COLLECTION INDOLOGIE – 124

Mapping the Chronology of Bhakti

Milestones, Stepping Stones, and Stumbling Stones

Proceedings of a workshop held in honour of
Paṇḍit R. Varadadesikan

edited by
Valérie GILLET

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE PONDICHÉRY
ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT

Typeset by: Sathi Patel
Cover photo: Garuḍa on the roof of the temple at Neṉmeli (Tiruttaṇi taluk, Tiruvaḷḷūr district) by Valérie Gillet
Cover design: Niral Shah, Pondicherry
Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

Introductory Note

Valérie Gillet

In 1983, Friedhelm Hardy published a thorough study of the early Vaiṣṇava Tamil Bhakti corpus which will rapidly become the authority in this domain: *Viraha-Bhakti, The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*.[1] In a nutshell, he argues that the normative ideology of the Vedānta system tends to reject the emotional aspect since it considers it as an obstacle to liberation. With the appearance of early Kṛṣṇaism in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, the notion materialises of a deity being born as a human being, subject to time and history. The Bhakti movement developed around the figure of Kṛṣṇa, but a Bhakti which is intellectualised, whose practice is linked with Yoga, devoid of emotions, and which probably absorbs some of the folk material related to this deity. During the early medieval period in South India, a movement that Hardy calls "emotional Bhakti" developed, and distanced itself from the well established "Vedānta tradition, early Kṛṣṇaism and its intellectual *bhakti-yoga*". Hardy proposes that it originated in the Tamil poems of the Vaiṣṇava Saints, the Āḻvārs,[2] and was passed on to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, the first Sanskrit work to display such an emotional devotion.

---

[1] Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, *Viraha-Bhakti, The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. A bibliography on this subject is found in the articles dealing with this corpus, especially those of E. Wilden and K. Young.

[2] The word Āḻvār is usually explained as the "one who is immersed" [in god], from the root *āḻ*—to sink, dive, be absorbed, immersed. However, S. Palaniappan considers that the term Āḻvār is derived from the word *āḷvār*, which means the "ruler, Lord" (from *āḷ*—to rule), found in the pre-Bhakti and Bhakti texts as well as in inscriptions, and synonymous with the word *nāyaṇār*, used for the Śaiva Saints. See S. Palaniappan, 2004, "*Āḻvār* or *Nāyaṇār*: The Role of Sound Variation, Hypercorrection and Folk Etymology in Interpreting the Nature of Vaiṣṇava Saint-Poets", in *South Indian Horizons, Felicitation volume for François Gros on the occasion of his 70th Birthday*, edited by Jean-Luc Chevillard and Eva Wilden, Institut Français de Pondichéry/École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondichéry (Publications du Département d'Indologie 94), pp. 63–84.

Hardy regrets, and so do we, that he was not able to explore with the same method the enormous corpus of Śaiva Tamil Bhakti which developed at approximately the same time. While Vaiṣṇava Tamil Bhakti inherits its models partly from earlier literature starting with the Caṅkam literature (see the contributions of L.C. Orr, G. Vijayavenugopal, E. Wilden and K. Young), the Śaiva corpus to some extent detached itself from such a strong and binding legacy. The poetry of the Vaiṣṇavas is full of allusions to Vedic lore and repeatedly extolls the Brahmin community (see the contribution of K. Young; for the tradition which equates the four works of Nammāḻvār with the four *Veda*, see the contribution of G. Vijayavenugopal). It differs from the Śaiva tradition which, although it sometimes mentions the *Veda* and refers to the Brahmin community,[3] does not seem to assert its brahmanical orthodoxy with the same insistence, since the early medieval Śaiva world involves cremation grounds, dance, madness, aimless wanderings, brahmanicide, etc. (for a description of all the myths related to Śiva involving such elements, see M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy, 1958, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Tēvāram: with special reference to Nampi Ārūrar (Sundarar)*, University of Madras, Madras, reprint 1990).[4]

Many studies exist on the Śaiva literary corpus, but they address only some of its aspects. For example, giving a broad overview of Tamil Bhakti, N. Cutler (see *supra* note 4) explores various facets of the Śaiva (and the Vaiṣṇava) corpus, such as the relation between the narrator, the god and the audience, or the poetics of Bhakti. Focussing on the *Tēvāram*, Indira Peterson (see *supra* note 3) offers a general description of this very long opus, its context, its history, its meanings, and M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy (see *supra*, at the end of the previous paragraph) gives a thorough presentation of the myths referred to in the poems, and attempts to relate them to iconography. The work of K. Pechilis Prentiss (*The embodiment of Bhakti*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999) revolves around the Tamilisation of the deity, its embodiment, and the dialectic between a local and a transcendental Śiva. Uthaya Veluppillai (unpublished doctorate), narrowing the textual range, concentrates on the relation between one of the most celebrated sites of the *Tēvāram*, Cīkāḻi, the poems extolling this place and the myth related to it. She unveils the late fabrication of a mythical web around a famous site.[5]

---

[3] See Indira V. Peterson, 1989, *Poems to Śiva: Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 190–192.

[4] Norman Cutler attempts, perhaps a little artificially, to list parallels between the Vaiṣṇava and the Śaiva Bhakti corpus. See N. Cutler, 1987, *Songs of Experience, The Poetics of Tamil Devotion*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, pp. 47–50. When discussing the spread of the poems and comparing the two corpora, he mentions that the Śaiva poems have been brought by the *Tēvāram* poets themselves to the public through pilgrimage (p. 49). However, the article of Leslie C. Orr in this volume shows that this notion of pilgrimage seems to have been forged only in the 12th century by Cēkkiḻār in his *Periyapurāṇam*.

[5] There is an extensive bibliography on Tamil Śaiva Bhakti. For more references on the subject, see the bibliographies of the various contributions in this volume dealing with Śaiva material (E. Francis, L.C. Orr, C. Schmid).

The accents of powerful devotion between a servant and his Lord Śiva are found first in the vibrant poems of Kāraikkālamaiyār, the famous Śaiva poetess probably contemporaneous with the first Āḻvārs, who sings of an almighty and terrible god dancing and wandering in cremation grounds. Filled with ecstatic love for her god, she lengthily describes him, his attributes and various appearances, addressing him directly, expecting a vision of his frightful aspect.

According to the generally accepted chronology, the *Tēvāram* comes after the poems of Kāraikkālamaiyār. Although its dates are still debated, there is a consensus of opinion for a composition between the 7th and the 9th centuries.[6] It constitutes the first seven books of the twelve *Tirumuṟai* which, according to the legend, remained locked for centuries in a cella of the temple in Citamparam. Less poignant than its predecessor, the poems of Kāraikkālamaiyār, this corpus roots each of its decades in temples located mainly in Tamil Nadu.[7]

The 7th century in the Tamil-speaking country saw the emergence of stone temples, parallel to the composition of this Tamil Bhakti textual corpus. They were mostly excavated at first and then built in stone, dedicated to the two major deities Śiva and Viṣṇu, materialising the devotion of their patrons in stone, an imperishable—and eternal—material.[8] These temples, whenever they have an hymn attached to them, are never described in the poems, whether Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava. In fact, it seems a general feature of these Bhakti poems that the natural landscapes, the walls of the city where the temple is, and the surroundings in general are mentioned, often in a stereotyped manner, but not the monument itself (see the contributions of L.C. Orr and K. Young). Likewise, the numerous allusions to the Brahmin community in the Vaiṣṇava corpus avoids the Brahmins attached to a temple—perhaps because of their lower status according to K. Young (see her contribution).

Therefore, in most cases, it is not possible to correlate the temple to which a hymn is dedicated with the archaeological reality (see the contributions of E. Francis, V. Gillet and C. Schmid). In fact, one of the ways to discern a correspondence between a hymn and a site—since the description of the surroundings is often stereotyped and does not permit us to recognise any particular feature—would be to establish a parallel between the mythological aspect of the deity described in the poem and the iconography of the monument or its epigraphical corpus. However,

---

[6] See the introduction of the *Tēvāram* edited by T.V. Gopal Iyer by F. Gros (François Gros, 1984, "Towards reading the Tēvāram", Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondichéry [Publications de l'Institut Français d'Indologie 68.1]).

[7] For a list of the works found in the twelve *Tirumuṟai*, the Tamil Bhakti Śaiva canon, see Cutler (1987: 4–5). They still await for a scholar to elaborate a general, thorough and critical study.

[8] Of course, we must bear in mind that many temples built in perishable material, nowadays disappeared, coexisted, as the Pallava inscription from the early 7th century in the cave temple of Maṇṭakapaṭṭu (*Epigraphia Indica* XVII, no. 5) suggests, mentioning that this temple is made without bricks (*aniṣṭakam*), without wood (*adrumam*), without metal (*aloham*) and without mortar (*asudham*).

this attempt often fails too, since the forms of Śiva in the poems are not necessarily found in the monument (see the contributions of E. Francis and V. Gillet) or the reference to the singing of a hymn in an inscription is not necessarily found in a temple to which a *Tēvāram* hymn is attached (see the contribution of L.C. Orr). We may infer from this absence of correlation that a hymn and a temple both express in their own language—textual or visual/physical—a devotion to a particular deity, a deity attached to a site.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that, in the majority of the poems of the *Tēvāram* and the *Tivviyappirapantam* (*Divyaprabhandam*), the temples extolled were probably local temples, not patronised by the king himself, and may thus have been built partly with perishable material at first. These temples may have been rebuilt or restored during the Cōḻa period, as the case of the Tiruccennampūṇṭi temple that Charlotte Schmid examines in this volume shows. Obscuring even further the first relation established between a temple and its hymn, shifts and movements of sacred places can also take place, prompted by the abandonment of a site (see the contribution of C. Schmid) or by changes in religious patterns of a site (see V. Gillet's contribution). The 12th-century *Periyapurāṇam* connects the *Tēvāram* sites by creating an artificial pilgrimage itinerary that the three *Tēvāram* Saints are said to have followed (see the contribution of L.C. Orr).

To complete the religious "landscape" of the emergence and development of the Tamil Bhakti, besides Śiva and Viṣṇu, two deities whose cult spreads through the Tamil-speaking country during the same period, i.e. the 7th to the 9th centuries, and which may therefore be considered as participating in the Tamil Bhakti movement, have to be mentioned. The first is Subrahmaṇya/Murukaṉ who had a strong impact on the religious scene of the Tamil country. He is extolled in two of the very first Bhakti texts, the *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurukkāṟupaṭai*, dated to the 6th or 7th century. The deity described in these texts draws on Sanskrit and Tamil origins—he is Subrahmaṇya, son of Śiva or Agni; Murukaṉ, Lord of the *kuṟiñci*, fearful deity presiding over matters of the heart—and temples dedicated exclusively to him appear in the 8th–9th century. Although the Tamil name Murukaṉ is well known to Bhakti literature, it is striking to find him called by only the Sanskrit and very brahmanical name Subrahmaṇya in the epigraphy of the first sites devoted to him. I have presented this deity in my contribution to this volume.

The second figure is a goddess popularly called Durgā. We find numerous slabs from this period scattered in many villages of Tamil Nadu, especially in the north, depicting a standing goddess, often with eight arms and with a buffalo head as pedestal, at whose feet two devotees each offer their flesh or head.[9] She is also

---

[9] C. Schmid has written two articles on the goddess (« À propos des premières images de la Tueuse de buffle : déesses et krishnaïsme ancien », *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 90–91 (2003–2004), published in 2004, pp. 7–67 and « Mahābalipuram : La Prospérité au double visage », *Journal Asiatique* 293. 2 (2005), published in 2006, pp. 459–528) and continues to gather photographs of these slabs, in order to prepare a thorough study of this figure in the Tamil country. For an example of this goddess in a temple, see fig. 15 of my contribution.

sometimes depicted in temples, especially during the Pallava period in Mahābalipuram, and has a shrine exclusively dedicated to her (one of the "five rathas"). The Tamil Bhakti corpus does not devote any particular poems to her as far as I am aware,[10] but the archaeological evidence shows that she was worshipped to a great extent in this region. An epigraph inscribed during the reign of the Pallava king Kampavarman (second half of the 9th century) found on a slab in front of the Subrahmaṇya temple in Mallām (Guntur taluk, Andhra Pradesh) records the offering to this goddess, called here Bhaṭāri, of nine parts of his body as well as his own head by a devotee who sacrificed himself, showing that this act of extreme devotion depicted at the feet of the goddess seems to have been practised in reality.[11] It appears to me to be a strong argument in favour of considering this goddess as a part of the early Tamil Bhakti movement.

These remarks on the standing goddesses carved on slabs, often found in villages, lead us to consider another type of slabs, the hero stones, which could also be regarded as an expression of Bhakti. The hero stones are lithic testimonies of a fallen warrior: they bear images, inscriptions or both, recording the death of a man. Having become stone, he is deified. This process of divinisation is described in the Tamil Epic, the *Cilappatikāram*, after the death of its heroine, Kaṇṇaki (cantos XXV-XXVIII). The contribution of K. Rajan in this volume, centered on the mortuary monuments, traces the evolution of these *naṭukal*, hero stones, from the early historical period in South India.

Concerning the chronology itself, one may say that there is no firm evidence, either internal or external, for establishing an unquestionable chronology of Tamil Bhakti. Although there is a general consensus on the fact that the movement of Tamil Bhakti started around the 6th century of our era, none of the texts can be assigned a definite date. Even when a link can be established beyond doubt between two elements, such as the hymn of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and the Vaikuṇṭhaperumāḷ temple in Kāñcipuram, no date can be established for certain (on this correspondence, see the contributions of E. Francis and K. Young). Emmanuel Francis states rightly: "As for the chronology of Bhakti hymns, Tirumaṅkai mentions Nandin II once by his name [...] and refers to a Pallavaṉ who worshipped at Paramēccuraviṇṇakaram [...], and who is most probably the same Nandin II. It would be hasty to conclude that Tirumaṅkai was contemporary with Nandin II (*ca.* 730–800), but it seems that the poet anyway lived in a period not far distant from this king, because he knows precise historical details that are corroborated by other sources." (p. 113).

We have to keep in mind that the textual and the archaeological material face the same obstacles when it comes to exact dating: a temple is far from being excavated or constructed in a single day, and is subject to many renovations and altera-

---

[10] She is lengthily described and extolled in chapter 12 of the *Cilappatikāram*, but this Epic is generally not considered as a part of the Bhakti corpus.

[11] See *South Indian Inscriptions* XII, no. 106.

tions (see for example the temples of Tiruccen̲n̲ampūn̲ṭi, Centalai and Niyamam in C. Schmid's contribution or the temple of Tirupparaṅkun̲ṟam in V. Gillet's contribution); a text too, especially when it comes to these corpora of poems by a single poet or group of poets, has been composed over time, sometimes by more than one hand, compiled or altered (see the contributions of L.C. Orr and K. Young). Therefore it appears to me that, in order to arrive at a reasonable chronological outline, there is no better way than to confront different types of sources. An "holistic approach" as Charlotte Schmid would call it.

All the articles assembled here deal with South Indian material. Although each contribution is concerned with only one aspect of the Tamil Bhakti movement, they explore different disciplines (metrics and poetics—J.-L. Chevillard, G. Vijayavenugopal, E. Wilden; literature only—R. Varadadesikan, T.S. Gangadharan; literature, epigraphy, and archaeology—E. Francis, V. Gillet, L.C. Orr, C. Schmid and K. Young) and address fundamental topics such as the division between a royal and a local Bhakti (see E. Francis and C. Schmid's contributions), or the notion of landscape and the construction of sacred space in Bhakti (L.C. Orr, K. Young).

Preceding the emergence of the Bhakti movement, but echoing mortuary traditions often referred to in the poems of Kāraikkālammaiyār since she witnesses Śiva's dance in cemeteries, the article of K. Rajan deals with memorial stones. In order to understand their meaning and role in the early historical society, the author explores the contemporaneous literature, the Caṅkam literature, and confronts it with the archaeological reality. In an attempt to outline an evolution of these mortuary practices, the author defines four stages: the first stage is concerned with the *patukkai* (cairn circle) which seems to be a heap of stone under which the dead are buried; with the second stage we see the appearance of menhirs (*naṭukal*) associated with burials; during the third stage, the burials seem to be abandoned and very high menhirs only remain; in the fourth stage, the size of the menhirs is reduced. Before turning to the rituals related to these monuments, the author presents three of what may be the oldest hero stones (*naṭukal*) engraved with inscriptions. He explains his views on the death related rituals according to the list of six actions given in the *Tolkāppiyam*, and then discusses the erection of a hero stone, its decoration and the offerings made to it, along with the notion of a dead hero becoming the stone itself, giving many examples drawn from Caṅkam literature.

Considering only the textual domain, the article of Paṇḍit R. Varadadesikan, to whom this volume is dedicated, surveys Vaiṣṇava literature according to the traditional point of view. For his presentation, the author divides the Vaiṣṇava corpus into two parts, based on the period they belong to: the first one is labelled "the earlier period (from 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.)", and the second one simply "later period (from 5th century A.D. to 20th century)". In the first part, he deals with references to Viṣṇu found in Caṅkam literature, mentioning that in this early corpus,

although the god is extolled, "we do not find any poem centered on the expression of love for Viṣṇu". The author analyses the various meanings the old name Māyōṉ could have, then enumerates the instances which could refer to the Vaiṣṇava *avatāra*s in the Caṅkam corpus (Trivikrama, Paraśurāma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Kṛṣṇa), to other mythological aspects the god, to five shrines (in Tiruppati, Madurai, Aḻakarmalai, Kāñcipuram, Mahābalipuram), and to festivals related to this god. He mentions briefly the "transitional period" (between the 2nd and the 5th centuries A.D.), during which the tradition considers the Epic *Cilappatikāram* to have been composed (2nd century A.D.), with a reference to Śrīraṅkam, and one to Tiruppati. He then turns to the "later period" which opens with the Bhakti literature of the Āḻvārs, for which he defines a span between 479 A.D. and 883 A.D. From the 9th century onwards, vernacular versions of the famous Sanskrit Epics are composed. The last part of this paper gives an interesting list of 75 Vaiṣṇava works (excluding theological and philosophical works) ranging from the 12th to the 20th century.

Exploring the traditional metrical system, Jean-Luc Chevillard ventures into the unsettling domain of Tamil metre, focussing this time on the metres found in texts belonging to the Bhakti corpus.[12] He analyses and compares the various metrical approaches of the editions of these Tamil Bhakti texts. The author begins with a didactical explanation of the various levels of reading such a text—musical, metrical, lexical and semantical levels—before concentrating on the metrical one. The pedagogic explanations that Jean-Luc Chevillard gives are necessary for a glimpse of the complex web that the Tamil metre constitutes: he surveys and details the metres found in the *Paṉṉiru Tirumuṟai* for the Śaivas as well as the *Nālāyirat Tivviyappirapantam* for the Vaiṣṇavas and analyses them in connection with some of the proposed chronologies of this literature; he defines the notion of "stanza", of alliterations (*etukai*) and other poetical techniques, and attempts to evaluate their role in the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava Tamil Bhakti corpus; he gives an invaluable insight regarding the reference to a stanza in the *Nālāyirat Tivviyappirapantam*, made extremely complex by the different counts in the various editions. He concludes with a statement on the imprecision of the definitions of Tamil metres, and the difficulty related to it, and announces a study in preparation on the nature of these metres.

---

[12] This article belongs to a series called "Studies in Tamil Metrics". For "Studies in Tamil Metrics-1" and "Studies in Tamil Metrics-3", see Chevillard, 2011, "On Tamil Poetical Compositions and their 'Limbs', as described by Tamil grammarians (Studies in Tamil Metrics—1)", in Puech, Christian & Raby, Valérie (eds.), *Horizons de Rétrospection—2, Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, Fasc. 2, SHESL, Paris, pp. 121–144; and Chevillard, 2013, "Enumeration techniques in Tamil metrical treatises (Studies in Tamil Metrics—3)", in W. Cox & V. Vergiani (eds.), *Bilingual Discourse and Cross-Cultural Fertilisation: Sanskrit and Tamil in Medieval India*, Institut Français de Pondichéry / École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pondichéry (Collection Indologie no. 121), pp. 241–322.

G. Vijayavenugopal detaches himself from the tradition and proposes a reappraisal of some fundamental concepts of Tamil poetics. He begins his article with a brief description of the *Tolkāppiyam* and the definition it gives of *kūṟṟu*, a term referring to the explanation of the situation and the personae of a poem. Turning then to the *kōvai* genre, he analyses the notion of *kūṟṟu* in the *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, a text quoted as an example in the commentary of the *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ*, a text from the 9th century A.D. The *kūṟṟu*s become shorter in this text, and differentiate the hero of the poems and the patron. The author counts 145 *kūṟṟu*s for the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* while there are 400 in the *Tirukkōvaiyār*: he uses this observation as an argument for the first work being significantly earlier. He also adds that while the patron of the poems in the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* was the king, God himself is the patron of the poems in the *Tirukkōvaiyār*, and he interprets this as a later development. The last part of this article concentrates on Nammāḻvār and his poems which draw on the *akam* tradition, namely the *Tiruviruttam* and the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. In an attempt to show the inspiration of Nammāḻvār, G. Vijayavenugopal compares *Tiruviruttam* 55 with other similar stanzas praising the fragrance of the heroine's hair and addressing the bee which has smelt it: *Pāṇṭikkōvai* 5, drawing itself on *Kuṟuntokai* 2. He adds *Tirukkōvaiyār* 11 to the list with a similar pattern. After a brief analysis, he surmises that the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* and the commentary on *Kaḷaviyal* seem older than the Nammāḻvār's poems, while the *Tirukkōvaiyār* is probably posterior. He concludes his article with a mention of the association between the hero and God in Nammāḻvār's poems, and the building of the Vaiṣṇava commentaries on these interpretations.

The article of Eva Wilden also examines mainly the poetry of Nammāḻvār and the *akam* tradition. Out of the 1000 poems of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḻvār, she identifies 27 decades that adapt techniques of the *akam* genre, where the male part is associated with the god, and the female part with the devotee. While F. Hardy (1983) believed that the *mullai tiṇai* (pastoral landscape) was the most prominent in these poems, the author intends to show that other *tiṇai* may have been prevalent, and that Nammāḻvār employs the traditional poetic technique of *tiṇaimayakkam*, the intermingling of settings, in order to create a new Bhakti universe of *akam*. She gives examples of such *tiṇaimayakkam* in the *Tiruvāymoḻi*: the *pālai* setting, in which the heroine, separated from her lover, threatens to follow him on his path into the wilderness, is replaced by the girl leaving to meet the god in the temple; the *mullai* setting, although not suitable to a Bhakti context since it is concerned with married life, is used when the heroine appears as a *gopi* waiting for Kṛṣṇa; the *marutam* setting is used for the manifestation of the heroine's jealousy when the god meets other women, i.e. *gopi*s in this case; the *neytal* setting survives in the situation of sending a non-human messenger from the seashore; the *kuṟiñci* setting, originally dealing with clandestine love in the mountains and its revelation, is often used by Nammāḻvār, transposed to the girl tormented by the love for her god, i.e. Kṛṣṇa, or to the mother wondering how to cure her daughter who declines because of the love for her god. Eva Wilden concludes that Nammāḻvār was prob-

ably well aware of the *akam* tradition, and "manipulates the inherited system to suit his purpose" (p. 329).

Katherine Young also explores Vaiṣṇava literature and tradition, but focusses on a different aspect: the construction of sacred space. She begins with the analysis of the notion of space in the Āḻvārs' poems. It draws on Caṅkam literature themes, to which the notion of place/space/landscape is closely related, but there are differences that the author enumerates: it focuses on God (the king of the *puṟam* literature and the hero of the *akam* literature have become God under the pen of the Āḻvārs); the *marutam* and *kuṟiñci* landscapes seems to be the most frequent *tiṇai* used since the temples are located in agricultural lands or described as "temple-mountain"; the sacred places are "transcendent centres of bliss that break into the terrestrial realm" (p. 338); the Āḻvārs refer to places in Northern India and they include cosmic elements in their notion of space. Although the notion of space for the Āḻvārs focusses on Tamil Nadu, it extends therefore sometimes to a pan-India world on a horizontal level, but also, on a vertical level, connects the places of the Tamil realm with the cosmic realm. Katherine Young describes the construction of the name of a deity attached to a temple by the Āḻvārs, "tamilising" the deity, the portrayals of the places sung of in their poems—she notes that only the surroundings of the temples are described, not the temples themselves—and the Āḻvārs' system of grouping by listing the places in their poems, based on what they want to emphasise. Her analyse of the texts leads her to refute the idea of an institutionalised pilgrimage network at that time—although some of the Āḻvārs may have visited some of the sacred centres —, and she raises the interesting question of the transmission of the poems and the consistency of their genre. Could these poems and this genre have spread through pilgrims? Through proximity with the *nāyaṉmār* tradition? Could the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḻvār (already institutionalised in temples by the 11th century) be the inspiration for the others? Katherine Young attempts then to unveil the process of crystallisation of the tradition of the 12 Āḻvārs and the 108 places of Viṣṇu. Exploring inscriptional and literary material, she suggests that the establishment of this tradition may have taken place in the second half of the 13th century, from the pen of Amutaṉār whose work focusses on the 108 places sung by the Āḻvārs for the first time, and perhaps from that of Piḷḷaipperumāḷaiyaṅkār. This presupposes, of course, that the Āḻvārs' works had already been gathered and considered as a whole in the 13th century, and, to arrive at this fixed sacred number, the Ācāryas had to twist to a certain extent the list of sacred places found in the Saints' poems, sometimes producing slightly different lists. The Ācāryas (between the 13th and 15th centuries) wrote commentaries and treatises on the works of the Āḻvārs, hagiographies of the Saints, giving theological and soteriological meanings to the places they sang of, but still did not refer to nor describe any type of proper route for a physical pilgrimage.

Leslie C. Orr is concerned with the same type of problematics related to the building of a sacred landscape, but on the Śaiva side. Her article compares the representa-

tions of the sacred landscape of Tamil Śaivism during medieval times in the *Tēvāram*, in the *Periyapurāṇam* and in the corpus of temple inscriptions and sculptures. The first part deals with the notion of place in the poems of the *Tēvāram*, according to its three authors, Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar. Giving a few examples, the author states that she does not see, in the *Tēvāram*, the descriptions of landscape reflecting the inner emotional state of the poet, as was in use in Caṅkam *akam* poetry—and in the contemporaneous Vaiṣṇava Bhakti poems drawing on the *akam* model. However, she notices a resemblance between these descriptions and those found in the *puṟam* poetry, in texts such as the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* and *meykkīrtti*s on copper plates. She concludes that there is no evidence nor even hints in the poems themselves that the poets actually travelled to the places they sing of, and that the "sacred geography created by the *Tēvāram* is not a map of something "out there" but a devotional realm within" (p. 201). Her analysis of the *Periyapurāṇam* reveals that the pilgrimages of the three *Tēvāram* Saints through the Tamil country—and beyond—described in this 12th-century work seem to be an artificial creation of Cēkkiḻār who may be simply trying to connect "a series of dots on a map" (p. 206): places are not really described, practical aspect of being on the road are not mentioned, itineraries are sometimes improbable, etc. The last part of her article concerns the temples' inscriptions and images. She first remarks that inscriptions referring to the singing of *Tēvāram*'s hymns are surprisingly not found in the *Tēvāram*'s most often sung temples, and that they are even found in temples not referred to in the *Tēvāram*. She also observes that depictions of the Saints in the temples—which are found from the 10th century onwards—do not really correspond to the link this poet is supposed to have with a site (from the *Tēvāram* and the *Periyapurāṇam*'s point of view). Having therefore deconstructed the idea of a pilgrimage or sacred geography being elaborated in the *Tēvāram* and *Periyapurāṇam*, Leslie Orr concludes with a powerful remark: "If the *Tēvāram* poems create an interior devotional realm focussed on Śiva, and the *Periyapurāṇam* a social geography oriented around the saints and the community of devotees, it is the temples, images, and inscriptions that are most centrally concerned with place, and that most completely and concretely fix the Śaiva saints—and Lord Śiva himself—in place." (p. 215)

The *Periyapurāṇam* and its influences is at the centre of the article by late T.S. Gangadharan. His intention was to demonstrate the influence of the Jaina Epic, the *Jīvakacintāmaṇi*, on the famous Śaiva hagiographical opus composed by Cēkkiḻār, the *Periyapurāṇam*. To illustrate his argument, he presented nine concrete examples of similarities between the two works—the *kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu* (invocation of the Almighty), the *avvai-y-aṭakkiyal* (the apology), the summary of the contents by chapter in the "patikam" which are equal to 13 in both cases, the continuation of the story of the hero throughout all the chapters, the long description of evil presages, the righteous code of warfare, the uncertainty of the women beholding the hero as to whether he is human or divine, the mention of bribing the officials, and as the final "vital proof" according to T.S. Gangadharan, the explanation of the act of

Ēṉātinātar throwing his sword in the *Periyapurāṇam* by a passage of the *Jīvaka-cintāmaṇi* which states that, at the time of death on the battle-field, one should not be holding murderous weapons.

In the same line as Leslie Orr's article, Charlotte Schmid's contribution is concerned with both the *Tēvāram* and the *Periyapurāṇam*, but this time in relation with a particular site. Basing her analysis mainly on the site of Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi, the author intends to demonstrate that the temple of Kaṭaimuṭi in the *Tēvāram* may in fact be the Caṭaiyār temple of Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi. Anchoring the temple in an historical background, she first briefly describes the epigraphs found on this temple, engraved under the reign of the Pallava, Muttaraiyar and Cōḻa dynasties, revealing the importance of the role of an interesting figure of the 9th century, the Pallava queen Aṭikaḷ Kaṇṭaṉ Māṟampāvai, of whom we find inscriptions in surrounding temples. Focussing on the inscriptions of the temple, which were inscribed only between the 9th and the 10th centuries, suggesting that the temple was abandoned after this period, Charlotte Schmid notices a probable evolution of the name of the deity, from Kaṭaimuṭi to Caṭaimuṭi. The second name corresponds to a common epithet of Śiva, *caṭai* being the coiffure of the god, while the first would mean the "Lord of the fringes". There is a *Tēvāram* hymn (1.111) dedicated to the Lord of Kaṭaimuṭi, attached to a temple in Kīḻaiyūr, in the district of Tanjore. However, only two inscriptions from the 12th century are visible in this temple (and other unreadable fragments) and they do not mention Kaṭaimuṭi. Since this name is mentioned in the Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi temple at an early date, and continued, until the 16th century, to be referred to in surrounding temples (under the name Caṭaimuṭi), the author cleverly convinces us that the 1.111 poem of the *Tēvāram* was attached to the temple of Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi and not to the one in Kiḻaiyūr as is nowadays believed. She strengthens her hypothesis with the analysis of stanza 2206 of the *Periyapurāṇam*, where the 3rd line, usually considered to refer to a name of Śiva, Caṭaimuṭiyār, may in fact refer to the Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi temple. After ascertaining such an argument, the author comes to the question of territory and emphasises the role of "intermediary" that the Pallava queen Māṟampāvai may have played between a royal and a local Bhakti, supporting the merchant community while the Pallava king relies on the Brahmins only. Charlotte Schmid concludes with some iconographical remarks, based on the standing Vīṇādharamūrti which is found on the southern face of the temple, and which seems to stand in between the Dakṣiṇāmūrtis and the Bhikṣāṭanamūrtis, between the Pallava and the Cōḻa-period programmes. At the cross-roads of various "spheres", this temple of Tirucceṉṉampūṇṭi has thus become "a unique piece" of what she calls "meeting-point of different worlds" (p. 277).

The definition of these different worlds, the royal and the local, is given in the article of Emmanuel Francis. In a very clear and straightforward style, he announces his intention of discerning two streams of Bhakti during the Pallava period, the royal one and the non-royal one. The author, focussing first on royal Bhakti, shows very

convincingly that the common idea that two verses of two royal inscriptions (in Trichy and in Kāñcipuram) refer to two episodes developed in the *Periyapurāṇam*—local Bhakti—is mere extrapolation. Analysing the only 12 alleged references to a Pallava sovereign in the Tamil Bhakti corpus, Emmanuel Francis shows that, for most of them, it does not seem to refer to a particular Pallava king, and that most of the time, this reference is not even directly linked with the god of the temple mentioned. Comparing with the more numerous occurrences of Cōḻa kings in the same corpus, he concludes that the Pallavas may not have been very much involved with local Bhakti. He reminds us that the involvement of Pallava kings in local Bhakti as described in the *Periyapurāṇam* should not be considered as an historical fact since these events are related a few centuries after they are supposed to have taken place, and therefore dismisses this famous text as a proof of their involvement in this type of Bhakti. To complete the picture, the author ventures into iconography. Warning us against the common tendency to relate the images in the Pallava temples and the descriptions of deities found in the *Tēvāram*, he considers depictions of two devotees who have an important place in the local Bhakti as well as in Pallava temples, i.e. Caṇḍeśa and Rāvaṇa, and deduces that there is "no indisputable evidence that Pallava sculpture betrays an intimate knowledge of the *Tēvāram*" (p. 119). In the last part which focuses on the sites of Tamil Bhakti and their royal donations, we reach a point where the royal and non-royal Bhakti spheres almost encounter each other: donations from kings are found in temples mentioned in the *Tēvāram*, i.e. local temples. However, the author continues to doubt the merging of these two, at least at an early date, arguing that the donations by kings are found only from the 9th century onwards, and that their secondary queens, the "country queens" (*reines du terroir*), of whom we have many more epigraphical sources than of the kings themselves, may have played a major role in initiating their own donations.

Beyond the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva religious movements, with which most of the above articles are concerned, the cult of Skanda/Subrahmaṇya/Murukaṉ flourishes during the same period and in the same region. My own contribution deals with the site of Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, near Madurai. The main temple at the bottom of the hill is now dedicated to Murukaṉ, and is traditionally considered as the first of his six sacred abodes in the Tamil-speaking South. After giving a brief analysis of the ancient and medieval literary data related to this site and to this deity, I present a detailed account of the archaeological material. Two inscriptions, one in Sanskrit and one in Tamil, record the foundation and the renovation of the cave temple (which constitute the heart of the temple) at the end of the 8th century, under the reign of a Pāṇḍya king. The cave temple was originally dedicated to Śiva and not to Murukaṉ. Therefore, if a cult of Murukaṉ was practised on this hill in the first centuries of the common era—of which we have no remains —, the cult of Śiva was introduced in this place at the end of the 8th century, a period which saw a significant development of the Śaiva cult in this region. In the last part of this article, I briefly attempt to map the religious movements and shifts through the analysis of two of the *Tēvāram*

hymns attached to this site, through the observation of the inscriptions in the main temple, and through the iconography and the epigraphy of the later Śaiva cave temple on the southern side of the hill, opposite to the main one. Although the data remains vague, we can situate the shift from the Śaiva cult to that of Murukaṉ roughly between the 12th and the 15th centuries.

The articles in this volume, although addressing fundamental questions of the South-Indian medieval period on sacred space, landscape, religious movements, political influences, metrics and poetics, exploring textual and archaeological corpora, transmitting the voice of the tradition or breaking away from it, contribute more or less closely to the debate on the question of chronology of Tamil Bhakti, analysing one of its aspects: as the title of this book suggests, each article highlights a milestone, a stepping stone, or a stumbling stone in mapping the chronology of Bhakti.