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The Sacred Landscape of Tamil Śaivism: Plotting Place in the Realm of Devotion*

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My aim in this chapter is to compare three representations of the sacred landscape of medieval Tamil Śaivism, drawn from three different types of sources. The first source is the corpus of devotional poetry composed in the period of about the seventh to ninth centuries—specifically the collection of poems known as *Tēvāram*, attributed to the three poets Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar. The second source—the twelfth-century hagiography *Periyapurāṇam* by Cēkkiḻār—draws extensively from the first, telling the life stories of the *Tēvāram* poet-saints as narratives of journeys to shrines sacred to Śiva, in which the poems are represented as spontaneous outpourings of praise and devotion to the particular manifestation of Lord Śiva dwelling at that site. And the third source, overlapping in time with the com-

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position of the *Periyapurāṇam*, consists of the corpus of temple inscriptions and sculptures of the tenth to sixteenth centuries—particularly those that depict or refer to the saints and their songs; located in specific places throughout the Tamil country, these materials allow us to understand the importance of place in medieval temple life and the significance of the *Tēvāram* and its authors in that context. By overlaying these three kinds of representation, I seek to gain some understanding of the historical evolution of Tamil Śaivism, and to appreciate the tradition's distinctive—and various—perspectives on the importance of landscape and place.

1. *Tēvāram*

One very often encounters, in scholarly and popular accounts, the idea that the *Tēvāram* poets were instrumental in singing into existence a network of sacred places in the Tamil country (e.g. Peterson 1983: 340; Champakalakshmi 1994: 214). The apparent "dedication" of the hymns to specific sites and the poetic descriptions of the landscapes within which Śiva's shrines were located and of the forms of the god beheld at these places—combined with the depiction of the poet-saints as wandering from place to place in the later text *Periyapurāṇam*—have given rise to the idea that the *Tēvāram* poems actually construct a map of connected places, of temples and shrines, which participated in a shared devotional ethos. The descriptions of the sacred places have further suggested to many scholars that the poets' compositions functioned to localise the divine in the Tamil country in another way—by employing the poetic conventions of earlier Tamil literature, the so-called Caṅkam poetry, particularly the *akam* or love poems in which particular landscapes (*tiṇai*) were evocative of various emotional states. Given this framework of analysis and interpretation that situates the *Tēvāram* poems' representations of landscape and place between the earlier Caṅkam and the later *Periyapurāṇam*, our effort ought to be first of all to understand the *Tēvāram* in its own terms—apart from or moving beyond the earlier poetic or the later pilgrimage models.

The *Tēvāram* is made up of seven books, each consisting of about a hundred poems (or more than a hundred in the collections of Campantar's hymns); these poems are sometimes termed "decades", since each poem is composed of ten or eleven stanzas. The first three books are the compositions of Campantar, adding up to 385 poems; *Tēvāram* 4, 5, and 6 are attributed to Appar, and contain a total of 312 poems; the hundred poems of *Tēvāram* 7 are the work of Cuntarar. In most editions, each of the poets' compositions are arranged according to *paṇ* (musical or metrical modes). The bringing together of the seven books into the single *Tēvāram* collection is primarily the result of publication efforts in the nineteenth century; the first complete printed edition was produced in 1860–66, with the compilation of manuscripts that contained the works of the three individual authors (Gros 1984: lxx).[1] Before

[1] The attribution of the poems to the three poet-saints is a tradition of long standing, but the

this time, much of the transmission and preservation of the hymns was in the hands of *ōtuvar*, the singers who performed the hymns in temples, who would have been concerned only with a fraction of the corpus (Chevillard 2000: 738–739).

The *Periyapurāṇam* and various catalogues of sacred places (especially the *Tiruppatikkōvai*, attributed to Umāpati and thus *possibly* dating to the fourteenth century)—as well as the *talamuṟai* organisation of some editions of the *Tēvāram*, based on the ordering given in the *Tiruppatikkōvai*, which serves as a sort of route map—have encouraged the identification of each of the *Tēvāram* poems with a specific site, even when the poems bear scant reference (or multiple references) to particular places (Gros 1984: lvii-lix). The generation from the *Tēvāram* of a comprehensive list of sacred places—the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam* or "places receiving a hymn"—is a relatively recent phenomenon. The twelfth-century *Periyapurāṇam* is certainly not organised around this concept—the poet-saints are not depicted as following the orderly circuit of sacred places—and even if we regard the *Tiruppatikkōvai* as dating from the fourteenth century, it is difficult to know what salience the *talamuṟai* concept had in medieval times.[2] The earliest concrete evidence we have of the significance of the list of the *pāṭal peṟṟa talam* is found in the remarkable ceiling murals at the Avuṭaiyārkōyil temple, dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, that seem to represent all or most of the Śaiva sacred sites in *talamuṟai* sequence (Seastrand 2012). Even then—scarcely today, in fact—this list of places did not serve to define an actual programme of pilgrimage (see Peterson 1982: 80). Nor is the set of *pāṭal peṟṟa talam* a "closed" or entirely agreed-upon group of places. Even the number of such places has been subject to change over the years (it used to be counted as 274 places, but now there are two more since a poem by Campantar was discovered engraved on a temple wall and an "extra" poem by Cuntarar was found in a manuscript), and the identification and location of a *Tēvāram* place may be contested or debated or may even shift (as demonstrated by Schmid in this volume; see Chevillard 2000: 739–740, for three further examples).

Almost all of the *Tēvāram* poems are regarded as being associated with one of the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam*, and of these 276, close to 70% are located in Cōḻanāṭu (Spencer 1970; Chevillard 2000). Five of these places are said to be in "northern

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possibility exists that each corpus has been composed by more than a single author, as has been suggested by Veluppillai (2013) for Campantar and by Shulman (1990: xl) for Cuntarar. Another factor to take into account is that among the books attributed to the same author there are marked differences, so that, for example in terms of the theme of sacred place, one is much more likely to find this theme in Appar's *Tēvāram* 5 rather than the fourth and sixth book attributed to him. Although in what follows I treat the three poets as individual authors, the possibility that they are in fact "collective persons" should be borne in mind.

[2] In this case, we see a striking difference with the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, in which a list of 108 sacred places seems to have become fixed, and a focus of attention for the Ācāryas, at a relatively early date (see Young in this volume and Dutta 2010).

India"—these include Paruppatam (Śriśailam) in Andhra Pradesh and Śiva's abode in Kailāsa, but (quite surprisingly) not Kaśi. Those *Tēvāram* poems not associated with a particular place are known as *potu*—i.e. "common" to more than one place (see Kandiah 1973: 312–345; *Digital Tēvāram*). There are 48 such poems—out of the nearly 800 poems of the whole of *Tēvāram*—three-quarters of which are composed by Appar. While most of these 48 *potu* hymns refer to no place, there are several that mention multiple places: Campantar's *Tirukṣettirakkōvai* (2.39), Appar's *Kṣettirakkōvai Tiruttāṇṭakam* and *Aṭaivu Tiruttāṇṭakam* (6.70 and 71), and Cuntarar's *Nāṭṭuttokai* and *Ūrttokai* (7.12 and 47). These poems that are effectively lists tend to group places according to the sound of their names: in 2.39.3, for example, all the place-names that end in -kā are given, followed by those ending in -tuṟai, -kāṭu, -kulam, -kalam, -pāṭi, etc. It is also worth noting that even poems that are assigned to specific places (on the basis of the name of the Lord given in the refrain, for example) may similarly contain lists of place-name; for example, Cuntarar's 7.31 is considered to be dedicated to Iṭaiyāṟu, since this place is named at the end of most of the stanzas, but it is almost entirely composed of the names of 42 other places said to be sacred to Śiva.

Campantar, whose poems are collected in the first three books of *Tēvāram*, has sung in praise of far more of Śiva's sacred places in the Tamil country than the other two *Tēvāram* poets. Of the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam*, 80% are regarded as having had a poem composed in their honour by Campantar, and 112 of these places (41%) are sung only by Campantar and not by the other *Tēvāram* poets. Sixty-seven of Campantar's poems focus on Cīkāḻi, his birthplace, a place also often referred to in the "signature verse" of the concluding stanzas of his poems. Not only does Campantar make frequent passing mention of Śiva's abodes, but of the three *Tēvāram* poets, he is the one who most often lingers over the description of place and who praises the power of place. A content analysis reveals that over one-third of Campantar's poems have place as *the* most prominent theme, and in 60% of his poems, the theme of place is the first or second most prominent.[3] Even where the poem devotes more attention to another theme—for Campantar this is most often description of the forms of Śiva—one very frequently finds reference to the name of a place in the poem's refrain or evocations of images of the Lord's dwelling place.

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[3] As a tool for analysing the content of the *Tēvāram*—and for comparing the Śaiva devotional poetry with the approximately contemporary corpus of Vaiṣṇava Tamil devotional poetry, the *Tivviyappirapantam*—each poem (decade) was classified according to which themes were most prominent, among the following: Place—name and description of place(s); Devotees—are they addressed, exorted, described?; Deities other than Śiva; Image of god—visual form; Mythic exploits; Name of god; Others—Jains, non-Śaivas; Poet—what the poet says about himself; Personal quest—how the poet relates to the lord, expressions of emotion; Romance—poet takes on persona of a woman in love with the lord, or the girl's mother; Theology—cosmology, soteriology, etc.; Worship—descriptions of acts and materials of worship and service to god.

Campantar describes the natural landscape of Śiva's abodes—beside a river or on the seaside or in the hills—and the gardens, groves and paddy fields that surround the temple or the town. But he also—far more than the other *Tēvāram* poets—talks about the built landscape: mansions, walls and towers. And he describes the social landscape, telling us of those who populate the place: beautiful women, devotees, ascetics, Brahmins, and—again—beautiful women. Campantar's places are not serene and idyllic, but bustling with activity—festivals, music and dancing—and filled with the sound of drums and the chanting of *Veda*s. And Campantar often invites his hearers to join the throng of devotees, promising that those who honour this Lord will be released from karmic bondage and achieve salvation.

> Suffering will be destroyed by coming (*cēra*) to
> Kacci Ekampam, whose green groves (*poḻil*) are made beautiful by wild-lime, jasmine, ironwood, *mātavi*, good bottle-flower and kadamba trees,
> the place (*iṭam*) where dwells Caṅkaraṉ of flowing *jaṭās*, He who made fire by shooting an arrow,
> utterly destroying in an instant the three great cities, shining with excellence, of the *asuras*. (*Tēvāram* 1.133.2)

> Suffering will be destroyed by coming (*cēra*) to
> Ekampam, surrounded by beautiful, densely-filled groves, in that very Kacci, famed for the height of its mansions (*māṭam*) which reach up to rest among the clouds,
> the place (*iṭam*) where dwells Piñṉakaṉ engrossed in his fiery dance,
> close to his woman, and adorned with the serpent tracing a line on his chest, which is smeared with beautiful white ash. (*Tēvāram* 1.133.3)[4]

These verses by Campantar give us an idea of the way in which place may be evoked in a *Tēvāram* poem. They also provide a good demonstration of how, in the works of the *Tēvāram* poets, mention of the features of Śiva's sacred place is combined with description of the feats or the form of the god—myths and images which rarely have any particular association with the site to which the poem is "dedicated". In these two stanzas (as in many others in the *Tēvāram* corpus—see Shulman 1990: 256), half of the verses are dedicated to the place and half to the god. In the English translations provided here, these two halves are given in reverse order from the original Tamil text. The "hinge" joining the two parts, in the case of both of these stanzas is the word *iṭam*—meaning "place" or "site"—which appears at the exact centre of the stanza, at the end of the second verse (also in stanzas 4 and 8 of this poem, functioning similarly). *Iṭam* is one of Campantar's favourite words, appearing on the average of over 1.5 times per poem; while Cuntarar employs this word almost as often, the frequency of use by Campantar is six times that of Appar, suggesting the lack of emphasis on place in the poems of Appar.[5] The two stanzas translated

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[4] All translations of *Tēvāram* are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[5] The concordance of the *Digital Tēvāram* has made this analysis, and other such word searches,

above, and the poem as a whole, also exemplify Campantar's fondness for landscape descriptions which situate nature within the context of human habitation—which feature groves (*poḻil*) rather than forests and which incorporate these groves into cityscapes, with their walls (*matil*) and mansions (*māṭam*). Campantar is much more likely than either Cuntarar or Appar to use the words *poḻil* and *matil*.[6]

> They are worthy indeed, considered to [have attained] heaven, those whose minds are different [from ordinary men],
> who praise the matchless feet of him whose body is smeared with ash,
> the god in Āṉaikkā with its fine ghats along the river—
> which, coming from afar flows into the cool paddy fields that exude sweetness. (*Tēvāram* 3.53.2)

> Come (*cērmiṉē*) to Āṉaikkāvu, [the abode of] him who bears water as well as ornaments on his red *jaṭās*, since the Kaṅkai falls there—he who is venerated on earth and in heaven, who, it is said, has the nature of changelessness, and who has wealth and towns and titles, whose staunch devotees assemble [to worship him] in the deep darkness of night and in the light of day. (3.53.7)

> They indeed can reach heaven, those who are able to fix their thoughts on the mighty anklet
> of [the Lord] who is truth—those who are able to sing the four Vedas which can praise the god in Āṉaikkā, at whose cool ghats swans abound
> and swarms of bees [take] the golden pollen of the flourishing lotus flowers. (3.53.8)

I was first drawn to this poem because of all of the seven *Tēvāram* poems on Tiruvāṉaikkā, this one contains by far the most description of the landscape surrounding this important Śaiva temple; even the other two poems on this place by Campantar have no description at all. In three of the six other *Tēvāram* poems supposed to be dedicated to this place, Tiruvāṉaikkā is one of several shrines that receives mention by the poet. In 3.53, translated in part above, we have two lovely stanzas (2 and 8) that describe the fertile riverine setting of Śiva's shrine in the midst of the Kāvēri, but an almost complete absence of evocation of landscape in the other stanzas. In the rest of the poem, the mention of the place serves primarily as an identifier of the god (the god "at Āṉaikkā", using the locative, in six of the eleven stanzas of the poem); indeed in the four stanzas with the exhortation to "come" to Āṉaikkā, as in stanza 7 translated above, the place is evidently identified *as* god (even in stanzas 5 and 10, where Āṉaikkā's setting is described—*aiyaṉ mēya poykai cūḻ āṉaikkāvu cērmiṉē*—one could translate "come to Lord Āṉaikkāvu, surrounded by flower-covered tanks").[7] Most of the stanzas of this poem are not "about" Āṉaikkā,

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possible. However, such quantitative analyses do not demonstrate but rather illustrate the different descriptive and affective emphases of the three *Tēvāram* poets.

[6] Campantar's use of *poḻil* is 60% greater than Cuntarar's and two and a half times Appar's; Campantar uses *matil* with more than twice the frequency of either Cuntarar or Appar.

[7] As Peterson points out (1982: 81), Śiva *is* the place. See Kandiah (1973: 53) and Veluppillai

or even about the distinctive form or power of Śiva dwelling in this place, but concern the multiple manifestations of the deity—including that of saviour—that transcend place. This orientation toward place is characteristic of Campantar's poems in general, even as he stands as the one poet among the *Tēvāram* trio who most often invokes and describes the places sacred to Śiva.

Appar stands at the other end of the spectrum. Instead of concerning himself with the landscapes in which Śiva dwells, the main emphasis in Appar's 312 poems is on the nature of God—as Lord of the universe, the primordial god, the all-pervasive, ultimate reality, the originator and destroyer of all things, their essence and truth. Of the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam*, Appar is considered to have composed poems on 126 (46%) of them, and 28 places are sung only by him; his corpus includes 37 *potu* works (not dedicated to a particular place). Appar seems to love cataloguing place names—he has written sixteen poems that mention ten or more place names (one of these poems—6.70, Appar's *Kṣettirakkōvai Tiruttāṇṭakam*—lists 168 place names). But more than one third of Appar's poems have no references to place apart from a name. And in less than a fifth of his poems can sacred place be said to be the most prominent theme. When Appar does provide place descriptions, these are most often natural landscapes devoid of people and activity.

Appar's poems that list place names, his poems depicting Śiva as the mendicant (*bhikṣāṭana*) roaming from town to town, the poems that focus on his frustrated quest to have a vision of his lord (see, e.g., *Tēvāram* 5.50, translated in Peterson 1989: 298–99)—all of these suggest an anxiety about devotion to a deity who cannot be fixed in place. Appar's Lord is a wanderer.

> He is present in Mayilāppu with streets lined with mansions whose towers are brushed by the night moon; he is in Marukal.
> He is the one of Koṭumuṭi in Koṅku and of Kuṟṟālam; he is in Kuṭamūkku and he goes to Koḷḷamputūr.
> He does not know what place (*iṭam*) to stay in. He, the one of Takkaḷūr, is in Taramapuram for many days—
> and then, adorned with bright white ash and surrounded by *bhutas*, he enters Puliyūr Ciṟṟampalam. (6.2.1)

Here we find Appar providing a sort of list of places sacred to Śiva in which he makes poetic use of the assonances of the place names—those beginning with M, with K, and with T—and also plays with the notion that although Śiva may be identified as the lord of one place, he may very well be in another. In spite—or because—of his sense of Śiva's elusiveness, Appar very often uses the language of seeing, and specifically the verb *kāṇ*. An extreme example is *Tēvāram* 6.77, on

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(2013) on the specific and various forms and expressions used in the *Tēvāram* poems to connect god and place.

Tiruvāymūr, in which the word *kaṇṭēṉ*, "I saw," is used a total of sixty-five times. Here is another illustration:

> Behold (*kāṇ*) the one who forever desires Umayāḷ, whose liana-like waist is as slender as a lightning bolt; behold (*kāṇ*) the Lord whose hand holds a bow as strong as a mountain.
> Behold (*kāṇ*) the one who took his place in the Caṅkam as a poet of excellent verses and who granted to Tarumi a bundle filled with fine gold.
>
> Having seen (*kaṇṭu*) the fragrant *koṉṟai* resembling gold and the upland lilies growing in the forest, resembling hands,
> behold (*kāṇ*) the one of Tiruttaḷi in Tirupputtūr, in the flourishing forest filled with the music of bees.
> It is he who is Lord of my mind (*cintaiyāṉ*). (*Tēvāram* 6.76.3)
>
> Behold (*kāṇ*) the one who dispels the disease of bad karma that gives rise to rebirth;
> behold (*kāṇ*) the one of Ekampam in Kacci with its fragrant flower gardens.
> Behold (*kāṇ*) the dancer in the hall of cool Perumpaṟṟappuliyūr who removes suffering in the wide and great world.
> Behold (*kāṇ*) the friend of the ruler of Aḷakai whose broad hand makes gifts as if a wishing-tree, and the matchless elephant of Ārūr.
> Behold (*kāṇ*) the one of Tiruttaḷi in Tirupputtūr, surrounded on all sides by beautiful fragrant groves.
> It is he who is Lord of my mind (*cintaiyāṉ*). (*Tēvāram* 6.76.5)

Although this poem is ostensibly about Tirupputtūr—in a forest setting (one of the few poems by Appar that has so much landscape description and so little theological reflection)—numerous other places are also mentioned. And the identification of god with these various places is interwoven with references to Śiva's salvific power and gracious deeds (referring, for example, to the legends that connect Śiva to Madurai). Punctuated by the repetition of "behold" (*kāṇ*), this poem is in fact a series of epithets of god, of which Śiva's link to particular places is one type. This is an example of the *stotra* form of composition which Peterson (1989: 25–26) draws our attention to as being particularly characteristic of *Tēvāram* 6, the collection of Appar's poems from which we have been drawing examples. The poem translated above (*Tēvāram* 6.76) not only illustrates Appar's use of the language of vision, and this *stotra* style, but also a theme found in a number of Appar's poems, a message about where god "really" is. In this poem, we learn that he who can be beheld in all of these temple towns—and who performs various acts of heroism and grace—is in fact resident in the mind of Appar.[8] This notion of interiorisation is present in another type of poem that is common with Appar, the address to one's mind or heart (*neñcu*). Appar tells his mind to meditate (*niṉai*) on Neyttāṉam (6.42); to do service (*paṇi cey*) to the lord of Cōṟṟutuṟai (5.33); to go to—*aṭai* (reach, arrive at,

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[8] *Tēvāram* 6.24 is a strikingly similar poem, which employs the word *kāṇ* to an even greater extent and also identifies the lord as *cintaiyāṉ*, he who is Lord of my mind.

obtain, take refuge in)—Tiruveṇkāṭu (5.49). In all these cases, although the actual dwelling places of Śiva are invoked, it is the mind and not the body that makes the journey; or one might even say that it is the Lord of each of these places who himself comes to take up residence in the poet's heart. In *Tēvāram* 5.91.1, in fact, Appar says that god dwells in the temple of his mind (*akampaṭi*).

Cuntarar's relationship with Lord Śiva is strikingly different from Appar's: he is neither frustrated in his quest to find God nor does he very often seek God within himself. Cuntarar's Lord is very near at hand, and Cuntarar is constantly demanding His help. The most prominent theme in nearly half of Cuntarar's hundred poems is his own plight—spiritual, financial or matrimonial. As the Tamil saying puts it, "Cuntarar sang of himself" (and goes on—in the words of Śiva—"Campantar sang of women, and my Appar sang of me"). The second most important theme for Cuntarar is the form or image of God, but he does not neglect the theme of place. Although it is rarely the central focus of the poem, 90% of Cuntarar's poems have some description of a sacred landscape, and although many of these are brief and formulaic, they are at times as rich and full of life as Campantar's scenes. But, unlike Campantar, Cuntarar does not speak of the saving power of Lord Śiva's holy sites, nor does he populate them with devotees; Cuntarar's places are filled instead with women, Brahmins, and ascetics. Of the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam*, Cuntarar hymns 83 (30%) and 26 places are sung only by him. The structure of Cuntarar's poems tends to be more complex than what we find for the other two *Tēvāram* poets.

> He who possesses the affection and beautiful body of the Mountain Woman, mother of Cēntar; Śiva who dwells in the great town of Atikai;
> in the midst of his locks is the Water Woman with flowing hair—whose speech is as sweet as the cuckoo's—where schools of carp splash and shine,
> as the river's abundant waters make the *marā* trees bow low (*vaṇaṅki*) and carry off sandalwood from the mountains, sweeping toward the restless sea,
> the abundant waters of the Keṭilam surge, on whose north bank is Vīraṭṭāṉam, the abode of the Lord.
> I may, for a moment, have forgotten him. (*Tēvāram* 7.38.5)

Here we have a "hinged" poem—as we saw in Campantar's *Tēvāram* 1.133.3 above—split between a description of Śiva, sharing his body with the goddess Pārvatī and bearing the goddess Gaṅgā in his matted locks, and a description of Śiva's abode at Atikai, focussing on the Keṭilam river which passes by the Vīraṭṭāṉam shrine. But in this poem, there is no clear break between the two parts, as the description of the waters of the Gaṅgā flows directly into the description of the Keṭilam. Cuntarar's complication and extension of landscape description in bringing together the elements of nature with the form of god is seen also in others of his poems—for example in his *Tiruttoṇṭattokai* (*Tēvāram* 7.39). *Tiruttoṇṭattokai* is a poem in which Cuntarar expresses his devotion to the Nāyaṉmār, the sainted devotees of Śiva, including the other two authors of *Tēvāram*, Appar and Campantar. In

stanza 5 we read: "I am the servant of the servants of my lord Campantaṉ,/ who loved only the feet of the god/ adorned with honey-rich, fragrant/ *koṉṟai* filled with striped bees..." (trans. Shulman 1990: 240). Where in the poems of Campantar and Appar we have looked at earlier (*Tēvāram* 3.53.8 and 6.76.3), we find bees hovering around lotuses at the river ghats or filling the forest with their music, Cuntarar's line on Campantar makes the bees become a part of the "landscape" that is Śiva's own body and the object of devotion. In Cuntarar's verses on Atikai translated above (*Tēvāram* 7.38.5), we see another way in which landscape description serves theological or devotional ends. The strong current of the river makes the *marā* trees bow low; the verb used—*vaṇaṅku*—can mean to bend, but also to worship or revere. The suggestion that nature worships Śiva in this poem by Cuntarar is found also in one of Campantar's poems, where the flowers, sandalwood, aloe, and saffron carried by the Muttāṟu River are represented as if they are offerings for the Lord of Tirumutukuṉṟam (*Tēvāram* 1.12.1; see translation by Peterson 1989: 167).

2. Poetry and place in *Tēvāram*

If we see in these cases a linking of natural elements to devotional acts and attitudes of reverence and service, this concerns a relationship between nature and God. None of the *Tēvāram* poems that we have examined seem to use the features of the landscape as indicators of the emotional state and circumstance of the poet or of any human actors represented in the poem, in the manner of the Caṅkam *akam* poetry. The earlier *akam* poems use landscape elements to suggest particular romantic situations and moods, with a set of such elements (*karu*s) being associated with each of the five *tiṇai* or "interior landscapes": *kuriñci* or lover's union (mountains), *mullai* or patient waiting (forest, pastureland), *marutam* or lover's unfaithfulness (agricultural lowland), *neytal* or anxiety in separation (seashore), and *pālai* or elopement and hardship (wasteland, parched landscape) (Ramanujan 1985: 242). In contrast to the corpus of Vaiṣṇava Tamil devotional poetry, the *Tivviyappirapantam* composed in approximately the same period, the *Tēvāram* scarcely ever employs such love themes as a means of depicting the devotee's relationship with God.[9] Nor in *Tēvāram* do we find the *tiṇai* conventions—the distinction among five different kinds of landscape—in any way strictly observed. Almost all of the poems that provide landscape descriptions make extensive use of *marutam* elements—paddy fields, rivers and tanks, cityscapes. This may be seen as a reflection of the distribution of the sacred sites, so many of which are in the Kāvēri River region. But even when the setting for Śiva's shrine is very obviously the hill country (*kuriñci*) or the seaside (*neytal*), *marutam* elements seem inevitably to be incorporated. An extreme case is *Tēvāram* 7.50, on Puṉavāyil, which is described largely in terms of the arid wilderness features of the

[9] For example, the analysis of Campantar's 385 *Tēvāram* poems shows that only 6 of them have romance as the most or second most prominent theme.

pālai tiṇai (owls hooting, wild boar, stony hills, scrubby thickets, scorched grass), but the poet, Cuntarar, cannot resist employing a formulaic *marutam* "landscape epithet"—twice referring to Puṉavāyil as "surrounded by golden fields" (Shulman 1990: 313–318). While acknowledging that the *tiṇai* conventions are not strictly employed in the landscapes depicted in the *Tēvāram*, David Shulman nonetheless argues for a continuity with the basic premise of Caṅkam *akam* poetics: "external description suggests an inner state of emotion and perception [...]. [T]he landscape [is] [...] a direct reflection of the poet's inner state" (1990: xliv-xlv). In my understanding of the *Tēvāram*, I do not see anything like such a close association between outer and inner landscapes. Instead, I am inclined to agree with Indira Peterson, according to whom—contrasting them with the Vaiṣṇava *Tivviyappirapantam* poets, who more fully deploy the *akam* poetic conventions—the authors of the *Tēvāram* "use the *akam* world primarily as an instrument and context with which to evoke the Tamil cultural past in a very general way, through association and allusion" (1989: 39; see, similarly, Kandiah 1973: 219–224 and Gros 1984: xlviii).

The influence of Caṅkam poetry on the *Tēvāram* in terms of description of place is to be sought not so much in the poetry of love (*akam*), but in the genre of *puṟam*—poems celebrating the valour and generosity of heroes. In these poems we find standardised metrically-fitting phrases, in imitation of bardic oral performance, being used as epithets both for the hero and—more importantly from our point of view—for his territory (Ramanujan 1985: 273–276; *Puṟanāṇūṟu*, introduction by Hart, xxiii-xxv). For example, in *Puṟanāṇūṟu* 13.9–13 (trans. Hart and Heifetz, 11): "May he come back safe, that lord of a land where the farmers/ collect feathers that peacocks have dropped in the fields, / [...] [where] all around, like a wall, there lies abundant water." In the post-Caṅkam period we find extensive use of such "landscape epithets" in the mixed *akam/ puṟam kōvai* genre, particularly in the text *Pāṇṭikkōvai* (*PK*) which may date from the eighth century, and thus be contemporary with the compositions of Appar and Campantar.[10] A specific place is mentioned in virtually every stanza of the *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, and landscape epithets appear very frequently. Although some of the places mentioned are those places belonging to the hero of the poem, the Pāṇḍya king, the greatest number are those where the Pāṇḍya has been victorious in battle against his enemies. Among such places, together with their epithets, we find, for example: "Cevūr where carp meander through wet rice fields" (*cēlaṅ kuḷarvaḷayal PK* 16), "Nelvēli with vast cool fields and flowers" (*nīṭiya pūntaṇ kaḷaṇi PK* 22), "Neṭunkaḷam fenced round by beautiful waters" (*nīraṇi vēli PK* 167), "Kōṭṭāṟu with walls as high as mountain peaks" (*kōṭaril nīḷmatil PK* 202), and "Pāḻi where winged bees buzz music in the groves" (*paṇṭēr ciṟaivaṇ ṭaṟai poḻil PK* 259). Another context where the places conquered by a hero are similarly described in this formulaic fashion is in the eulogistic prefaces (*meykkīrtti*s) of the kings of the

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[10] On *kōvai*, see Cutler (1987: 86–91). Thanks to Sascha Ebeling and Leah Comeau for discussions and information about this genre.

Tamil country. The earliest example of such usage is in the eighth-century Vēḷvikkuṭi plates issued by the Pāṇḍya king Varaguṇa (*EI* XVII, no. 16); he and his predecessors are lauded for their victorious battles in, among other places, "Kuṟunāṭu where crowds of bees abound on all sides", "Koṭumpāḷūr with high ramparts and deep trenches", and "Peṇṇākaṭam (surrounded by) an expanse of water and flowery groves".[11] This pattern continues in later *meykkīrtti*s, such as that of the eleventh-century Cōḻa ruler Rājendra I (*SII* II, no. 20 and elsewhere), who claims to have conquered, for example, "Maturaimaṇṭalam whose fortress towers have clouds as banners", "Mācuṇittēcam with green paddy-fields", and "Mānakkavāram with groves of fragrant blossoms". The landscape epithets of the *Pāṇṭikkōvai* and of the *meykkīrtti*s are in many cases identical to those used by the *Tēvāram* poets in the course of their descriptions—or should we say "descriptions"—of the places sacred to Śiva ("surrounded by beautiful, dense groves", "whose strong walls touch the clouds", "with bee-filled gardens").

Did the *Tēvāram* poets actually visit these shrines? Are their descriptions of the site "realistic" and based on actual experience? There is little to suggest that the poets are providing eye-witness accounts of the distinctive features of these landscapes, given the stereotyped—and repetitive—quality of much of the description of place, and given the fact that we encounter descriptions of places to which they surely did not travel, for example Campantar's evocation of the mountain setting of Śiva's Himalayan abode, Kailāsa, in *Tēvāram* 1.68 and 3.68 (Kandiah 1973: 167–170). Nor do the *Tēvāram* poems tell us anything about the journeys of their authors. The poets are not physically, actively seeking out the lord. The only real movement, in fact, is Śiva's own wandering as a mendicant; other than this, his divine acts are more often represented as icons rather than as narratives. For the *Tēvāram* poets, their seeing of the lord's sacred places—like their sight of his sacred forms—seems most often an interior visionary experience, rather than the result of actually travelling to his shrines.[12]

In the *Tēvāram* we encounter at times what seem to be urgings that the places where Śiva dwells ought to be visited. In both of the poems by Campantar translated at the beginning of this chapter, for example, we see him using the verb *cēr*—"come"—

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[11] This inscription is unusual because even outside the section praising the ruler and his lineage, we find—in the descriptions of the boundaries of the land granted—landscape epithets: "Nāgarūr surrounded on (all) sides by faultless flower-gardens" and "Pāyal where lotuses grow in canals".

[12] Peterson (1989: 31) discusses the fact that in *Tēvāram* what appear to be descriptions of icons of Śiva are not in fact "realistic"; rather, she says, in the "imaging" of Śiva, "the aesthetic of description in the *Tēvāram* is an aesthetic of personal experience and feeling". Kandiah (1973: 156–58, 165–67, 171–73) says that in a number of cases, the *Tēvāram* poets' experience of place can only be the result of "spiritual vision". Granoff (1998b) provides a useful discussion of the presence in pilgrimage literature of very realistic depictions of unseeable or unreachable sites, evidently experienced in visions and dreams.

telling of the benefits of coming to Kacci Ekampam (*Tēvāram* 1.133), and exhorting his listener to come to Lord Āṉaikkāvu (*Tēvāram* 3.53.7). It is notable, however, that in each of these cases, the hearer is advised to come to Śiva—not to the place, but to the god. As the last stanza of another of Campantar's poems, he concludes: *pūntarāy pantaṉ āynta pāṭalāl vēntaṉ aṉṉiyūr cērntu vāḻmiṉē*—May you prosper, having come to the Lord (of) Aṉṉiyūr through the celebrated song of Pantaṉ of Pūntarāy (i.e. Campantar) (*Tēvāram* 1.96.11).[13] Here Campantar represents his own poem as the means by which one can attain (*cēr*) Śiva—the Śiva who is at Aṉṉiyūr, but who is at many other places as well. The *Tēvāram* poems are hymns of praise, and they are to be sung so as to come to know god. What is praised is Śiva, and not Śiva's sacred places—which are mentioned (as in the case of *puṟam* poetry) only because they belong to him, the hero of the poem. The sacred geography created by the *Tēvāram* is not a map of something "out there" but a devotional realm within.

3. *Periyapurāṇam*

We have a strikingly different kind of construction of place when we turn to the *Periyapurāṇam*, characterised by a spatial literalism that seems quite foreign to the *Tēvāram*. The *Periyapurāṇam*, composed in the twelfth century by Cēkkiḻār, highlights the stories of the three *Tēvāram* poets, even as it recounts the miracles and intense devotion of all of the 63 individual Nāyaṉmārs, the Tamil Śaiva saints, and nine groups of devotees. Cēkkiḻār arranges his narrative on the pattern established by Cuntarar in his work *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*, which, as we have seen, is essentially a list of the Nāyaṉmārs to whom Cuntarar pays hommage. Between Cuntarar's and Cēkkiḻār's work we have the *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti* of Nampi Aṇṭār Nampi which elaborates on Cuntarar's list. Cēkkiḻār's only departure from the pattern of his predecessors is to tell Cuntarar's own story in four long sections placed at intervals throughout the text, forming a frame story for the narrative as a whole and showing Cuntarar's life as connected with that of others among the saints, particularly Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ. (The *Periyapurāṇam* devotes a total of 836 verses to Cuntarar, out of a total of 4281 verses.) Two other long sections are devoted to the life stories of Appar (428 verses) and Campantar (1255 verses), which Cēkkiḻār skillfully interweaves with one another. The only other Nāyaṉmār whose story is told at any length is Kaṇṇappar, the hunter (180 verses). For all three of the *Tēvāram* poets, Cēkkiḻār represents them as perpetually moving from one sacred site to the next, this journey punctuated by accounts of miracles performed, but—most often—by the saints' singing of hymns. Often Cēkkiḻār simply says that the saint sang a hymn or "offered

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[13] See Veluppillai (2013), who gives the translation: "vivez en ayant atteint, en chant, [le temple d']Aṉṉiyūr du roi." This verse provides an excellent example of what Peterson refers to when she describes the singing of *Tēvāram* as mental pilgrimage (1982: 81).

a garland of Tamil songs" to the deity of the place, but in about 200 cases, he actually quotes the first few words of the hymn.

Cuntarar's hymns are most completely represented in the *Periyapurāṇam*, with 96 of his 101 poems quoted. This remarkably close fit may be due to Cēkkiḻār's focus on Cuntarar as his narrative's central character, or the greater ease with which 100 poems could be integrated into a story as opposed to the 300 to 400 each of Campantar and Appar, or the greater historical immediacy of Cuntarar, whose life unfolding three hundred (?) years earlier may have been remembered more clearly and completely than those of the other two saints who presumably lived at an earlier time.

But the fit between the *Periyapurāṇam*'s narrative and Cuntarar's *Tēvāram* is not exact. Six of Cuntarar's hymns are said in the *Periyapurāṇam* to have been sung at particular locations where there is no indication within the poem itself of a connection to this place. The *Periyapurāṇam* names over 30 places where Cuntarar journeyed and composed a hymn in honour of the Lord, although no hymn of Cuntarar's on the place is extant. The *Periyapurāṇam* says that Cuntarar composed three hymns on Chidambaram, but we have only one. Cēkkiḻār departs somewhat from his usual mode of narration when he accounts for Cuntarar's hymning of the northern abodes of Śiva, Śrīśailam and Kedaranātha, by having the saint halt at Kalahasti, apparently as far north as he is willing to go, and "broadcasting" his hymns in the direction of those northern sites. If Cēkkiḻār is right that he never visited the place it is ironic and interesting that Cuntarar's poem (*Tēvāram* 7.79) on Śrīśailam, in what is today Andhra Pradesh, is extremely rich in its description of the mountain setting—a perfect *kuriñci* landscape. And the story of Cuntarar's journey to the far south—Pāṇḍyanāṭu—as told by the *Periyapurāṇam*, is quite unconvincing. Cēkkiḻār shows Cuntarar visiting fourteen sites in Pāṇḍyanāṭu. The poet-saint is said to have voyaged as far south as Tirunelvēli and hymned the god there, to have worshipped Lord Śiva at Madurai, together with the three Tamil kings—the Cēra, the Cōḻa, and the Pāṇḍya—and to have reached Rāmeśvaram, from where, across the Palk Strait, he "broadcasted" hymns to two of Śiva's temples in Sri Lanka. Yet Cuntarar, in the *Tēvāram*, sang only five sites in Pāṇḍyanāṭu—and these do not include Tirunelvēli, Madurai or Rāmeśvaram.

The *Periyapurāṇam*'s narrative dedicated to Campantar depicts his brief life as that of a child prodigy and peripatetic poet. Campantar's trajectory from site to site in the *Periyapurāṇam* is not a systematic pilgrimage, but seems rather erratic and episodic—he sets out because he has been beckoned by a devotee or desires to see a particular place, and then returns to Cīkāḻi, impelled by his love for the Lord of his hometown.[14] Only 72 of Campantar's 385 hymns are "quoted" by Cēkkiḻār, a very much smaller proportion than we saw in the case of Cuntarar. But Cēkkiḻār repeatedly says that Campantar visited *all* of the sites of a particular region, and offered hymns there. It seems that Cēkkiḻār wanted to cover his bases, so to speak. I am not

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[14] See Peterson (1982) and Veluppillai (2013) for discussions of these routes.

sure that in fact every place that Campantar dedicated a hymn to is found in the *Periyapurāṇam*—although it is quite possible, given the long lists of places referred to—but we do find that the hymns on particular places that the *Periyapurāṇam* says Campantar composed are not all found in the corpus of his hymns in the *Tēvāram*. It is interesting that in some cases, these places missing from Campantar's *Tēvāram* are in fact places that Cuntarar sang. According to the *Periyapurāṇam*, Campantar does the same "broadcasting" as Cuntarar from Kalahasti and Rāmeśvaram. But the *Periyapurāṇam*'s account of Campantar's southern tour, while not necessarily realistic in all its particulars, is quite detailed, and is associated more closely and extensively than Cuntarar's with poems that Campantar composed on sites in Pāṇḍyanāṭu (Campantar has 24 hymns dedicated to 13 places in Pāṇḍyanāṭu).

Appar's career as a poet-saint, according to the *Periyapurāṇam*, began at Tiruvatikai, where he abandoned the life of a Jain monk to become a devotee of Śiva. Cēkkiḻār depicts Appar as engaged in continuous travel from the time of this "conversion", but rarely directly cites his poems—there are fewer than 40 quotes, and I have had difficulty in tracing some of these in Appar's writings. Thus, we have a very large number of Appar's hymns that are not "placed" in the *Periyapurāṇam*—which is perhaps in keeping with the character of Appar's poems that we have already noted. Another correspondance between Appar's hymns and his hagiography emerges in the fact that the *Periyapurāṇam* provides a number of long and unembroidered lists of the places to which Appar travelled, compacting a complicated journey into a few stanzas, with no effort to provide an account of what transpired at these places, nor what Appar beheld when he halted there.[15]

Cēkkiḻār plots Appar's travels for the most part through the Cōḻa country, but toward the end of Appar's life, according to the *Periyapurāṇam*, he made two long journeys, first to the north (determined to see Lord Śiva at Kailāsa, he actually got past Kalahasti), and then to the far south. The account of the first of these journeys has a bizarre and miraculous quality and the account of the second is extremely sketchy. It is almost as though Cēkkiḻār tacks this on at the end of his narrative—just before Appar attains liberation at Tirupukaḻūr—to provide a context for the five hymns on the sacred places of Pāṇḍyanāṭu that Appar actually did sing, but the whole southern journey is rushed through in fewer than ten stanzas and, of course, includes several sites (Tirunelvēli, Tirukkāṇappēr) that are not referred to in Appar's *Tēvāram* poems.

The *Periyapurāṇam* contains a great deal of landscape portrayal that is not connected with the peregrinations of the *Tēvāram* trio, and much of this description is keyed

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[15] For Appar's travels, *Periyapurāṇam* (*PP*) 1454–1479 mentions 37 places in 25 stanzas; *PP* 1493–1505 14 places in 13 stanzas; and *PP* 1556–1574 10 places in 9 stanzas. There is a similar passage in the account of Campantar's travels which condenses a journey to 17 places into three stanzas (*PP* 572–574). In the numbering of verses of the *Periyapurāṇam*, I follow the edition of Alastair McGlashan, and all translations of this work are his.

to the political or regional divisions of the Tamil country, with Cōḻanāṭu playing a starring role. The *Periyapurāṇam*'s opening setting is Kailāsa, the abode of lord Śiva (*PP* 11–22), but the scene soon shifts to provide an extended and rich portrait of the Cōḻa country (*PP* 51–85)—featuring especially the social landscape, the inhabitants and their activities—and then zooms in further to provide a description of the town of Tiruvārūr (*PP* 86–98) (Cox 2007: 14–15; Monius 2009: 225–228; Ebeling 2010: 455–56). In these introductory verses, the landscape of Cōḻanāṭu is clearly linked to the Cōḻa ruler—both the king Anapāyaṉ who is Cēkkiḻār's contemporary and the legendary Cōḻa Manunīti, whose story is set in Tiruvārūr. Similarly, in the brief and perfunctory descriptions of Pāṇḍyanāṭu (*PP* 968–974 and 2527–2528), the connection of the land and the Pāṇḍya king is made clear. This is not the case in the elaborate treatment of Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam, and its great city, Kāñcipuram, where a total of 110 verses (*Periyapurāṇam* 1083–1192) is given over to portraying the setting within which the saint Tirukkuṟippuṭṭoṇṭar is born—whose own story takes up a mere 18 verses. Here there is no king mentioned as ruler over this land; if a connection is made to a lord, this is lord Śiva, whose towns in this region are mentioned in passing and who, together with the goddess Pārvatī, is particularly invoked in the description of Kāñcipuram. Or perhaps there is an implicit claim on behalf of the Cōḻa ruler to the extensive Toṇṭai territory—which was in fact politically contested in the twelfth century.

In his depiction of Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam Cēkkiḻār employs the *tiṇai* framework of Caṅkam poetics, but he adds a further dimension of complexity; after describing *kuriñci*, *mullai*, *marutam* and *neytal* zones separately, he goes on to treat the boundaries of one *tiṇai* with the next: "where the mountains meet the farmlands, the black deer that bound across the hillsides mirror the black buffalo that draw the plough in the paddy fields. [...] [Where forest and sea meet], the fishermen give fish in plenty to the forest dwellers in exchange for quails and chicken, while their daughters weigh out coral and pearls to the hunter's wives in exchange for millet and beans [...]" (*PP* 1119, 1121, trans. McGlashan).[16] In general, in the *Periyapurāṇam*—as in the *Tēvāram*—the *marutam* landscape dominates, and elements belonging to this *tiṇai* seem to be inserted regardless of their suitability. In terms of the urban landscape, we find—apart from the long descriptions of the towns of Tiruvārūr (*PP* 86–98) and Kāñcipuram (*PP* 1150–1186)—Chidambaram coming in for special

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[16] There is a striking parallel with this passage in an earlier work, dating from the late Caṅkam period, *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* (vv. 193–226). Here we see the successive descriptions of *marutam*, *mullai*, and *neytal* elements in a landscape, then a portrayal of the intermingling of the creatures, people, and products of these three *tiṇai* with one another and with elements of the *kuriñci* landscape, ending with the declaration that "Four diverse pleasant regions are thus found/ Together in a single realm"—with the poem concluding, some verses later, "This is the land the Kaveri well sustains,/ And this, the realm the king doth own" (see *Pattuppāṭṭu*, pp. 72–75, trans. Chelliah). This king is, of course, the Cōḻa ruler.

attention. Although Chidambaram has only ten *Tēvāram* hymns associated with it, Cēkkiḻār provides elaborate descriptions of this place, at several different junctures in the narrative. For example in verses 239–248—when Cuntarar approaches Chidambaram—we find a long list of the kinds of trees and flowers that adorn the place, but also references to the built landscape here (gates, walls, mansions, streets surrounding the temple); this is a much fuller depiction than is found in any of the *Tēvāram* poems, and also one which evidently reflects the expanding importance and physical fabric of this place in Cēkkiḻār's own times (Cox 2007: 20–21).

Another context for the description of place in the *Periyapurāṇam* is the identification of the hometowns of each of the saints, which is usually at the beginning of the account of their acts of devotion. The very lengthy portrayal of Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam and Kāñcipuram that prefaces the story of Tirukkuṟipputtoṇṭar is quite atypical, and for the most part the setting of the saint's place of birth is described in just a verse or two; this is even the case for Cuntarar, who is such a key figure in the narrative.[17] The treatment of Appar's and Campantar's places of origin is more extended, with 13 verses devoted to their description in each case (*PP* 1267–1279 and *PP* 1900–1913). Almost as long are the portrayals of Nantaṉār's home, a village of untouchables (*PP* 1041–1050; see Ebeling 2010), and Caṇṭēcura's, a Brahman settlement (*PP* 1206–1214). *Periyapurāṇam*'s story of Kaṇṇappar starts with a seven-verse description of the fortified town of his people, hunters and robbers (*PP* 650–656), but later on in the narrative, in the account of the hunting expedition and Kaṇṇappar's ascent of Mount Kalahasti, the abode of Śiva (*PP* 722–750), we find a dramatic depiction of landscape. This is arguably the most vivid description of place in the whole of the *Periyapurāṇam*, unusual for its evocation of a sense of being there and of movement through space. While much of the time Cēkkiḻār's landscape description seems to hold up a painting for us to view—a painting with rather predictable elements—here we feel that we are present within the scene, crashing through the forest, witnessing the violence of the hunt, wondering at the strange beauty of the mountain slope (see Cox 2005).

If we consider pilgrimage to mean the passage through space—through places—to arrive at one's goal, probably Kaṇṇappar's story is the most realistic portrayal of pilgrimage in the *Periyapurāṇam*, as the saint's actual journey to Śiva's shrine is recounted. The *Tēvāram* poets' movement from one place to another, on the other hand, is glossed over, with scant reference to the realities of being on the road or to the experience of anything in between point A and point B. Cēkkiḻār telescopes long journeys into brief passages, describes logistically improbable itineraries (e.g. Cuntarar and Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ shuttling back and forth between Kerala and the Kāvēri delta), and sometimes has the poet-saint effect a miraculous passage from one place

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[17] The antecedent texts of the *Periyapurāṇam*—Cuntarar's *Tiruttoṇṭattokai* and Nampi Aṇṭār Nampi's *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti*—when they describe the birthplaces of the saints, employ "landscape epithets".

to another, as in the case of Appar's instantaneous transportation from Kailāsa to Tiruvaiyāṟu (cf. Casey 1993: 275–76, 289). And although he has systematically plotted the *Tēvāram* trio's presence at Śiva's shrines in the Tamil country as if a series of dots on a map, Cēkkiḻār's descriptions of the places themselves is in general quite minimal—in contrast often with what the poets themselves (at least Campantar and Cuntarar) had to say about the landscape of the site.

If Cēkkiḻār does explicitly invoke the *tiṇai* conventions, as we have seen, he does so in a strictly formal sense; there is virtually no link between emotion and landscape in the *Periyapurāṇam*. This is a narrative filled with pain, longing, and joy, but these feelings are not keyed to elements in the setting. The only real exception to this neutral, non-metaphorical treatment of landscape is found—again—in Kaṇṇappar's story, as he approaches Kalahasti. The saint says: "'As we come in sight of this place, my burden seems to grow lighter. Longing wells up in my heart, and my mind races on ahead, filled with a new desire [...]' [On] the banks of the Poṉmukali [...] the waves of the river had deposited pearls from the bamboo thickets along its banks, logs of dark eagle wood, gems from the mountains, sandal wood, gold and diamonds [...] As Tiṇṇaṉār [i.e. Kaṇṇappar] entered the clear water of the stream, his mind too cleared and his heart was filled with joy" (*PP* 746–749, trans. McGlashan).[18] Even here—and throughout this entire episode, as Whitney Cox (2005) points out—the focus is on the visual, and ultimately on the prospect of seeing the lord. The sounds and fragrances that are so much a part of the portrayal of place in the *Tēvāram* seem to fade into the background. Where Cuntarar's poem set in Tiruvañcaikkaḷam on the Kerala coast (*Tēvāram* 7.4) emphasises the roaring and thundering of the sea, Cēkkiḻār transfers this soundscape into a different context: as the retinues of Cuntarar and Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ witness the reunion of the two saints, "The great army of the Cēra king exulted, with a roar like the ocean waves. The company of devotees wearing the radiant holy ash exulted, with a roar like the Ganges in flood" (*PP* 4250, trans. McGlashan).

The relationship between landscape and saint in the *Periyapurāṇam* is not one in which the setting serves as a reflection of the feelings of the saint; instead, it is suggested that the landscape expresses its feelings—of love and reverence—for the saints, just as the crowds celebrate the meeting of the saints at Tiruvañcaikkaḷam. As Appar nears Chidambaram, he passes through fields. "In those pools thick with scented lotus petals, buffaloes grazed on the fresh blossoms. Nearby, the sugar cane grew thick and tall as bamboo in the forest, and pearls dropped from the rings around its stems. All nature saw the great one approaching through the fertile fields,

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[18] Interestingly, the only other good example of landscape being tied to the experience of one of the saints in the *Periyapurāṇam* is also situated at Kalahasti, where Campantar has a vision of Kaṇṇappar in the presence of the lord. "That vision aroused in him an intense longing which pervaded his whole being, like a water course that rushes down the hillside and floods all the low-lying land" (*PP* 2921, trans. McGlashan).

and overcome with feeling, shed tears of love [...] The gentle parrots and myna birds saw him coming and greeted him with reverence as the king of lofty Tamil [...]" (*PP* 1423–24, trans. McGlashan). Campantar is similarly honoured as he approaches Chidambaram. Crossing to the Koḷḷiṭam river, "its waters bowed low at his feet and the sea flowed up stream to greet him, bringing conches, pearls and coral in its cool waves [...] As he came, to left and right the birds raised a song of welcome, the flower-covered tanks were wreathed in smiles, and the buds of the red lotus made as if to join their hands in greeting [...] The paddy in the fields saw Campantar coming, and bowed its head in worship [...] [T]he betel nut palms growing in profusion round the fields danced for joy, as though blessed with a thousand eyes to enjoy the scene" (*PP* 2044–2049, trans. McGlashan). Whereas in the *Tēvāram* Śiva was depicted as receiving the worship of nature, here the saints are the objects of this reverence. Cēkkiḻār's loving descriptions of the adornment of the body of the saint, whether with garlands and other "natural" elements (*PP* 940–943) or with rich clothing and jewels (*PP* 3107–3114) also echoes the way in which the form of Śiva is portrayed in the *Tēvāram* poems.

All of this suggests that what in the *Periyapurāṇam* is preeminently "about" is the saints. While this may seem obvious, what it means is that the text is *not* really about pilgrimage or place. It does not create a map of Śiva's sacred places—far less a "network" or a model for action that the Śaiva devotee might emulate. If Cēkkiḻār is indeed concerned to imbed the sites sacred to Śiva in the Tamil country, the "unified geography" that he creates has far more to do with people than it does with places. The *Periyapurāṇam*'s landscapes are overwhelmingly social rather than natural ones, and great emphasis is placed on the encounters and connections among the saints. Cēkkiḻār maps a territory sanctified by the lives and deeds of the Nāyaṉmārs, and imagines into being the concept of a Tamil Śaiva community (Peterson 1983: 340; Cox 2006: 92).

4. Temple images and inscriptions (tenth to sixteenth centuries)

When we turn to a consideration of temple images and inscriptions, we move to completely different genres and modes of representation, where it may seem that the issue of landscape scarcely enters. And, indeed, there are very few examples of landscape description in these sources: in temple iconography, the depiction of Śaiva sacred sites—as in the murals at the Avuṭaiyārkōyil temple mentioned above—does not seem to date from before the seventeenth century; as for the inscriptions, place descriptions are present in the eulogistic prefaces composed in Tamil (*meykkīrtti*s), but these are limited to the stereotyped landscape epithets in the *puṟam* mode that we have earlier examined.[19] Yet space and place are absolutely

[19] There is a single exception to this generalisation that I have found, in the poetic preamble to an inscription of the early eleventh century from Kiḻūr (*SII* VII, no. 863), where the river Peṇṇai is

central to the temple milieu in terms not only of physical presence—the siting, establishment, laying out, and building of a temple—but also with respect to the records engraved on temple walls that register the gifts made to the temple deity and the legal and administrative agreements that concern the locality. The inscriptions provide detailed geographic information about the situation of the temple—defining the precise place where the deity dwells—as well as providing geographic coordinates for the hometown of the donor, if he or she is from elsewhere. These locations are usually expressed in terms of a series of nesting and increasingly larger geographic units: at the first level, we typically have quite a small place, a neighbourhood; this is then described as a part of a village or town; the village is located within a "township" (*kuṟṟam*); which is in turn situated within a *nāṭu* (something rather smaller than a taluk); and at last—although not invariably—located within a *vaḷanāṭu* or other large-scale administrative or territorial unit. The sense of localisation is here very strong, and—taken together—the thousands of temples, temple images and temple inscriptions provide us with an on-the-ground manifestation of the medieval Śaiva sacred landscape. We shall begin by considering how the images' and inscriptions' contents and character allow us to see precisely how the *Tēvāram* poems and their authors figured in this landscape.

Inscriptional references to the singing of hymns—*tiruppatiyam*—in Śaiva temples are quite numerous, but it is very rare to find any specification of the hymn's title or its author. The works most commonly referred to are not the compositions of the *Tēvāram* poets, but are the work of another poet-saint, Māṇikkavācakar. Probably a contemporary of Cuntarar, Māṇikkavācakar is not counted as one of the sixty-three Nāyaṉmārs nor is his story told in the *Periyapurāṇam*. Nonetheless, as both a saint and a poet, he is well known from at least the eleventh century, when the first bronze images of him appear, and when we find a record that his composition *Tiruvempāvai* was performed in the temple at Tiruvoṟṟiyūr (*ARE* 1912, no. 128). *Tiruvempāvai* is mentioned in seven inscriptions dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries; this is the most frequently mentioned hymn of the Tamil Śaiva devotional corpus. As for the *Tēvāram* hymns, there are a few eleventh-century inscriptions from Tiruvoṟṟiyūr and Chidambaram indicating that Cuntarar's *Tiruttoṇṭattokai* was performed (*ARE* 1912, no. 137 and *SII* V, no. 1358, at Tiruvoṟṟiyūr, and *SII* IV, no. 223 at Chidambaram). A single reference to the hymns of Appar appears in a thirteenth-century inscription from Kuṟukkai in Tanjore district, which records arrangements for the recitation of *Tiruttāṇṭakam* (*ARE* 1917, no. 219; although the poems that Appar sang on this place—4.49 and 4.50—do not appear in *Tēvāram* 6, which is *Tiruttāṇṭakam*). And the mention in an eleventh-

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described at some length, using a vocabulary that is quite similar to that found in the *Tēvāram*—the river rushes down from mountain slopes bearing camphor wood from the forests, flows into irrigation channels, and passes by mansions, gateways, and city walls surmounted by bright banners.

century inscription at Chidambaram of the recitation of *Kumārastotra* (*SII* IV, no. 225) may possibly refer to Campantar's hymns.

It is worth noting that the specific hymns mentioned most frequently—*Tiruvempāvai* and *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*—are not focussed on the praise of a particular place. Then there is the surprising fact that most of the Śaiva temples where arrangements for hymn-singing were made, according to the inscriptions, were *not* a part of the sacred landscape that the hymns themselves mapped out. I have collected all the inscriptions I could find, dating from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, referring to the singing (or chanting) of *tiruppatiyam*: of the 93 Śaiva temples with inscriptions referring to hymn-singing, only 17—less than one-fifth—are in one of the 276 sacred places sung by the *Tēvāram* poets. On the other hand several of the temples which enjoy the abundant praise of the *Tēvāram* trio (as attested by some of the poems translated above) are devoid of inscriptional references to hymn-singing: Tiruvatikai (Atikai) and Tiruvaiyāṟu (both of which have 18 *Tēvāram* decades dedicated to them), Ekāmranātha temple of Kāñcipuram (12 decades), and the famous Śaiva temples of Tiruvāṉaikkā and Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (7 and 5 respectively); at these temples there are *no* medieval inscriptions arranging for the singing of Tamil hymns although all of these temples are rich in inscriptions detailing the provision of other types of services in this period.

In medieval temple inscriptions, the *Tēvāram* poet-saints are scarcely acknowledged as poets; their significance is instead as saints. Not only are they mentioned by name as the objects of worship, but the presence of numerous stone and bronze images of the *Tēvāram* saints bears witness to such worship. Nor are the *Tēvāram* poet-saints the only objects of devotion among the Nāyaṉmārs. The Śaiva saints who are earliest represented and worshipped are in fact saints who did not achieve fame as poets: notably the hunter Kaṇṇappar—but most especially Caṇṭēcura (Caṇḍeśvara).[20] Perhaps the earliest inscriptional reference to the *Tēvāram* poet-saints is a record from the early eleventh century at the Tanjore temple, where images of Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar (together with Cuntarar's wife Paravai, King Rājarāja and his queen, and Śiva as Candraśekhara) are said to have been set up (*SII* II, no. 38; A.D. 1014). This is an atypical case, since the three *Tēvāram* saints are only infrequently represented—in medieval images or inscriptions—as a group.[21]

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[20] On Caṇṭēcura, see Goodall (2009). We find stone relief sculptures of this saint as early as the eighth century at the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcipuram. Beginning in the ninth and tenth centuries, Caṇṭēcura is found in a shrine of his own, positioned northeast of the central shrine dedicated to Śiva. It is also in this period that inscriptions start to refer to his functioning as a sort of "temple manager", acting on behalf of Lord Śiva in business matters, and that we have bronze images of the saint.

[21] The only other inscriptional reference to the three together as a group is around the same period, in the early eleventh century, from Tirumaḻavāṭi, where a woman sponsors the setting up of their images (*ARE* 1920, no. 37).

Among images, there is a depiction of the three on the gopura at the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple, which may date to the eleventh century (Srinivasan 1956–57: 58). From later times, perhaps the thirteenth century, a relief sculpture on the south side of Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam (outside of Madurai) portrays the three (see fig. 1 and Nagaswamy 1989: 232; V. Gillet in this volume, p. 180). One of the earliest representations of the Śaiva poet-saints features two of them together; this is a stone relief sculpture on the southern wall of the temple of Karuṭṭattāṅkuṭi on the outskirts of Tanjore that has been dated to the mid-tenth century, depicting Campantar with his cymbals and Appar carrying his hoe (Srinivasan 1956–57: 56–58).

As an individual saint, Campantar is portrayed in bronze sculptures, a few of which begin to appear in the eleventh century but which become especially numerous in the thirteenth century—indicating the importance of this saint in the context of festival processions. Among the *Tēvāram* poet-saints, Campantar receives the most frequent mention in the inscriptional record (at 27 places, half of which are in Cōḻanāṭu). We find an eleventh-century inscription relating to Campantar's worship indicating that there was a shrine for him at Cīkāḻi (*ARE* 1918, no. 376); this and subsequent inscriptional references at Cīkāḻi to worship offered to him and to the singing of hymns in his shrine, seem fitting, both from the point of view of

Fig. 1: Relief sculpture of Campantar, Appar, and Cuntarar at Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, 13th century (?) (photograph by Leslie C. Orr).

the large number of hymns Campantar has sung on this place and the fact that this is his birthplace. Similarly, we are not surprised to find inscriptions of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries at nearby Āccāḷpuram (*ARE* 1918, no. 527 and 1918, no. 531) that record arrangements for offerings to Campantar and his consort, since—although he has written only one hymn on this place—the story of his life found in the *Periyapurāṇam* concludes at Āccāḷpuram, where, on his wedding day, he, together with his bride and the entire wedding party, attain final salvation.

Appar, like Campantar, begins to receive epigraphical notice relatively early—in inscriptions of the eleventh century (e.g. *SII* II, no. 38 and II, no. 41; *ARE* 1928, no. 68), and although the number of inscriptions in subsequent centuries is not as great as those referring to Campantar's worship, the inscriptions are more widely distributed geographically. For example, a thirteenth-century inscription from Pirāṉmalai in Ramnad district (*ARE* 1924, no. 216) refers to shrines and services in honour of Appar, who is even today given special recognition at this site: the thirteenth-century shrine no longer remains, but an image of Appar appears as a niche figure on the south wall of the temple (fig. 2). What is somewhat strange, however, is that Pirāṉmalai (called Tirukkoṭuṅkuṉṟam in *Tēvāram*) was sung not by Appar, but by Campantar. The medieval inscriptions indicate that Appar is, in fact, quite a bit more popular as an object of worship in this region—Pāṇḍyanāṭu, in the far south of Tamilnadu—than one would expect, given his relative lack of focus on sites in this area in his poems, and the very tenuous connections between Appar and this region in the account of the *Periyapurāṇam*.[22] Appar is also extremely well-represented in terms of the numbers of bronze processional images that depict him. Some of these appear to be quite early: for example, an image from Tirupukaḻūr—the place where Appar died, according to the *Periyapurāṇam*—which may date from the tenth century, if we are to accept Nagaswamy's dating (1989: 230–31).[23] In any case, eleventh-century bronze images of Appar are certainly in evidence, including that unearthed at Tiruveṇkāṭu, one of the cache of thirty-five extraordinary images that were buried (probably in the thirteenth century) and have been recovered in the course of the last seventy-five years; this group of bronzes, which seem to have been produced in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, includes also Campantar, Cuntarar and Paravai, Kaṇṇappar, and Caṇṭēcura (Thomas 1986).

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[22] Appar dedicates hymns to only four places in Pāṇḍyanāṭu—two at Madurai, one at Pūvaṇam to the southeast of Madurai and one at Tiruppattūr to the north of Madurai—and he is referred to in inscriptions at three places, all in Ramnad district (Caturvedimaṅkalam, Pirāṉmalai, and Tiruppattūr); there is an overlap in only one case. Campantar, who is by far the most generous of the saints in his dedication of hymns to sites in Pāṇḍyanāṭu (he sings 24 hymns on 13 different places in Pāṇḍyanāṭu), is mentioned in inscriptions at numerous places in this region, including at five temples in Ramnad district (Caturvedimaṅkalam, Pirāṉmalai, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Tirumalai, and Tiruppattūr).

[23] There is also an inscription referring to Appar at Tirupukaḻūr (*ARE* 1928, no. 681).

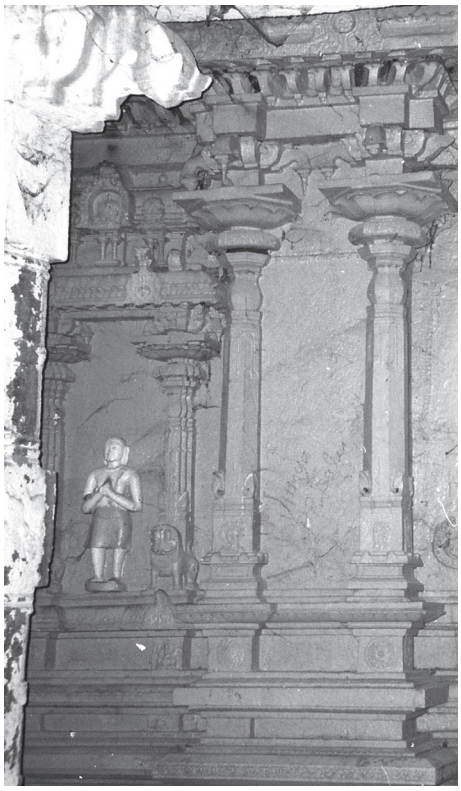

Fig. 2: Relief sculpture of Appar on the wall of the temple at Pirāṉmalai (photograph by Leslie C. Orr).

For Cuntarar, we find a late tenth-century inscription (from Kuhūr in Tanjore district; *ARE* 1917, no. 299) that records arrangements for a festival in his shrine, and a number of later inscriptions refer to the setting up of his image—in several cases in the company of his consort Paravai—and the offering of worship to him. These include two eleventh-century inscriptions (*ARE* 1939–40, nos. 225 and 227) from Tirunamanallūr, Cuntarar's hometown, recording the gift of an image of Cuntarar and provisions for offerings to it, and two thirteenth-century inscriptions from Avaṉāci (*ARE* 1909, nos. 181 and 187), one of the places to which Cuntarar journeyed and where he performed a miracle, according to the *Periyapurāṇam*.[24] The

[24] Another inscription referring to the worship of Cuntarar in the region of Avaṉāci—in Koṅkunāṭu, the northwest part of Tamilnadu—comes from Perūr and dates from the twelfth century (*ARE* 1958–59, no. 437). There is also a twelfth-century image of Cuntarar from Koṭumuṭi in the same region (Srinivasan 1963: 310).

number of inscriptions that refer to such worship of Cuntarar is, however, quite a bit smaller than in the case of the other two members of the *Tēvāram* trio. And there are significantly fewer bronze images of Cuntarar than those of his fellow saints; the Tiruveṇkāṭu image is perhaps the earliest extant image and one of the few early medieval examples of Cuntarar that we have.

I have already remarked that with respect to hymn-singing in medieval Śaiva temples, there is a lack of fit between a map of inscriptional references to this liturgical activity and *Tēvāram*'s "map" of the 276 *pāṭal peṟṟa talam*. When it comes to evidence for the worship of the *Tēvāram* poet-saints, we have seen that there are some correspondances between the recognition of these saints in the temples, on the one hand, and their hymns and hagiography, on the other. But there are also some gaps and lacks—correspondances that we expect but fail to find—a few of which have already been mentioned, and a few more that should be noted. At Tiruvārūr, there is only one inscription, from the twelfth century (*SII* VII, no. 485), that refers to the worship of the *Tēvāram* saints—rather surprising, considering the number of poems dedicated to this place (and its centrality in the *Periyapurāṇam*), but even more surprising is that this single inscription mentions only Appar, Cuntarar, and Paravai—and not Campantar. At Tiruvalañculi (also in Tanjore district), a twelfth-century inscription (*SII* VIII, no. 228) records arrangements for the worship of Appar, Māṇikkavācakar, and Kaṇṇappar; again, Campantar is missing although he composed three hymns on this place, more than any other of the poets. On the other hand, why is Campantar the only one of the saints mentioned in inscriptions from Tiruviṭaimarutūr (late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries; *SII* XXIII, nos. 289 and 309) when all three of the *Tēvāram* poets—and Māṇikkavācakar—sing this place? Also: why is Campantar honoured at Tiruvāymūr, according to an inscription of the thirteenth century (*ARE* 1963, no. 581)? He had indeed written one hymn on this place, but the two that Appar had written are unusually full of descriptions and evocations of this place—yet Campantar is the focus of worship. And Appar is also ignored in the inscriptions of Chidambaram, to which he dedicated many more hymns than Campantar and Cuntarar; here only Campantar is mentioned (*ARE* 1961–62, no. 174 and 1962–63, no. 559).

5. Concluding reflections

In setting up their images, and arranging for their worship, medieval temples made a place for the saints, brought them "home", with little regard for the maps that might be derived from the corpus of *Tēvāram* hymns, or from Cēkkiḻār's hagiography. Whether because of a special attachment that a devotee had to one of these saints, or because of a miracle or other deed—unknown to Cēkkiḻār—that circulated locally and linked the saint to the site, or because of particular festival traditions that had come to be established in the temple; there are many possible reasons for the honouring of the saints that had nothing to do with their own literary output or for their depiction in literature. The act of emplacement of the saints within the temple,

making them one's own, is of course similar to what we see in the case of the fixing of Śiva in the medieval temple milieu. In the inscriptions, this god is invariably referred to not as Śiva—but as the Lord (usually the term *uṭaiyār* is used) of such-and-such a place. And the place is described at length, in ever-widening territorial units—centered on the site of the temple (typically the medieval inscription, following the mention of the regnal year of the king as a means of dating, *begins* with the description of the place where the Lord dwells). This way of relating Śiva to place is almost precisely the opposite of what we have seen in the *Tēvāram*. In the poems, the emphasis is on the transcendent Śiva, who incorporates the lord of this local shrine (or of many local shrines) just as he does the various forms and mythic deeds of the god. As Schmid has observed (in this volume), the giving of a *Tēvāram* hymn to a temple is a way of abstracting the deity from his locality. In the inscriptions, on the other hand, Śiva's identity *as* Śiva goes virtually unremarked—the important thing is that he is *this* particular place's Lord.[25]

The singularity and centrality of a specific place in the inscriptional perspective is expressed also by the depiction of the site as a magnet, drawing in donors and devotees for services within the interior spaces of the temple (Orr 2004). Here we also find pilgrims being attracted to the place, and provided for; and it is significant that much of the vocabulary used to refer to these visitors—*tēcāntiri* and *paratēci* (both meaning "from another place") and *apūrvi* ("not [seen] before")—emphasises their foreignness in spatial terms.[26] Where in the *Periyapurāṇam*, our attention was focussed on the unique and holy character of the saints, wherever they might wander, here in the inscriptions what is unique and holy is the particular place, while the pilgrims are anonymous others. With reference to pilgrimage—and in keeping with the inscriptional (and, we may also say, architectural) definition of the temple as a unique central place—it is important to note that there is not the slightest indication in the medieval inscriptions that there is a "network" of Śaiva sacred sites—that individual temples are "connected places" (Feldhaus 2003)—or that they participate in some sort of shared religio-political imperium (cf. Stein 1977; see Orr 2007).[27]

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[25] To put it another way, in the inscriptions, the god is identified as "Place-lord" while in the *Tēvāram*, he is "Lord (who is clearly Śiva) [who dwells in a] place".

[26] The word *iyāttirai* (from Sanskrit *yātra*), although not uncommon in Tamil literature, is scarcely found at all in the medieval inscriptions. In its earliest epigraphical usage (e.g. in the ninth-century *SII* XIV, no. 26) it refers to a military campaign, and not a pilgrimage.

[27] Nor does the map of temples where the saints were honoured and where their hymns were sung correspond to the trading networks and sites of urban settlement that the medieval inscriptions provide information about (Hall 1980; Heitzman 1987). It seems that Kāñcipuram is almost the only important economic centre where we also find a confluence of devotional literary attention (in the *Tēvāram* and the *Periyapurāṇam*) and temple activity associated with the *Tēvāram* saints and their hymns.

A high degree of localisation is expressed in the inscriptions and is established through the emplacement of saints and gods in the medieval temple setting. This means that—even though they do not describe any landscapes nor provide a comprehensive map of any sort—these sources are the most substantively geographical of all the materials we have examined. 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.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARE *Annual Reports on Epigraphy*
EI *Epigraphia Indica*
PP *Periyapurāṇam*
SII *South Indian Inscriptions*

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