, but kept virtual silence about his transcendental and metaphysical aspects on the other.

Thus it does not seem to be an exaggeration to state that the ancient Tamils introduced the whole image of Sanskritic Viṣṇu into their own idea not all at once but only step by step, and not blindly but in a prudent, selective manner. The introduction of transcendence of God Tirumāl followed by that of erotic and emotional elements of the worship is located near the end of this process. At the time of the *Paripāṭal*, the erotic and emotional themes of Tirumāl *bhakti* were not yet brought in, despite the introduction of the idea of transcendental Tirumāl. It is not until the period of the *Prabandha* (Tamil *Pirapantam*) that the devotion to Tirumāl-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa with erotic aspects came to the fore⁽¹⁶⁴⁾. We should keep in mind here that, for the above reason, Tirumāl *bhakti* in the *Paripāṭal* remained incomplete. Even though it may have been “full-fledged” as Zvelebil dares to call it⁽¹⁶⁵⁾, yet it can hardly be said to have attained its “full-blown” stage. To seal the arguments, Gros correctly posits: “Nous sommes enclins à conclure que le mouvement de bhakti vishnouite n’a pas encore atteint dans les poèmes

de *Pa.* [= *Paripāṭal*] son plein développement puisqu'il y manque le thème qui sera dans toutes les littérature ultérieurs de ce type le thème essentiel"⁽¹⁶⁶⁾.

As we are clear that Tirumāl odes do not set forth any original view in cosmology or metaphysics, we can also hardly expect the systematic descriptions of philosophical speculation. Notwithstanding these, the speciality of those odes lies in their rich literary imagery as well as their first religious awareness of Vaiṣṇava devotion, which eventually leads to the *bhakti* of the *Nāḷayirappirapantam*. It is in this context that Gros designates the Tirumāl hymns as "le premier document de l'hindouisme à caractère purement religieux qui soit rédigé non pas en sanskrit mais en tamoul"⁽¹⁶⁷⁾.

3. Are Tirumāl Hymns Sectarian?

As for the philosophical accounts in the Tirumāl hymns, one can at least say that, as seen in the Hindu cosmology in general⁽¹⁶⁸⁾, the Sāṃkhya view of the world infiltrates into the cosmological concepts of those hymns. Some scholars beat around the philosophical accounts of the Tirumāl odes just to detect references or at least allusions to the Pāñcarātra doctrines⁽¹⁶⁹⁾. But it is doubtful whether such efforts will produce any result. It is true that Sāṃkhya principles cast their shadow on the Pāñcarātra cosmology. From this, however, it does not immediately follow that the suspected allusions to Sāṃkhya principles found in Tirumāl hymns (e.g. III 49, 77-79) are directly inspired by the Pāñcarātra doctrines, for all those allusions in the Tirumāl odes appear independently of the ideas of, for example, the *vyūha*-s in which the Pāñcarātra philosophy is closely linked with the Sāṃkhya explanation of cosmology.

Moreover, while in the Pāñcarātra philosophy Lakṣmī, the female principle otherwise called Śakti, takes part in the Creation of the universe⁽¹⁷⁰⁾, Lakṣmī (or Tiru) mentioned in the Tirumāl hymns remains subordinate, being portrayed only as the divine consort of Tirumāl as in

the precedent *Caṅkam* texts, and is not expected to play any crucial role in a cosmological or a metaphysical context. In this respect, too, the Tirumāl odes do not produce testimony to their being penetrated with the Pāñcarātra ideas.

As for the doctrine concerning *vyūha*-s also, the Tirumāl hymns do not bear convincing evidences since one passage (III 81-82) alone may be suspected to be, if anything, allusive to the doctrine.

As is well-known, the Pāñcarātra sets forth five aspects of Lord Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva, viz. *paravāsudeva* or *paratva* (transcendental form), *vyūha* (emanation), *vibhava* or *avatāra* (incarnation), *antaryāmin* (inner controller) and *arcā* (idol). Sarangapani opines that all these five forms of the Supreme Lord are implicitly referred to in Tirumāl hymns⁽¹⁷¹⁾. Gros, on the other hand, is negative in acknowledging the references to the distinct ideas of *vyūha* and *arcā* in the Tirumāl odes in spite of his recognition of the other three: *paravāsudeva*, *vibhava* (or *avatāra*) and *antaryāmin*, as the essential components of the philosophical accounts of the hymns⁽¹⁷²⁾. As regards the *vyūha*-s, he harbours suspicion about the reference to the notion of *vyūha*-s and its derivation from the Pāñcarātra philosophy for the following reasons:

- a) The notion of *vyūha*-s is alluded to in the Parimēlaḷakar's commentary, rather than the original text itself.
- b) The concept of *vyūha*-s itself is familiar to Purāṇas and Ālvār-s (rather than to the Pāñcarātra).
- c) The idea seen in III 81-82 that Māl assumes four different colours according to the Four Yuga-s, the idea found to parallel that in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, can hardly be regarded as borrowed from the Pāñcarātra.

As for *arcā*, Gros argues, even though the ode XV of the *Paripāḷai* may be dedicated to the Tirumāl idol of Tirumāliṇcōlai, the same ode can be far more properly understood in the context of the *ārrippaṭai* ('guide poems') genre of classical Tamil poetry than in the connection

with the Pāñcarātra doctrines. From the above, Gros concludes, “La référence au Pāñcarātra ne nous apparaît donc pas évident”.

To begin with, it is a point in question if the Tirumāl hymns refer to any particular sect or school whether it might be the Pāñcarātra, the Vaikhānasa or the Bhāgavata. In fact, the Ālvār-s, early ones in particular, who were preceded by the *Paripāṭal* poets, were destitute of any sectarian colouring and did not stand up for any Vaiṣṇavite school of thought⁽¹⁷⁵⁾.

It still remains uncertain as to the historical details of the Pāñcarātra, in particular the dates of its origination and the introduction into the South. According to Hardy, although the history of the Pāñcarātra as well as the Vaikhānasa in the South before the ninth century A.D. remains obscure, it is almost undeniable that both the schools were present there for the last few centuries of the first millenium A.D.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Furthermore, by reference to precedent studies by different scholars, Hardy estimates that the flourishing period of the Pāñcarātra was c. A.D. 600-800 in Northern India and it had penetrated the South by about the eighth century⁽¹⁷⁵⁾. Here we do not enter into a detailed chronological discussion of Vaiṣṇava schools or sects, but, if Hardy's argument is trustworthy enough, it is rather difficult to assume that the *Paripāṭal*, which was compiled most probably between A.D. 400 and 500 or a little later, was familiar with the Pāñcarātra doctrine. As stated above, Gros assumes a critical attitude to those scholars who try to lay stress on the developed features of the Tirumāl cult observed in the *Paripāṭal* by intentionally identifying various accounts in the texts with the references to the established Pāñcarātra ideas⁽¹⁷⁶⁾. The notion offered by Gros is found appropriate enough from the chronological point of view mentioned above. It seems plausible that Tirumāl cult as found in the *Paripāṭal* was primarily linked with the rise of Viṣṇu worship in the Tamil country anterior to the distinct sectarianisation of the Vaiṣṇavas⁽¹⁷⁷⁾.

In connection with the sectarianisation, it seems necessary to point

out another tide in South Indian Hinduism: the polarisation into the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas. In *Paripāṭal* collection, as already introduced at the beginning of this monograph, there are in all seven odes dedicated to Tirumāl including one fragmental hymn (*tiraṭṭu*). It is known from the colophone at the end of each ode that the ode III among them was composed by a poet named Kaṭuvan ḷaveyinaṅār, who can be identified with the poet of the ode V, a Cevvēḷ ode. Among Cevvēḷ odes of the same anthology, two poets given a Vaiṣṇava name are to be known: Kēcavaṅār (cf. Skt. *keśava*) of the ode XIV and Nallaccutanār (cf. Skt. *acyuta*) of the ode XXI. These textual evidences would probably suggest that the decisive polarisation into the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas in the South was not yet achieved in those days. In fact, not only the names of the poets but the contents of the *Paripāṭal* themselves represent the same situation. For instance, five-headed Māl in I 43-44 may be identifiable with Śiva in his Sadaśiva aspect by reference to Parimēḷalakar's commentary⁽¹⁷⁸⁾. The destruction of Tripura (*tripura-saṃhāra*), which is commonly recognised as an exploit of Śiva in the Epic-Purāṇic context, is ascribed to Tirumāl in the *Paripāṭal* (Fragment I 76). The same may be evidenced by the *Tirumurukārrupaṭai* as well as the Cevvēḷ hymns of the *Paripāṭal*. The *Tirumurukārrupaṭai*, which is indisputably a Śaiva text today, deal with Śiva and Viṣṇu quite indiscriminately, except that the former is clearly designated in the text as the father of God Murukan (cf. v.256) to whom the work is dedicated. Similarly, in the Cevvēḷ hymns of the *Paripāṭal*, Śiva does not enjoy a position distinctly superior to that of Viṣṇu with the only exception of the ode V narrating the birth of Cevvēḷ-Murukan whose father is, needless to say, Lord Śiva⁽¹⁷⁹⁾. The name 'Māan marukan', an appellation of Cevvēḷ-Murukan seen in XIX 57, may be understood in this context.

Thus, Sarangapani's notion that Tirumāl and Śiva do not coexist in the *Paripāṭal*⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ turns out to be improper. According to Hardy, the polarisation into the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava become thoroughgoing

from the sixth or seventh century onwards⁽¹⁸¹⁾. N. Subrahmanian's view that the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites were in sharp antagonism against each other from the seventh century onwards may be supposed to point the same⁽¹⁸²⁾. In this context, we should keep in mind that the so-called *Caṅkam* works, which are presumably pre-Pallava, show no clear evidence of the serious antagonism between the two sects⁽¹⁸³⁾.

From all those, we have enough reason to assign the date of the compilation of the *Tirumurukārruppatai* as well as the *Paripāṭal* to a period anterior to the full-scale polarisation of the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas⁽¹⁸⁴⁾. Incidentally, Hardy is of the opinion that, though the Pāṇṭiyas introduced Māyōṅ-Tirumāl cult from the Northern India as their royal symbol and propagated it all over their land, this implies neither that they were Vaiṣṇavite proper nor that their national religion was Vaiṣṇavism⁽¹⁸⁵⁾. His argument is well attested by the probable date of the polarisation of the two major Hindu sects in the South. Zvelebil, in his *Tiru Murugan*, shows his interpretation of the marriage of Murukan with daughters of Viṣṇu, Devasenā and Vaḷḷi, as the integration of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism⁽¹⁸⁶⁾. This might perhaps be true of the devotional Tamil literature of later periods, like the *Kanta-purāṇam*. As far as the earlier phases of the Tamil literary history are concerned, however, his interpretation does not remain persuasive or valid since Murukan's double marriage with them is narrated in those texts which were compiled prior to the above-mentioned polarisation.

III. The Cult of Tirumāl in Early Tamil Nadu and Its Northern Features

All the above discussions in the present work do not distinctly mark the unique features of the early worship of Tirumāl in the Tamil country; rather the reverse is the case. It would seem to me that all these speak in favour of the Northern origin of the Tirumāl cult in

South India. Now we must further pursue our argument by focusing on a few particular themes so that we may attest this hypothesis and place the Tirumāl cult properly in the early history of Southern Hinduism.

A. Worship of Rāma and Balarāma in the Early Tamil Land

As stated in the section of *avatāra*-s, Balarāma (alias Baladeva) is known to have been an object of 'joint worship', being associated with various Vaiṣṇava gods, in particular Kṛṣṇa. It is rather doubtful whether there existed the independent cult of Balarāma in early Tamil Nadu. This may be related to an established fact in Sanskrit mythology that the two brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, are intimately coupled together in various episodes⁽¹⁸⁷⁾. Thus, the Southern origin of Balarāma as suggested by P. T. Srinivas Iyengar⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ may require reconsideration. It would seem proper to assume that the worship of Balarāma was introduced from the North into the South along with that of Kṛṣṇa. The joint worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as revealed in the *Paripāṭal* odes, actually reflect the ancient situation. As Kṛṣṇa gained popularity in later ages, the importance of Balarāma waned accordingly. In the period of Ālvār-s, the latter had already lost his importance⁽¹⁸⁹⁾. Such a development of the advance and the retreat of Balarāma cult of South India is observed to exhibit close correspondence to that of the North⁽¹⁹⁰⁾. This strongly suggests that the cult of Balarāma in the South was moulded and developed under the incessant influence of the Northern religious trends.

This fact, along with the discussion on Rāma to be given below, seems to be suggestive of the probable Northern pedigree of the idea of *avatāra* itself.

As in the other *Caṅkam* classics⁽¹⁹¹⁾, so in the *Paripāṭal* there is no reference to deified Rāmacandra⁽¹⁹²⁾. This does not necessarily indicate, however, that Rāma was totally unknown in the *Caṅkam* corpus. Scholars cite *Puranānūru* 378 and *Akanānūru* 70 as the references to this heroic

figure. Both poems, which contain allusions to some episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, hint that the Tamils in those days were aware of the story of that epic. Here it should be noted that in those poems Rāma is neither deified as an object of worship nor portrayed as an *avatāra* of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. According to Hart, the absence of the deification of Rāma is in agreement with the older middle books of the *Valmiki-rāmāyaṇa*⁽¹⁹³⁾. It is a well-known fact that, in Sanskrit literary tradition, the deification of Rāma begins in the opening and concluding chapters of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in the newer portion of the *Mahabhārata*⁽¹⁹⁴⁾. In the North, his cult became really popular only after the Muslim invasion⁽¹⁹⁵⁾. The absence of deification of Rāma in the *Caṅkam* literature cannot be irrelevant to such trends of the North.

Dimmitt and van Buitenen remark that, among famous members of the *daśāvatāra*-s, Matsya, Kūrma, Varaha, Vāmana, Narasiṃha and Kṛṣṇa are repeatedly referred to in the great Purāṇas sometimes even at great length, whereas Paraśurāma and Rāma are occasionally recalled but only rarely described, and, as for Buddha and Kalkin, they occur once or twice in the lists of Viṣṇu's *avatāra*-s but have no significant tales of their own at all⁽¹⁹⁶⁾. As we have examined, in the *Paripāṭal* there is no reference to Matsya, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Buddha and Kalkin. This blends well with the trends of Sanskrit Purāṇic literature stated above.

The above facts convince us that the idea of *avatāra*-s of the *Paripāṭal* hymns is not of its own but mostly borrowed from the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition. Concerning the absence of deification of Rāma in the early Tamil literary sources, Maraimalaiyadigal says that the story of Rāma was not in vogue in Tamil Nadu in the age of the *Paripāṭal*⁽¹⁹⁷⁾. Here, it is to be kept in mind that “the story of Rāma was not in vogue in Tamil Nadu” not because people were ignorant of it, but probably because the concept of incarnation itself, which was originally foreign to the Tamils, was not yet firmly rooted into the Southern soil and was still subject to the Northern religious tendency. It

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is in this very context that Maraimalaiyadigal is correct when he remarks that the incarnations of Tirumāl were the creations of Northern Indians⁽¹⁹⁸⁾.

Thus, we come to know that the worship of Rāma and Balarāma, the two gods closely related to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu in mythology, in early Tamil Nadu cannot be properly understood without referring to the Northern situation of their worship, since the Southern worship of the two gods is found to be reflective of its Northern counterpart. From this, one can conjecture that the worship of the both deities, whose stronghold was unmistakably in the North, was originally extraneous to the Tamils and brought from Northern India. This further brings us to the assumption that the bulk of Tirumāl cult as found in early Tamil Nadu along with its accompanying elements basically stemmed from the North.

B. Appellations Applied to God Tirumāl

We shall seek to find another clue to the problems of Tirumāl worship in Southern India by examining various Tamil names applied to this god. Here we will follow up what is implied by ‘Māl’ and ‘Māyōn’, the two old and significant names of Lord Tirumāl. To begin with, the accounts found in *Tamil Lexicon*, *DED-DEDR*, and *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* on the two words, *māl* and *mayōn*, and their common nominal root *mā* are given in the Table IV⁽¹⁹⁹⁾.

1. *Mā*:

Mā forms the radical of both *māl* and *māyōn*, and its meanings are broadly divided into two categories in *Tamil Lexicon* and *DED-DEDR*: [a] black(-ness) (*DED* 3923; *DEDR* 4781), and [b] great(-ness) or strong (strength) (*DED* 3923; *DEDR* 4786). *DED* and *DEDR* place two names of Viṣṇu, *māl* and *māyōn*, in the [a] category, whereas *Tamil Lexicon* makes out the [a] category of meanings to be understood in the

association with Skt.*māyā* and seeks the derivation of the [b] category from Skt.*mahā*. *DED* and *DEDR*, on the other hand, pay no attention to the etymological explanations the *Lexicon* seeks to convey.

Here, it appears necessary to bear in mind a semantic association of the conception of “black” with that of “great” or “strength” found in the Tamil or Dravidian vocabulary⁽²⁰⁰⁾. In this context, it would seem better to conceive the root *mā* as well as its derivatives to have a dual

TABLE IV

	<i>Tamil Lexicon</i>	<i>DED-DEDR</i>	<i>Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index</i>
<i>mā</i>	<i>mā</i> ⁴ (1) greatness (2) strength	<i>mā</i> (3923;4786) great	<i>mā</i> : : (7) dark colour (8) Tirumāl : : : :
	<i>mā</i> ⁵ (1) beauty (2) blackness (3) colour (4) paleness caused by love-sickness	<i>mā</i> (3918;4781) black	
<i>māyōṇ</i>	<i>māyōṇ</i> (1) dark coloured person (2) Viṣṇu	<i>māyōṇ</i> (3918;4781) dark-coloured, person, Viṣṇu	<i>māyōṇ</i> Kaṇṇan
<i>māl</i>	<i>māl</i> ² (1) illusion, delusion (2) desire (3) love, lust (4) blackness	<i>māl</i> (3918;4781) blackness, black, cloud, Viṣṇu	<i>māl</i> (1) Tirumāl (2) Aniruttan (3) black colour
	<i>māl</i> ³ (1) greatness (2) great man (3) Viṣṇu	<i>māl</i> (3923;4786) great man	

sense of “black” and “great” (or “strong”) instead of dividing one and the same term into two different roots. In other words, it would seem appropriate to grasp a word as it is, as a whole with the association of plural meanings and connotations.

2. *Māyōn*:

So far as the name ‘Māyōn’ stemmed from *mā* is concerned, there is no difference of opinion between *Tamil Lexicon* and *DED-DEDR*, either of which takes *māyōn* for “a person of blackish complexion”. N. Subrahmanian, a noted cultural-historian and the author of *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, agrees with this interpretation in his *Śāṅgam Polity*⁽²⁰¹⁾. Zvelebil, too, interprets ‘Māyōn’ as “The Dark (Black, Dark-blue) One”⁽²⁰²⁾.

In the case of *māyōn* too, the word may be conceived of as having the sense of “great one” or “strong one” as well, though there is some evidence to show that the word predominantly signifies “black-complexioned one”. Hardy points out that the word *māyōḷ*, the feminine form of *māyōn*, exclusively denotes “dark-complexioned woman” (‘māmai nīramuṭaiyāl’) in the *akam* genre of classical poetry, as in *Kuruntokai* 9, 132, 199 and 259⁽²⁰³⁾. Therefore, according to Hardy, *māyōn* is none other than “black-complexioned man”⁽²⁰⁴⁾. Indeed, apart from the passages cited by him, we can confirm the usage of *māyōḷ* as “girl of black complexion” in some other places in *Caṅkam* texts, i.e. *Aiṅkurunūru* 145, *Narriṇai* 135 (5), 146 (10), 180 (5), 371 (1) and *Porunarārrupaṭai* 14. In all these passages, *māyōḷ* indicates the heroine (*talaiṇi*) without exception. These examples may be evidential of the word *māyōn* applied to Tirumāl with the dominant implication of “man of black complexion”. There seems to be no room for doubt that the Northern image of Lord Kṛṣṇa is well reflected in the Tamil name ‘Māyōn’. The *Tolkappiyam* (poruḷ. 5.5), in which Māyōn is designated for *mullaitiṇai*, the sylvan or pastoral tract, supports God Māyōn as the Southern counterpart of Kṛṣṇa.

Is it true that *māyōn* meant “black one” alone as Hardy insists? In

order to reinforce his argument, he further cites *Puranānūru* 229 (27) and 291 (2) in which the noun *māyōṇ* is employed in its ‘general meaning’ as “person of dark complexion”⁽²⁶⁵⁾. At least so far as *māyōṇ* in *Puranānūru* 229 is concerned, it is somewhat doubtful whether it solely implies “Black One”. The twenty-seventh verse, namely the last verse, of this long poem runs as follows: ‘maṇivarai yanna māa yōṇē’. U. Vē. Cāminā-taiyar glosses this verse as ‘Nīlamalaipōlum māyōṇ’ (“O Māyōṇ who resembles a blue [or black] mountain”). *Nīlam* (derived from Skt. *nīla*) can be translated either as “(dark-)blue” or as “black”. *Maṇi* in the original verse might be interpreted in various ways. Suppose we take “black” among some possible meanings of this word, the passage may be translated as “O Māyōṇ who resembles a black mountain!” Here, Māyōṇ indeed has an image of “Black One” beyond doubt. It may be also true, however, that he is likened to a mountain at the same time in this passage. In this connection, it is to be remembered that Lord Tirumāl (or Balarāma) is occasionally compared to a mountain as in *Paripāṭal* XIII 3-4, 10-12 and XV 19-23, and more explicitly in XV 33. Hence it would be plausible that in this poem God Māyōṇ has the double image of “Black One” and “Great, Lofty One”. The same might be true of *Narriṇai* 32 (1) which runs: ‘Māyōṇ anna mālvarai’. This phrase is to be translated as “a black mountain resembling Māyōṇ”, suppose ‘māl’ here is tentatively rendered as “black”. Here also Māyōṇ is known to have the twofold image of “Black One” and “Great, Lofty One”, since he is compared to a mountain⁽²⁶⁶⁾. From these textual examples, it would seem probable to me that the name ‘Māyōṇ’, which may predominantly imply “man of dark complexion”, has the sense of “Great, Lofty Being” as well even in a lesser degree.

3. *Māl*:

Regarding ‘Māl’⁽²⁶⁷⁾, another important name of the Lord, the description offered in *Tamil Lexicon* is at variance with that in *DED-*

DEDR. The former ascribes ‘Māl’ to the word *māl* which only means “great(-ness)”, while the latter derives it from the word *māl* denoting “black(-ness)”. On this point, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* by N. Subrahmanian is silent. However, the same author says in *Śāngam Polity*: “Māl means ‘Great’ and Tirumāl was the ‘sacred, great one’”⁽²⁰⁸⁾. Pillay also notes, “‘Māl’ means great and ‘Tirumāl’ denoted the sacred great God”⁽²⁰⁹⁾. It is evident that Zvelebil understands ‘Māl’ as “Dark One” or “Black One”, when he translates ‘Tirumāl’ as “the Blessed Dark One”⁽²¹⁰⁾. Hart also interprets ‘Māl’ as “the black one”⁽²¹¹⁾. These examples suffice to show how scholars differ in opinion on the basic meaning of the name ‘Māl’. It would seem to me that, generally speaking, native scholars are willing to support “Great One” for the name ‘Māl’, whereas the others prefer to the word as “Black One”.

Gros points out that the explanation of Tamil ‘Tiru-Māl’ from its Sanskrit parallel ‘Śrī-Kṛṣṇa’ is rejected by many Vaiṣṇavites nowadays⁽²¹²⁾. They prefer to make a clear-cut distinction between the root *mā* “black” and the root *māl* “great”. Gros, however, criticises such a notion, saying, “En fait, *māl*- signifie, comme *iru*-, l’un et l’autre et la philologie ne permet pas de trancher”⁽²¹³⁾. His observation is presumably to the point. It would be likely that, not only in *māl* but also in *mā* and *māyōn*, two meanings, “black(-ness)” and “great(-ness)”, are closely united together to such an extent that one cannot separate one from the other.

Hardy, who made comprehensive researches in Kṛṣṇaism in South India, totally rejects “great (-ness)” as a meaning of *mā* and *māl*, identifying ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māl’ exclusively as “person of dark complexion”. He remarks, “It is quite clear that Māyōn, etc. [viz. Māyōn, Māl, Māyavan and Māyān] are different Tamil renderings of the Skt. name Kṛṣṇa ‘the Black One’”⁽²¹⁴⁾. It can hardly be said, however, that he gives enough philological reasons and evidences to exclude “great (-ness)” from the senses of *mā* and *māl*. His argument to identify Tirumāl with Kṛṣṇa, a particular incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, by allotting the meaning

“black (-ness)” to the words *mā* and *māl* does not seem to hold well philologically and in the historical context of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu worship developed in the South to be discussed later.

Here it is necessary to cite a few usages of the word *māl*. First, we will further examine a verse of *Narriṇai* 32 (1) mentioned above which runs: ‘Māyōṇ anna mālvurai’. In our foregoing discussion, we have translated this phrase as “a black mountain resembling Māyōṇ”, taking this ‘māl’ for “black” tentatively. However, it is found equally possible to take this ‘māl’ for “big”, “tall”, “lofty” or “great”. In fact, A. Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar’s commentary considers the ‘māl’ as ‘periya’ (big) and paraphrases the passage as ‘Māyōṇaip pōṇra periya malai’ (“a big mountain resembling Māyōṇ”). It would be safer to admit that the word ‘māl’ has the double meaning, “black” and “big” (or “tall”).

In the verses 1-5 of the *Mullaippāṭṭu*, the rain-laden clouds gathering and moving swiftly are likened to tall Māl (‘nimirnta māal’). (As we will see in this article, Tirumāl is sometimes compared to a dark cloud big with rain.) From this example, we come to know that Māl is imagined both as “Tall, lofty One” and as “Dark, Black One”.

The verses of *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* 256-257 are also suggestive in this context. The long compound of this phrase, ‘māl-varai-malai-makaṇ-makaṇē’, may be translated as “O the son [=Murukan] of the Hill Goddess who is a big mountain”, though the meaning of ‘varai’ is here far from clear. Naccinārkkiniyar annotates this phrase as ‘*Perumaiyaiyuṭaiya malaiyākiya malaiyaraiyan makaḷuṭaiya makanē*’ (Italics are mine). This interpretation is followed by Cōmacuntaraṇār. It is clear that ‘māl’ in this passage is better understood as “big”, “tall” or “lofty” than as “black”⁽²¹⁵⁾.

Furthermore, *Cirupāṇārruppaṭai* 205 mentions ‘kaṭavuḷ mālvurai’, which may refer to Mt. Meru. Naccinārkkiniyar (p.170) glosses this phrase as ‘teyvaṅkaḷ irukkinra perumaiyaiyuṭaiya mēru’ (“Mt. Meru with hugeness [or greatness] where deities abide”). Cōmacuntaraṇār’s

modern commentary is almost identical (‘teyvaṅkaḷ uraikinra perumaiyu-ṭaiya mērumalai’). Here, since Mt. Meru, the huge cosmic mountain, is taken up, the ‘māl’ in this phrase is unmistakably “huge” or “great”.

From the above examples, we notice that ‘māl’ commonly has the sense of “big”, “tall”, “lofty” or “great” in *Caṅkam* passages.

In this connection, *neṭṭiyōṇ*, one of the epithets applied to Lord Tirumāl, may demand our careful consideration. What is denoted by *neṭṭiyōṇ* is not distinctly known, although this name itself frequently appears in the *Caṅkam* corpus⁽²¹⁶⁾. Some seek to find in this epithet the Vedic-Purāṇic idea of the Three Strides (*trivikrama*). This is indeed plausible, since there is linguistically no doubt that *neṭṭiyōṇ* indicates “Tall One” (*DED* 3099; *DEDR* 3738)⁽²¹⁷⁾. But in view of the fact that the same epithet may be applied to Murukan and Paraśurāma⁽²¹⁸⁾ as well in the *Caṅkam* texts, it might be more appropriate to take it for “Great, Exalted One” rather than “Tall One”. The recurrence of the name *neṭṭiyōṇ* suggests that Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was commonly understood by the early Tamils not merely as the god of dark colour but also as Great, Exalted One. It is highly probable that people in those days imagined Tirumāl/ Viṣṇu not as Kṛṣṇa but as a whole, or rather as a complex of many aspects including those of Kṛṣṇa and other *avatāra*-s.

One can cite another textual example in this connection when one comes across the following verses in *Paripāṭal* III 1-3: ‘Māyōyē māyōyē/ marupirappu arukku mācu il cēvaṭi/ maṇitikal urupiṇ māyōyē/’ (“O Māyōṇ! O Māyōṇ! O Māyōṇ endowed with the blemishless red feet which cut [the chain of] rebirth and the body shining [like] sapphire!”). ‘Māyōṇ’ in this paragraph does not necessarily imply “black-complexioned person”, as Parimēlaḷakar properly notes, ‘Māyōṇenpatu, kariyōṇennum poruḷ kuriyātu peyar māttraiyāy ninratu’⁽²¹⁹⁾. ‘Maṇitikal urupu’ (“the body with the splendour of sapphire”) is rather associated with bluish complexion⁽²²⁰⁾. It may be said that the word ‘Māyōṇ’ in this context, free from its implication of “Black One” or any other, functions as a

mere proper noun indicating not a particular Incarnation like Kṛṣṇa but the whole entity of God Tirumāl.

4. Significance of Different Names of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu

The above examination provides a positive proof that both ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māl’ (and hence ‘Tirumāl’ also) have a double meaning instead of an exclusive implication of Kṛṣṇa as “Black One”. This probably indicates that, in Tamil society in those days where the theological doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism, as of Pāñcarātra of later days, was not yet introduced, Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was worshipped, so to say, as the composite whole of multifarious aspects including *vyūha*-s and *avatāra*-s, any of which had not yet established its own independent entity in worship. Various epithets and names⁽²²⁾ applied to one and the same god, may be understood in this context. The description of Balarāma (not Viṣṇu) who has Lakṣmī on his chest (*Paripāṭal* I 3-5) as well as that of Churning of Milk-ocean in which Lord Tirumāl plays a triple role as Kūrma, Vāsuki and the puller of the serpent-rope (*Paripāṭal* Fragment I 64-71) may be interpreted as revealing the fact that Tirumāl was worshipped as a whole without distinction between his transcendental form and his descents at least at the stage of the *Paripāṭal*. This, too, turns out to be parallel with the situation of the Northern Vaiṣṇavism.

Here, it is necessary to refer to Hardy’s view. Quoting the passage of *Paripāṭal* XIII 26-37 in which three manifestations of Māl viz. Nārāyaṇa, Balarāma and Varāha are narrated, he remarks, “Thus it appears that ‘Kṛṣṇa’ is used here indiscriminately for both the transcendental Viṣṇu and the ‘incarnate’ Kṛṣṇa, and moreover also for the *Avatāras*. This situation is not altogether surprising, when we look carefully at the Northern traditions. Even there ‘Kṛṣṇa’ includes only at a later stage the ‘cowherd of Vṛndāvana’, particularly as the lover of the *gopīs* ... In the earlier [Northern/Sanskrit] sources, there was no need for such a precise distinction between the Transcendental god and his human

‘incarnations’”⁽²²²⁾. Though we are not fully convinced of his notion that ‘Māl’ is no more than a mere rendering of Skt.Kṛṣṇa, his above-cited argument speaks in favour of the Southern worship of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu keeping step with the Northern trends of the Vaiṣṇava religion.

To sum up, it may be noted that both names, ‘Māyōṇ’ and ‘Māl’, applied to Lord Tirumāl is, in all probability, endowed with a double meaning, “Black One” and “Great, Tall One”. The former sense may correspond to Skt.‘Kṛṣṇa’ and suggest an ‘incarnate’ aspect of Viṣṇu⁽²²³⁾, while the latter may perhaps represent a ‘transcendental’ aspect of the Lord or, as the epithet ‘Neṭiyōṇ’ hints, a ‘mythological’ aspect as celebrated *Trivikrama*. (As far as ‘Māyōṇ’ is concerned, “Black One” or “Dark One” may be somewhat dominantly implied.) Thus Tirumāl, whose appellations themselves make us presume his close association with the Northern-Sanskritic world, stands out in sharp contrast to Murukan, the god *par excellence* of the Tamils, whose older names predominantly suggest his indigenous features.

Tirumāl’s names and epithets, many of which have multiple meaning, are likely to show that he was understood as a god into which diverse elements were so harmoniously united that no one might dare to worship any single aspect in an independent manner. This proves to be in complete accord with the Northern situation of Viṣṇu cult. All these unmistakably show that the Southern worship of Tirumāl was moulded basically on its precedent Northern model of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult.

The probable Northern origin of Tirumāl cult may be attested by some other textual evidences also. They are enumerated below:

- a) Lord Tirumāl is designated as ‘Celvan’ (“wealthy man”, “lord”), a Tamil title generally applied to the gods of Northern provenance⁽²²⁴⁾.
- b) Tirumāl is not directly connected with the phenomenon of “possession”, “frenzy” or “trance” characteristic of the sacred indigenous to Tamil India⁽²²⁵⁾.

- c) With the only exception of Tirumāliṅkuraṁ otherwise known under the name of Tirumāliṅcōlaimalai, the cult of Tirumāl does not show the significant association with “mountain” which was commonly believed by the ancient Tamils to be one of the most important seats of the divine⁽²²⁶⁾.

The scarcity of references to Māyōn-Tirumāl in the earlier texts and his rise in popularity in post-*Caṅkam* periods may also evidence that this god was originally foreign to the Tamils.

C. Brāhmaṇical References in the *Paripāṭal* Hymns

The Northern features of Tirumāl and his cult seem to be in accord with the recurrence of Vedic or Brāhmaṇical references in the Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal*. The references to the Vedas and the Brahmin cultures, which are all presented in a good light by the poets, are found here and there in all the seven odes (520 lines). The following is the table of the references:

References to the Vedic Scriptures

- * *arumarai* (“Rare Secret”, i.e. Vedas) … I 13; II 57; III 17; IV 65
(=Upaniṣads? Cf. Parimēlaḷakar).
- * *kēḷvi* (“Hearing”, “Revelation”, i.e. Vedas. Cf. Skt.śruti) … II 25,
61; III 48; Fragment I 19.
- * *vāymoḷi* (“Word of the Mouth”, “True Saying”, i.e. Vedas) … I 65;
III 11, 12, 93; XIII 44; IV 63.
- * *mutumoli* (“Old Saying”, i.e. Vedas) …… III 47; XIII 40.
- * *pulam* (“Knowledge”, i.e. Vedas?) …… I 46.
- * *marai* (“Secret”, i.e. Vedas) …… II 63.
- * *vētam* (“Vedas”) …… Fragment I 18.
- * *vētattu marai* (“Secret of the Vedas”) …… III 66.
- * *ēe* (=Sāmaveda. Cf. Parimēlaḷakar) …… III 62.

References to Brahmins

- * *antaṇar* (“Gracious One”, i.e. Brahmin)⁽²²⁷⁾ ... I 13, 37; II 57; III 17;
IV 65; Fragment I 20.

References to the Vedic Sacrifice

- * *aran* (“Virtue” ... an allusion to the chief of sacrifice,
vēḷvi-mutalvan, according to Parimēlaḷakar) III 5.
- * *vēḷvi* (“Sacrifice”, i.e. Vedic *yajña*) ... XIII 56.

✱In addition to the above references, the verses II 61-62 may indicate the idea of Vedic sacrifice.

The poets consistently pay tribute to the authority of the Vedas as well as that of Brahmins. It is remarkable that in III 47 Māl is explicitly called ‘Mutumoli-mutalvan’ (“the chief of Old Saying”, namely “the Chief of the Vedas”)⁽²²⁸⁾. Such an expression obviously shows that the cult of Tirumāl had its root in Vedic India, not in the indigenous South, or at least had the Vedic authority behind it.

As for the Cevvēḷ hymns of the same anthology, we notice that the Vedic-Brahmanical references are apparently fewer in number as revealed in the following table⁽²²⁹⁾.

Vedic-Brahmanical References in the Cevvēḷ Odes of the Paripāṭal

- * *vētam* V 23.
- * *mutumoli* VIII 9.
- * *nānmarai* (“Four Secrets”, i.e. Four Vedas) ... IX 12.
- * *vāymoli* IX 13.
- * *curuti* (“Śruti”) XVIII 52.

-
- * *vēḷvi* V 26, 31; XIX 43, 88⁽²³⁰⁾.
 - * *vēḷ* (a verb denoting “to perform sacrifice”) V 41.

-
- * *pārppār* (“Seers”, i.e. Brahmins) …… VIII 52, 68⁽²³¹⁾.
 - * *antaṇar* …………… XIV 28.

Here we find only thirteen Vedic-Brāhmaṇical references in 612 lines, whereas in the Tirumāl odes of the same anthology thirty references in all are to be pointed out in 520 lines. The odes XVII and XXI in particular contain no clear references to the cultural elements presumably of Vedic-Brāhmaṇical provenance.

The same is true of the case of the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, an idyll exclusively dedicated to Lord Murukaṇ. Here also the references are found in nine places among 317 lines as follows.

Vedic-Brāhmaṇical References in the Tirumurukārruppaṭai

- * *arumaraikeḷvi* …………… verse 186.
-
- * *antaṇar* …………… verses 96, 263.
 - * *aiyar* (Brahmins) …………… verse 107.
 - * *irupirappālar* (“the Twice-born”, cf. *Skt.dvija*) … verse 182.
-
- * *vēḷvi* …………… verses 96, 156.
 - * *muttī* (Three Fires) …………… verse 181.
 - * *ṅān* (“String”, i.e. Sacred Thread) …………… verse 183.

What is significant as regards the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* and the Cevvēḷ hymns of the *Paripāṭal* is that the atmosphere produced there is far from Vedic or Brāhmaṇical. The themes of Tamil literature, particularly those of *akam* genre of poetry, adopted to a great extent in those works form the keynote of the verses, so that Vedic-Brāhmaṇical references appear somewhat foreign and extraneous to the whole context of the work. This may indicate that the worship of Cevvēḷ-Murukaṇ is

more indigenous to, and more deeply rooted in, the Tamil soil than that of God Tirumāl. This appears quite significant in the light of the accepted notion that “Vaiṣṇavism has generally been more closely connected with Brāhmanism and Sanskritisation than Śaivism”⁽²³²⁾.

Epilogue

From the foregoing, we may draw a conclusion as in the following: Except for a few episodes which have no exact parallel in Northern myths⁽²³³⁾, dominant Northern influences can be observed in the mythological accounts of Lord Tirumāl in the *Paripāṭal* and other *Caṅkam* texts. The same can be said of iconography. Metaphysical or cosmological accounts about Lord Tirumāl are seldom found in the *Caṅkam* corpus with a single exception of the *Paripāṭal*, a late *Caṅkam* work with pre-devotional lineaments. Philosophical and cosmological descriptions given in the Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal* are indicative of the reflection of Sanskritic ideas derived from Northern India. It is worthy of note that the significant theme of transcendence and immanence of Tirumāl is narrated in this anthology. It is doubtful whether the notion of transcendence of the Absolute in particular was originally known to the Tamils. All these strongly suggest that the idea of the sacred as conceived in the Tirumāl odes of the *Paripāṭal* is substantially of Northern provenance, and hence that the bulk of Tamil Vaiṣṇavism is, in principle, a derivative of the Northern tradition⁽²³⁴⁾.

The foregoing discussions in this study pose a question concerning the “Southern origin” of a popular god variously called Māyōṅ, Māl or Tirumāl and his cult claimed by some scholars⁽²³⁵⁾. If Māyōṅ-Tirumāl had been a god peculiar to Dravidians and only later identified with Aryan Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, he might have left in literature some non-Aryan traits as the mark of his indigenous-autochthonous origin as in the case of Cevvēl-Murukan. In reality, however, we have come across no textual evidences

to convince us of the Southern or Dravidian pedigree of this god himself as well as his worship. In this respect, the situation is found to be quite different from that of Cevvēl-Murukan who firmly maintained Southern values as one of the basic traits of his cult⁽²³⁶⁾.

We might at least say this: The Tamils were not simply receptive of anything under foreign influence. They accepted, or rather, adopted the multifarious Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult of the North in a selective manner and by steps and stages: first the visible and hence approachable aspects of Lord Viṣṇu, namely mythology and iconography (as seen in pre-*Paripāṭal Caṅkam* texts), subsequently his metaphysical and hence inaccessible aspects such as transcendence and immanence (as in *Paripāṭal* hymns), and later the erotic aspects of Lord Kṛṣṇa as shown in his cycle of myths. It is in this manner of adopting foreign elements to enrich their own culture that we may find the uniqueness or speciality of the ancient Tamils⁽²³⁷⁾.

Notes:

* This article develops in much greater detail some of the themes already sketched in the third chapter of my doctoral thesis submitted to Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, the University of Madras, in December, 1987.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the seminar led by Prof. Shingo Einoo, held at the Institute of Oriental Culture, the University of Tokyo, on December 12, 1992. My special thanks are due to Prof. Einoo and the participants for their valuable suggestions and comments.

1 According to F. Hardy (*Viraha-bhakti: the Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, Delhi, 1983, p.134f., footnotes), the *Caṅkam* corpus contains at least seventy references to Murukan, while Māyōṇ-Tirumāl is mentioned only about ten times in the early sources.

Some Remarks on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu Cult

- 2 With regards to the eminent position of Tirumāl in ancient Tamil Nadu, a parallel may be found in the Sinhalese pantheon. Though there may be some doubt as to the identification of God Upulvan with Viṣṇu in the old Sinhalese pantheon. Lord Tirumāl/Viṣṇu has established himself as a major deity throughout the ages. Cf. H. Bachert, "The Cult of Skandakumāra in the Religious History of South India and Ceylon", in *Compte-rendu de la troisième conférence internationale*, Pondichéry, 1973, pp.202, 204; K.K. Pillay, *South India and ŚrīLanka*, Madras, 1975, p.153.
- 3 For the identification of Māyōn mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam* with Viṣṇu, see Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.159, n.137.
- 4 Bechert, *op.cit.*, p.204.
- 5 Cf. R. Sarangapani, *Critical Study of Paripāṭal*, Madurai, 1984, p.98. Pillay points out the occurrence of the word 'viṇṭu', the Tamil cognate of Skt.'Viṣṇu', in *Aiṅkurunūru* 58 (*A Social History of the Tamils*, vol.I, Madras, 1969, p.489, n.77). But it is clear from the context that 'viṇṭu' in this poem signifies not Viṣṇu but a mountain.
- 6 It may also be possible that what Viṣṇu has on his chest is not the *śrīvatsa*-mark but Śrīdevī, Viṣṇu's divine consort. Cf. F. Gros, *Le Paripāṭal: texte tamoul*, Pondichéry, 1968, p.170, n.36; Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.607, n.8.
- 7 For example, see Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār's Tamil commentary (*Pattuppāṭṭu Uraiyuṭan*, 2 vols., Cennai, 1976 [vol.1], 1980 [vol.2]), p.100f.
- 8 See Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.154: "The temple ... , Vehkā (according to the commentators), would seem to have been the only one known during this early period as specifically 'Vaiṣṇavite'".
- 9 The commentators impose the etymology on the epithet 'Neṭiyōn' by reference to the Vāmana myth. Cf. J. V. Chelliah, *Pattupattu (Ten Tamil Idylls)*, Madras, 1962, p.128, n.4; *Tamil Lexicon*, 6 vols. and supplement, Madras, 1982 (first published 1924-1936), p.2336, s.v.; M. Winslow, *A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary*, New Delhi, 1979 (first published 1862), p.691, etc. It is not certain, however, that this name is really associated with the Vedic-Purāṇic idea of the Three

- Strides (*trivikrama*). According to Hardy, 'Neṭiyōn' does not allude to any mythological aspect of this god, but simply means "exalted one" (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.607f. and Appendix VI). The epithet 'Neṭiyōn' is most commonly used to denote Tirumāl/Viṣṇu in the *Caṅkam* texts (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.219). But it is notable that this name is, though rarely, applied to Murukaṅ (*Akanānūru* 149(16)) and Paraśurāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu (*Akanānūru* 220(5)) also (see Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.489, n.76). This will be explicable, if 'Neṭiyōn' simply indicates "the exalted one" and does not exclusively imply the Vāmanāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu.
- 10 Tamil text: 'Nīlanira uruviṅ neṭiyōn koppū/ nāṅ muka oruvar payanta pal italt/ tāmaraip pokuṭṭiṅ kaṅvarat tōri/'
- 11 Cōmacuntaraṅār's commentary, p.130.
- 12 Naccinārkkiniyar's commentary: 'itaṅāṅē mullaikkuriya teyvaṅkūriṅār' (U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar's edition: *Pattuppāṭṭu Mūlamum Naccinārkkiniyar Uraiyum*, Tancāvūr, 1986, p.273). Further, according to this medieval commentator, a myth about Mahābali (*māpali*) and Viṣṇu is alluded to in this passage. This is not clear, however, from the original text.
- 13 Tamil text: 'kaṅaṅkoḷ avuṅark kaṅanta polantār māyōn mēya ōṅa nannāl'. In this sentence of the *Maturaiikkāñci*, Hardy observes "popular religious flavour" which is found in none of the other passages (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.154). The festival of Kṛṣṇa's birth became a popular theme of literature and art. Cf. L. Renou et J. Filliozat, *L'Inde classique: manuel des études indiennes*, tomes I et II, Paris, 1947 (tome I), 1953 (tome II), §§ 1049, 1214.
- As for the Tamil word *avuṅan*, its derivation from Skt.*hūṅa* is sometimes proposed.
- 14 As to the references to Tirumāl in the *Puranānūru*, *Akanānūru* and *Narriṅai* given in this paragraph and the next, I refer to Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.157f. and the Appendix V.
- 15 Tamil text: 'viṅṅuyar puṭkoṭi viral veyyōnum, maṅimayil uyariya māṅā veṅri, ... nālam kākkum kāla munpin'.
- 16 Tamil text: 'pukaltalurrōrkku māyōn anna, urai cāl cirappin pukal cāl māra'.

Some Remarks on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu Cult

- 17 See Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.489, n.77; N. Subrahmanian, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* (second edition), Madras, 1990, s.v.
- 18 Tamil text: 'mā iru vicumpil kaṭitu iṭṭipayirri, nēr katir niraitta nēmiyañ celvan, pōr aṭaṅku akalam poruntiya tārpōr, tiruvil tēettuk kulaii uru keḷu, maṅpayam pūppa'
- 19 Tamil text: 'māyōṅ anna mālvaraik kavā an, vāliyōṅ anna vayan̄ku veḷ aruvi'.
- 20 G. L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, Berkeley, 1975, p.57.
- 21 Hardy seems to throw a doubt on the derivation of Tamil *tiru* from Skt.śrī (*op.cit.*, p.607, n.7), which appears untenable to me. Neither *DED* nor *DEDR* supports the Tamil origin of the word *tiru*.
- 22 Here a king assumes an aspect of Lord Tirumāl. This is interesting in view of the significant association of the image of king with that of god in ancient Tamil culture. See also the note 37 of this article.
- 23 'Ceyyōḷ' as an epithet of Goddess Lakṣmī appears in *Paripāṭal* II 31. For this epithet, see Gros, *op.cit.*, p.174.
- 24 Tamil text: 'kaṭuvoṭu oṭuṅkiya tūmpuṭai vāl eyirru/ aḷal en uyirkkum aṅcuvaru kaṭuntirra/ pāmpu paṭappuṭaikkum palvarik koṅciraip/ puḷ aṅi nīḷkoṭic celvanum ... /
- 25 Tamil text: 'tāmarai payanta tāvil ūḷi/ nāṅmuka voruvar cuṭṭik ... /'
- 26 See Naccinārkkiniyar's commentary, p.56.
- 27 Cāminātaiyar's edition, p.57.
- 28 Filliozat seems to follow Cāminātaiyar's interpretation. Cf. J. Filliozat, *Un texte de la religion Kaumāra: le TirumurukāRRuppaṭai*, Pondichéry, 1973, p.XLII.
- 29 For the different identifications of these groups of deities, see Filliozat, *op.cit.*, p.86.
- 30 Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.1f.
- 31 Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.170, nn.14-25.
- 32 Cf. *ibid.*, p.170, n.26. This usage of 'kaṭa' is also found in XV 45.
- 33 Cf. Parimēlaḷakar's commentary (*Paripāṭal Mūlamum Parimēlaḷakar Uraiyum*, notes by U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar, 5th edition, Madras, 1980) on

III 31-32.

- 34 For Kṛṣṇa's combat myths including his fight with *Asura* Keśin, see B. Preciado-Solis, *The Kṛṣṇa Cycle in the Purāṇas: Themes and Motifs in a Heroic Saga*, Delhi, 1984, pp.93-100.
- 35 The Ṛg-Vedic myth of Viṣṇu's Three Strides does not make mention of his form of a dwarf (see, for example, *Ṛg-Veda* L.154, VII.100). It is in the Brāhmaṇa literature that Viṣṇu in the disguise of a dwarf is clearly mentioned as to his *trivikrama* episode. Cf. A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Delhi, 1981 (first published 1898), pp.39, 41.
- 36 Cf. Sanskrit epithets of Balarāma such as Haladhara, Halabhṛt, Halāyudha and Lāṅgalin, all of which signify "Bearer of a Plough".
- 37 E.g. *aṅṅal* ("king": I 27, XIII 15), *kurucil* ("king": II 49), *mallaṅ* ("boxer", "wrestler": III 89) and *maḷḷaṅ* ("warrior": III 90). As for the identification of Tirumāl with a king or vice versa, see E. Ēkāmparanātan, *Kōyilum Iraivalipāṭum*, Cennai, 1986, p.26. See also the note 22 of this article.
- 38 Compare 'Padmanābha', a well-known epithet of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in Sanskrit literature.
- 39 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.171, nn.45-46.
- 40 Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'Nirainta veḷḷattu naṭuvu tōnriya mānilam tōnrāta mutarḱālattup piramaṅaik koṅṭu untikkaṅmalarnta pokuṭṭut tāmaraiyaiyuṭaiya nin nēmiya ulakirku niḷalāvatu'.
- 41 Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'amararkkuṅavākiya amirttaik kaṭaintukoṭuppatāka ninmanattinḱaṅ ninainta avavilē ...'
- 42 *Viṣṇu-purāa* 1.9.2-116. I refer to C. Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology*, Philadelphia, 1972, pp.94-98.
- 43 Gros points out a similar idea found in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and so on (Gros, *op.cit.*, p.300, nn.64-71).
- 44 See *ibid.*, p.168, n.9. A modern commentator, Cōmacuntaraṅār, also identifies this jewel with *kaustubha* ('Ninakkē uriyatena ariyappaṭṭa kaultuvamaṅiyākiya tikaḷum aṅiyai uṭaiyai').
- 45 Cf. Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'Mōkiṅiyākiya ninvaṭiviṅaik kaṅṭu maḱiṅta maḱilcciyē avuṅarkku accamāy muṭiya amararkku nallamirti-

naip pakuttiṭṭatalāl’

- 46 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1035. For instance, the *Gītagovinda* (12th cent. A.D. ?) has the list of the familiar *daśāvatāra*-s: ‘Matsyaḥ kūrmo varāhaś ca narasiṃho’tha vāmanaḥ/ rāmo rāmaś ca kṛṣṇaś ca buddhaḥ kalkī ca te daśa/’ The *Matsya-purāṇa* also offers the same list. Cf. Danielou, *op.cit.*, pp. 165, 431.
- 47 The currently famous list of the ten *avatāra*-s consists of Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise), Varāha (Boar), Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma (Rāma with an axe), Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalkin. See, for example, Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §§ 1036-1052. Apart from the above list of *daśāvatāra*-s, different lists of the Incarnations which contain 11, 12, 15, 22, 24 or even 39 *avatara*-s are known in Sanskrit Purāṇas. Cf. Dimmitt and van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, pp.67-69; Vettam Mani, *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purāṇic Literature*, Delhi, 1975, p.83; Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1035. For the twenty-four Incarnations given in the *Bhagavata-purāṇa*, see R. K. Siddhantashastree, *Vaiṣṇavism through the Ages*, New Delhi, 1985, pp.85-106.
- 48 See Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1035.
- 49 Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.109. According to Sarangapani, the ten *avatāra*-s in the *Nālāyirappirapantam* are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Balarāma, Rāma, Parasurāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin.
- 50 Frag. I. 64-66: ‘Tikaḷ oḷi munnīr kaṭainta akkāḷ verput/ tikaḷpu eḷa vānki taṇ cīr cirattu ēṛri/ makara maṛikataḷ vaittu niruttup/’
- 51 There is no old commentary available on the Fragment I of the *Paripāṭal*. Hence, we can refer only to the commentaries by modern *pandit*-s. Among them, Cōmacuntaranār, for example, says, ‘makaram-īnaiyuṭaiya alaipuraḷkinra appārkaṭalinkaṇ *āmai urukkoṇṭa* tanatu al-akiya mutukil ērrivaittu nilaiperaḷ ceytu ...’ (Italics are mine.)
- 52 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.173, n.16.
- 53 Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘vaḷartiraippunan mūḷkiyeṭuttalin atanāl maṇṇappatta kiḷar pukariṭaiyātakiya maruppirkoṇṭu ātivarākam maṇan-

- ayartalar pulliyaḷavākiya nilaṇum veḷḷattāl varuntirillai yenru vē-tapporuḷai uṭkoṇṭuraippōr uraiyoṭenak kūṭṭuka’.
- 54 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1038.
- 55 Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary: ‘Ivai kūṭum ūḷi muṭivinuḷ ēḷum onrākiya alikkaṇ aḷuntukinra nilamakaḷai alakiya varākamāki maruppār peyarttetuttōyenavum’.
- 56 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.189, nn.22-24.
- 57 For the theme of marriage between Varāha-Viṣṇu and the Earth in Purāṇic literature, see Vettam Mani, *op.cit.*, p.827. Varāha-Viṣṇu carrying Devī is a frequent theme of iconography. Cf. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. I, part I, Delhi, 1985 (first published Madras, 1914), pp. 132-145.
- 58 For the episode about Hiraṇyākṣa, see, for example, Vettam Mani, *op.cit.*, pp.314, 826.
- 59 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1038. Further, see S. Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, New Delhi, 1981 (second rev. and enl. ed.), p.226.
- 60 The account of Narasiṃhāvātāra given in the *Paripāṭal* is found more similar to that in the *Padma-purāṇa*, see Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.148f. For the detailed discussion of this *avatāra* as well as Vāmanāvātāra in the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, see D. A. Soifer, *The Myths of Narasiṃha and Vāmana*, New York, 1991.
- 61 Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary: ‘aḷakkinrakālattu mērcolliya mūvēḷ- ulakiṇuṭ kiḷavākiya ēḷulakattaiyum eñcāmalurra aṭiyinaiyuṭaiyai’.
- 62 Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary: ‘aycciyaroṭu kuravai kōttalāl avarcku iṭamum valamum āyiṇōy!’.
- 63 Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LI, 183, n.83; Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.205; Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.111.
- 64 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LI; Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.221.
- 65 S. Vaidyanathan, *Indo-Aryan Loanwords in Old Tamil*, Madras, 1971, p.126.
- 66 *Paripāṭal* III 25-26: ‘mā vicumpu oḷukupunal varaḷa vannaccēvalāyc cir- akarp pularttiyōy’.

- 67 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LII.
- 68 Balarāma's club is well-known in the *Harivamṣa*. See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.266, nn.55-57. For Balarāma with two arms having a club (*gadā*) and a plough (*hala*), see Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.201. Gopinatha Rao points out that the *Agni-purāṇa* mentions Balarāma who has a club (*musala*), discus (*cakra*), a plough (*hala*) and a conch (*śaṅkha*) in his four hands (*ibid.*, p.201). Taking this into due consideration, we may attribute the conch and the discus-weapon mentioned in XV 59 to Balarāma.
- 69 Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.201.
- 70 For the mythological accounts of the origin of the striking contrast in colour between these two brothers, see Vettam Mani, *op.cit.*, p.99f.
- 71 There is a reference to Vāliyōn in II 20. According to *Tamil Lexicon*, 'vāl' (youth, whiteness, goodness, etc.), the root of the name 'Vāliyōn', is derived from Sanskrit *bāla*, which appears irrelevant to me. Cf. *DEDR* 5364.
- 72 *Paripāṭal* I 3: 'Maiyilvāl vaḷaimēni'; *Paripāṭal* II 20: 'Vaḷaiyoṭu puraiyum vāliyōn'.
- 73 See, for example, Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.201; Danielou, *op.cit.*, p.180.
- 74 P. T. Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils: From the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, New Delhi, 1989 (first published Madras, 1929), pp. 202-206; Gros, *op.cit.*, p.L; Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.112f.; Subrahmanian, *Śāngam Polity: The Administration and Social Life of the Śāngam Tamils*, revised ed., Madurai, 1980, p.368. A brief introduction of Balarāma and his worship in the *Caṅkam* literature is given by N. P. Joshi, *Iconography of Balarāma*, New Delhi, 1979, p.20.
- 75 J. Gonda interprets Balarāma's association with Śeṣa as an expression of the idea of a close relation between the cosmic serpent and the High God (*Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Delhi, 1969, p.152).
- 76 Renou compares the relation between Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with that between Śiva and Subrahmaṇya (Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1048).
- 77 Thousand heads, which are commonly understood as the attributes of

the cosmic serpent known as Ādiśeṣa or Ananta, are sometimes ascribed to God Viṣṇu himself. In this aspect, Viṣṇu is called 'Bahuś-ira', "One who has numerous heads". Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.107, n.1.

78 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.266f., nn.58-61.

79 Cf. Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'Ilavāttukkaḷuḷ, oḷiḷoḷiyavai, orukulaiyavai, vaḷḷaṇi vaḷaināncilavai, calampuri taṇṇēntinavai eṇa vantaṇa palatēvana; ēnaiya vācutēvan'. In Sanskrit tradition, discus, conch, bow, arrow and sword are known as the *pañcāyudha* of Lord Viṣṇu.

In spite of the probable confusion between Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and Balarāma seen in the verses XV 55-61, the *Paripāṭal* knows the rigid distinction between the two as well. In the verses II 20-25, for instance, it is said that Viṣṇu, as Kṛṣṇa, is younger than Balarāma but, as Vāsudeva, he is older than Balarāma. This is an example of the clear distinction presented in the *Paripāṭal* among Vāsudeva, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. Cf. Parimēlalakar's commentary on II 20-27.

80 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §§ 792, 1028, 1320, 1321.

81 Parimēlalakar apportions the four colours, black, white, red and green, to four Yugas when he identifies the four gods. But there is no traditionally strict identity between the colours and the four gods. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.182f., nn.81-82.

82 Parimēlalakar's commentary on III 82 (p.26).

83 Cōmacuntaranār takes "three forms" (*mūvuru*) in XIII 37 for Brahmā, Rudra and Tirumāl (p.230). However, it seems to me far-fetched from the context of the original text.

84 According to Gros, this theme of the battle between Vāyu and Śeṣa is reflected in the *sthala-purāṇa*-s in South India (Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LII-LIII).

85 Text: 'Aṇaṅkuṭai aruntalai āyiram viritta/ kaṇaṅkoḷ curratu aṇṇalai vaṇaṅki/ nallaṭi ētti niṇ paravutum/ ellēm piriyaṅku em curramoṭu oruṅkē/'

Translation: "We adore three, the Chief (=Ādiśeṣa) who spreads out his owe-inspiring thousand heads and has the gathered flowers. We praise and admire thy good feet. May we be together with our kinsmen

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- without separating (from thee)!”
- 86 ‘Nakar’, whose probable Sanskrit cognate ‘*nagara*’ means “city” or “town”, sometimes signifies “temple” in Tamil passages.
- 87 Kuḷavāy is said to have been located near present Madurai. Cf. Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.115.
- 88 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.229, n.49: “Tirumāl semble être adoré ici sous les traits d’Ādiśeṣa”.
- 89 See Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary on the verse 6. Moreover, see Gros, *op.cit.*, p.179, nn.15-16.
- 90 Neither *Index des mots de la littérature tamoule ancienne* (3 vols., Pondichéry, 1967, 1968, 1970) nor *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* makes entry of the word ‘karuṭaṇ’. This suggests that the word is absent from the whole *Caṅkam* corpus. By the age of Parimēlaḷakar (the end of 13th cent.?), the word ‘karuṭaṇ’ had acquired citizenship in the Tamil vocabulary, since the reputed comentator mentions this word on his commentary on III 61 and XIII 38.
- 91 Tamil *uvaṇam* may be a derivative from Skt.*suparṇa* (“well-winged”, an epithet of Garuḍa). See *Tamil Lexicon*, p.162; Gros, *op.cit.*, p.176, n.60.
- 92 Cf. the note 21 of this monograph.
- 93 The original meaning of ‘mā’ is “beauty”. Cf. *DED* 3886; *DEDR* 4746.
- 94 The epithet ‘Ceyyōḷ’ also appears in *Akanānūru* 316 (13), as mentioned above.
- 95 Cōmacuntaranār: ‘Kāmanum cāmanumākiya iruvarukkum tantaiyavanē!’ (P.7); ‘Iruvar-kāmanum cāmanum eṅka’(p.8).
- 96 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.170, n.28.
- 97 See, for instance, III 83.
- 98 Cf. XV 10-13.
- 99 *Tulasi* is a holy plant in Hinduism in general (Danielou, *op.cit.*, pp.370, 376). It is sacred especially to Lord Viṣṇu. According to Prof. S. Einoo and others, this plant became sacred to Viṣṇu very late in Sanskrit literary tradition. Our present amount of knowledge does not suffice to explain why *tulasi*, as the plant sacred to this god, is

- mentioned in the *Paripāṭal* which was presumably compiled before the dawn of the *bhakti* literature in the South. Cf. the notes 100 and 106.
- 100 References: Garuḍa banner (I 11, 57; II 60; III 17-18; IV 36, 37, 42; XIII 4, 38-39, 41; XV 56), Garuḍa *vāhana* (III 16, 59-60), battle-discus (Skt. *cakra*; Tamil *nēmi*, *āḷi*, *paruti*, *tikiri*) (I 52, 58; II 19, 49 (allusion); III 89, IV 9; XIII 6, 9, 58; XV 59), *tulasi*-garland (Tamil *tuḷāy*, *tuḷavu*) (III 87; XIII 59-60; XV 15, 54), Lakṣmī or *śrīvatsa* (I 3, 7-8, 36; II 30-31; IV 59).
- 101 In the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, these weapons are given proper nouns: for example, the discus as Sudarśana, the conch as Pāñcajanya, the bow as Śāringa, the mace as Kaumodakī (See Danielou, *op.cit.*, pp.155-157). The *Paripāṭal*, however, does not mention these names as such.
- 102 III 36: 'Nārakai yaṅṅal' (O great man with four arms!).
- 103 Skt. *caturbhujā* ("the four-armed one") itself is an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu.
- 104 In I 21, an ornamental jewel on Viṣṇu's chest is referred to. It is not sure whether this jewel indicates his famous *kaustubha* or not.
- 105 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.170, n.28, and p.174, nn.28-31. Viṣṇu's necklace (*āram*) is mentioned in XIII 11. This also may allude to Vaijayanti.
- 106 Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'Vanamālaiyaṅinta celvanē!' Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.183, n.88.
- The garland made of *tulasi* mentioned in XIII 59-60, XV 15, 54 may perhaps indicate *vanamālā*. Apart from these references, a garland on Viṣṇu's chest is mentioned in XIII 3-4. It is not certain whether this garland is identical with *vanamālā*.
- 107 Since the hue similar to the flower of *pūvai* (alias *kāyā*) is attributed to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, he is sometimes called *pūvaiyaṅṅan* or *kāyāmpūm-ēṅṅan* in Tamil.
- 108 References: *pūvai*-flower (I 6-7; III 73; XIII 42), a gem (sapphire) (I 59; III 3; IV 57; XIII 42; XV 50), a rain cloud (XIII 42; XV 50), darkness (XIII 42; XV 50), and the ocean (XIII 42).
- 109 XIII 42-43: 'Kār malarp pūvai kaṭalai iruḷ maṇi/ avai aintum uraḷum

- aṅkiḷar mēṇiyai’.
- 110 XV 50: ‘Vauval kār iruḷ mayāṅkumaṇi mēṇiyaṅ’.
- 111 The same kind of simile is found in other Tamil works. See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.259, n.50.
- 112 See, for example, III 2: ‘Maṇupirappu arukkum mācil cēvaṭi’ (“the spotless red feet which cut off rebirth”), and III 18-19: ‘Niṅ cēvaṭi toḷārum uḷarō’ (“Are there those who don’t worship your red feet?” — a rhetorical question).
- 113 In the allusion to *vyūha*-s (III 81-82), red eyes as well as black body are attributable to Vāsudeva.
- 114 In Tamil also, he is called *Patumakkaṇṇan*, *Kamalakkaṇṇan*, etc. It is noteworthy that in both traditions, Sanskrit and Tamil, eyes are likened to flowers. Cf. Hart, *op.cit.*, pp.258-260.
- 115 Declined in the masculine, the Skt. word *pīlāmbara* itself may signify God Viṣṇu.
- 116 This is the reason why Balarāma is called Vāliyōn or Vēḷḷaiyōn, the White God, in Tamil. See Srinivas Iyengar, *op.cit.*, p.202.
- 117 Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.201.
- 118 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.173, nn.20-24.
- 119 Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.173, n.16.
- 120 According to Dimmitt and van Buitenen (*op.cit.*, p.126f.), there are three kinds of creation motifs in the Purāṇic literature: 1) the creation from Viṣṇu-Narāyaṇa who has God Brahmā as his active agent, 2) the creation from a cosmic egg, and 3) the creation by the cooperation of two eternal elements, Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Among these three, the theme of the creation from a cosmic egg is absent in the Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal*.
- As the fourth motif, Dimmitt and van Buitenen point out 4) a complex synthesis of the notions of Brahmā as active creative agent along with Puruṣa and Prakṛti as cooperative creators, and cite a passage of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa* (*op.cit.*, pp.17f., 36-38). In Tirumāl hymns of the *Paripāṭal*, however, the first and the third motifs do not form such an organic synthesis.

- 121 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.178f., n.9. The three groups of the worlds are, according to Gros, Svarga (or seven *nidhvaloka*-s), Martya (or seven *dvīpa*-s), and Pātāla (or seven *adholoka*-s).
- 122 See Parimēlaḷakar's commentary.
- 123 Apart from these, some conventional ideas apparently derived from the Sanskrit Purāṇic cosmology, such as Mt.Meru and the ocean surrounding the continent, are frequently mentioned in the *Caṅkam* corpus of classical Tamil literature.
- 124 If the philosophical sysytem suggested by numbers in *Paripāṭal* III 77-80 is none other than Sāṃkhya, it is quite interesting in view of the probable etymology of 'Sāṃkhya' which may originally have meant "relating to number", "culculating", etc. (see, for example, Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1421).
- 125 But this interpretation may be controvertible. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.180f., n.49.
- 126 *Pūtankaḷaintum* (Skt.*pañcabhūta*) are *vicumpu* (ether), *vaḷi* (air), *tī* (fire), *nīr* (water), and *nilan* (earth).
- 127 *Ñānentiriyānkaḷaintum* (correspondent to Skt.*pañcajñānendriya*) are not named one by one in the *Paripāṭal* text. But it is apparent that, as Parimēlaḷakar enumerates in his commentary on III 79, they are *cevi* (ear), *tōl* (skin), *kaṇ* (eye), *nā* (tongue), and *mūkku* (nose).
- 128 In XIII 14, *cuvaimai* (taste), *icaimai* (sound), *tōrram* (form), *nārram* (smell), and *ūru* (touch) are enumerated. In orthodox (Sanskritic) epistemology, they are collectively termed *pañcaviṣaya*-s or, in the Sāṃkhya sysytem, *pañcatanmātra*-s. Parimēlaḷakar mentions these only as "senses" (*pulankaḷ*).
- 129 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.259, nn.63-64.
- 130 These virtues are correspondent to the four *brahmavihāra*-s ("four pious conducts"), which are common to Buddhists and Yogins. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.186, n.1. In Buddhism, these are traditionally called *caturaparamāṇa*, "the Four Boundless".
- 131 It is to be noted that "penance" is almost equivalent to "devotion" in certain situations in Southern Hinduism. Cf. D. D. Shulman, *Tamil*

Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition, Princeton, 1980, p.357, n.7. Here in the *Paripāṭal* too, the distinction between “penance” and “devotion” is not always clear.

132 I refer to Parimēlalakar’s commentary for my translation. Gros renders the same passage as “Pour penser ta grandeur, qui peux-Tu concevoir, sinon Toi, Le premier de vieux mots d’antique nature?” (*op.cit.*, p.14). Here we do not take Gros’ interpretation.

133 Parimēlalakar’s paraphrase of this *vali* (strength) as *ahaṅkāra*, a principle of Sāṃkhya, seems unsuccessful and far-fetched. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.180f., n.49.

134 “The universe”, according to the text, consists of five elements, the sun, the moon, Aran (=the sacrificial priest), five planets, the sons of Diti (=Asura-s), the sons of Vidhi (=twelve Āditya-s), eight Vasu-s, eleven Rudra-s, Aśvin-s, Dharma (=Yama), the attendant of Yama, twenty-one worlds and living creatures.

Among them, five elements, the sun, the moon and the sacrificial priest are known as *aṣṭa-mūrti* in Sanskrit tradition. Twelve Āditya-s, eight Vasu-s, eleven Rudra-s and two Aśvin-s form so-called “thirty-three gods”, Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.178, nn.4, 5, 7.

Parimēlalakar traces the antiquity for the organisation of the universe from Tirumāl/Viṣṇu to the Vedas. See his commentary on III 10-11.

135 Thus, even Śiva and Brahmā are no more than the aspects of Lord Viṣṇu. He is indeed portrayed as Supreme God who unites the three deities (*trimūrti*) within himself. Cf. Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1027.

136 The idea of pervasion and inherence of Tirumāl seems to correspond to the emphasis on Viṣṇu as the “Pervader” in Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, rather than the notion of immanence of the sacred indigenous to ancient Tamil Nadu. The name Viṣṇu is usually understood as to mean “pervader”. This interpretation was preferred particularly by the authors of Sanskrit Purāṇas. They conceived of Viṣṇu to be “God that pervades and motivates the entire universe”. Cf. Dimmitt and van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, p.60; Gonda, *op.cit.*, p.4, n.31. The latter cites *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 2.3.120 which runs, ‘yasmād viṣṭam idaṃ sarvaṃ vā-

- maneha jāyātā/ tasmāt sa vai smṛto viṣṇur viśer dhātoḥ praveśanāt/’
- 137 Verses with somewhat similar purport are to be found in the *Bhagavadgītā* VII 6-12.
- 138 Tamil text: ‘Ulakuyirkaḷin tōrramum nilaiparum oṭukkamum ninkaṇṇavenravārām’.
- 139 Cf. Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary on II 20-27.
- 140 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LX: “La contradiction est douloureusement perçue entre la transcendance infinie, imperturbable, et l’immanence du Dieu sensible au cœur (IV 53-56), mais est résolue, semble-t-il, dans le mouvement de confiance qui achève le poème (IV 7-73), espoir repris par le poème XIII où Tirumāl apparaît comme le Dieu de la délivrance (V 7-13)”.
- 141 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LIII.
- 142 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.210.
- 143 *Ibid.*, pp.202, 206, 213, 229-233.
- 144 *Ibid.*, p.211: “Thus to ‘live at the feet’, ‘to worship feet’ of Māl is ideomatic for ‘to perform worship of the temple statue’”. In spite of Hardy’s view, ‘worshipping of feet’ is known to be a figurative expression of ‘worshipping’, by reference, for example, to a phrase ‘cūḷin aṭitoṭu kunru’ (*Paripāṭal* VIII 70) (“the mountain whose foot you touched when you swore”), which is annotated by Parimēlaḷakar as ‘kūruvāyāyin ... (cānrōrānē) vaṇaṅkappaṭum tirupparaṅkunram’.
- 145 Gros disagrees with S. R. Balasubramaniam who remarks the “establishment of the iconographical aspect of this deity” in *Paripāṭal* II 61-63, and criticises his view as misconstruing the purport of Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary (Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LV, n.1, p.176, nn.61-68). Gros seems to assume a critical attitude toward the effort to gather proofs of the basic ideas of the Pāñcarātras including *arcā* in the Tirumāl odes (*ibid.*, pp.LIV-LV).
- 146 As the passages filled with devotional sentiments in the Cevvēl odes of the *Paripāṭal*, we can point out, in particular, V 16-21, 71-81; VIII 65-66, 79-82, 96-108, 126; XI 83-85; XIV 29-32; XVII 6-8, 60-63; XVIII 54-56; XXI 68-70. As for the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, see verses 4, 93-94, 250-252, 279

and 284-286.

- 147 I 38: 'Ārvālarḱku aḷiyum nī'; III 65: 'Aṛattinūḷ anpu nī'.
- 148 I 36: 'Nī aruḷal vēṇṭum' ("We request you to bestow grace").
- 149 IV 27: 'Nin curattalum vaṇṇmaiḱum māri uḷa/'
- 150 Tamil text: 'Aruḷ kuṭai āka aṛam kōḷ āka/ aru niḷal paṭāmai mūvēḷ ulakamum/ oru niḷal ākkiya ēmattai mātō/'
- 151 Tamil text: 'viṇ aḷi koṇṭa viyal mati aṇi koḷ at/ taṇ aḷi koṇṭa aṇaṅkuṭai nēmi māḷ/ Cf. Parimēḷalakar's commentary: 'Viṇṇiṅkaṇṇinru aḷittarrolilaikkoṇṭa niraṁmatiyatu kuḷircciyai yokkak kuḷirnta aḷittarrolilaik koṇṭa māḷē!'
- 152 III 2: 'Maṛupirappu aṛukkum mācu il cēvaṭi'. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.178, n.2, p.191, n.62. Incidentally, the term 'cēvaṭi' is also applied to Murukan. See, for instance, the invocatory poem of the *Kuruntokai*.
- 153 A similar sentiment is also found among the devotees of Cevvēḷ-Murukan. They, too, eagerly desire to live at Murukan's divine feet. See such verses of the Cevvēḷ hymns as IX 84, XVIII 54-56 and XXI 68-69.
- As we have already touched, Hardy prefers to set forth temple rituals to the divine statues as the premise of these modes of descriptions on Tirumāl's feet (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.211). However, it would seem irrelevant to me. Such paragraphs may be better understood in the context of the conventional mode of expression of the religious sentiment of humility, or rather, self-abasement universally observed among the *bhakta-s* in Southern Hinduism throughout.
- 154 XIII 12: 'Tiru varai akalam toḷuvōrku/' 'Tiru varai akalam', which has a double meaning, can be also interpreted as "the chest where Tiru, i.e. Goddess Lakṣmī, abides". Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.256, n.10.
- 155 I 34: 'Vellā yām' ("incapable we"); IV 3-5: 'Kīḷakkuṅkāl avai ninakku/ irumpūtu aṇmai naṛku aṛintēm āyinum/ nakutalun takuti iṅku ūṅku nin kiḷappa/' Such awareness of the debased state of the *bhakta-s* is typically found in Tamil devotional poems. See Hart, "The Nature of Tamil Devotion", M. M. Deshpande and P. E. Hook eds., *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, Michigan, 1978, p.11.
- 156 XV 15-16: 'Nāru iṇart tuḷāyōn nalkiṅ allatai/ ērutal cḷitō vīru peru

turakkam/’ Cf. Cōmacuntaranār’s commentary on the same verses: ‘Vērōṅṛīrkillāta cirappinaiyuṭaiya mēnilaiyulakattinḱaṅ, maṇaṅkamalāninra pūṅkotttukalaṭaiyuṭaiya tuḷaci mālaiyinai aṇinta namperumān tiruvaruḷ ceytaviṭattu ērutalanri aruḷ ceyyāviṭattu, uyirkaḷ tam muyarciyanē ērutal iyalvatanrām’.

157 Cf. the verse XXI 15 in the Cevvēḷ hymns. Tirupparaṅkunram claims the superiority even to the abode of gods (XVII 6-8). For the parallelism between the two sacred mountains, see Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.207.

158 In the Tamil *bhakti* religion in later periods, a temple which is no less than the terrestrial embodiment of Heaven, comes to assume a cosmological image of a South Indian (Śaiva) temple is excellently analysed by Shulman in his remarkable work, *Tamil Temple Myths*. The fact that a temple is figuratively identified with the celestial world in the *Paripāṭal* may be worthy of note as paving the way for the above idea of a temple with the cosmological significance in later devotional Hinduism of the South.

159 For the Tamil concept of the sacred, see, in particular, H. Yamashita, “Deivamu to Kāvuvu: Kodai Tamiru Sekai no Kami” (=Teyvam and Kaṭavuḷ: Concepts of ‘god’ in Early Tamilnadu), *Ronshū*, No. 15, 1988, pp.(57)-(72).

160 This reminds us of Renou’s view that *bhakti* is more intrinsic and essential to Vaiṣṇavism than to Śaivism (Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §§1304, 1345, 1355). It would appear that in Tamil Nadu also, at least at the beginning, the idea of *bhakti* was more familiar to Vaiṣṇavas than to Śaivas. Moreover, it seems plausible that the *bhakti* movement of Tamil Śaivas was inspired and enhanced under the initiative and influence of Vaiṣṇavas. But it should be borne in mind here that, as we will see below, there was no polarisation of Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas as such in the strict sense of the word at the age of the *Paripāṭal*. Therefore, we should draw a clear line between the poets of the *Paripāṭal* and Vaiṣṇava Āḷvār-s. In this sense, the *Paripāṭal* poets may have seen, so to say, the “forerunners of Āḷvār-s”, but can hardly be designated “the Āḷvār-s of *Paripāṭal*” as in Sarangapani’s study (Sarangapani,

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- op.cit.*, p.119).
- 161 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §910.
- 162 Cf. Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.207.
- 163 Parimēlalakar's commentary: 'Iṭavala – āycciyaroṭu kuravai kōttalāl avarckku iṭamum valamum āyinōy! kuṭa ala – kūtātūtarku eṭutta kuṭattinaiyum pakaivaraik kollutarku eṭutta alappaṭaiyinaiyumuṭaiya'. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LI, 183, n.83.
- 164 See Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.287.
- 165 Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1974, p.48.
- 166 Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LI-LII.
- 167 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LIV. Further, see *ibid.*, p.LIII: "Ce qui est remarquable, c'est qu'elles apparaissent, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'Inde, dans une autre langue que le sanskrit, et cela avec une admirable perfection formelle".
- 168 Cf. Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1123.
- 169 See *ibid.*, 1317.
- 170 See *ibid.*, 1319.
- 171 Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.116f.
- 172 Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LIV-LV.
- 173 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1304; Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.301.
- 174 Hardy, *loc.cit.*
- 175 *Ibid.*, p.35.
- 176 Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LIV-LV. Sarangapani may be one of those scholars. He remarks, "It may be held that in the age of *Paripāṭal* the Tamils were familiar with the whole theory of pāñcarātra Āgama, Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and His four Vyūkas" (Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, p.117). His argument proves to be historically untenable when he insists that the *Paripāṭal* was written in the second century A.D. (*ibid.*, p.19).
- 177 In his discussion on the *Paripāṭal*, Hardy assumes an association of Māyōn as a religious figure with the Pāñṭiya royal symbolism. (But, as he emphasises, this does not imply that the early Pāñṭiyas are 'Vaiṣṇavas' or that Vaiṣṇavism was the 'state religion'.) According to this scholar, the introduction of Tirumāl cult to the Tamil land had not

- only a religious but also a political significance (Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.155-157, 168f., 201, 225f.).
- 178 I 43-44: 'Aintalai uyariya aṇaṅkuṭai aruntiral/ maintuṭai oruvanam ...' Primēlaḷakar's commentary: 'Aintu talaiyai tōnvitta aṇaṅkuṭai aruntiralaiyuṭaiya ... cīcan'. Cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.171, n.43.
- 179 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.217, n.2.
- 180 Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, His view might hold true only on the supposition that the *Paripāṭal* was compiled after the polarisation into the both Hindu sects, which is hardly acceptable. He actually considers this work to be completed in the second century A.D. (*op.cit.*, p.19). See also the note 174 of this article.
- 181 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.203.
- 182 Subrahmanian, *Śangam Polity*, p.377.
- 183 See Pillay, *A Social History of the Tamils*, p.488.
- 184 Hardy, in his *Viraha-bhakti* (p.125), estimates the compilation of the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* to be dated to 7-9th centuries. This dating turns out to be controvertial in view of the above discussion.
- 185 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.155f.
- 186 Zvelebil, *Tiru Murugan*, Madras, 1981, p.51f.
- 187 See Vettam Mani, *op.cit.*, pp.99, n.: "Since the life of Balabhadra (=Balarāma) is so mixed with that of Kṛṣṇa a complete lifestory of Balarāma could be had only if it is read along with that of Kṛṣṇa".
- 188 Srinivas Iyengar, *op.cit.*, p.203f. Pillay, however, is negative to Iyengar's view (Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.492, n.95).
- 189 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.204.
- 190 See A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Culcutta, 1984 (first published London, 1971), p.309.
- 191 See Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.491; Subrahmanian, *op.cit.*, pp.374, 413f.
- 192 See, for instance, Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.491, n.88; Subrahmanian, *op.cit.*, p.374, n.37; Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, p.60f.
- 193 Hart, *op.cit.*, p.62. Among the seven books of the *Vālm̄ki-rāmāyaṇa*, the first and the last are unmistakably later additions. See Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1042; Basham, *op.cit.*, p.414. See also F. Whaling,

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- The Rise of The Religious Significance of Rāma*, Delhi, 1980, p.98.
- 194 Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1043.
- 195 Basham, *op.cit.*, p.306.
- 196 Dimmitt and van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, p.63.
- 197 Maraimalaiyadigal, *Maṅikkavācakar Varalārum Kālamum* (in Tamil), Madras, 1967, p.401 (vol.I).
- 198 *Ibid.*, p.447 (vol.II).
- 199 For the significance of ‘māl’, ‘māyōn’ and ‘mā’, see Kathir Mahadevan, *Cultural Heritage of Ancient Tamils*, Madurai, 1981, pp.156f., 169.
- 200 E.g. All of Tamil *iru*, *irumai*, *karu*, *karumai* and *kāl* have the double meaning of “black(-ness)” and “great(-ness)”.
- 201 Subrahmanian, *op.cit.*, p.370f.
- 202 Zvelebil, *op.cit.*, p.9.
- 203 Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.153, 218. Such correspondence between ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māyōl’ reminds us of that between ‘Ceyyōn’ and ‘Ceyyōl’.
- 204 Basham also understands ‘Māyōn’ as “Black One” (Basham, *op.cit.*, p.307f.).
- 205 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.153, n.122, p.218.
- 206 It is hardly deniable that ‘Māyon’ here has a dominant meaning as “Black One”, because the next verse says of a shining white waterfall and compares it to Vāliyōn (=Baladeva) (‘Vāliyōn anna vayaṅku veḷ aruvi’). Nevertheless, this does not totally deny the dual meaning of the word *Māyōn* as well as the double image of this god.
- 207 *Tamil Lexicon* suggests some relation of his name with Skt.*māla*. With the notice of “derivation doubtful”, Sanskrit dictionaries define *māla* as a name of Viṣṇu (cf. M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Delhi, 1963 (first published Oxford, 1899), s.v.; V. S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, revised and enlarged ed., Kyoto, 1978 (first published Poona, 1957), s.v.). Granting that Tamil *māl* and Skt.*māla* are related with each other in etymology, the derivation of the former from the latter would not appear plausible. It seems rather proper to assume the derivation of Skt.*māla* from Tamil *māl*, since, as we will see in this section, the Tamil word *māl* semantically

- matches the entity of Lord Viṣṇu.
- 208 Subrahmanian, *op.cit.*, p.370.
- 209 Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.489.
- 210 Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, 1974, p.48.
- 211 Hart, *op.cit.*, p.57.
- 212 Gros, *op.cit.*, p.XLVIII.
- 213 *Ibid.*, pp.XLVIII-XLIX.
- 214 Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.153, 217f.
- 215 Cāminātaiyar introduces an interpretation shown in another commentary (*vēṅurai*) which runs as follows: 'Mālpōlum varaiyinaiyuṭaiya malaiyaraiyan tirumakaḷār makanē'. 'Māl' in this commentary most probably denotes God Tirumāl. If so, Tirumāl is here likened to a mountain.
- 216 See, for instance, *Kuruntokai* 111 and *Akananuru* 22. It is interesting to note that *Akananuru* 149 (16) calls him 'Neṭiyōn', ("the Tall One"), a common epithet of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu ('oṭiyā viḷavin neṭiyōn kunrattu'). Cf. Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.484.
- It is open to question, however, 'Neṭuvēḷ' only signifies "the Tall one", Hardy takes 'Neṭiyōn,' a common epithet of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, to mean "exalted one" (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.607f. and the Appendix VI).
- Since 'neṭi' and 'neṭu' apparently originate from the same root (cf. *DED* 3099; *DEDR* 3738), 'Neṭuvēḷ', too, may possibly mean "the Exalted One".
- 217 Hardy goes so far as to say that 'Neṭiyōn' does not allude any mythological aspect of this god, but simply means 'exalted one' (*op.cit.*, p.607f., p.610). However, as we have examined, the awareness of the celebrated tale of Three Strides of Lord Viṣṇu, a mythical episode as old as the Vedas, is proved in the *Paripāṭal*. It seems hardly possible to wipe out the mythological connotation of Viṣṇu's Three Strides from the epithet *Neṭiyōn*. Compare *DED* 3099 and *DEDR* 3738 which define 'Neṭiyōn' as "tall person, great person, Viṣṇu."
- 218 Cf. Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.486, n.26, and the note 8 of this article.
- 219 See Gros, *op.cit.*, p.178, n.1.

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- 220 Cf. Parimēlaḷakar's commentary: 'Maṇitikalurupu—nilamaṇi (pi-m, nīlaniram) pōla viḷaṅkānira niram.' Further, see Gros, *op.cit.*, p.178, n.3.
- 221 See, for example, Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.219.
- 222 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.220f.
- 223 Here we may be reminded of the name 'Rāma' which denotes "Black One" as well as "Delighted, Lovely One".
- 224 According to Hart (*op.cit.*, p.63), 'celvan' is a kind of title exclusively applied to the gods of Northern origin, who are characterised by benevolence and auspiciousness. We find this title applied not only to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu (cf. *Tirumurukārruppātai* 151; *Akanānūru* 175 (14); *Paripāṭal* IV 10, VIII 58) but also to Śiva (*Akanānūru* 181 (16); *Puranānūru* 6 (18)). From this, Hardy's definition of 'celvan' as a mere epithet or a name of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.219) turns out to be doubtful. 'Celvan' should be regarded not as an epithet or a name of a particular deity but as a title or a designation of a certain category of gods.
- 225 A dance peculiar to Māyōn-Tirumāl is known in literature. It is not evidenced, however, that the dance was accompanied with ecstatic rituals and intoxication as in the case of Murukan's *veriyāṭal*. Although Tirumāl's association with the sacred force 'aṇaṅku' which often causes divine possession is detected in the *Caṅkam* corpus, he is not found connected with the concept of "possession". For "possession" in the ancient Tamil religious cult, see Hart, "The Theory of Reincarnation among the Tamils", W. D. O'Flaherty ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, Delhi, 1983, pp.116-133.
- 226 In contrast with the case of indigenous Murukan, temples of Viṣṇu are rarely located on hills or hillocks (Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.488, n.). It is indeed true that two hills Veṅkaṭamalai (Tirumala) of Tirupati and Aḷakarmalai (Tirumāliruñcōlai) near Madurai, for example, are known as sacred to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. As for the former, however, it is doubtful whether Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was originally enshrined there or not. Subrahmanian is of the opinion that the mountain, which had been

initially sacred to Murukan, came to be conceived of as a holy place of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu by impassioned devotees of this god in later periods (Subrahmanian, *op.cit.*, p.369). Further, see Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, § 1032; G. A. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā*, Poona, 1960, p.185; Shulman, *op.cit.*, p.413, n.72.

As for Aḷakarmalai also, Subrahmanian expresses the similar notion (*loc.cit.*). Tirumālirūñcōlai (or Aḷakarmalai) is, in all probability, identical with Palamutircōlai, a divine hill of Lord Murukan. Cf. Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.487f.; Gros, *op.cit.*, pp.LVI-LVII. Viṣṇu as a mountain dweller is not unknown in the Vedas (Macdonell, *op.cit.*, p.39; Gonda, *op.cit.*, p.23ff.). But that aspect is far from his dominant feature.

227 The folk etymology of this word is “those who are lovely [=am] and cool [=tan]” (see Hart, *op.cit.*, p.51).

Tamil Lexicon suggests two suspected derivations of *antaṇar*: one from a Tamil root and the other from Sanskrit *anta* (=vedanta). The latter seems farfetched to me. *DED* 126 and *DEDR* 148 define this word as “brahman” and do not ascribe it to any Sanskrit pedigree, which might appear more appropriate.

228 See Parimēlalakar’s comentary: ‘Anātiyāy varukinra marapinaiyuṭaiya vētattirku mutarva!’

229 Without producing any concrete evidence, Hardy writes, “It would appear that Tirumāl hymns contains much higher portion of such ‘brahmin references’ than do the songs about Murukan” (*op.cit.*, p.208). Our investigation will subsequently prove that his assumption is correct.

230 It is doubtful whether all these four refer to Vedic sacrifice. According to Parimēlalakar, ‘veḷvi’ in XIX 43 and 48 means not Vedic sacrifice (*vajña*) but offering (*pūjā*).

231 See Hart, *op.cit.*, p.51.

232 Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Leiden/Köln, 1975, p.152, n.147. In this context, see also Hart, *op.cit.*, p.71f.

233 For example, three episodes may be cited here (cf. Gros, *op.cit.*, p.II):

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1. Exploits of Haṃsāvātāra (III 25-26).
 2. Recovery of the sun from the *Asura-s*
 3. Battle between Śeṣa and Vāyu (Fragment I 72-73)
- 234 This never means that the Southern features of Tirumāl worship are insignificant and even negligible. We should not forget that some typical Southern traits of Tirumāl worship bestowed the originality and speciality to the devotional Vaiṣṇavism in the Southern soil. This topic is discussed at full length in Hardy's *Viraha-bhakti*.
- 235 For instance, Srinivas Iyengar states, "when many millenniums after this remote age the Aryan cults migrated to South India, the regional gods of South India were identified with the Aryan gods similar to them in function, the red god with Subrahmaṇya, the black god with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, the sea-god with Varuṇa, the sky-god with Indra and the desert-goddess with Durgā" (Srinivas Iyengar, *op.cit.*, p.84).
- L'Inde classique* §1048 also seems to regard Māyōn, which becomes identified with Kṛṣṇa in later periods, as a god of Dravidian origin. Zvelebil, too, believes that Māyōn-Tirumāl is indigenous to Dravidian India (*Tiru Murugan*, pp.12, 24). According to S. K. Chatterji, Kṛṣṇa was originally a youthful god of Dravidians and only later identified with Viṣṇu (*Tamil Culture and Civilization*, ed. by Thani Nayagam, p.31). G. D. Sontheimer is also of the similar view (*Pastoral Deities in Western India*, Delhi, 1993, p.17).
- The Dravidian origin of Northern Kṛṣṇa is also a matter of controvertial opinion (cf. Gonda, *op.cit.*, pp.3-11). The scope of the present study, however, does not allow us to go deep into this subject.
- 236 This may bespeak the delicate shades of character between the two adolescent gods, Māyōn/Kṛṣṇa and Murukaṇ/Subrahmaṇya. For the comparison between these two, see Gros, *op.cit.*, p.LV-.
- 237 For the selective way of their adopting Northern culture, see *Tamil Culture and Civilization*, p.8.