

Jaroslav Vacek
javaka5@seznam.cz
(Charles University in Prague)

Old Tamil Kings and Chieftains as Described in Sangam Literature

SUMMARY: Old Tamil Sangam literature can offer some very concrete information about a number of local kings and chieftains (Pāri, Ōri, Āy, Naḷḷi, Pēkaṇ etc.) and occasionally also their relations with the three great dynasties Pāṇṭya, Cōḷa and Cēra. The three dynasties use special symbols, which are partly derived from nature: tiger (*puli*) – the emblem of the Cōḷa Kings; fish (*mīṇ*) – the symbol of the Pāṇṭyas. The Western Cēras use a ‘military’ symbol, viz. the bow (*vil*). Kings and chieftains (*vēḷir*) are referred to on various occasions; they fulfil various roles, among other things also that of ‘sponsors’ of the poets. References to chieftains and other ‘political’ figures in Sangam literature are made with regard to war and partly other social functions as can be seen in the standard formulas appearing with these figures.

The paper sums up some of the roles of the castes according to the Poruḷatikāram of the Tolkāppiyam grammar and then deals with the ‘positive’ attributes of kings and chieftains. For example, they possess strong or quick bows (*val vil*, 33x), long lances (*neṭu vēl*, 29x) or sharp lances (*kūr vēl*, 10x), (great) moving chariots (*iyaḷ tēr*, 21x) or strong chariots (*tēr vaṇ*, 8x), and strong horses (*mā vaṇ*, 11x) or big horses (*neṭu mā*, 5x). Their hands are wide (*taṭam kai*, 46x) and liberal (*kai vaṇ*, 18x) and they perform victorious battles (*vel pōr*, 36x) and good battles (*nal pōr*, 7x). They have a reputation for liberality (*vaṇ pukaḷ*, 5x), in fact, they experience joy in liberality (*vaṇ maḱiḷ*, 14x). They enjoy excellence (*cīr keḷu*, 14x), abundant fame (*urai cāl*, 19x) or great fame (name) (*peru peyar*, 36x). There are also negative attributes. The paper will document some selected ‘qualifications’ of the ‘men of war’.

KEYWORDS: Tamil literature, Sangam literature, early Tamil history, old Tamil kings, old Tamil chieftains, lexical frequency in Sangam texts, formulas.

0.

Old Tamil social structure has been described in various texts published in the last hundred or so years. The government at both the capital and in the villages was described e.g. by N. Subrahmanian (1980). The individual royal families and the chieftains of the Sangam period were discussed in the volume on the *Historical Heritage of the Tamils* (Subramanian, K.D. and Thirunavukkarasu 2010). More recently the work of Rajan Gurukkal has dealt with the historical interpretation of the Sangam texts (Gurukkal 2010: 77ff.) and particularly with forest tribes (Gurukkal 2010: 121ff.). Detailed information and text references regarding the individual names and concepts are available with N. Subramanian (PPTI 1966). Most of these works include a broader picture on the basis not only of the Sangam Anthologies (*Eṭṭuttokai*, *Pattuppāṭṭu*) but also of the later texts of the Epics (*Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*).¹

In the following paper we will concentrate on the specifically literary reflection the earlier Sangam Anthologies can offer in this respect. There is very concrete information about the area of South India called *tamiḷakam*,² or also just *tamiḷ*. The social and ‘political’ situation is mostly described in the *puṟam* type of poems, but some information about the ‘political’ figures and their practices can also be found in the ‘love poems’ (*akam*), especially in the context of

¹ The Sangam epic poetry was thoroughly discussed with various literary implications and also aspects of social structure by Kailasapathy in his by now ‘classical’ work (1968). An interesting idea was voiced by K. K. Pillai (1979: 36), who speaks about ‘quasi-historical literature’ including not only the Sangam works, but also other later genres (*ulā*, *kōvai* etc.).

² As for the term *tamiḷakam*, it appears only once in *Puranānūru*: *vaiyaka varaiippil tamiḷakam* (Puṟa. 168,18)
 ‘Tamiḷakam or the land of the Tamiḷar within the bounds of this world’
 (Rangaswamy 1968: 94).

For further textual references to the designation *tamiḷakam* and to *tamiḷ*, cf. Rangaswamy 1968: 94ff.

‘separation of lovers’, due to the military engagement of the young man. Therefore, we can find interesting references to the three royal families Pāṇṭiya, Cōḷa and Cēra (mostly scattered, except *Paṭṭirruppattu*) and to the local chieftains and their position on the ‘political’ scene. The former are traditionally called *mūvēntar*, though the term is not found in the texts of the anthologies (cf. below *mūvar*, *mūvir*).³

1. Social ‘structure’—selected roles and attributes

1.0. The social role of the rulers can be seen in the context of the other social groups and their roles. It is already in the Old Tamil grammar *Tolkāppiyam* that we can find the definition of some roles and attributes of the relevant social groups, which are obviously based on the concept of the four *varṇas*, however, with some modifications—be it the Brahmanas (*antaṇar*), the kings (*aracar*), the traders (*vaicikan*),⁴ the farmers (*vēlāṇ māntar*) or the chieftains (*ēṇōr*,⁵ or ‘petty kings or chieftains’; Rangaswamy 1968: 97). The individual social groups are defined very clearly in the *Tolkāppiyam* and it may be of interest to compare various renderings of the text and also a few conflicting interpretations.

³ The PPTI refers to Puṛa. 110 and 111 s.v. *mūvēntar*, however, the form there is *mūvir* (Puṛa. 110,1) ‘you three’ (cf. below).

⁴ Note that the word for the ‘king’ is of Skt. origin! (*aracar/ṇ* < Skt. *rājan-*) and the same goes for the ‘trader’ (Skt. *vaiśya-*). Ilakkuvanār (1963: 257, note 1) mentions the Sanskrit origin and underlines the fact that the word ‘is rarely used even in the works of later period’. Cf. also below the relatively lower frequency of *aracar* and its derivatives in Sangam texts.

⁵ This word does not occur in the PPTI, which has only *ēṇāti* (s.v.) ‘title conferred by Tamil kings on their distinguished generals; a corruption of ‘Sēnāpati’’. Similarly TL has only *ēṇāti* ‘an ancient title conferred by a king on his minister; general; soldier, warrior’. According to the TL, the word probably comes from Skt. *senādi*. But cf. Skt. *senāpati*, *senādhipati* (Monier-Williams, s.vv.). Cf. Subrahmanian (1980: 91ff.), who agrees that the word is a corruption from Skt. *senādhipati* (Subrahmanian 1980: 93). Further cf. below the various interpretations of the word.

A. Possession of the Brahmanas

*nūlē karakam mukkōl maṇaiyē /
āyum kālai antaṇarkku uriya.*

(Tol Poruḷ 615–71) (SVS 2004: No. 1570; Murugan 2000: No. 1562)
(Poruḷ. No. 625, p. 463)

The sacred thread, the pitcher, the trident staff and the low wooden seat belong to “*an̄dhaṇar*” if examined. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 256; No. 625)

The sacred thread, pitcher, the trident staff, and the low wooden seat belong to the ‘*antanar*’ if examined. (SVS 2004: 611)

The sacred thread, pitchers in hoops,
The trident staff and low wooden seat
Are possessions proper to the brahmins. (Murugan 2000: 641)

The thread, the pot, the three-pronged staff and the sitting plank, when contemplated, belong to the brahmins.
(Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 584)

B. Symbols of sovereignty

*paṭaiyum koṭiyum kuṭaiyum muracum /
naṭai navil puraviyum kaḷiṇrum tērum /
tārum muṭiyum nērvāṇa pīravum /
terivu koḷ cen̄kōl aracarkku uriya.*

(Tol Poruḷ 616–72) (SVS 2004: No. 1571; Murugan 2000: No. 1563)⁶
(Poruḷ. No. 626, p. 464)

Weapon, flag, umbrella, drum, horse of studded pace, elephant, car, garland, crown, and such others be-fitting the kings of sceptre, well-versed in judgement shall have as their own. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 256, No. 626; see also SVS 2004: 611)

⁶ A summarising translation is offered by Rangaswamy (1968: 97): Army, flag, umbrella, trumpet, horse, elephant, chariot, crown, garland—all these belong to the crowned kings.

The monarchs wielding the just sceptre
 Do hold as symbols of sovereignty
 Army, royal banner, umbrella,
 Drum, swift horse, elephant, chariot,
 Garland, crown and such of these. (Murugan 2000: 641)

The army, the flag, the umbrella, the drum, the horse with the gait, the elephant, the chariot, the garland, the crown and other suitable things belong to the kings possessing scepter. (Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 585)

And it is to be noted that the kings can also use what the Brahmins (*antaṇar*) use (SVS 2004: 611, No. 1572; Murugan 2000: 641, No. 1564), but the Brahmins cannot claim rulership according to one interpretation of the text (*antaṇarkku aracu varaivu inṇē*;⁷ SVS 2000: 611, No. 1574; not available in Murugan 2000: 642). On the contrary, most other translations interpret the line differently. Ilakkuvanar (Ilakkuvanar 1963: 258, No. 637) translates: “The ruling over a state is not forbidden to ‘aṇdhaṇar’.” Murugan has the same Tamil text under his No. 1574 (p. 644) below after the ‘Farmers’, and in his translation he maintains that ‘The brahmins do not stand removed from the claim to rulership’. Similarly Sundramathy and Manuel (2010: 590, No. 627) translate as ‘The brahmins are not denied the right or ruling.’ They add the comment: ‘Rarely the brahmins may also rule over a kingdom.’

C. Traders

vaicikaṇ peṇumē vāṇika vāḷkkai.
 (Tol Poruḷ 622–78) (SVS 2004: No. 1578; Murugan 2000: No. 1569)
 (Poruḷ. No. 632, p. 468)

‘vaisikan’ will have the mercantile life. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 257, No. 632)
 The vaicikaṇ class will live on trading. (SVS 2003: 613)
 Vaicikaṇ class draw their living

⁷ The edition has a variant of the text: *antaṇāḷarkku aracu varaivu inṇē* (Poruḷ. No. 637, p. 470), which is also followed by Murugan (2000: 641) and Sundramathy and Manuel (2010: 685).

On the occupation of trade. (Murugan 2000: 643)

The *vaiciyaṅ* (merchant) lives by trade. (Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 588)

kaṅṅiyum tārum eṅṅiṅar āṅṅē.

(Tol Poruḷ 624–80) (SVS 2004: No. 1580; Murugan 2000: No. 1571)
(Poruḷ. No. 634, p. 469)

They will have the right of the wearing ‘kaṅṅi’ and ‘thār’. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 257, No. 634)

The traders have right of wearing wreaths and garlands. (SVS 2003: 613)

The honour of wearing wreaths and garlands too

The tradesmen have a claim to. (Murugan 2000: 643)

Wearing designatory flowers and garlands is allowed for the merchants.
(Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 589)

D. Farmers (*vēḷāḷar*)

vēḷāṅ māntarkku uḷutūṅ allatu /

il eṅa molīpa pīra vakai nikaḷcci.

(Tol Poruḷ 625–81) (SVS: 1581; Murugan: 1572) (Poruḷ. No. 635: 469)

The peasants shall have no other duties except the duty of tilling the soil and earning the food thereby. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 258, No. 635); cf. also SVS p. 613)

The *vēḷāḷar* class take to no occupation

But farming and cultivation. (Murugan 2000: 644)

For the agriculturists there is no other type of action except ploughing the land and producing food. (Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 590)

vēntu viṭu toḷiliṅ paṭaiyum kaṅṅiyum /

vāyntaṅar eṅpa avar perum poruḷē.

(Tol Poruḷ 626–82) (SVS: 1582; Murugan: 1569) (Poruḷ. No. 636, p. 469)

They will have the right of carrying weapons and wearing garlands when they are engaged by the kings in the affairs of the state. (Ilakkuvanār 1963: 258, No. 636)

The farmers have right of carrying weapons and wearing wreaths when they go on missions of the state. (SVS p. 613)

Weapons of war and wreaths to wear
 The *vēlālar* have access to
 As they go on missions of the state. (Murugan 2000: 644)

Vēlālar can also possess weapons and designatory
 flowers when they are engaged as warriors by the king. (Sundramathy and
 Manuel 2010: 590)

E. (Ruling) Chieftains

villum vēlum kaḷalum kaṇṇiyum /
tārum mālaiyum tērum māyum /
maṇ peru marapiṇ ēṇōrkku uriya.

(Tol Poruḷ 628–84) (SVS: 1583; Murugan: 1575; Poruḷ. No. 638, p. 470)⁸

Bow, lance, anklet, flower, garland, wreath, car and sword—these belong
 to the petty kings. (Ilakkuvanar 1963: 258, No. 638)

The chieftains will have bow, spear, anklet, wreath,
 garland, neck ornaments, chariot and horse. (SVS p. 613)

The others [ruling chieftains] have claim to

Bow, spear, anklet, wreath,

Garland, neck ornaments, chariot and horse. (Murugan 2000: 645)

The bow, the spear, the anklet, the flower, the garland, the chain (*āram*),
 the chariot and the horse are allowed to the others also if granted by
 the king. (Sundramathy and Manuel 2010: 591)⁹

*aṇṇar*¹⁰ *āyiṇum iḷintōrkku illai.*

(Tol Poruḷ 629–85) (SVS: 1584; Murugan: 1577) (Poruḷ. No. 639, p. 470)

⁸ A summarising translation is offered by Rangaswamy (1968: 97):
 Bow, spear, anklet, garland, chariot, sword—all these belong to petty kings or
 chieftains.

⁹ Sundramathy and Manuel (2010 :591) interpret the term *ēṇōr* as
 ‘others’. They also refer to Ilampūraṇar’s interpretation as ‘merchants and
 agriculturists’, and Pēraciriyar’s interpretation as ‘chieftains’ (*kuṟunila*
maṇṇar).

¹⁰ Sundramathy and Manuel (2010: 591) comment that *aṇṇar* refers to
ēṇōr in the previous *cūttiram*.

The low-born shall not have the right of possessing these even though they are in similar positions. (Ilakkuvanar 1963: 258, No. 639)

For the low-born people though they are in similar position, they shall not have the right of possessing the above mentioned things. (SVS 2004: 613)

Fall in standing witnessed

The chieftains above [1575]

Are not entitled to the possessions said. (Murugan 2000: 645)

People inferior than the four castes cannot be given the above mentioned honours even if they possess wealth
(Sundramathy and Manuel 2010:591).

2. The ‘ruling’ scene

The early ‘ruling’ scene of South India has been thoroughly described, among others, by K. N. Sivaraja Pillai (1932), N. Subrahmanian (1980) and in a number of further studies.¹¹ The following analysis summarises the ‘literary reflection’ of the ancient situation on the background of the above-specified social roles of the individual groups. The basic types of rulers will be in the focus of attention, starting with the traditional dynasties and finishing with minor rulers and chieftains. It is a basic survey of the main characteristic features and the topic could and should be studied in greater detail in future, including a systematic survey of the literary references.

¹¹ E.g. V. Balambal (1998) deals with some special questions as they are reflected in the Sangam texts: the Cēra-Cōḷa antagonism (Balambal 1998: 19–23), crime and punishment (Balambal 1998: 49–57) or the *saptāṅga* theory and state in the Sangam period (Balambal 1998: 73–78). R. Gurukkal (2010) makes a more specific analysis of the roles and functions of the individual figures. Concerning ‘the *vēntar* level of political power’, Gurukkal (2010: 128) speaks about ‘the redistributive social relationship’, which according to him ‘involved some kind of a simple hierarchy from the *vēntar* to the *kuṭimākkal*’. The term *kuṭimākkal* is not used in the texts. Gurukkal (2010: 126) renders it as ‘settlers’ (TL does not mention this phrase either).

A. Three main kingdoms

The three Tamil kingdoms were studied repeatedly from various points of view.¹² Two of the three Tamil kingdoms, the Cōlas and the Pāṇṭiyas, use nature signs as their ‘political’ symbols, only the Cēras use a more specifically military symbol:

Tiger (*puli*) – emblem of the Cōla Kings

Fish (*mīṇ*) – emblem of the Pāṇṭiyas

Bow (*vil*) – emblem of the Cēras

These emblems can occasionally be used in the metaphorical expression of the Sangam poems, cf. e.g. the Pāṇṭiya King overcoming the ‘bow with the tiger’ (*puliyōtu vil nīkki*; Kali. 104,3), i.e. overcoming the Cēras (*vil*) together with the Cōlas (*puliyōtu*).¹³

As mentioned above, *mūvēntar* is a traditional term for the three Tamil dynasties, but the texts of the Anthologies use the terms *mūvar* (8x) or *mūvir* (2x), which can have a number of attributes (cf. below).

Occurrences of the terms:

mūvēntar (0x) vs. *mūvar* (8x; from that 1x *mūvarai*, Puṛa.

137,2; 1x *mūvaroṭu*, Tiru. 167) – ‘the three (Tamil) kings’ *mūvir*

(2x; Puṛa. 109,2; 110,1) – ‘you three (Tamil) kings’

¹² Early systematic descriptions of the Tamil kingdoms and their social life can be found e.g. in Srinivas Iyengar (1929: 486ff.) or Sivaraja Pillai (1932: 67ff.). The three kingdoms (*mūvar*) are also discussed with reference to Sangam Anthologies by Rangaswamy (1968: 97ff.). ‘Tamil literature as a source material of history’ is discussed by K.K. Pillai (1979: 17ff.), who also offers a brief survey of the Tamil kingdoms including minor chieftains (Pillai 1979: 23–29). For a more recent basic survey and interpretation of some of the interesting points, cf. Swaminathan (2010) concerning the Cēras, Umamaheswari (2010) concerning the Pāṇṭiyas and Govindarajan (2010) concerning the Cōlas. Further cf. Ramachandran 1974: 12ff.

¹³ For more references to this symbolical use of the ‘tiger’ as the Cōla emblem, cf. Subrahmanian 1966: 581; Kali. 104,3; Puṛa. 157,12; 174,17; 202,20; Paṭṭi. 135, and also in later texts.

The words are used in very clear contexts as a part of an appeal:

aḷitu ō tāṇ ē pāriyatu paṟampu ē (Puṟa. 109,1)

naḷi koḷ muraciṇ mūvir um murriṇum (Puṟa. 109,2)

Lit., ‘Oh, it is a pity, the (mountain) Paṟampu of Pāri (1)

if all three (of you) lay siege (of it) with fame-having (big) war drums’ (2)

Some attributes can occur more than once, e.g.

viṟal keḷu (**4x**) victory-having, e.g.:

iraṅku muraciṇ iṇam cāl yāṇai (Puṟa. 137,1)

munṇīr ēṇi viṟal keḷu mūvarai (Puṟa. 137,2)

‘the three (kings) having victory up to the sea boundary (2)

with sounding war drums and herds of many elephants’ (1)

tamiḷ keḷu (**2x**):

tamiḷ keḷu mūvar kākkum (Aka. 31,14)

moḷipeyar tēetta pal malai irantu ē (Aka. 31,15)

‘having gone beyond the many mountains of countries with various language (15)

protected by the Three Kings who rule (lit. have) the Tamil (land)’ (14)¹⁴

B. Kings and other rulers

The Sangam texts have a number of terms used for kings, rulers and/or chieftains:

vēntu king, kingdom, royalty (PPTI s.v.) (VIS s.v.: kingship 26x, king(s) 4x; SVS 1972 s.v.: king 2x) (Total 78x without case suffixes)
vēntaṅ/r king (crowned monarch); Indra (not in the Sangam) (PPTI s.v.)
 (-r: 69x; -ṅ: 51x = 120x)

¹⁴ Vēṅkaṭacāmināṭṭār interprets as *tamiḷ nāṭṭiṇaiy āḷum mūvar* ‘the three (kings) ruling the Tamil land’. Cōmacuntaraṇṇār interprets more symbolically as *tamiḷp paṇṇu poruntiya cēra cōḷa pāṇṭiyar ākiya mūṇṇu muṭi maṇṇarum*. The former interpretation seems to be more suitable.

maṇṇaṅ/r king(s) (PPTI s.v.) (-r: 50x; -ṇ: 16x = 66x) (VIS s.v., PPTI s.v.: only ‘king’; SVS 1972 s.v.: 1x ‘chief’ in singular – Aka. 209,12; 7x ‘king’ in plural)¹⁵

aracaṅ/r king(s) (*araca* 1x; -r: 5x; -ṇ: 4x = 10x) (< *rājan-*); plus forms with palatalized second syllable: *araicu* (9x, from that 2x: *araciṅ*), *araciṅ* (1x, Kali. 130,4), *araicar* (1x, Naṅ. 291,3)

kō king (34x) (most of the occurrences in Puṛa. 18x; then Pati. 9x; Akam texts have only a few occurrences – Kali. 2x; Naṅ. 1x)¹⁶

¹⁵ Note that in the later language there were synonymous pairs (PPTI s.v. *maṇṇar*):

maṇṇar kō ‘King of kings’ (Cilap. XXVII,67; XXX,95; XXX,118 = Ceṅkuṭṭuvan);

maṇṇar kōmāṇ ‘King of kings’ (Cilap. XXV,94 = Ceṅkuṭṭuvan);

maṇṇaṅ maṇṇaṅ ‘King of kings’ (Cilap. XXVI,5).

¹⁶ The Sangam total is given as 31x by Lehmann and Malten (1992, s.v.), however, in some verses the word appears twice. The lexeme *kō* also means ‘cow’ (borrowing from Sanskrit), e.g. Kali. 103,37 (cf. also PPTI s.v.; with a different numbering of the verse, 103,36) and 107,3 (in the form *kōviṇattār* ‘herdsmen’; not in the TL). The word *kō* can also mean ‘father’ (TL s.v. *kō3* 4.), e.g. Kali. 116,11 (*kō varinnum inku ē* ‘even if [your] father came here’).

It would be interesting to compare the stylistic usages of this basic word and the following forms *kōṇ*, *kōmāṇ* and *kōcar*, which are related (cf. DEDR 2177). The various textual and stylistic usages may also throw some light on the linguistic and dialectal layers in Old Tamil and ancient Dravidian (cf. Vacek 2009). There is e.g. a frequent nuclear formula *em kō* ‘our king’ (7x), also occurring in a complex formula *em kō vāḷiya(r)* (2x: Puṛa. 9,8; Kali. 103,79) ‘long live our king, may our king prosper’. Similarly *num kō* ‘your king’ (2x) appears in a formula *num kō yār* ‘who is your king’ (2x: Puṛa. 212,1; Pati. 20,1). Parallel formula *em kōṇ* ‘our king’ appears 4x in Puṛa. The phrase *em kōmāṇ* appears only 1x (Puṛa. 95,9). These and similar questions would require another specialised and rather extensive study.

kōṇ (7x), (PPTI s.v.: ‘chief’, ‘king’; VIS s.v.: 5x ‘king’; Matu. 74; Kali. 94,36; Aka. zero)

kōmāṇ ‘king’ and ‘chieftain’ (24x) (SVS 1972 s.v.: both; VIS only ‘chieftain’; PPTI only ‘king’; Gurukkal 2010: 125 – ‘chief’)¹⁷

kōcar (15x) viceroys, from Tuḷu Nāḍu (see PPTI s.v.); VIS s.v., SVS 1972 s.v.: the Koocar warriors¹⁸

The different renderings of some of the titles as either ‘king’, ‘chief’ or ‘chieftain’ by various authors perhaps indicate that their concrete meaning may have depended on the context.¹⁹ In fact, there is one more term with two variants, one of which has a range of various, though comprehensibly related meanings. This may imply the possibility that the Sangam Anthologies reflect a transitional period of fluctuation of the basic concepts, which could be used differently according to the special contexts.

īrai king (6x, Puṛa. – VIS s.v.)

chief, king (1x, Aka. 388,26 – PPTI s.v.; but not SVS 1972 s.v., see below)

God (Murugan) (2x or 3x, Aka. 388,20, Puṛa. 129,1 – PPTI s.v.; but not

¹⁷ Cf. the following usages of the term:

kaḷvar kōmāṇ ‘chief of thieves’ (Aka. 61,11);

teṇnar kōmāṇ ‘the chief of the Southerners, i.e. the Pāṇḍyan’ (Aka. 209,3; PPTI s.v.; SVS 1972 s.v. *kōmāṇ* has ‘the chief’ for this occurrence);

paratavar kōmāṇ (?‘chief of the inhabitants of the maritime tract’, Aka. 226,7; however, SVS 1972 s.v. *kōmāṇ* translates as ‘king’ in this instance).

¹⁸ Referred to as a tribe by Kailasapathy (1968: 89). There are also some other terms, or rather ‘motivated’ designations, partly coined in special contexts, such as e.g. *koṟṟaṇ* ‘chief, king’ (Puṛa. 171,7; 168,17; VIS s.v.), cf. *koṟṟam* ‘victory’ (7x, Puṛa., cf. VIS s.v.). Similarly *kuṟumpar* ‘petty chieftains’ (Puṛa. 293,2; VIS s.v.), cf. *kuṟumpu* ‘fort’ (6x, Puṛa., cf. VIS s.v.).

¹⁹ A brief systematic summary of the various terms and their meanings is made by Thirunavukkarasu (1994: 12–13).

VIS s.v.; SVS 1972 s.v. adds Aka. 338,6, which is ‘chief, king’ according to the PPTI s.v., see above)

iraivan king (4x, Pura. according to PPTI s.v.; 1x according to VIS s.v.)
chief (4x, Pura. according to VIS s.v.) not found in Aka.

Another example, the term *maṇṇaṇ* occurs in the following typical formulas, where the context seems to indicate that it should be understood as ‘chief’, rather than ‘king’ (cf. VIS s.v. for the Pura. occurrences):

cūrūr maṇṇaṇ (4x: Pura. 299,1; 308,4; 319,12; 328,16), *cūrūr maṇṇar*
(1x: Pura. 197,13)

‘lords of small principalities’ (Madhava Menon 2011: 353)

‘king of a small country’ (Madhava Menon 2011: 475)

eyil maṇṇaṇ (3x: Aka. 373,18; Naṅ. 43,11; Pura. 338,12)

‘king with single fort’ (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 30)

‘king with one fortress’ (Wilden 2008: 145)

cūrūr maṇṇaṇai pāṭṭinaṇi celiṇ ē (Pura. 328,16)

‘If you go singing praises of the king of that (small) settlement’ (Madhava Menon 2011: 496)

ōr eyil maṇṇaṇ oru maṭam makaḷ ē (Pura. 338,12)

lit. ‘Tender daughter of a chieftain / king (?VIS s.v.) of one fortress’

cf. ‘the only daughter of the chieftain who has only this one fort’ (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 508)

C. Chieftains (*vēḷir*)

A total of 59 various chieftains are mentioned in the texts (Thirunavukkarasu 1994: 7), but some are more often in the foreground and some of their qualities are also specified. It may be noted that the sword (*vāl*) is not mentioned with the chieftains in the texts of the Anthologies, which may be a realistic reflection of the fact that they used only the ‘classical’ or rather more ‘primitive’ instruments of war.

The basic terms:

vēl – (32x) (3) ‘A member of the Vēlir clan’; but also: ‘Lord Muruka’ (PPTI s.v.)

vēlir – (12X) ‘The Vēls, the leading feudatories in Tamiḷakam in the Śaṅgam age.’ (PPTI s.v.)²⁰

Chieftains (*vēlir*) are referred to on various occasions, they fulfil various roles, among other things also that of ‘**sponsors**’ of the poets.

There are a few chieftains, also the so-called ‘last seven *vaḷḷals* or patrons’ (referred to as *eḷuvar* ‘the seven’ – total 8x, from that 1x *eḷuvarotu*), who are more often mentioned:

Pāri (23x), *Ōri* (22x), *Kāri* (18x), *Āy*²¹ (VIS s.v.: Puṛa. 10x; SVS 1972: Aka. zero), *Elīṇi* (10x), *Pēkaṇ* (6x), *Naḷḷi* (10x)

However, there are also other chieftains: e.g. *kumaṇaṇ* (5x), *malaiyaṇ* (11x), etc..

Among the chieftains, especially *Pāri* enjoyed reputation and was praised by the poets, sometimes in a very poetic maner as in the following poem of Kapilar:

pāri pāri enru pala ētti (Puṛa. 107,1)

oruvaṇ pukaḷvar ce nā pulavar (Puṛa. 107,2)

pāri oruvaṇ um allaṇ (Puṛa. 107,3)

māri um unṭu iṇṭu ulaku purappatu ē (Puṛa. 107,4)

‘Praising (him) much and repeating ‘Pāri, Pāri’, (1)

poets of fine (faultless) tongue will praise the one (only him). (2)

Pāri is not the only one, (3)

There is also rain, it verily protects this world.’ (4)

²⁰ Cf. also Sivaraja Pillai (1932, passim). Gurukkal (2010: 125) refers to *kiḷār* chiefs as ‘hunter chiefs either of *vēṭar* or *kuṛavar* tribes’. This terms has a number of variants, it appears a number of times, e.g. in Puṛa. (35x; VIS s.v.: ‘chief, lord, of the right-he’), Naṛ. (10x; Wilden 2008 III, s.v.: ‘master’), or Aka. (5x; SVS 1972 s.v.: ‘master, chief’).

²¹ *Kāri* and *Āy* have homophones with more meanings. Therefore, establishing the exact number will require dealing with the individual texts in a more detailed study.

D. Tribes and warriors

The names of chieftains and kings may sometimes also be the names of their tribes or clans (Rangaswamy 1968: 94). There is a number of tribes, which are discussed by Rangaswamy (1968: 99ff.). Some of them appear very often in the Anthologies and they would deserve more attention in future. At the moment we can list only a few of them:

maravar ‘warriors’ (Puṛa. VIS s.v.: **19x**; Aka. SVS 1972 s.v.: **10x**)
‘hunters’ (Aka. 284,8; SVS 1972 s.v.: **1x**)

‘kings’ (Puṛa. VIS s.v.: **2x**)
‘inhabitants of the desert tract’ (Aka. SVS 1972 s.v.: **5x**) (total: **68x**
including case forms)

maravaṇ ‘warrior’ (Puṛa. VIS s.v.: **5x**) (total: **11x** no case forms)
maḷavar ‘warriors’ (Puṛa. VIS s.v.: **2x**; Aka. SVS 1972 s.v.: **14x**) (total: **22x** no case forms)

eyiṇar ‘hunters; they wore sandals (of leather) and they were bearded and of ferocious speech’ (PPTI s.v.); (Aka. SVS: **2x**)
the MaRava men (!Puṛa. 177,13; VIS s.v.: **1x**)

eyiṇaṇ ‘hunter’ (Aka. SVS: **4x**)
‘a benefactor’ (Puṛa. 351,5; VIS s.v.: **1x**)

paratavar ‘fishermen; a kind of feudatory chieftains in extreme South India’²²
(VIS s.v.: ‘fishermen’ **1x**; ‘a chieftain’ **1x**)

²² Note the phonetic closeness to the name of the ancient kings of the Mahābhārata – the Bharatas. In this context there is an explanation of the name of the Bharatas (Mahadevan 2009: 24ff.) by way of Ta. *porai*, *poraiyaṇ* ‘a title of the Cēra kings’, which I. Mahadevan derives from Ta. *poru* ‘to bear’ (Mahadevan 2009: 26) and relates the title to the name of the Bharatas of the Mahābhārata, and also to a particular type of the Indus valley signs. The above name of the fishermen inhabiting the southern coast might also be considered in this context. Multiple interpretations of similarly sounding terms and also names is not exceptional. Folk etymology, sometimes multiple, is a strong subconscious process, or even drive, in every language and in every ethnic group. However, the ancient ethnic reality will remain obscure, until some concrete proofs can be found.

(SVS 1972 s.v.: *-r* **13x**: ‘inhabitants of the maritime tract’; *-ṅ* **1x**: ‘inhabitant’)

-ṅ (total: **1x** no case form)

-r (total: **43x** no case forms)

3. Literary description

References to kings and chieftains and other ‘political’ figures in Sangam literature are made with regard to war and partly other social functions as can be seen in the standard formulas appearing with these figures. However, it is to be underlined that their ‘qualifications’ are not only related to war and expansion. An important aspect of their functioning is protection. In that sense they are attributed a very important social role.

The kings and/or chieftains possess

strong or quick bows (*val vil*, **33x**),

kulāa val vil koṭu nōkku āṭavar (Aka. 265,17)

‘warriors of severe look and bending strong bows’

and **arrows** (*ampu*, **28x**)

nāṭaṅ / uruva val vil paṅṅi ampu terintu (Aka. 82,10–11)

‘the hero grasping a beautiful bow, selecting the arrow’

or

excellent bows (*viḷu toṭai*, **7x**; from that **5x** +*maṟavar*)

with whistling arrows (*vīḷai ampiṅ*, **3x**) or **strong arrows** (*val ampu*, **1x**)

vīḷai ampiṅ viḷu toṭai maḷavar (Aka. 131,6)

‘warriors with excellent bows and whistling arrows’

val ampiṅ viḷu toṭai maṟavar (Aka. 105,13)

‘warriors with excellent bows and whistling arrows’

Further they have

victorious (winning) lances (*veṇ vēl*, **38x**)

veṇ vēl viṭalai (3x: Puṛa. 261,16; Aiṅk. 364,4; 388,5)
‘warrior with a victorious lance’

veṇ vēl vēntaṅ (3x: Aka. 392,21; Aiṅk. 426,1; 444,4)
‘king with a victorious lance’

veṇ vēl poraiyaṅ (2x: Aka. 338,13; Pati. 86,3)
‘Poṛaiyaṅ with a victorious lance’

veṇ vēl vēl ē (Puṛa. 396,12)
‘chieftain with a victorious lance’

long lances (*neṭu vēl*, **29x**)

tiruntu ilai neṭu vēl teṅṅavaṅ (Aka. 138,7)
‘the Pandya King with a long lance of perfect blade’

miṇ oḷir neṭu vēl iḷaiyōṅ (Aka. 203,10)
‘the young man with an excellently shining (lit. lightning + shining) long lance’

oḷiru ilaṅku neṭu vēl maḷavar perumakaṅ (Puṛa. 88,3)
‘chief (great man) of the Maḷavars with a long lance shining and glittering’

cuṭar vāy neṭu vēl kālaiyoṭu (Kuṛu. 378,4)
‘with a young man (having) a long bright-edged spear’

white (or shining) lances (*veḷ vēl*, **20x**)

veḷ vēl viṭalai (5x: Puṛa. 237,14; Aiṅk. 393,5; Aka. 7,12; Kuṛu. 15,5; Naṛri. 305,9)
‘warrior with a white (shining) lance’

or many lances (*pal vēl*, 16x)

<i>pal vēl eļiņi</i> (2x: Aka. 105,10; Kuṛu. 80,5)	‘Eļiņi with many lances’
<i>pal vēl kōcar</i> (Aka. 113,5)	‘Kōcar with many lances’
<i>pal vēl maņnar</i> (Matu. 234)	‘kings (chieftains) with many lances’

or sharp lances (*kūr vēl*, 10x)

<i>kūr vēl kumaņa</i> (Puṛa. 159,25)	‘Kumaņaṅ having a sharp lance’
<i>kūr vēl pāriyatu</i> (Puṛa. 116,16)	‘of Pāri having a sharp lance’
<i>kūr vēl kālaiyoṭu</i> (Naṛ. 184,2)	‘with a warrior (of desert tract) having a sharp lance’

glittering swords (*oļiru vāļ*, 11x)

oļiru vāļ maņnar (2x) ‘kings with glittering swords’

oļiru vāļ maņnar oļ cuṭar neṭu nakar (Puṛa. 177,1)
‘big, shining and glittering town of kings having glittering swords’

oļiru vāļ tānai (2x) ‘army with glittering swords’

oļiru vāļ tānai korra ceļiyan (Aka. 46,13; 106,10)
‘victorious Ceļiyan having an army with glittering swords’

and many shields (*pal tōl*, 7x)

pal tōl mā vaṅ cōlar (Aka. 123,10)
‘Cōlar(s) with strong horses and many shields’

They also have

strong horses (*mā vaṅ*, 11x)

mā vaṅ pāri (Puṛa. 236,3) ‘Pāri with strong horses’

big horses (*neṭu mā*, 5x)

neṭu mā pāri (Puṛa. 201,5) ‘Pāri with big horses’

and **great chariots** (*neṭu tēr*, 96x, from that 8x suffix)

neṭu tēr kai vaṇ celiyaṅ (Aka. 175,10)

‘liberal-handed Celiyaṅ with great chariot(s)’²³

virai pari neṭu tēr (Aka. 339,1)

‘great chariot with hurrying (quick) horses’

moving chariots (*iyal tēr*, 21x)

viṇ poru neṭu kuṭai iyal tēr mōriyar (Aka. 69,10)

‘the Mauryas with moving chariots and cloud-reaching great umbrellas’

ivaṅ viḷaṅku cirappiṅ iyal tēr kumaṇa (Puṛa. 158,26)

‘Oh, Kumaṇaṅ with moving chariot(s) and fame shining in this world’

or **strong/abundant chariots** (*tēr vaṇ*, 8x)²⁴

tēr vaṇ malaiyaṅ (Naṅ. 100,9)

‘Malaiyaṅ of strong chariots’ (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 70)

tēr vaṇ cōḷar (Naṅ. 379,7)

‘Cholas of formidable chariots’ (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 268)

tēr vaṇ kiḷli (Puṛa. 43,10; 220,6)

‘Kiḷli²⁵ with abundant chariots’ (according to VIS)

²³ Cf. *neṭiya tēriṇaiyūm kaiyaṅmaiyaṅiyūm uṭaiya pāṇṭiyaṅ neṭuñceliyaṅ*, lit. ‘Pāṇṭiyaṅ Neṭuñceliyaṅ having liberality of hand and great chariot(s)’ (Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār and Venkaṭacalam Piḷḷai); *neṭiya tēraiyaṅ iravalukku vaḷaṅkum kaiyaṅmaiyaṅiyūm uṭaiya neṭuñceliyaṅ*, lit. ‘Neṭuñceliyaṅ having liberality of hand giving to beggars and (having) great chariot(s)’ (Cōmacuntaraṅār).

²⁴ This interpretation of the sequence is found in the translation of Kandasami Pillai (Kandasami Pillai 2008), though it can also be understood as two independent attributes ‘having chariots’ and ‘being generous’ (Wilden 2008). In Puṛaṅaṅūru, VIS interprets *vaṅ* as ‘abundant, big; fastness’. In Aiṅkuṛuṅūru the word *vaṅ* is rendered as ‘charity (Elayaperumal 1975) or ‘presenting’ (Jotimuttu 1984).

²⁵ Kiḷli can be a name of a Chola king or a Chola title (PPTI s.v.).

tēr vaṇ pāri (Pura. 118,5)

‘Pāri with abundant chariots’ (according to VIS)

tēr vaṇ kōmāṇ (Aink. 55,2)

‘king who presents chariots’ (Jotimuttu 1984: 184)

And a chariot is ridden by

a charioteer with a strong hand (*kai val pākaṇ, 1x*)²⁶

kaṭu pari nal māṇ koṭiñci neṭu tēr (Aka. 230,11)

kai val pākaṇ paīyena iyakka (Aka. 230,12)

‘a charioteer with strong hand driving slowly (12)
the great chariot (having) a lotus bud (drawn
by) good horses with quick gait’

The kings and/or chieftains’ **hands are wide** (*taṭam kai, 46x*)

taṭam kai vāy vāḷ kuṭṭuvaṇ (Pura. 394,3)

‘Kuṭṭuvaṇ with wide hands and an unfailing (perfect) sword’

ekku viḷaiṅku taṭam kai iyal tēr ceṇṇi (Pura. 61,13)

‘Chola King (Head) with a moving chariot and wide hands with glittering
javelin’

and **liberal** (*kai vaṇ, 18x*)

pāṭunar toṭutta kai vaṇ kōmāṇ (Aka. 100,11)

‘concerning singers liberal-handed **king/chief**’²⁷

²⁶ Two words for ‘charioteer’, viz. *pākaṇ* (total **10x**) as well as *valavaṇ* (total **11x**) seem to appear mostly in the *akam* type of poems.

²⁷ Cf. *pāṭi varuvārai vaḷaittuk koḷḷum kaivaṇmai vāynta kōmāṇ*, lit. ‘king/chief possessing libelarity of hand surrounding/embracing those who come singing’ (Veṅkaṭaçāmi Nāṭṭār and Veṅkaṭaçalam Piḷḷai); *pāṇarkaḷaiyūm pulavarkaḷaiyūm taṇṇoṭu toṭarpu ceytu koṇṭa kaivaṇmaiyaṭaiya aracaṇ*

kaṭu pari puravi kai vaṇ pāri (Aka. 78,22)

‘liberal-handed Pāri with horses of rough swiftness’²⁸

They also have **jewels**²⁹ and **umbrellas** (*kuṭai*, **59x**; e.g. *veḷ kuṭai* ‘white umbrellas’; total **22x**)

veḷ kuṭai pacu pūṇ pāṇṭiyaṇ (Aka. 231,12)

‘Pāṇṭiya (king) with a green jewel (ornament) and a white umbrella’

and they perform **victorious battles** (*vel pōr*, **36x**) or **good battles** (*nal pōr*, **7x**)³⁰

vel pōr cōḷaṇ (Aka. 141,23)

‘Chola (king) (performing) victorious battle(s)’

nal pōr kumaṇa (Puṇa. 164,8)

‘Kumaṇaṇ (performing) good battle(s)’

nal pōr neṭu vēḷ āvi (Aka. 1,3)

‘great chief Āvi (one of the *vēlirs*) (performing) good battle(s)’

‘king having liberality of hand (and) putting singers and bards into contact with himself’ (Cōmacuntaraṇār). Cf. also SVS s.v. *toṭutta* ‘which will encircle’.

²⁸ Cf. *mikka viraivaiyūṭaiya kutiraiyaiyum kaivaṇmaiyaikum uṭaiya pāri*, lit. ‘Pāri having liberality of hand and very quick horses’ (Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār and Veṅkaṭācalam Piḷḷai); *kaṭiya celavinaiyūṭaiya puraviyaiyum kaiyāl vaḷaṅkum vaḷḷaṇmaiyaikum uṭaiya pāri*, lit. ‘Pāri having liberality of giving by hand (practiced by hand) and (having) very horses with very quick gait’ (Cōmacuntaraṇār).

²⁹ The lexeme *pūṇ* ‘ornament, jewel’ is a homophone with several meanings, so its number of occurrences will have to be defined according to the context.

³⁰ Other frequent formulas:

aṭu pōr (**23x**) conquering battle; *viṛal pōr* (**7x**) victorious battle; *neṭu pōr* (**2x**) great battle.

The have a **reputation for liberality** (*vaṇ pukaḷ*, 5x)

urai cāl vaṇ pukaḷ pāri paṛampin (Aka. 303,10)

‘on the hillock of Pāri (having) reputation for liberality³¹ of abundant fame’³²

and in fact, they experience **joy in liberality** (*vaṇ makil*, 14x)³³

āṇā naraviṇ vaṇ makil piṭṭaṇ (Aka. 77, 16)

‘Piṭṭaṇ (having) joy in presenting toddy without interruption’³⁴

vaṇṭu paṭu naraviṇ vaṇ makil pēkaṇ (Aka. 262,16)

‘Pēkaṇ (having) joy in presenting toddy in which bees have fallen’

pal kuṭai kaḷḷiṇ vaṇ makil pāri (Naṛ. 253,7)

‘Pāri who delights in generosity [giving] toddy in many cups’ (Wilden 2008, II: 565)

³¹ Cf. TL s.v. *vaṇ pukaḷ*. The meaning of the complex phrase is explained by modern commentators as follows: *uraittal amainta vaḷaviya pukaḷiṇaiy uṭaiya*, lit. ‘possessing a reputation for liberality consisting in (joined with) telling [i.e. being spoken about] (Vēnkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār and Venkaṭacalam Piḷḷai). Or *ulakeṅkum kūrutarṅ iyaṅra vaḷaviya pukaḷiṇaiy uṭaiya*, lit. ‘possessing a reputation for liberality associated with (consisting in) the speaking everywhere in the world’ (Cōmacuntaraṅār).

³² However, some of the phrases can have slightly varying nuances according to various scholars, cf. SVS s.vv. *urai* ‘the act of saying’; *cāl* ‘abundant’.

³³ This attributive phrase can also be used with other persons, e.g. *vaṇ makil entai* (Aka. 308,8) ‘my Father (having) joy in liberality’; *eyyā vaṇ makil / tantai* (Naṛ. 198,10–11) ‘father (11) who rejoices in unceasing liberality’ (10) (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 141).

³⁴ Cf. *iṭaiyṭ iṅri kaḷḷiṇatu vaḷaviya kaḷippai virumpupavanum ākiya piṭṭaṇ enpavan*, lit. ‘the one called Piṭṭaṇ, who desires the joy of presenting toddy without interruption’ (Cōmacuntaraṅār). Note, however, that Vēnkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār and Venkaṭacalam Piḷḷai interpret the phrase differently (and presumably less correctly): *kaḷḷiṇatu mikka makilcciyaiy uṭaiya piṭṭaṇ*, lit. ‘Piṭṭaṇ (having) great joy of toddy’.

māri vaṇ maḱiḷ ōri (Naṟ. 265,7)

‘Ōri who delights in the rain-like liberality’ (Kandasamy Pillai 2008: 187)

They enjoy

excellence (*cīr keḷu*, **14x**)

cīr keḷu maṇṇar maṟaliya ṇātpiṇ (Aka. 246,10)

‘of/in the war opposed by kings having excellence’

abundant fame (*urai cāl*, **19x**)

urai cāl cīrappiṇ vēntar muṇṇar (Puṟa. 303,6)

‘in front of a king having superiority of abundant fame’³⁵

or **great fame (name)** (*peru peyar*, **36x**)³⁶

peru peyar karikāl (Aka. 141,22; 246,8)

‘Karikāl (having) great fame’

peru peyar taḷumpaṇ (Aka. 227,17)

‘Taḷumpaṇ (having) great fame’

peru peyar cāttāṇ (Puṟa. 178,5)

‘Cāttāṇ (having) great fame’

peru peyar maṇṇarkku (Neṭu. 78)

‘to kings of great fame’

karu kai oḷ vāl peru peyar vaḷuti (Puṟa. 3,13)

‘Vaḷuti (Pāṇṭiya king) (having) great fame, a glittering sword and a big

³⁵ Cf. VIS s.vv. *urai* ‘fame’; *cāl* ‘abundant’.

³⁶ However, this phrase can also occur as an attribute of places and local names: *peru peyar vaḷuti kūṭal* (Aka. 315,7); *peru peyar kūṭal* (Naṟ. 39,10); *peru peyar kaḷḷūr* (Aka. 256,15); *peru peyar paṟampu ē* (Puṟa. 113,7); *peru peyar mūtūr* (Puṟa. 398,11); *peru peyar maturai* (Matu. 699).

hand’

Some of the above attributes occur in combinations, as it could be seen in many of the examples.

However, to make the picture more complete, we should also note the fact that there are some **negative attributes**, such as:

<i>pīṭu il</i>	‘not having/without greatness’ (3x: always with ‘kings’)
<i>pīṭu il maṇṇar</i> (Puṛa. 93,4)	‘kings without greatness’
<i>pīṭu il maṇṇar pōla</i> (Aka. 125,21)	‘like kings without greatness’
<i>pīṭu il maṇṇar pukaḷcci vēṇṭi</i> (Puṛa. 148,5)	‘kings without greatness desiring praise’

These are select attributes of the ‘men of war’. Another topic would be to discuss the questions of totems, tutelary trees, elephants, drums and related symbolical possessions of kingly figures (cf. e.g. Kailasa-pathy 1968, Subrahmanian 1980).

4. Conclusion

This paper could not be exhaustive, the Sangam literature with the various levels of contents is very broad and in fact can still be a rewarding topic for concentrated research, though much has already been done (cf. References). However, the above presentation offers a picture authentically reflecting select data scattered in the texts and at the same time displaying some of the stylistic features, the most important being the formulas repeatedly used with the individual figures. The references to ‘public’ figures are dispersed in both *akam* and *puram* types of poems. Both seem to draw a realistic picture, though in the *akam* poems this information forms a background of a more specific atmosphere of one-to-one human (mostly love) relations, which are emotionally charged. On the other hand, the general atmosphere of the other stream of the Sangam texts—the *puram*—offers a completely different picture, viz. a picture of public activities, duties and obligations not only of the kings, chieftains and tribal chiefs, but also of the male (and also female) population in general. Besides displaying heroism,

the king is also obliged to protect. Perhaps the following poems from *Puṛaṇānūru* can serve as a good counterbalance to the ‘love poems’ of the *akam* genre, and at the same time as the right conclusion of this paper.

<i>nel um uyir aṇṇu ē nīr um uyir aṇṇu ē</i>	(Puṛa. 186,1)
<i>maṇṇaṇ uyirttu ē malar talai ulakam</i>	(Puṛa. 186,2)
<i>ataṇāl yāṇ uyir eṇṇpatu aṇṇikai</i>	(Puṛa. 186,3)
<i>vēl miku tāṇai vēntaṇṇu kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 186,4)

‘Paddy is not life, water is not life. (1)

The King is the life (in) this world of broad expanse. (2)

Therefore knowing ‘I am life’, (3)

The duty of the king is an army with many spears.’ (4)

However, it is not only the king who has obligations, everybody in this world has some duty to fulfil, which is expressed in the following verse with a dynamical gradation:

<i>īṇṇu puṛantarutal eṇ talai kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 312,1)
<i>cāṇṇōṇ ākkutal tantaikku kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 312,2)
<i>vēl vaṇṇittu koṇṇuttal kollaṇṇu kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 312,3)
<i>naṇṇaṇṇai nalkal vēntaṇṇu kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 312,4) ³⁷
<i>oḷṇṇu vāḷ aru camam murukki</i>	(Puṛa. 312,5)
<i>kaḷṇṇu eṇṇintu peyartal kāḷaikkku kaṇṇ ē</i>	(Puṛa. 312,6)

‘Giving birth and protection is the duty on my part (1)

Creating a wise man³⁸ is the duty of the father (2)

³⁷ *Varia lectio taṇṇaṇṇai for naṇṇaṇṇai* appears not to suit the context, though VIS used this variant and explained it as ‘the village in the agricultural tract’ (VIS s.v.; cf. also the TL). The present reading is to be found in Cāminātaiyar’s and Turaicāmiṇṇipṇṇai’s editions. The latter explains it as follows: *nall oḷukkattaik kaṇṇippatu* ‘teaching a good conduct’. The reading is also alliterating with the next lexeme. Though Madhava Menon (2011: 478) also uses the variant *taṇṇaṇṇai*, he translates it as ‘to train him to disport himself properly.’ See also the Italian translation below.

³⁸ This translation follows VIS (s.v. *cāṇṇōṇ*). However, the meaning of *cāṇṇōṇ* is broader, it can also mean ‘great or noble’ person, or even ‘warrior’

Sharpening and giving (him) a lance is the duty of the smith (3)
 Providing good training is the duty of the king (4)
 Winning the rare (or hard) war with a (bright) shining sword (5)
 Felling (killing) an elephant and returning back is the duty of the young
 hero (of the desert tract)' (6)³⁹

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(cf. TL s.v.). Cf. also Italian *un uomo eccellente* (Note 39 below).

³⁹ Cf. the Italian translation by Panattoni (2002):

Metterlo al mondo e allevarlo è mio primo dovere.
 Farne un uomo eccellente è il dovere di suo padre.
 Appuntire una lancia e dargliela è il dovere del fabbro.
 Educarlo alla buona condotta è il dovere del re.
 Far strage con la spada lucente nella terribile battaglia 5
 e tornare dopo aver abbattuto un elefante è il dovere di quel torello.

Concerning the first line, Panattoni underlines the fact that it refers to the mother, who is speaking: Parla la madre di un giovane guerriero (2002: 355, note 127).

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