

# Vaiyapuripillai's Dating of Cilappatikāram<sup>1</sup>

(A note on some methodological difficulties and consequent historical incongruities)

by

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The date of Cilappatikāram (Cil), the earliest available narrative poem in Tamil, is yet a much disputed one.<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking there are four important views—(a) that it belongs to 2nd c.A.D. (Dikshithar, Rasamanickam, Subrahmanian) (b) that it belongs to mid 9th c.A.D. (Vaiyapuri Pillai) (c) that it was 'composed' immediately after the era of the Caṅkam anthologies (Meenakshisundaram, Varadarasan), and (d) that it should have been written somewhere around late 5th c.A.D. or early 6th c.A.D. (Srinivas Iyengar, Nilakanta Sastri, Chelvanayakam).

S. Vaiyapuri Pillai's (1891-1956) name looms large in the world of Tamil Studies. As editor and textual critic of several literary and grammatical works and author of many articles and two books on the history of Tamil language and literature, he brought order into the chaotic area of the chronology of Tamil literary and grammatical works. The validity of his contributions has often been challenged but their importance has never been in doubt.

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1. The sad news of the death of Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri was announced (16.6.1975) at the time I was completing this paper. I dedicate this as a humble tribute to the memory of the great scholar, who by his monumental writings brought S. India effectively into all-Indian historical perspective.

2. The following works and writings constitute the more important contributions on Cil.

(1) Kanakasabhai Pillai, V. *The Tamils 1800 years ago* - Madras (IInd Ed.) 1956. (2) Subramanya Iyer, K. V. *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*. Madras, 1917. (3) Swamikkannu Pillai, L. D. *Indian Ephemeris* Vol. I, p. I App. III, Madras - 1922. (4) Srinivas Iyengar P. T. *History of the Tamils* - Madras, 1929 (5) Krishnaswamy Aiyangar S. *Manimekhi in its Historical Setting*. Madras 1928. (6) Raghava Iyengar M. *Ceran Cenkuttuvan* (7) Dikshithar V. R. R. *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*. Madras, 1936. (8) Nilakanta Sastri K. A. (a) *Colas*, Madras (IInd Ed.) 1956. (b) *Dates of Cil, and Mani* U.C.R. Vol. IV. No. 1 1949. (c) *A History of South India*. Madras 1966. (9) Chelvanayagam, V. *Date of Cil. and Mani*. University of Ceylon Review (U.C.R.) Vol. III No. Colombo 1948. (10) Rasamanickam, M. *Tamil Moli Ilakkiya Varalaru* Madras. 1963. (11) Meenakshisundaram, T.P. (a) *History of the Tamil Language*. Poona 1965 (b) *History of Tamil Literature* - Annamalai - 1965 (12) Varadarasan M. *Ilanko Atikal*. Madras (IInd ed.) 1963 (13) Subrahmanian N. (a) *Sangam Polity* - London - 1966 (b) *Pre-Pallavan Index* Madras 1966. (14) Vaiyapuri Pillai S. (a) *Ilakkiya manimalai* Madras 1954 (b) *History of Tamil Language and Literature* - Madras 1956. (c) *Karya Kalam* Madras 1957. (15) Raja Rao, M. *The Chronology of the events in Cil*. The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society - Madras 1956.

## VAIYAPURIPILLAIS' DATING OF CILAPPATIKĀRAM

As he states in *Kāvya Kalam*<sup>3</sup>, he got interested in the question of the date of Cil. when he was Head of the Tamil Research Division of the University of Madras (1936-1946). His first writings on the subject were rather sketchy. It was in the introduction he wrote to R. K. Canmukam Cetty's edition of the *Pukarkkāṇṭam* of Cil. that he first dealt with it in a fairly concise manner.<sup>4</sup> The arguments were further developed and elaborated in the inaugural lecture he delivered at the University of Travancore (Jan. 1949). This lecture edited by V. himself, but published posthumously, was dealing with the History of the Epic in Tamil (*Kāvya-kālam*). In *History of the Tamil Language and Literature* (HTLL) another posthumous publication, we find a more logical and systematic presentation of his views. V., in spite of the difference of opinion he had with Nilakanta Sastri ((Sastri) on this issue, seems to have had the benefits of discussion with him<sup>5</sup>.

It would be useful to be briefed, at this juncture, of Sastri's view of V's datings in general. "We do not have any literary or grammatical text (in Tamil) which does not reveal some relationship with Sanskrit. I have often wondered whether (V). Pillai had credited Skt. with a better share than necessary in the development of Tamil. This must be taken as a slightly exaggerated effort on his part to refute the views of those who claimed that there was no trace of Sanskrit influence at all".<sup>6</sup> V. had insisted on a late date for all the Tamil literary works which, by tradition, were considered ancient.<sup>7</sup> Yet, one has to acknowledge the fact that V. was the first Tamil scholar who consciously employed the historical method to determine the dates of the ancient Tamil works.

In the case of Cil. he adopts the following method to arrive at the date he considers historically possible.

At first he sets out to prove conclusively that Cil. belongs to a period much later to the one the Caṅkam anthologies belong. Having done that, he proceeds to fix the *terminus ad quo* and *terminus ad quem* by reference to those works, both Sanskrit and Tamil, which Ilāṅkō, the author of Cil. had "utilised" in his composition of Cil. That leads on to the probable date of the writing of the epic. At that point where he indicates the 'probable' date, he analyses the social and the religious conditions referred to in Cil. to show how those differ vastly from the conditions that would have existed in 2nd. c.A.D. the date generally ascribed to Cil. because of Gajabahu syn-

3. p. 101.

4. This was later published as one of the essays in *Ilakkiya Maṇi Mālai*, pp. 125-54.

5. Sastri, K. A. N. U.C.R. Vol. IV - No. I 1949.

6. q. v. Rama Sundaram - *Vaiyapuri Pillaiyin Aivu Murai Araacci* Vol. I No. 4. July 1970.

7. This wrangling over dates was (is) intimately connected with the rise of Tamilian nationalism and its repudiation of the Brahminic influences on Tamil culture. See Sivathamby K. *The Politics of a Literary Style*. Paper presented to South Asia Seminar. Jaffna Campus of University of Sri Lanka (3.5.1975).

chronism. He then makes pointed references to (a) the usages *Tonṭi* and *Paṅkaḷar* found in *Cil.* (b) the dances mentioned in *Cil.* and (c) the linguistic variations between *Cil.* and the *Caṅkam* classics.

This methodology in so far it argues for a post -2nd century date is basically correct and contrasts sharply with the highly emotive arguments of certain other scholars.<sup>8</sup>

V. prefaced his arguments for a late date for *Cil.* with the observation that "Kaṅṅaki and Kōvalaṅ are not historic figures' and that *Cil.* is fiction<sup>9</sup>. He cites in support Naccinārkkiniyar's comment on *Tolkāppiyam* Ceyyluliyal 237th *cuttiram*, wherein *Cil.* is mentioned as an example for the literary genre called *Tonmai* (that of Antiquity). Both V. and Sastri have traced the evolution of the Kaṅṅaki saga from those references in *Caṅkam* poems which speak of a chaste wife who had plucked and thrown away one of her breasts in a state of unbearable agony caused by the parting of her husband, to the deification of Kaṅṅaki as *Pattini* in *Cil.*<sup>10</sup>.

One should not fail to observe that those who vehemently oppose V's dating of *Cil.* have not dealt with this problem in any direct manner.

It is true *Cil.* abounds with magic and the supernatural. But that should not entitle us to take *Cil.* as an 'invented' story which never took place. A literary work which has traceable connections with such persisting cult as the *Pattini* worship and with the origins of the *Nattukkottai Chettis*<sup>11</sup> cannot be dismissed as mere fiction.

*Cil.* properly speaking, should be viewed as a mythical narrative. While using a literary work of that type as an historical source, one should be conscious of the sociological basis of literature. However, "fantastic" the content may be, a literary work is also representation of a social fact. Unlike history proper, literature has to have an appeal which would facilitate its acceptability to contemporary society in terms of social beliefs. V. himself does not hesitate to refer to the social conditions depicted in *Cil.* and to argue how they differ from the ethos that emerges from the *Caṅkam* classics. *Caṅkam* poetry too had mythical stories describing the exploits of kings like *Tūṅkeyil eṅinta* *Toṭitōtceṅpiyan*, *Neṅiyōn* and even *Karikālan*. Recent studies of myths and

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8. One could easily detect an inherent reluctance on the part of Meenakshisundaran to accept a late date, see his *H.T. Lang* p. 118 and contrast it with what he says in *H.T. Lit* pp. 22, 42. Also see *Sangam Politiy.* p. 22 for the intolerant manner Subramanian treats V's arguments for a late date.

9. HTLL p. 146., *Ilakkiya Mani* pp. 133-5, *Kavya Kālam*-pp. 102. 6.

10. Sastri UCR Vol. IV - No. 1 Jan. 1949.

11. Raghunathan T. M. C. *Naktarahar Varalum Cilappatikarak - Kataiyum.* Aaraachi Vol. 5 - No. 1. Tinnevely - (S. India) 1969.

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oral poetry warn us off from taking the view that such works have nothing to do with social reality and that they are all fiction.

The arguments put forward by V. to prove that Cil is not a work of the Caṅkam era are as follows.

1. Iḷaṅkō is not a Caṅkam poet. i.e. we do not have any poet (represented in the anthologies) with this name.
2. Pattinī worship is not mentioned in the whole of Caṅkam literature.
3. Kaṇṇāṭaka and Bengal which were not known to the Tamils of the Caṅkam Age are mentioned in Cil (xxv - 156 - 7)<sup>12</sup>
4. References to Srī Rangam and Vēṅkaṭam as places of religious interest (xi-35 - 51) indicate that the work is post-Caṅkam.
5. Religion as depicted in Cil. differs very much from what is depicted in the Caṅkam classics.
6. Cil. uses the term 'Kāvēri' for the river Kāviri; latter is the earlier usage.
7. The social life and habits as portrayed in Cil. point to a late date.
8. Dances referred to in Cil. (those of the Kūttaccākkaiyar and the one related to talaikkōl) differ vastly from the simple dancing of the Kūttars and viralis of the Caṅkam age.
9. Many linguistic usages found in Cil. differ from those found in the Caṅkam classics. (V. is of the opinion that the usages found in Cil. became current in the language about the eighth century and later.)

It is significant that V. has not made any reference in his writings on Cil. and its date to the textual problem raised by Srinivas Iyengar, who felt that the entire Vaṅcikkāṅṭam (the last Kāṅṭam of the epic) was a later day addition.<sup>13</sup> It sounds rather strange on the part of V. who adduces the point relating to Sri Rāngam and Vēṅkaṭam not to have discussed this at all. It was Srinivas Iyengar who first raised the problem relating to Sri Rangam and Vēṅkaṭam. V seems to have assumed, perhaps quite correctly, that the work in its entirety should include Vaṅcikkāṅṭam too. But this problem relating to the textual character of the work is one which a textual editor of the calibre of V. could hardly miss, even to dismiss it as unfounded.

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12. Roman figures refer to the number of the Canto and the arabic numerals to the lines of the verse.

13. Srinivas Iyengar P. T. op. cit. pp. 564 ff.

As for the arguments mentioned above, no scholar, who considers Cil. as a post-Cankam work, ever disputed them, except No. 3, which we shall discuss later. The linguistic variations in Cil. according to most of the scholars, could be taken only as evidence of a post-Cankam date, but V. maintains that those indicate an 8th or 9th c. usage. Meenakshisundaram assigns Cil. to a post-Cankam date because of point No. 8.

Except those who continue to maintain a 2nd c. A.D. date — and they are a few now — majority of scholars accept the position that Cil is a post-Cankam work. Cankam period is now taken to be from about 100 B.C. to about 250 A.D.<sup>14</sup>

But real difficulty arises when V. uses some of the very same arguments (Nos. 3. 4. 5. 7, 8 & 9) to decide in favour of the 9th c. date.

Before we go into a closer examination of the arguments for a 9th c date, we should consider another of his basic premise; “*Maṇimēkhalai* (Maṇi) is the earlier of the two kāvyas. Aṭiyārkkunallār specifically mentions this fact at the end of his uraippāyiram..... There is no doubt that Ilanko (the author of Cil) had the text of Maṇi in his mind while composing his great work.<sup>15</sup>

Tradition has it that Cil. and Maṇi are twin epics written almost at the same time or within a very short interval. Srinivas Iyenger was one of the first to state that Cil is earlier to Maṇi. Chelvanayakam contended, “Cil. was at least a hundred years older than Maṇi”. Sastri, in his reply to Chelvanayakam argued for the contemporaneity of the two epics. and but did not refer to the, linguistic variations.<sup>16</sup>

In *KāvyaKālam*, V. has gone into this problem in greater depth.<sup>17</sup> There he has documented at length all the nouns which occur with the same adjectives in both the epics, the identical descriptions and the identical similies and metaphors that occur in both the epics. It was his aim to indicate the closeness of each other in time. Having done that (and having incidentally disposed of some of the unbelievable claims in the prologue) he goes on to cite Aṭiyārkkunallār's comment to show that Cil. was a later work. He concludes by saying that there exists no evidence which could contradict this position.

V. is of the opinion that both Cil. and Maṇi must have arisen after 800 A.D. and that Maṇi must have preceded by Cil by a short time.

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14. Sastri *A History of South India* IIIrd Edn. Madras - 1966 - p. 117.

15. HTLL p. 152.

16. UCR Vol. V No. 1 1949.

17. pp. 152 - 8.

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A close examination of the identical poetic forms brings to mind the technique of oral verse making seen in the heroic epics.<sup>18</sup> The identity of many lines in both epics could be explained if they are taken as post-*Caṅkam* works.

The titles of the chapters of *Cil* and *Maṇi* indicate that they were conceived as books to be sung<sup>19</sup> or, at least, they were modelled on oral epics. This would mean that they would logically come at the end of the heroic *Caṅkam* age and not at the end of the imperial Pallava period.

Further, this formulaic composition being essentially a feature of oral epics, goes out of existence when literature comes to be written. If we accept V's date, we would have to answer the question, why, of all the works of the ninth century, only these two should reveal this feature.<sup>20</sup>

It would be interesting at this stage to familiarise ourselves with the social character of the heroic and the post heroic literatures.

“Stated briefly heroic literature may be said to represent the warrior or the princely class in general-while non-heroic literature represented the seer and the religious interest. No other class or interest seems to be represented, at least in ancient literatures, before post heroic times — indeed not before the phase of transition from barbarism to civilisation. In this latter phase (post-heroic phase) the warrior and the seer are still prominent; but former is now a soldier of fortune, who serves under a temporary contract like Archilochus or Egill Skallagrimson. *Beside him there appear new classes—the merchant especially merchant ship owner, the independent land owner and the city official.*<sup>21</sup>

If *Caṅkam* poetry is heroic poetry, then *Kōvalan*, who is important both to *Cil*, and *Maṇi*, is a logical descendant of the heroic Kings like *Kārikalān*. *Kovalan* could not have come, as the above quotation shows, after imperial dynasties. The close similarity of *Cil*, and *Maṇi* in such vital matters as poetic composition etc., should therefore, be taken as evidence of their post-heroic character too.

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18. Kailasapathy K. *Tamil Heroic Poetry* - Oxford 1968 pp. 135-186.

19. Meenakshi Sundaran T. P. *Kutimakkal Kutimakkal* Madras 1961. pp. 29-46.

20. It will be a worthwhile exercise to find out the formulaic similarities in the *Bhakthi* Literature of the Pallava period.

21. Chadwick, H. M. & N. K. *The Growth of Literature* Vol. III Cambridge 1939, p. 29 (emphasis added)

As for the linguistic variations between the two works the consensus is to take Cil as pre-Mani. Chelvanayakam raised this point. Kandasamy<sup>22</sup> reiterated it, unfortunately with no mention whatsoever to the earlier writing of Chelvanayakam.

V. arrives at a 9th C. date for Cil. on five important grounds; those are.

1. the late dates of those works which the author of Cil. had utilised in his work.
2. the reference to Bengalese (Pañkalar)
3. the reference to Tonṭi
4. Cil is posterior to Peruñkatai, a work of 750 A.D.
5. the reference to Cākkaikkūttu.

V. categorises the works which, according to him, Ilanko would have utilized, under two heads — (a) Sanskrit works and (b) Tamil works. The major Skt. works are Bharata's *Nāṭya Sastra* for which he accepts Keith's date of 300 A.D. and Pañcatantra for which he again takes Keith's date — 500 A.D. There are other works like *Mayamata* and *Ratnapariksha*, which he accepts as later works 'the dates of which are not definitely ascertained'<sup>23</sup>. Keith's dating of *Nāṭyasāstra* is not accepted now and the more acceptable view is to ascribe it to 200 A.D.<sup>24</sup> But this does not make any substantial difference because Cañkam period is taken to end by circa 250-300 A.D.

The problem is really about *Pañcatantro*. Cil. (xv: 54-74) refers to the story of a Brahmin lady and a mongoose. V. holds that, since the Skt. *Pañcatontra* belongs to a post-500 A.D. date, Cil. which has this story in it must belong to a later date. Almost all who have challenged V's dating of Cil, have referred to the fact that *Pañcatantra* is a collection of fables and that to insist that Ilankō had used it only after it was codified in Sanskrit would be, to say the least, to be unmindful of the Indian conditions. There is reason in what they say. Most of the stories found in *Pañcatantra* are found in the Buddhist Jataka stories too. What then is the chronological position of the Jataka stories? Should they also be post-500 A.D.? The origin and diffusion of a folk tale cannot be determined by such methods. It is also important to clear the position whether a story just because it is first codified or mentioned in Skt. the cultural lingua franca of India, is indisputably North Indian in origin.

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22. Kandaswamy S. N. *Manimekalyin Kalam*. Madras 1961.

23. HTLL p. 150.

24. Manmohan Ghosh - *Contribution to the History of Hindu Drama* - Calcutta - 1958.

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The foregoing discussion indicates that the date of the Skt. *Pañcatantra* cannot be taken as a decisive factor in assigning the dates of other literary works.

More disputable is the type of literatures V. depends upon to conclude that Cil. belongs to a date after 825 A.D.

The fact that *Kural* is prior to Cil has never been in doubt. But a decision to hold that Cil. is late because it too has ideas and sentiments expressed in certain gnomic didactic works composed very much later cannot be taken as valid methodology. The works referred to are *Nānmaṇikaṭikai*, *Palamoli*, *Ācarakkōvai*, and *Aranericcāram*. These are not definitive socio-ethical treatises like *Kural*: they are just metrically arranged collections of wise sayings and proverbs dealing with human conduct and behaviour. One can never take the position that the ideas enshrined in the verses were expounded for the first time in those verses. Those sayings are necessarily drawn from established mores and lore. A similarity of expression either in content or in form cannot and, in fact, should not, be taken as evidence for or against.

We should also note in passing that the evolution of gnomic literature in Tamil has not been studied in detail. The general tendency is to emphasise the didactic aspect *per se* without relating it to the social conditions of the age; no reference is made to the social fabric but ample reference is made to the religious origin of those principles.

One work which V. alleges Ilanko had utilised is a literary collection of proverbs - *Palamoli*.

Apparently more weighty is the argument about the use of the word "Paṅkalar" (Cil xxv: 156-9). From Dikshithar down to Sastri almost everybody has taken this word as referring to the Bengalese. V. elaborated on it and, found that the form 'Paṅkalar, was used to refer to the Bengalese in the 7th, and 8th, centuries.

Mylai Ceeni Venkatasamy has shown through inscriptional evidence that the Paṅkala Natu referred to in Cil. is the territory lying to the north of Aruvānātu, the northern boundary of Tamiland<sup>25</sup>. Venkatasamy shows that this Paṅkalanātu lay to the north of Tondaimandalam, the ancient name for which was Aruvānātu.

The others referred to in those lines include Koṅkaṇar (those from the, Konkan region) Kalinṅkar (those from Kalinga) Karunāṭar (those from

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25. Mylac Ceeni Venkatasamy - *Cilappatikaramum Pankalarum* - Kalaikkattir Coimbatore August 1959.



Karnataka), Kaṅkar (those from the Ganga domains.) Venkatacamy's identification of Paṅkalar as those from Paṅkala nāṭu indicates a geographical contiguity of the areas. It is interesting to note that Caminata Iyer had indicated that there was a variant reading "Vankalar" for Pankalar.<sup>26</sup> But V. has not taken that reading. Students of early Tamil history are indebted to Venkatacamy for having corrected an error of assumption which went undetected for quite some time.

The other country to which V. refers to is Toṅṭi. This what V. says: "Toṅṭi is said to be a port in the east and the kings of the Cōḷa branch of this place are said to have brought to Kūṭal, the Pandya capital, large quantities of agil, silk, sandalwood, spices like musk and camphor as tribntes in flotilla wafted ashore by the wind blowing from the east. This could not be the Toṅṭi of the Ceras on the west coast nor could it be the Toṅṭi of the Pandyas in the east coast, near Ramnad. If we may rely upon the statement of the poet as explained by the commentator, the reference must be to a Cola settlement in the Far East, and over this settlement, the Pandyas had perhaps some suzerainty".<sup>27</sup>

The reference to Toṅṭi occurs in lines 107-10 in the 14th chapter. The text only refers to

Vaṅka ēṭṭattut Toṅṭiyōr

(Those from Tonti who had (or by) a flotilla (of ships).

The text goes on to say that they brought in those commodities mentioned above. Aṭiyarkkunāllar (13th c.), the commentator explains it as, "Kings from Toṅṭi which lies in the east." That Toṅṭi lay in the eastern direction is correct because it is the easterly wind that brings in the "scent" of those aromatic items to the capital. Whether it could be argued that the easterly winds brought that aroma all the way from the Far East is one point (in which case it sould be the north-eastern wind) but the more important one is that the text, as it stands, cannot be credited with all these meanings. One could also state that Toṅṭiyōr (those from Toṅṭi) could also mean merchants from Toṅṭi.

V. goes on to connect this with the Sailendra Kings, "These was some connection between the Pandyas and the Sailendras in eighth century A.D."<sup>28</sup> In view of the above discussion, it could be said that his conclusion is not a fully warranted one.

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26. Caminata Iyer (ed.) *Cilappatikāram*. Madras 1960 p. 526.

27. HTLL. p. 145.

28. HTLL p. 154.

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The next major argument for a late date of Cil is that Cil is later than Uṭayanān Perunḱatai, "it is well known that Uṭayaman Perunḱatai is one of the works which Iḷaṅkō has utilised in his Cil. The commentator Aṭiyarkūnallār suggests this and there are several parallel passages in support of this".<sup>29</sup>

A "tentative periodization of Tamil" based on historical linguistics done by Kamil Zvelabil separates Cil from Perunḱatai.<sup>30</sup> Zvelabil categorises the language of the later and latest poems of the 18 minor works and of Cil as Late Old Tamil and the hymns of the earlier Saiva nayanar and Vaisnava Alvars, Perunḱatai, Manimekalai Perumtevanar's Paratam etc..... as belonging to Early Middle Tamil (6th, 7th C.A.D to 850 A.D.).

The other important argument V. adduces for a late date is that the first inscriptional mention of "talaikkōli". and "kūttaccākkaiyaṅ" occur only in 1060 A.D. and in early part of 10th century and that Cil would therefore have been written at a period closer to this, viz., 9th c.A.D.<sup>31</sup> V. has not cared to notice the obvious difference between the references to the dances mentioned in Cil and in the inscriptions. In Cil the performance is for a, very secular, aristocratic audience whereas the inscriptions refer to dances associated with temples. The latter dances are obviously ritualistic in character. The dances mentioned in Cil. are not temple based whereas the dances mentioned in the inscriptions of the Cola period are mostly temple based. The history of the increasing importance of the temple in the Pallava and the Cola periods reveals that arts which were lying outside bounds of the temple were brought within the temple. It would therefore be wrong to date Cil on the basis of the references to temple dances.

The foregoing inquiry into V's arguments for a 9th c. date for Cil reveals that one needs more convincing reasons to agree with him.

Methodologically speaking we notice an inconsistency which needs mention. While handling inscriptional evidence, whether it is about Paṅkaḷar or Kuttaccakkaiyar or talaikkoli, V. is prepared to accept that the usage as found in Cil should have been prior to those references (because the inscription belong to a later date) but when he is referring to gnomic literatures he does not even consider the possibility of Cil. having given the first literary expression to a yet uncodified ethical maxim.

A more positive check on the possibility of a 9th c. date is to examine the relevance of the theme of Cil. to the social and political conditions of the

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29. Ibid p. 157.

30. Zvelabil, K. *Tentative periodization of the development of Tamil*. Tamil Culture. Madras Vol. IV No. 1 1957.

31. *Kāvya Kalam* pp. 137 - 9.

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Pallava and the early Cola period. Cil. being one of the greatest works in Tamil literature is bound to reflect, as all great literatures do, the features of the age. V. himself accepts this criterion as an essential feature of literature.<sup>32</sup>

Cil. speaks of the three Tamil Kingdoms. It speaks of the three capitals in very flourishing terms. "The transition from the Caṅkam age to that in which the Pandyas of the line of Katunkon and the Pallavas of the Simhavisnu line divided for three centuries the Tamil land between them, is completely hidden from our view. The same darkness shrouds the fortune of the Colas until the accession of Vijayalaya in the second quarter of the ninth century".<sup>33</sup> With Vijayalaya, Tanjore becomes the important Cola centre, and with him begins the gradual rise of the Cola power. The history of the Cēra country too was not anything spectacular.<sup>34</sup> To sing of the three capitals as flourishing in 9th century is historically anachronistic. It cannot also be held that Pallavas were hated so much that neither they nor their capital Kanci deserved any mention. We know from Nandikkalampakam, an exquisite poetic work of the period of Nandivaraman III (846-849), (according to V, should be almost contemporaneous with Cil,) that this particular king was a lover of Tamil. It should also not be forgotten that the Pallavas extended state support to the popular Bhakti movement.

More intriguing is the choice of the hero. The main character of Cil, is a merchant prince. It would not have been possible in Pallava times for anybody to sing the praise of a merchant prince for, as Minakshi states, in the Pallava period "we have plenty of references in epigraphy to Brahmins and Kshatriyas but Vaisyas and Sudras are not mentioned in inscriptions"<sup>35</sup> The available literatures of the Pallava and the Cola periods are all eulogies, direct or indirect, on kings and their courtiers; the commercial class does not get reflected in literature. With all the power and affluence they enjoyed the merchant guilds of the Cola period were not able to get adequate portrayal of their activities in the creative literature of the period.

Perhaps the most important of all the historical factors that argue against a 9th century date for Cil, is that the dances mentioned in Cil. are not temple based whereas from Pallava period onwards the practise of maintaining dancers at temples had begun. In Cil. Mātavi performs dances of ritualistic significance at the Intira festival. She is not mentioned as belonging to any temple.

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32. HTLL. p. 16 ff. p. 100 ff.

33. Sastri, *Colas* p. 100.

34. Sastri, *History of South India* p. 162.

35. Minakshi - *Administration and Social life under the Pallavas* - Madras 1938. p. 139.

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*VAIYAPURIPILLA'S DATING OF CILAPPATIKĀRAM*

Minakshi also mentions that "there is no direct evidence to show that in Pallava period, the different Kūttus of the Tamil country flourished.<sup>36</sup> But this cannot surely be said of the period of Cil. where the author takes special care to describe in detail the ritualistic dances of the cattle keepers and the hunters.

These major historical factors rule out the possibility of a mid 9th century date for Cil; they point towards a post Cankam, pre-Pallavan date, i.e., Cil. has to be assigned to a date, between 300 and 600 A.D.

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36. Ibid p, 277.