

Comparative Mythopoetic Strategies in *The Cilappatikāram*

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Abstract

Tamil Classical Literature employs myriad linguistic strategies in conjunction with discursive *sangam* poetic conventions for the creation of the mythical narratives as seen in the circa 5 C.E. *kappiyam* (epic) *The Cilappatikāram*. This paper analyses the usage of the comparative mythical superstructure invoked at various moments in the Tamil epic to establish the text's mythical underpinnings in relation to larger world of mythological discourse inhabited by myths of battles fought "at the time of churning/The ocean, and in seablown Laṅkā, and the one/In which the seablue god drove the chariot" (Aṭikaḷ 236), the last two being references to the major Sanskrit epics *The Rāmāyaṇa* and *The Mahābhārata*. The comparative use of mythical references as a textual strategy also sheds light on the ideological frameworks within which the text was composed. The mythopoetic impulse in the Tamil epic is ideologically pluralistic in nature, staying in tune with the thematic concerns of the epic which draws from Jaina, Buddhist as well as Hindu traditions. This is significant as the socio-political tensions of the battle between the southern Chera kingdom ruler King *Ceṅkuṭṭuvan* who leads an army to subdue the hubristic northern Kings in the *puram*-domain in Book III, are also resolved within the larger mythical framework of the *Pattinī* goddess. Thus, *The Cilappatikāram*'s usage of comparative mythical superstructure, especially in Book III acquires significant ideological underpinnings that situate the worldview embodied by the significant Tamil epic.

Keywords: *Cilappatikāram*, myth, linguistic strategies, comparative, epic

The Tamil classical era composition *The Cilappatikāram* or *The Tale of an Anklet* is notable for its indigenous poetics. Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ, the composer of the epic tale, has been widely recognized by critics as a prince who renounced his royal status to become a Jain ascetic, and drew together influences from Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism as well as other minor folk traditions to compose the tale of Kōvalaṅ, Kaṇṇaki, and Mātavi. A tale that narrates the apotheosis of a woman from the merchant class into a mythical goddess, the Tamil classic has come to be associated with and to establish the antiquity of Tamil culture and language. The circa 5 C.E. text employs myriad linguistic strategies in conjunction with discursive *sangam* poetic conventions for the creation of the myth of the goddess *Pattinī*. The epic consists of three books divided in thirty cantos and is notable for the non-androcentric protagonist Kaṇṇaki as well as for its use of non-Sanskritic poetic conventions which combine elements of poetry, music and dance with the prose narrative. This paper analyses the usage

of the comparative mythical superstructure invoked at various moments in the Tamil epic to establish the text's mythical underpinnings *in relation* to the larger world of mythological discourse inhabited by myths of battles fought “at the time of churning/The ocean, and in seablown Laṅkā, and the one/In which the sea blue god drove the chariot” (Aṭikaḷ 236), the last two being references to the major Sanskrit epics *The Rāmāyaṇa* and *The Mahābhārata*. As this analysis will highlight, the comparative mythopoetic strategies inherent in *The Cilappatikāram*, especially in the Book III acquire ideological significance through the relational juxtaposition of myths from the Tamil and Sanskrit context in the Tamil epic, and also provides insight into the worldview that the epic germinates.

Before embarking on the reading of comparative mythopoetic strategies in *The Cilappatikāram*, it is useful to review the Tamil epic's narrative strategies and unique poetics which are influenced by the *Sangam* literary tradition. The grammatical text *Tholakappiyam* which is said to be from the second *Sangam* period, categorises all poetic discourse into *akam* and *puṛam*, the former associated with themes of the personal, love and interiority in contrast to the *puṛam*, which is based on the public, exterior and war themes. I use the word ‘contrast’ instead of ‘opposition’ because the elements in the *akam* and *puṛam* often overlap and create more layered meanings, despite being discursive poetic categories with distinct narrative practices. In the *Sangam* poetry as evidenced in the extant corpus of the *Ettuthokai* (*The Eight Anthologies*) and the *Pathupattu* (*The Ten Long Poems*), the poetic form is “the complex interplay of suggestions” (Hart 196) composed of the *mutal* (first element of time and place, with place also extended to mean *thinais*), the *karu* (the native elements from nature) and the *uri* (the human element or the emotion). The *mutal* and *karu* often intermingle in what is termed as ‘*thinaimayakkam*’, especially across different phases of love as seen in the *akam* poetry. As noted by many commentators on *Sangam* poetics, the conventions do not bind the composer, but rather provide a blueprint which is built upon with poetic creative processes. Thus, the *Tholakappiyam* which theorizes much of the *Sangam* poetics is characterized by Venkatachalapathy as not only a grammatical text, but a text that “presents a veritable cosmology, a unified world view” (16).

It is significant to note the centrality of nature in early *Sangam* poetry, as seen in the naming of the five major *akam thinais* after the flora that predominates the corresponding Tamil landscapes of hill, forest, farmland, seashore, and wasteland. In contrast, the worldly *puṛam thinais* are more flexible in their use of imagery and depend on naming the personae which remain unidentified in *akam* discourse. *Thinais* thus represent not just the natural elements or the landscape with associated human behaviours but come to embody the mood associated with the particular ‘*uri*’ or human emotion being expressed in the lyric. A.K. Ramanujan reads *thinais* as a “hyphenated continuum” between ‘nature-culture’, a non-binary, non-Eurocentric conception of Tamil culture that is the feature of *Sangam* poetics (286).¹ A. R. Venkatachalapathy has also noted the discursive contribution of *thinai* poetics to contemporary theoretical frameworks in ecocriticism (28).

¹ Quoting here an interpretation of Tamil *thinai* poetics which informs the discussion in the latter part of this paper as well. Martha Ann Selby writes, “What makes the *tinai* system a “poetics” is, in fact, a sort of “overdetermination.” The composers of these poems foisted this desire [of human body's continuity with nature] outward upon environmental elements, and incorporated those elements into a multi-layered semiotics. In the poems, *tinai*

The late-Sangam text *The Cilappatikāram* is influenced by Tamil *Sangam* poetics not only at the level of its narrative, but also at the level of structure. A secular epic composed by a Jain ascetic, the text presents a socio-cultural milieu in which Buddhist, Jain and Hindu religious practices co-exist with references also to minor folk traditions. Despite the Jain belief in karmic cycle which drives the major events such as Kōvalaṅ's unjust killing in the epic; the mythopoetic imagination draws from a pluralist worldview and encompasses references to *Rama* from Sanskrit epic tradition, as well as major and minor Tamil mythical figures such as *Murukan*, *Kottravai*, *Aiyai* and many others, often in juxtaposition with one another. The epic comprises thirty cantos which span over the Tamil kingdoms of Chola, Pantiya and Chera dynasties; collectively representing the '*Tamilakam*' which is placed in opposition to the northern *Ārya* kings in the final third book based in the Chera empire. Here, R. Parthasarthy's observation on the structural aspect of the epic is enlightening.

The three books represent the three distinct phases through which the narrative moves—the erotic, the mythic, and the heroic. The erotic (*akam*) and the heroic (*puram*) are the traditional categories of Tamil discourse. The poet enlarges and deepens its resonance by adding a mythic (*purāṇam*) dimension to it... Kaṇṇaki's exemplary life as a chaste wife impacts on all the three phases of the narrative and makes it structurally coherent (6).

The *akam/puram* shifts which permeate the text structurally, even at the thematic level, can be read as analogous to the fluidity of *thinaimayakkam*, a narrative strategy through which while the *uri* (human element) of a scene remains stable, the *mutal* and *karu* may overlap creatively. An example could be drawn from the Canto 1 which opens with the wedding of Kaṇṇaki and Kōvalaṅ, a significant departure from war-based western epics. Although based on the description of the wedding with *akam* as the predominant mode, opening Canto 1 also establishes the sovereignty of the Chola king which is a *puram* thematic situation, hence marking an "interplay of the erotic and the heroic, of chastity and kingship, of agam and puram" (Mangalam 122) at the thematic level as well.

The consummate indigenous non-Sanskritic Tamil *Sangam* poetics thus provides structural and thematic coherence to *The Cilappatikāram*. When examined from a non-Eurocentric perspective, the 'epic' as a genre falls short to illustrate the unique features of the Tamil legend of Kaṇṇaki's apotheosis into the goddess Kaṇṇaki. The Tamil legend expands the conventional understanding of epic by including sections on the various domestic travails of the couple, the non-androcentric legend rendered into a poetic form consisting of dance and song cycles apart from narrative in Iḷaṅkō's composition. Many commentaries on the text's genre provide indigenous conceptualisations, although with a fraught history from the twentieth century onwards.² As Zvelebil notes,

becomes more than a "landscape" or poetic "gesture." It becomes an actual language—the constant repetition of *tinai* symbology gives it a "congruity," locking it into articulations of convention that are requisite for a full-blown rhetoric" (29).

² For more see Normal Cutler "Three Moments in Tamil Literary History" in Pollock, Sheldon, ed. *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, UCP, 2003. Cutler elaborates on the "histories of Tamil literature which emerged as a genre of scholarship in twentieth century", and the influence of the Dravidianist cultural turn on

Atiyarkkunallar (12th-13th cent. A.D.) defines *The Cilappatikāram* as an “*iyal-icai-ndtaka-porul-totar-nilai-cceyyul*, i.e., 'a poem whose stanzas are connected by their content, having elements of poetry, music, and drama.' Such large poems (*cceyyul*) of connected stanzas of text (*totarnilai*) were identified, under the impact of Sanskrit thinking, as *kavyas*, and came to be called *kappiyam*” (130). R. Parthasarthy further traces the genre of “the *totar-nilai-cceyyul*” or loosely the “poetic sequence”, to have “originated in the long poems of classical Tamil poetry and later came to be known as the *kappiyam*, narrative poem” (315). Thus, the thirty cantos of *The Cilappatikāram* can also be placed as individual long classical Tamil poems, converging perhaps through the composer’s redaction to take its contemporary form. While there are enough affinities between the western idea of epic and Tamil long poems for the latter to be ascribed as an epic sometimes in discussions, it is useful to identify the text’s unique poetics and highlight it, as in the use of the word ‘*kappiyam*’ instead of the more Eurocentric ‘epic’ in referring to the text.

The Cilappatikāram as a *kappiyam* reinforces its representative value as part of the classical Tamil culture and worldview. Emerging from the Tamil cultural context, the *kappiyam*’s juxtaposition of the allusions to mythical events from Sanskrit epics with the mythopoetic description of Kaṇṇaki’s apotheosis at significant moments is a sign of dialogicity between the Sanskrit epic traditions and Tamil culture, but need not be restricted to only that reading.³ Here I would give an example to illustrate this comparative mythopoetic activity in the text. In canto 13 of the second book of *Maturai*, a *Brahman* visits the couple driven to *Maturai* as a fruition of Kōvalaṅ’s karmic cycle after he has squandered all his money and reunited with his wife. The *Brahman* paints a picture of despondent kin after Kōvalaṅ’s departure from *Pukār* with his wife Kaṇṇaki.

...The great hero,
Rāma, left for the strange forest,
Saying:
‘As his eldest son, my father’s command
I obey. A trinket the kingdom.’
Like Ayodhyā at Rāma’s departure,
All of Pukār is indignant at your going away. (133)

The comparison of Kōvalaṅ leaving *Pukār* with *Rāma* leaving his kingdom not only glosses over Kōvalaṅ’s indiscretion by presenting his departure in more benign terms, but is relevant here for bringing in mythical figures from Sanskrit epic in the Tamil *kappiyam*’s mythical framework of

Tamil literary historiography and genre classifications of the classical texts such as *Cilappatikāram* (specifically pp. 288-322).

³ K. Zvelebil examines the dialogicity between Sanskrit and Tamil literary traditions in detail, and comments on the evidential paucity of the same during the early Sangam era. He writes: “The impact of the great national epics of India cannot naturally be underestimated. There had been a Southern recension of *the Mahabharata*. The story was familiar to early bardic poets: Puram 2, Akam 233, and *Cilappatikāram* XXIX all mention the great war. Inscriptional evidence is available for the ceremonial participation of the South Indian rulers in the great battle...The story of Rama, too, was current in early Tamil India, as may be seen from Akam 70, Puram 378, and *Cilappatikāram* XIII. 64-6 and XIV. 46-8...None of these early Tamil versions of the two great epics is extant now” 130-31.

comparisons. Earlier in the epic, Kōvalaṅ is also suggested as resembling the Tamil god *Murukan*, as well as *Gopala*, with connotations of his protective role towards Kaṅṅaki in Canto 15 before he is fatefully executed. However, a more direct example of comparative mythopoesis can be found in Canto 1 in which *Ananku* or ‘sacred power’ as defined by Tamil culture is associated with the young bride Kaṅṅaki by her comparison to *Arundhati*, a minor mythical figure from the Sanskrit literary tradition.⁴

She is Lakṣmī herself, goddess
Of peerless beauty that rose from the lotus,
And chaste as the immaculate Arundhatī. (26)

Arundhati, the symbol of chastity and wifely devotion in Sanskrit thus becomes the mythical figure that embodies the implied suggestion of *Ananku* power which was associated with chaste women in the Tamil culture. The allusions to northern or Sanskritic mythical figures by bringing them within the purview of Tamil *Sangam* poetics is not unique to *The Cilappatikāram*, but as noted by George Hart, stretches back to early *Sangam* poetry and remains a characteristic part of literary tradition in the following centuries as well. With regard to recurring references to *Krishna* and *Balarama* in early *Sangam* poetry anthology *Purananuru*, Hart points out,

Thus it is evident that from the very beginning, the Tamils applied their own poetic conventions to the gods and mythological figures from North India, and that from the first they emphasized the roles of the new gods in what was for them the central and most sacred act of life, love between man and woman. In the succeeding centuries, the Vaishnava and Saiva Tamil saints continued and developed this practice (57).

While the pattern of mythical allusions in early *Sangam* poetry is not within the purview of this paper, Hart’s observation reiterates the dialogic relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit mythopoesis in the classical literature, and hints towards the relational nature of myth-making as we find at many instances in the *kappiyam Cilappatikāram*.

The comparative mythopoesis in the *kappiyam Cilappatikāram* can be read as a narrative strategy reminiscent of, if not reflective of the influence of the ‘technique of suggestion’ which is integral to *akam* and *puṛam* *Sangam* poetics. Like the poetic imagery of the *Sangam* poem marked by an interplay between the *mutal* (first elements of time and place) and *karu* (native elements) which comes to represent the *uri* (human element of emotion) or the human experience, the interplay between various myths juxtaposed within the text also substantiate and eventually naturalise the myth of the *Pattinī* Goddess. Expounding upon the *Sangam* poetic suggestion techniques, R. Parthasarthy

⁴ George Hart notes that for the Tamils, “...the sacred was primarily manifested not through a number of discrete deities, each of which had an extensive mythology associated with it, as in North India, but rather through a power thought to inhere in certain objects and persons and to be activated in certain situations. Moreover, this *ananku*, as the Tamils called it, was not a force that worked for human welfare, but rather was capricious and potentially malevolent; therefore, it had to be carefully controlled lest, like fire, it bring destruction (81).

highlights that in *the Cilappatikāram*, “The landscape embodies, rather than expresses, meaning. Ilanko chooses only a few details, but they are enough to evoke the total landscape, one that becomes the inner landscapes of mind, heart, and spirit that are ineffable” (297). Despite reading the *Sangam* poems and the *kappiyam* in translation, the symbolic interplay of *thinai*s and the resonances of the suggestive language strikes the readers nonetheless, a testimony to the semiotic possibility of translating symbolic language.

Delving at the level of semiotics, where Sangam poetic conventions perform their unique function, A.K. Ramanujan reads the *thinai* poetics as,

In the Tamil system of correspondences, a whole language of signs is created by relating the landscapes as signifiers to the *uri* or the appropriate human feelings. In this world of correspondences between times, places, things born in them, and human experiences, a word like *kurinci* has several concentric circles of meaning: a flower, the mountain landscape, lover’s union, a type of poem about all these, and musical modes for these poems. But its concrete meaning, “a mountain flower” is never quite forgotten. (241)

The suggestive meaning or signification created through the interaction between the human emotion and its embodiment in the landscape acts like a metalanguage, defined by Barthes as, “a second language, *in which* one speaks about the first” (114). In Sangam poetics, the denotative sign of the ‘landscape’ in Tamil language becomes a signifier/form again in a second order semiological chain of poetic syntax which endows it with the signified/concept of human emotion which becomes the associated signification through poetic convention.⁵

However, the connotations emerging from these poetic conventions—especially in the more symbolically charged *akam* poetry—operate as “inset”, defined by Ramanujan as an implicit comparison at the structural level in the poem, unaccompanied by “explicit markers of comparison (e.g., “like”, “as”); such an omission increases manyfold the power of the figure” (246). It is only when this intricate metalanguage of suggestion and comparison is adopted by the poets, albeit creatively, then the Sangam poetics acquires or comes to represent a “world-picture which functions like a mythology” (Ramanujan 286). This is the world-picture which establishes the discursive *akam* and *puram* conventions and more significantly the inherent comparative narrative strategies within Sangam poetics which influence the mythopoetic imaginary of the late-*sangam kappiyam Cilappatikāram*.

⁵ The visionary A.K. Ramanujan highlighted this semiotic phenomenon in Sangam poetics as follows: “Mere nature description or imagism in poetry would be uninteresting to classical Tamil poets and critics, for it would not “signify”; it would be a signifier without a signified, a landscape (*mutal* and *karu*) without an *uri*, an appropriate human mood” (243). Ramanujan further elaborates the signification process of the “second language” of Sangam poetry by pointing out that the association of *kurinci* flower with its corresponding *thinai* is not entirely arbitrary, but derives from topographical properties and cultural associations with the region already in place (250). This is reminiscent of Barthes’ description of the signifier-signified relationship at the second level of signification not being entirely arbitrary/denotative, but connotation oriented. I am indebted to Ramanujan’s nuanced semiotic reading of Sangam poetics from which I draw in this paper.

The interplay between *akam* and *puram* discourse is integral to the non-androcentric *kappiyam* which traces the chaste wife Kannaki's apotheosis into a goddess, a female protagonist who oversteps the boundaries of the *akam* domain after the unjust killing of her husband and subverts and questions the authority of the *Pantiya* king who has failed to uphold *dharma* in his kingdom. The injustice perpetrated in the public/ *puram* domain influences the stability of the *akam* domain, and the latter complements, and hence responds to the unjust power structures of the former. Kaṇṇaki's redemptive burning down of Madurai stems from her *ananku* (sacred power), referenced at various points in association with her from the opening canto onwards. *Ananku*, a sacred power inhered in various people and objects, including the chaste women and king, was a capricious force which had to be channeled and propitiated, "carefully controlled lest, like fire, it brings destruction" (Hart 81). Thus, the description of Kaṇṇaki as a lamenting widow with disheveled hair at the *Pantiyan* king's gate highlights her status as a woman in rage and marks an important moment in the transition to her deification. It is significant to note the comparative mythopoetic impulse in the narrative here:

She is not Korravai, the goddess of victory
With the fierce spear in her large hand,
Standing on the buffalo's neck that spurts
Continuous blood from its open wound.
She is not Aṇanku, the youngest sister
Of the seven virgins, who made Śiva dance.
She is not Kālī who lives in the dreadful forest.
She is not Durgā who tore apart the broad chest
Of Dārūka. Pent up with hatred and anger
At the loss of her husband, she stands
At the gate, a golden anklet in her hand. (187-88)

The subversive self-declaration of Kaṇṇaki as a widow seeking justice in Book II is ironically and deftly submerged within the larger ideological functions of the myth-making process which legitimizes the Chera king's masculine sovereignty by a paradoxical submission to the mythical goddess. Through the purportedly propitiatory act of establishing the shrine dedicated to the *aṇanku* power of the goddess, the Chera king in book III institutionalises the cult of the Goddess.⁶ In the process of her deification, the woman who had entered and challenged the public/ *puram* domain is re-appropriated as a goddess in the masculine rhetoric of war and kingship. The process of deification of Kaṇṇaki witnesses the comparative mythopoetic framework at full play;

The goddess of Maturai appeared before her
Who had wrenched off her fierce, youthful breast,
Whose triumph equaled that of Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī,

⁶ Here, one may also explore the symbolism inherent in the wedding anklet, the breaking of which also marks the sexual castration of the once-wedded now widowed Kannagi. This can be compared with the role played by ornaments such as the ring, in Sanskrit legends such as that of Sankuntala.

And Kālī who slew the Buffalo Demon. (198)

As discussed before in the parallel drawn between the ‘technique of suggestion’ in *Sangam* poetics and mythopoetic comparisons which are a major literary device in the Tamil *kappiyam* (epic), the chain of suggestions here substantiates and paves the road for the naturalisation of the myth of the Goddess *Pattīni*. The comparative mythopoetic framework works to naturalise the construction of the Goddess myth in *The Cilappatikāram*, by placing it within the larger mythopoetic discourse consisting of references from Sanskrit tradition as well as some references from the Buddhist and Jain cosmologies. Here, significantly a dialogicity is visible between the multiple mythopoetic traditions establishing an interrelated, pluralistic worldview. However, it is to be noted that the Goddess myth’s institutionalisation is interrelated to the political hegemonic ambitions of the Chera king, whose wish to assert his authority over the defiant northern Arya kings finds a vehicle in the ritualised establishment of the shrine of the goddess *Pattīni*, for which the stone is brought from the Himalayas. With regard to the war waged against the intemperate Aryan kings in the III Book of the *kappiyam*, Norman Cutler notes:

While Aryan kings of the north may serve as “the other” against which Tamil political identity is defined in *Cilappatikaram*, at the same time the north, represented by the Himalaya and the Gaṅga, carries an undeniable prestige...It is thus evident that if the author of *Cilappatikaram* speaks on behalf of a Tamil imperium, he also employs a rhetoric that emphatically is not exclusively Tamil (300-301).

The description of the war brings together many ancient Tamil cultural beliefs in which the “words that meant king in ancient Tamil now denote God” (Hart 13). The king, often compared to *Indra* or *Yama* when setting out for war was imbued with sacred power granting him the responsibility of ensuring security of the kingdom through victory in war, as through a successful harvest (Hart 34-35). The influence of these cultural associations is seen into following verses where the act of cutting through enemy lines is implicitly compared to the harvesting process:

Those who guarded the elephants trembled with fear.
Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṅ yoked the animals like oxen,
And with swords as sticks he threshed the enemy.
Goblins applauded him who plowed the battlefield
With his spear. With their long hands, shaking
With bangles, they raised the crowned heads
Of the dead. Flaunting them they danced
Before the war-chariot, and compared this battle
With the ones fought at the time of churning
The ocean, and in seablown Laṅkā, and the one
In which the seablue god drove the chariot. (236)

The description of the battlefield is symbolically charged, and comparative mythopoesis juxtaposes the significant event of the war fought for fetching the stone for the shrine of the Goddess to the mythical events from Sanskritic mythical discourse, thus highlighting the inherent comparative impulse in the narrative of the epic, as well as the relational nature of myth-making.⁷ The juxtaposition at this point in Book III is not to elevate the stature of the Goddess myth, but rather renders the sacred war being undertaken by the Chera king at par with other wars from the narratives of *the Rāmāyaṇa* or *the Mahābhārata*.⁸ The ideological underpinnings here relate to the Chera king, whose authority is fortified by participating in the sacred power of the Goddess. The comparison of this war with those in *the Rāmāyaṇa* and *the Mahābhārata* epics is not uttered by the poet directly, but stated by dependent subjects like the goblins who have revelled in similar war fields, thus projecting the Tamil conception of the war field on northern cultural myths as well. By situating the Tamil conception of war as the reference point, the north is brought within the purview of Tamil poetics. The mythopoetic process which naturalises the Goddess *Pattiṇi* is highly ritualistic as seen in the Book III cantos, the getting of the stone from the Himalayas being one of the steps of the more elaborate cultural practice. The close reading of comparative mythopoetic impulse in establishing the myth of the Goddess in *the Cilappatikāram* thus can be historicised as part of the power structures of kingship; albeit not in an isolationist mythopoesis, but in an inherently dialogic relation with the contemporary mythopoetic discourses. As aptly paraphrased by Susan Bassnett in her essay “Influence and Intertextuality: A Reappraisal” that “every text, as Roland Barthes reminds us, has meaning in relation to other texts,” In conclusion, it can be argued that the comparative mythopoetic impulse is an extension or influence of the narrative strategies of *Sangam* poetics; the latter influencing the strategies of suggestive mythical comparison to establish myths in relation to one another, establishing intertextuality as a given in textual practices of the Tamil *kappiyam* under consideration.

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⁷ See Hart in sub-section “The Ancient Tamils in War”, “The battlefield itself was metamorphosed into another world for the participants, a place where everything was charged with sacred power to the highest degree. Thus the poems describe over and over the metamorphoses of the gruesome objects of battle into beautiful or productive things associated with peace, especially things connected with agriculture” (32).

⁸ As noted by Parthasarthy, “The apotheosis of Kannaki into the goddess Patthini confirms the sacred character of the *Cilappatikaram*” (9).

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