The Forms and Functions of the Aiyanār Temple Complext : A Preliminary Study on the Cult of Male Godlings in Rural Tamil Nadu

The Forms and Functions of the Aiyanār Temple Complex: A Preliminary Study on the Cult of Male Godlings in Rural Tamil Nadu

Hiroshi YAMASHITA

Nagoya University

INTRODUCTION

Some Prefatory Comments

When seeking to understand the religious phenomena of Indian society, it may be said (provisionally using M. N. Śrinivas's terms; Śrinivas 1952: 214–219) that those elements associated with 'Sanskritic Hinduism' and those associated with the 'local Hinduism' that is centred on particular villages and regions together constitute the dual focus of one's inquiries[1]. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the validity of one's understanding of Indian religious phenomena is largely dependent upon how rational a definition one is able to apply to the different aspects of Hinduism, which may be described in general terms by means of, for example, the above two concepts, and how consistently one is able to interpret them within the context and structure of Hinduism as a whole.

As regards so-called 'Sanskritic Hinduism', considerable light has been shed on its characteristics, primarily in respect to its historical development, as a result of progress in textual studies since the nineteenth century, while details on the subject of so-called 'local Hinduism' too, although by no means adequate, are gradually being made available to academic circles not only by way of the accumulated investigations and reports of local scholars, but also through the analyses undertaken from fresh perspectives by Western ethnologists and anthropologists. Thus these two fields have, as individual topics of research, each been subjected to separate processes of elucidation. But when it comes to presenting a unified reinterpretation that integrates the results of these two processes and conforms with the framework of Hinduism as a whole, the present situation is one of which it can hardly be said that an integrated conception winning the uniform consensus of all scholars is being formulated, notwithstanding the fact that its importance has been pointed out by L. Dumont and others (Tanaka 1981: 93–94). Especially in the case of Japan, it would even seem that a *de facto* separation of roles between philologists and anthropologists has been established by tacit consent, and there is no denying the fact that this, coupled with their diametrically opposed forms of methodology, has led to the creation of a barrier to mutual understanding, which is in turn proving to be a major obstacle to gaining insights into the phenomena under consideration

in their entirety.

This tendency towards an absence of any integrated perception or viewpoint, or towards a disregard for the context as a whole, that is evident in attitudes towards the study of Hinduism is not confined to the relations between different fields of academic research, but may also be similarly discerned in regard to the approaches taken to 'local Hinduism' itself. For example, on account of the fact that overmuch attention has hitherto been focussed on 'goddesses' (especially in research relating to South India), a correspondingly sufficient amount of attention has not been paid to the 'gods', who may be considered to fulfill equally important roles in the religious life of the villagers. One even gains the impression that in the strictly 'segmentary' facts of goddess worship village religion in its 'entirety' is concentrated and compressed and that the corpus of so-called 'local Hinduism' is complete with its system of cults centred on goddesses, and it is probably true to say that this has resulted (even if only unconsciously) in the presentation of a somewhat distorted overall picture of the religious phenomena of Hindu villages.

It is of course an indisputable fact that in religion on the village level the worship of goddesses is especially prominent and that, by way of contrast, cults centred on male deities are relatively inconspicuous. Furthermore, members of the groups of village gods and goddesses do not seem to form couples, nor would a cursory glance at their functions and roles suggest any complementary characteristics. It may also be said that in respect to cosmology and ritual too the members of one group do not of necessity presuppose the existence of the other group or any sharing of roles. In this sense, both systems are self-contained, and there would not appear to exist any interrelations of primary importance between them. But when one considers the fact that, in spite of major contrasts in their character, they share the same village setting, exist side by side within the pantheon of each regional society or village community, and are worshipped conjointly and simultaneously by village members, it would be more natural to suppose that, rather than evolving in complete independence of one another, they coexist by way of some form of common context and links within the framework of the village cult as a whole or the awareness of individual villagers. This is why it is difficult to obtain an overall picture of village religion without a suitable definition of the position of the worship of male deities.

In view of the above considerations, I shall in the present paper bring together the provisional results of textual research and on-the-spot investigations, and by bringing more light than hitherto to bear on the question of 'male deities', which have but rarely received the attention that they deserve, it is my aim to provide a lead towards a total understanding of village Hinduism.

The Present State of Research on Gods and Points at Issue

Although there is yet to appear a scholarly work devoted solely to the subject, the study of the non-Sanskritic male deities to be found in the Hindu villages of South India has by no means been left until now in a state of complete neglect.

Mention of these gods is made, for example, in the reports by W. T. Elmore (1915) and H. Whitehead (1921), which may be described as pioneering achievements in the study of village gods[2], and outlines of their cults were also made known to academic circles by these two scholars. However, not only is the information that they provide on the god cults generally rather limited, but it is also marked by not inconsiderable confusion and factual errors[3], and one is forced to say that their accounts contain too many points open to question for it to be possible to accept them as representing the truth of the matter. One serious shortcoming in particular is the absence of any interest in the existence of a certain hierarchy evident within particular groups of gods, and in the case of Elmore it would even appear that he was totally incognizant of the very fact of this stratification.

A similar state of affairs is to be observed also among contemporary Indian researchers. For example, although Tu. Irāmacāmi (1985: 29–38), who has published a folklife study (*nāṭṭuppuṟa iyal*) of the rites associated with village gods in the district of Tirunelvēli in Tamil Nadu, does recognize the existence of a certain ranking of male gods and the fact of caste differences among groups worshipping different gods, he does not evince any searching interest in the significance of the 'stratification' underlying these phenomena. Generally speaking, in the case of Indian researchers, their work consists of little more than the uncritical enumeration of individual phenomena (—it is of course true that such 'enumerations' greatly benefit our own research—), and one is forced to note the shared absence of any awareness of the existence of a 'structure' or some sort of unifying principle lying beneath these multifarious phenomena.

An analogous tendency may also be partially observed in the report of several surveys of Tamil rural villages conducted in and around 1980 by the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa affiliated to the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Raman and Shanmugam 1983: 38–52). Here the writers' interest is limited to the origins and types of male gods and to the distribution of their temples, and no attention whatsoever is paid to the stratification of the gods and its significance.

It was Dumont who drew attention to the hierarchy obtaining among male gods and examined its relationship to the idea of caste hierarchy, and his arguments and the problems that they involve will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section.

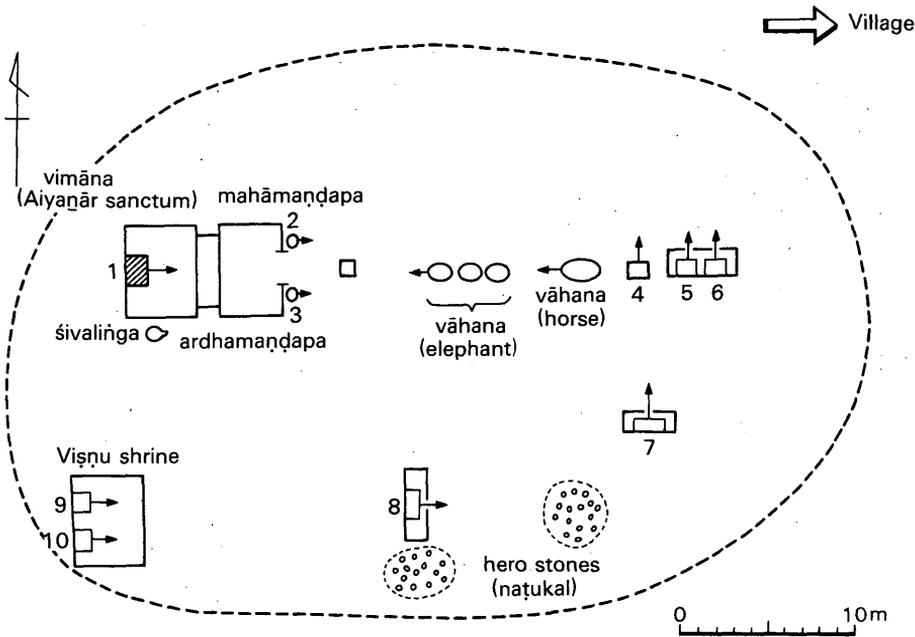### An Outline of the Area Surveyed

The cult of the god Aiyaṉār and related godlings, which constitutes the central theme of the present study, is to be found historically only in southern India south of the Godavari River (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 486), and today, although popular throughout Tamil Nadu, it generally predominates in the southern half of the state, including the Kāvēri delta region (Arunachalam 1977: 46), and there are not a few large-scale temples devoted to the cult. The fieldwork on which the present study is based was undertaken in August and September 1989, and it was conducted in cen-

tral and southern inland Tamil Nadu (cf. Yamashita 1992b), centring on Tirumāṉūr
Panchayat Union in the Ariyalūr Taluk, which lies in the western extremity of
Tiruccirāpaḷḷi District and is separated from Tañcāvūr District by the Koḷḷiṭam
(=Coleroon) River, a tributary of the Kāvēri (Cauvery). I was able to survey a total
of almost one hundred villages, including some in neighbouring Tañcāvūr and
Putukkōṭṭai Districts. This corresponds to so-called Cōḻanāṭu, the region that
was formerly under the sway of the Chola dynasty (9th–13th century).

Tirumāṉūr, the main area surveyed, belongs to the 'Kāvēri Delta' in the broad

① Tiruccirappāḷḷi District
② Putukkōṭṭai District
③ Tañcāvūr District
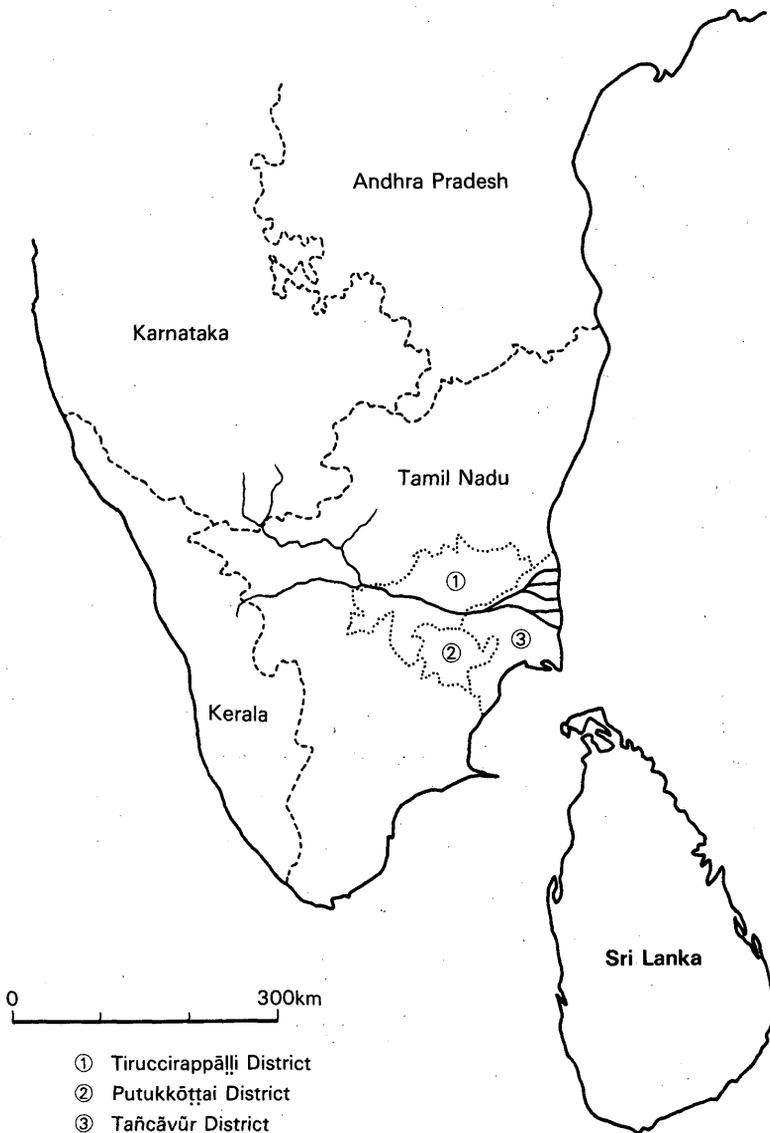
Map 1 Areas surveyed

Map 2 Plan of a typical Aiyaṉār temple complex (Aiyaṉār Temple, Kīlavaṇṇam village)

The legend for the map:

1 Aiyaṉār
2 Dvarapālaka (entrance guardian)
3 Dvārapālaka (entrance guardian)
4 Celliyamman (goddess)
5 Ceṅkamala-āṉtavar
6 Muṉicuxarar (=Muṉiyaṉ)
7 Karuppaiya-cuvami (=Kaṟuppu)
8 Marutaiyāṉ (=Maturaiviraṉ)
9 Hanumāṉ
10 Rāma

sense of the term[4]). It is farmed by means of irrigation cultivation sustained by a plenteous underground water system, and it constitutes a rich granary. Hence my fieldwork was, needless to say, undertaken primarily in wetlands, but nearby drylands and intermediate areas were also included as the occasion demanded. The caste composition of this region varies considerably from one village to the next, but the Mūppaṉār and Paṭaiyācci(Vaṉṉiyar) generally predominate, and there are also some villages where the Mutturāyar (Mutturāja) constitute the dominant caste.

In conducting my investigations, my primary objective was to gain a faithful grasp of the general characteristics and overall features of the cult by gathering and examining as much general information on Aiyaṉār and related deities and cults as could be obtained from the villagers. At the same time, I also endeavoured on all occasions to cover and record to the greatest possible extent the sequence of rites,

festivals and consecrations (*abhiṣeka*) related to these deities.

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AIYANĀR CULT

Within the group of male deities related to Aiyaṇār that may be found in the villages of present-day Tamil Nadu, it is practically only Aiyaṇār himself whose name has been clearly preserved in written literature and whose historical evolution may be traced to any degree. This fact is in itself sufficient to suggest a difference in the nature of Aiyaṇār's background when compared with that of other gods, and in this section I shall accordingly focus primarily on Aiyaṇār, presenting an overview of the origins and development of his cult with reference to the fruits of philological research.

The Question of Aiyaṇār's Appellations

There is not necessarily any generally accepted explanation of the etymology of the name 'Aiyaṇār' (or Ayyaṇār). The word '*aiyaṇār*' is composed of '*aiyaṇ*' and the honoric affix '*-ār*' (deriving from the plural suffix), and when examining its etymology, it therefore becomes necessary to inquire into the etymology of '*aiyaṇ*'. Although there are some who seek the etymological origins of '*aiyaṇ*' in pure Tamil (Oppert 1893: 505; cf. Arunachalam 1977: 17–18), the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (*DED* 163, *DEDR* 196) and *Tamil Lexicon* (p. 580) give 'father', 'sage', 'teacher', 'master', etc., as the basic meanings of '*aiyaṇ*' and suggest that it derives from Sanskrit '*ārya*' (Pāli '*ayya*'). (It is, therefore, also cognate with Tamil '*aiyar*', denoting 'Brahman' or 'Brahmin'.) This may be regarded as a reasonable view (cf. Adiceam 1967: 10). There appears a mere single instance of the use of '*aiyaṇ*' in the Caṅkam poems representing the oldest literary sources of the Tamil language, but it occurs in the *Kalittokai*, 43.5 (4th–6th century ?), a work belonging to the newer stratum of texts, and there is moreover no positive evidence suggesting that it here refers to the god Aiyaṇār[5].

Several of the medieval Āgama texts refer to this god by the name 'Āriya', and in the late-sixteenth-century Tamil lexicon *Akarāti-nikaṇṭu* 'Cāttaṇ' (that is, the god Aiyaṇār) is given as one of the meanings of '*aiyaṇ*' (Adiceam 1967: 10–11). One should, however, be mindful of the fact that the terms '*aiyaṇ*' and '*aiyaṇār*' appear on the whole but rarely in written sources.

'Cāttaṇ', another name by which the god Aiyaṇār is known, is generally considered to derive from Sanskrit '*śāstā*' ('teacher', 'ruler', 'king', 'father') (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 487–488), but there are some who derive it from Tamil '*cāttu*' ('trade caravan'; < Skt. *sārtha*), and there is no consensus on the matter (cf. Arunachalam 1977: 18–19; Clothey 1982: 36)[6]. The word '*cāttaṇ*' would appear to have been widely used as a proper noun in ancient Tamil Nadu, and many poets of the Caṅkam period (*ca.* 1st–3rd century) are known to have used the name 'Cāttaṇ' (or its honorific form 'Cāttaṇār') (Subrahmanian 1966: 354–356; Arunachalam

1977: 19–20; Clothey 1982: 36; Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 102–103).   As an example of 'Cāttaṉ' apparently used to refer to some divine entity, mention may be made of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (*ca*. 1st century B.C.–3rd century A.D.?), 395.21 (Clothey 1982: 36).   Be that as it may, it is by no means clear what exactly the terms '*aiyaṉ*' and '*cāttaṉ*' denote in texts predating the *bhakti* period.

The Historical Development of the Aiyaṉār Cult

In this subsection I wish to give an outline of movements in the Aiyaṉār cult from since the time of the *bhakti* period, and I shall refer primarily to the study by F. W. Clothey (1982: 37–49).

As a deity, Aiyaṉār-Śāstā emerges in the sixth to eighth centuries, but in the period prior to this Buddhist and Jaina elements must also not be overlooked, and it is no easy matter to ascertain the character of his cult at this early stage.   'Cāttaṉ' and '*aiyaṉ*' would also seem to have been titles given to Buddhist and Jaina sages at the time.   He is said to have been worshipped as a tutelary god by Jains or at Jaina temples, and iconographical similarities with the present-day god Aiyaṉār have also been pointed out (Arunachalam 1977: 23–24).   Aiyaṉār's tutelary character may therefore be considered to go back to at least prior to the sixth to eighth centuries (Arunachalam 1977: 32).

Tamil Hinduism began to flourish from the seventh and eighth centuries onwards, supplanting Buddhism and Jainism, which had been popular prior to this time, and the Aiyaṉār-Śāstā cult too, coming under the influence of especially Śaivism, was forced to undergo various changes and gradually became ever more Hinduized.   In the *Tēvāram* by Appar (Tirunāvukkaracu; 6th–7th century) Cāttaṉ is mentioned as Śiva's son[7], thus indicating that this god was already being incorporated into myths relating to Śiva.

It was during the Chola period that the importance of Śāstā increased and his aspects as a god associated with the great tradition came to the fore (Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 106–107).   Inscriptions referring to him appear in the eighth to ninth centuries and further increase from the tenth century onwards, and it is known from the content of these inscriptions that by the tenth or eleventh century Śāstā had come to be enshrined on the south side of many villages under Chola rule. This would mean that his position as a village god too was in the process of being established.   In addition, inscriptions and other historical sources indicate that temples dedicated to Aiyaṉār, while under the patronage of the landowning class as well as of kings and Brahmans, also received donations from villagers in general and that Aiyaṉār functioned also as their lineage god.

In Kerala, on the other hand, again on the basis of epigraphical sources, the worship of this god by tribal chieftains may be traced back as far as the eighth to ninth centuries.   Poems dedicated to him in the fourteenth century are already sufficiently charged with the devotional atmosphere to suggest that the cult here was gradually diverging from the Tamil course of development.   In a history dating from the sixteenth century Śāstā is described as the guardian of Kerala.   Generally

speaking, there were strong ties between this god and kingship in Kerala, and his links with Vaiṣṇavas are also older and closer than in Tamil Nadu. Today Aiyaṇār is known in Kerala by the name of 'Aiyappaṇ' and is gaining enormous popularity as an important *bhakti* god, thus presenting a marked contrast to the Aiyaṇār cult in Tamil Nadu, where it would appear to have been on the decline since the end of the last century (Adiceam 1967: 97). There are many points of considerable interest in the Aiyappaṇ faith of Kerala, but I shall defer a consideration of these to another occasion, and in the present study I wish to proceed with my inquiry by focussing on the Aiyaṇār cult as it has evolved in Tamil Nadu.

Myths Relating to Aiyaṇār

There has been preserved a Purāṇic tale relating to the birth of Aiyaṇār-Śāstā. According to this tale he was born to Viṣṇu (Hari) and Śiva (Hara) and is therefore known in Sanskrit as 'Hariharaputra' ('son of Hari and Hara'). There are many variations of the tale of his birth, but it may be summarized as follows:

A conflict over the ambrosia (*amṛta*) that had been obtained by churning the Ocean of Milk broke out between the gods(*deva*) and the antigods(*asura*). Viṣṇu transformed himself into a charming damsel named Mohinī and, cunningly bewitching the Asuras with her beauty, succeeded in obtaining the ambrosia for the gods. Śiva, having conceived a desire for her immediately upon setting eyes on her, embraced her, and as a result a son Aiyaṇār was born to the two gods (Krishna Sastri 1916: 230; Arunachalam 1977: 20–21; Clothey 1982: 42–43)[8].

According to a folk-etymological explanation that has gained some currency, Mohinī received Śiva's seed in the palm of her hand, and because the child was born from this, he was named 'Kaiyaṇār' (← *kai*: 'hand'), and this was corrupted to 'Aiyaṇār' (Adiceam 1967: 92; Arunachalam 1977: 20). (But this explanation cannot be said to be particularly prevalent among villagers in general.) A number of other myths relating to Aiyaṇār are also known (Arunachalam 1977: 21), but it may be said that, with the exception of the birth tale, the mythical facts concerning Aiyaṇār hardly ever enter the consciousness of the villagers in the course of their daily life[9].

The first account hinting at the birth of Aiyaṇār as resulting from the union of Viṣṇu and Śiva appears in the Tamil lexicon *Piṅkala-nikaṇṭu*, thought to date from somewhere between the eighth and thirteenth centuries (Clothey 1982: 42). Here this god is referred to by the name 'Arikaraputtiraṇ' (< Skt. Hariharaputra), meaning 'son of Viṣṇu and Śiva'. Although there is a possibility that the germs of the tale of Aiyaṇār-Śāstā's birth may be traced back to Sanskrit sources of the eighth to ninth centuries or even earlier (Clothey 1982: 42–43), for a more detailed account one must wait until the Tamil Purāṇa *Kanta-purāṇam* (by Kacciyappa-civācāriyar) dating from the fourteenth (?) century[10]. Thus Aiyaṇār-Śāstā's links with the Vaiṣṇavas surfaced in Tamil Nadu somewhat later than those with the Śaivas, gradually becoming more marked in the tenth to eleventh centuries and later, and they were further strengthened by royal patronage from the mid-

thirteenth century onwards (Clothey 1982: 43).

The Iconographical Features of Aiyaṉār
     The iconographical features of this god are described in detail in the Purāṇas
and Āgamas (Adiceam 1967: 24–57; Gopinatha Rao 1914: 488–490), but initial
references appear, as in the case of the inscriptions, in the eighth to ninth centuries
(Clothey 1982: 38).   A Tamil lexicon *Tivākaram* (early 8th century?) cites five
names for this god: 1) Kōḻikkoṭiyōṉ ('he who has the cock on his banner'), 2)
Cātavākaṉaṉ (?), 3) Kāri ('black one'), 4) Kaṭaniṟavaiyaṉ ('he who is the colour
of the sea'), and 5) Cāttaṉ (Clothey: 1982: 38).   This would suggest that the
iconographical form of this god was already evolving at the time.   An image of
Śāstā (8th century) unearthed in the vicinity of the Pallavan village of Uttaramērūr
is already endowed with the basic features to be seen in images today (Gros et
Nagaswamy 1970: 89 and Fig. 13; Clothey 1982: 38).

     Among the above five appellations, 2) is considered by some to mean 'he who
rides a (white) elephant' (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 488; Clothey 1982: 38), but the
validity of this interpretation is open to question[11].   There are also some who take
'*cāta*' to mean 'horse' (cf. Adiceam 1967: 12), and although it is difficult to deter-
mine whether Aiyaṉār's original *vāhana* (vehicle or mount) was an elephant or a
horse[12], it may perhaps be said that classical literature would tend to support the
former.   This inconsistency or "confusion" surrounding his *vāhana* has been
carried over by the cult as it exists today.

     According to the aforementioned *Piṅkala-nikaṇṭu*, Aiyaṉār, son of Hari and
Hara, rides a white elephant, holds a '*ceṇṭu*' in his right hand[13], is flanked by two
consorts, the goddesses Pūraṇai (< Skt. Pūraṇā) and Puṭkalai (< Skt. Puṣkalā)[14],
is a *yogin*, and has the role of a protector of the Dharma (Clothey 1982: 42).   One
Sanskrit text (*Suprabhedāgama*) gives the names of his two consorts as Madanā and
Varṇanī (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 489), and there are also instances in which he is said
to be accompanied by his consort Prabhā and his son Satyaka (Adiceam 1967: 52–
53).

     Aiyaṉār is usually depicted as a youth with his hair erect and with a peaceful
countenance (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 488; Clothey 1982: 39), but it is also known
from textual sources that he very occasionally assumes a wrathful aspect (Adiceam
1967: 26; Kaṉakarattiṉam 1986: 107)[15].   He wears a sacred thread (Skt. *ya-
jñopavīta*) and sits with one knee raised in the pose known in Sanskrit as *sukhāsana,
yogāsana* or *vīrāsana*(cf. Figs. 1 and 2), but in later times he is generally shown with
his raised knee held in position with a yogic band called a *yoga-paṭṭa* (Adiceam
1967: 26; Clothey 1982: 39).   The use of a sacred thread would suggest that this
deity embodies in some form or another Brahmanical or Sanskritic values.

     The outward appearance of Aiyaṉār himself reflects nothing other than the fact
that he is a *yogin* or *brahmacārin* (Clothey 1982: 42; Gopinatha Rao 1914: 488).
But at the same time his attendance by two consorts, together with the presence of
his son Satyaka, is indicative of his character as a *gṛhastha* or householder, and this

would suggest that his image oscillates between that of a householder and that of a renouncer. This ambiguity of character, in particular its duality or two-sidedness, is also to be seen in other South Indian gods, especially Murukaṉ[16], and is worth noting.

Another god with the dual image of householder and religious practitioner (*saṃnyāsin*) is Śiva, and similarities and correspondences may be observed between Aiyaṉār and Śiva in other respects too. Dumont has already considered this question, and I wish to leave details, including an examination of the validity of his conclusions, to another occasion.

At all events, the information to be gleaned from literary sources on Aiyaṉār and the related group of gods is extremely fragmentary and limited, and one has to admit that it is too scant to enable one to clarify the actual state of the cult in former times. Moreover, whatever the origins and history of these gods might have been, these facts are not of any primary importance in at least the sphere of actual religious life, and it is therefore impossible to elucidate the true significance of such beliefs in contemporary villages on the basis of historical research and analysis based on literary sources alone. It is for this reason that fieldwork becomes indispensable.

THE AIYAṈĀR CULT IN THE VILLAGES OF PRESENT-DAY TAMIL NADU[17]

An Outline of the Aiyaṉār Temple Complex

As was noted earlier, the god Aiyaṉār is worshipped in almost all parts of Tamil Nadu, but his cult is especially popular in the central and southern parts of the state where I conducted my survey, and large temples are also more numerous here than in other regions. The above-all most distinctive feature of Aiyaṉār is the fact that this god is almost without exception enshrined together with other male deities within the same temple. In other words, within the precincts of an 'Aiyaṉār temple' there will be found not only a sanctuary dedicated to Aiyaṉār, but also invariably the shrine/s of another god or gods. Hence an Aiyaṉār temple will as a matter of course constitute a 'temple complex', and Aiyaṉār is looked upon by the villagers as representing the 'chief god', as it were, of the gods enshrined together within the same temple[18]. This fact has often been overlooked by researchers, and by this oversight they must be considered to have overlooked a phenomenon of some importance when considering the essence of Aiyaṉār and his cult.

The types of gods that appear together with Aiyaṉār are generally fixed (with some minor regional differences), and one may mention as representative of them Karuppu, Maturaivīraṉ[19] and Muṉiyaṉ (= Muṉiyāṇṭi)[20]. But they are not all enshrined together within a single Aiyaṉār temple; it is only that some among them are invariably installed in an Aiyaṉār temple. A temple complex will also often have large numbers of hero stones(*vīrakkal* or *naṭukal*) and *satī* stones[21]. In addition

to the male deities, certain goddesses will also be frequently found enshrined within the temple compound[22], but they are all goddesses wanting in individuality or a strong sense of being, and they are confined to rather subordinate roles. These goddesses who appear together with Aiyaṉār clearly differ in lineage and character from the powerful goddesses such as Māriyammaṉ and Kāḷiyammaṉ who are worshipped independently and also become the objects of the villagers' ardent faith.

Unlike the temples of deities such as the above Māriyammaṉ, which occupy important sites within the village[23], the Aiyaṉār temple is usually located on the village outskirts or on the boundary with a neighbouring village. It is, therefore, shown scant regard by the villagers except when a festival or some similar event is held, and the compound is usually left in a state of total neglect(cf. Fig. 3). In principle the temple should be situated near the 'water's edge' (nīrturai), beside, for example, a river, reservoir or pond[24], and to the southwest of a village (ūr), but it may also be found to the northeast (Arunachalam 1977: 43)[25]. Because of subsequent movements by the settlement, however, the direction in which it lies as seen from the present position of the village will not infrequently be found to be at variance with this principle. In the present survey, images of Aiyaṉār himself were often seen to be facing east (see also n. 43).

The size of the temple compound ranges in width from about ten metres to almost one hundred metres. The configuration of the temple grounds is of no particular shape, and it is not unusual to find that the extent of the precincts is not even clearly defined. Generally speaking, it may be observed that the more favoured a temple's economic conditions (vacati) are and the more sophisticated it becomes, the greater the tendency is for it to be surrounded by walls and for the compound to become square in shape in the manner of Hindu temples of the great tradition.

As regards the architectural style of the temples too, in cases of some sophistication they will consist of a vimāna or main sanctuary with, although small in scale, a maṇḍapa (anterior halls), ardhamaṇḍapa, antarāla(anteroom) and garbhagṛha 'sanctum sanctorum', and one will even see complex temple buildings with a structure resembling a śikhara or spire surmounting the vimāna. But apart from such cases, the structure is generally very simple, and it is by no means rare to find no building or permanent structure at all within the temple grounds(cf. Fig. 3)

During the night, Aiyaṉār and his attendant gods (parivāra-teyvaṅkaḷ, parivāra-mūrttikaḷ) are believed to mount elephants or horses and to patrol (vēṭṭai)[26] the village, thereby protecting it from demons and other external enemies. It is maintained that it is for this reason that their temple is located on the outskirts of the village. Because of this role of theirs, they are collectively known as kāval-teyvam ('tutelary gods'), kāppu-teyvam (do.) or ūr-kāval ('village guardians'), and in many of the temples a stucco or terra-cotta figure of an elephant or horse is placed facing each of the divine images(cf. Figs. 4 and 5). But on the other hand, as is indicated by the Tamil proverb to the effect that "a god resides in all the bricks of an Aiyaṉār temple,"[27] Aiyaṉār and the other gods enshrined in the temple complex will frequently be seen to be symbolically represented by small and

somewhat flat stone pillars or bricks, one for each god(cf. Fig. 6; Perumāḷ 1990: 23). It is also possible to point out cases, although rare, in which there is no *pativu* or object representing the 'divine' at all (cf. Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 16–17, 29–30).

The above proverb may be said to clearly show 1) that a plurality of gods is en-shrined in an Aiyaṉār temple, 2) that it is common to find that these gods are represented by objects such as simple bricks, and 3) that this has become a matter of common knowledge for the villagers. As will be explained below, in the cult cen-tred on Aiyaṉār the representation of the god's 'form' (*uruvam*) by means of concrete images is not of any essential importance.

The position of priest (*pūcāri*) is often filled by a person of Paṇṭāram birth(cf. Fig. 7), but villages in which other non-Brahman priests fulfill these duties are also found[28]. In the case of temples that have undergone a certain degree of sophistica-tion, Brahman priests may also participate in the rites on the occasion of *pūjās* and other rituals (cf.Fig. 8).

The Basic Character of Aiyaṉār

Notwithstanding the fact that Aiyaṉār is regarded as the leader of the group of male deities, within the village pantheon he is not by any means an individual or con-spicuous figure (Clothey 1982: 43). As was noted earlier, he has since ancient times been attributed the role of 'protector of the Dharma' and 'preserver of order'[29], and this aspect of his has in principle been preserved down to the present day. In point of fact, it is customary in some villages to refer to him as the 'god of truth' (*mey-teyvam, meyyāṉa teyvam*), and he is held in high regard by the populace as an impartial god presiding over justice[30]. As a guardian of the land (*kṣetrapāla*) (Op-pert 1893: 507–508; Adiceam 1967: 55, 78, 95), his primary duty is the safeguarding (*kāval*) of the village as a whole, but he also evidences that facet of a god concerned with rainfall, which exerts a great influence on the harvest (Caṉmukacuntaram 1986: 220). That the temples dedicated to this god are often situated near water is no doubt not unconnected with this fact.

Such functions may be said to be linked to the order and welfare of the village or communal society (*samutāyam*) as a whole rather than to the direct interests of the individual villagers. In this sense, Aiyaṉār is endowed with a largely public character and is basically a god belonging to the village as a whole (*ūrukkup potuvāṉa teyvam*), and it is to be surmised that he is a deity not readily conceived of as an object of prayers (*vēṇṭutal, pirārttaṉai*) born of purely personal motives[31]. Aiyaṉār is frequently referred to by the title '*āṇṭavar*', corresponding to the San-skrit '*īśvara*' ('supreme god'), and this fact in itself would suggest that he is a figure reflecting a view of the divine of a higher order, removed from the plane of personal prayer.

Although the appellation 'Aiyaṉ' is occasionally used when referring to this god, he is usually called 'Aiyaṉār' by the villagers, this being an honorific title form-ed by the suffixation of the honorific suffix '-ār' (deriving from the plural

indicator). This is a point worth noting, and within the village milieu he is but rarely referred to by names suggestive of proper nouns without any honorific affix, such as the 'Cāttaṉ'(Śāstā) and 'Arikaraputtiraṉ'(Hariharaputra) appearing in literary sources. By way of contrast, in the case of important gods such as Śiva (Civaṉ) or Subrahmaṇya(Murukaṉ), who serve as the objects of personal *bhakti* in Hinduism, it is general practice to use a name without any honorific affix. They are, in other words, referred to without any honorific title, whereas Aiyaṉār is usually 'mistered', as it were, and from this it is to be inferred that the emotions and attitudes of the villagers towards him are somewhat distant.

Judging from the results of my own investigations, Aiyaṉār is a so-called 'vegetarian god', and no offerings (*paṭaiyal*) of sacrificial animals (*pali*) are made to him (cf. Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 125)[32].

The Character of Aiyaṉār's Attendant Gods

The situation differs somewhat, however, in the case of Karuppu, Maturaivīraṉ and the other gods of Aiyaṉār's entourage.

If we consider for example Karuppu, we find that, in addition to being called simply 'Karuppu' or 'Karuppaṉ' without any honorific title, he is also widely known by names to which has been added '*aṇṇaṉ*', denoting 'elder brother', such as 'Karuppaṇṇaṉ', 'Karuppa(ṉ)ṇa-cuvāmi' and 'Periyaṇṇa-cuvāmi'[33], thereby indicating that he is treated with a certain sense of familiarity by the villagers (cf. Raman and Shanmugam 1983: 44). Many variants of Karuppu are known to exist—for example, Ākāca-karuppu (Karuppu of 'Space'), Ūmai-karuppu ('Dumb' Karuppu), Noṇṭi-karuppu ('Lame' Karuppu), Caṅkili-karuppu (Karuppu of the 'Chain') and Ellai-karuppu (Karuppu of the 'Boundary')[34]—and when these are also taken into account, it would suggest that the god Karuppu is generally regarded by the villagers with considerable interest.

In the case of Maturaivīraṉ too, whose popularity rivals that of Karuppu, an honorific title is not usually used, and he is either called simply 'Maturaivīraṉ' or known by the name 'Marutaiyāṉ', which is probably a contraction of 'Maturaivīraṉ'[35]. In Tiruccirāpaḷḷi District he is usually ranked next to Karuppu (Ci. Irāmacāmi 1982–84: 65), while in Tirunelvēli District Karuppu and Maturaivīraṉ are often confused with one another, and there have also been instances reported in which the latter is included within the scope of the former (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 38).

Muṉiyaṉ (Muṉiyāṇṭi), another god sometimes appearing in Aiyaṉār temple complexes, will in some cases be ranked next to Karuppu, and in villages where Karuppu is absent he may even act as proxy for him (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 40). Although in regard to his origins connections with Buddhism and Jainism have frequently been noted (Clothey 1982: 50; Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 42), today he is generally conceived of as an ambivalent or preeminently evil god, and this fact may also be inferred from the following proverb: "Muṉiyaṉ, disliked by everyone, is like Caṉiyaṉ, that is, Saturn (the evil planet disliked by everyone)" (Jensen

1897: 306 [no. 2765]). Muṇiyaṉ is also sometimes referred to by the 'honorific title' of 'Muṇīcuvaraṉ' (←'muni' + '-īśvara'), but in this case the honorific title should be regarded as giving expression to emotions of fear and the corresponding sentiments of dislike and distance, and one is advised to distinguish it from the case of Aiyaṉār[36].

Gods such as Karuppu, Maturaivīraṉ and Muṇiyaṉ are often repre-sented by stone images scored with rough carvings or simply by erect stones, bricks or tridents(triśūla)(cf. Fig. 14), but when made the subject of distinct artistic repre-sentations, they often assume a wrathful appearance, and the beholder will be overwhelmed by a huge concrete or stucco image (generally seated) sometimes rising to three or four metres in height(cf. Figs. 10 and 11).

Because these gods are believed to occasionally exert adverse influence on the daily life of man, they are sometimes collectively known as 'tuṣṭa-tēvatai' or 'evil gods'[37]. Partly on account of their fearsome (payaṅkaramāṉa, tuṭiyāṉa) appearance when represented in the form of an image, they are worshipped by the villagers with a '(submissive) devotion marked by fear (payam)', described as 'paya-pakti' (< Skt. bhaya-bhakti). Through the medium of the individual's pressing emotions of 'fear', these gods arouse a personal rapport with each of the villagers[38] and even come to function as the objects of 'vows' (vēṇṭutal, pirārttaṉai) for the fulfillment of their private prayers. This attitude on the part of the villagers may be said to be in direct contrast to that espoused towards Aiyaṉār. In a word, Aiyaṉār treats the villagers as a 'whole', whereas the other gods treat them as 'individuals'.

In the case of these gods, the practice of severe penances (tavam, viratam) such as may be observed in the cults of goddesses—fasting and abstinence (unnāviratam), fire walking (tīmiti), kāvaṭi, etc. —is not required, but instead sacrifices (kāvu) using a he-goat (kaṭā) are often performed(cf. Figs. 12 and 13). In addition, it is also general practice to make offerings of liquor (cārāyam) to Maturaivīraṉ (Ci. Irāmacāmi 1982–84: 65).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AIYAṈĀR AND HIS ATTENDANT GODS

Dumont's Understanding and Related Problems

At this stage I wish to consider the role of the god Aiyaṉār within the village pantheon with reference to a monograph by the French anthropologist Louis Dumont (1953: 255–270; see also Dumont 1986: 440–448).

Dumont interprets Aiyaṉār and his entourage of male deities in roughly the following fashion. First, while recognizing on the one hand that the character of the god Aiyaṉār is "ill-defined" (sa personalité mal définie), he conceives of the god Karuppu as lying structurally at the opposite pole to Aiyaṉār, and he posits a scheme involving a clear-cut conceptual distinction and opposition between the two. Dumont seeks to understand this conceptual contrast within a bipolar

framework by regarding it as a transference or projection of social relations such those obtaining between upper castes and lower castes, vegetarian castes and non-vegetarian castes, pure castes and impure castes, and Brahmans and Untouchables. He perceives, in other words, a reflection or analogy of the social institutions and hierarchy of the village community in the striking contrast between the character of these two gods.

This type of dualistic interpretation grounded in the notions of purity and impurity is Dumont's forte, but upon having attempted to verify the validity of his views on the basis of the results of on-the-spot investigations, it behoves me to point out that in many respects they do not accord with the actual situation.

Dumont defines Karuppu as "the black god" (*le dieu noir*) and emphasizes the contrast with "the pure god" (*le dieu pur*), namely, Aiyaṇār. He moreover develops his argument by unconditionally regarding Karuppu as being 'black' in colour, a colour which he considers to suggest the lower castes (Dumont 1953: 270), but this assumption is not without its problems.

Firstly, the meaning of the name 'Karuppu' is open to further consideration. There is a general tendency to interpret the word 'karuppu' in the sense of 'black (one)' (Caṇmukacuntaram 1986: 222)[40], but this meaning is also closely linked to the meanings of 'become angry', 'be at enmity', 'become dirty', etc. (*DED* 1175, 1176; *DEDR* 1395, 1396), and it is no easy matter to determine which corresponds to the original meaning of 'Karuppu'. In point of fact, images of Karuppu that are pale in colour (or skin-coloured) are not uncommon (cf. Fig. 13), although it is indeed true that images of Karuppu are often dark-blue in colour. But here one cannot exclude the possibility that, because of an association of Karuppu's name with that of Kṛṣṇa (cf. Kaṇakarattiṇam 1986: 222), there evolved on a secondary level an identification of Karuppu with Kṛṣṇa and that, when making images of Karuppu, it eventually became customary to use dark-blue in imitation of images of Kṛṣṇa (cf. Dumont 1986: 409). In actual fact, the villagers often do look upon Karuppu as an incarnation(*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu, and it is not unusual to find the forehead of images of Karuppu marked with a *nāmam*, the sign of God Viṣṇu or his devotees.

In his study, Dumont appears to be taking great care not to define Aiyaṇār as being white in colour in contrast to Karuppu's black. There is considerable latitude in the prescriptions of Aiyaṇār's colour, including golden, silken, blue, white and black, and he is in fact generally described as being of a dark complexion, with some texts, as has already been noted, calling him 'Kāri' ('black one') (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 488–490; Adiceam 1967: 27). It is thus obvious that from a philological standpoint too it is inappropriate to uncondtionally regard Aiyaṇār as being white in colour. In his discussion of the 'two consorts' to be found in attendance upon various South Indian gods, however, Dumont states that the divine consort from the upper caste is white in colour (*teint clair*) while the other is dark in colour (*teint foncé*) (Dumont 1953: 270). If this should be the case, then why is Aiyaṇār, whom Dumont considers to represent Brahmanical values, not always white? Dumont

has not been able to give a convincing explanation for this anomaly.

Furthermore, the large image of a god fair-complexioned (or skin-coloured) and wearing a sacred thread is often to be seen standing next to a dark-blue image of Karuppu. This god is, however, a so-called 'meat-eating' god (such as Muniyan), differing from Aiyanār, and, according to Dumont, belongs to the line of 'inferior gods' (*dieux inférieurs*) representing projections of non-Brahman castes. In addition, large black (or blue) images of gods usually representing Karuppu sometimes wear a sacred thread, while images of Maturaivīran, who is often a 'meat-eating' god, are also frequently found with a sacred thread. How are these facts to be explained by Dumont's logic?

In the final analysis, discussions of the iconographical features of the gods found in Aiyanār temple complexes are not necessarily of any intrinsic significance. It has already been noted that Aiyanār and the gods of his entourage are not always represented by means of 'images' (*paṭimam* < Skt. *pratimā*) endowed with established iconographical features (*uruvam, vaṭivu*). It is of course possible to suppose that there first existed a concrete (iconographical) conception and that this was later simplified to forms such as stones and bricks for economic and other reasons affecting the faithful (that is the villagers). But if this should have been the case, then one would expect to find a similar state of affairs in regard to, for example, Śiva and Viṣṇu. But it is quite inconceivable that Śiva or Viṣṇu should be represented by a mere stone or brick. This is probably because (at least in the context of their cults) these gods are inseparably connected with the notion of anthropomorphism and constitute a fundamental part of their devotees' conception of the divine. In the case of Aiyanār and his entourage, on the other hand, it is to be surmised that because, on account of a different conception of the divine, there is no absolute need to attribute concrete characteristics to a 'god', there is no great psychological resistance to expressing manifestations of the divine by means of a fetish, and that therefore such examples are to be observed on a daily basis. In the case of Aiyanār temple complexes, the presence or absence of any image and the extent to which the image is anthromorphically carved are largely matters of arbitrary choice and are of only secondary importance[41]. Consequently, it is difficult for iconographical differences to serve as meaningful criteria in determining the essential nature of the gods found in these temple complexes.

Next, Dumont classifies the village gods into the two categories of 'pure' (*cuttam*) and 'impure' (*acuttam*) and, defining Aiyanār as 'pure' and Karuppu as 'impure', stresses the contrast between the two (Dumont 1953: 264). But in actual practice it will be found that there is a tendency among the villagers to carefully avoid applying the opposite concept of '*acuttam*' to other village gods. The very notion or expression 'impure god' is regarded as objectionable by the villagers. A similar state of affairs may be discerned in the fact that although they may use the term 'good god' (*nalla cāmi*), they avoid the expression 'wicked god' (*keṭṭa cāmi*)[42]. One cannot, of course, on this account immediately conclude that there exists no contrast between 'pure' and 'impure' among the gods. According to Nishimura

(1987: 59), all gods are 'pure,' and in the light of the above facts, setting aside the question of the validity of Nishimura's arguments, the soundness of interpreting the nature of village gods by containing them within a scheme based on a dichotomy of pure and impure must be subjected to careful scrutiny. As may be inferred from Tamil classical literature, since ancient times the 'impure' has as a source of mystical power had a particularly important significance in religious terms in Dravidian society. A conception of the divine distinctly different from North Indian notions, attributing as they do positive and sacred values to above all 'purity' and 'light', was current in the South Indian society of ancient times (cf. Hart 1979: 15–17). If the cults centred on the male deities of the village should be in some way connected with this ancient indigenous conception of the divine, then one must naturally be wary of applying to them values associated with the contrasting Sanskritic system based on the concepts of purity and impurity. Supposing, for example, that Aiyaṉār should be informed with a certain Brahmanical value or conception of the divine, there is a possibility that the criteria of purity and impurity applied to Aiyaṉār may not have any meaning as criteria in regard to Karuppu and similar gods. The single criterion of purity/impurity may serve as an effective yardstick for entities belonging to the same logical scheme, but one cannot expect it to serve as a yardstick when applied to a different semantic system (cf. Sekine 1986).

Dumont presents a clear-cut schema according to which vegetarian gods (such as Aiyaṉār) always face north, while Karuppu and other meat-eating gods face south (Dumont 1953: 264). But in view of the results of my own investigations, this assertion must also be called into question. In the case of Aiyaṉār, as has already been noted, images facing east predominate, while in regard to Karuppu and other attendant gods no particularly noticeable tendency could be ascertained, and it is not at all unusual to find them even facing the same direction as Aiyaṉār[43]. Simplification and typologization are, in fact, not possible when considering the direction in which images of the gods face.

On the subject of priests, Dumont states that, ideally speaking, there are two types, namely, those attending on Aiyaṉār and those attending on Karuppu and the other gods (Dumont 1953: 264). But such a situation is to be found only in a small number of sophisticated temples, and it differs markedly from the realities of the smaller temples, without even any proper divine images, that account for the majority of Aiyaṉār temple complexes and may be considered to reflect their original form.

The Question of Aiyaṉār's Dependence

Dumont identifies Aiyaṉār with the upper castes (that is, Brahmans) and Karuppu with the lower castes (non-Brahmans) and recognizes between them a relationship based on domination, such as that existing between master and servant. It is true that a superficial reading of his arguments would seem to suggest that his insights are correct. But once one examines the realities of the situation with

greater care, it would appear to be possible to interpret the phenomena not on the basis of a rigid bipolar scheme, but within a different context. This I now wish to do.

It has already been pointed out that when Aiyanār is enshrined in a temple, he is without exception accompanied by other gods and is regarded as their leader. What is important to note here is the fact that the gods enshrined together with Aiyanār in an Aiyanār temple are not necessarily entities for whom coexistence with other gods is a prerequisite. That is to say, in addition to Aiyanār temple complexes, independent temples dedicated to Karuppu, Maturaivīraṇ and so forth are by no means uncommon (Whitehead 1921: 33; Caṇmukacuntaram 1986: 222). It is optional whether or not these gods appear as the retainers of other gods. This fact would suggest that, while coexisting within the same temple complex, Aiyanār and the other gods differ from each other in an important respect in regard to their respective characters.

Here it is also important to take note of the following fact. Namely, whereas examples of gods such as Karuppu and Maturaivīraṇ functioning as, for instance, the attendants of goddesses are to be observed when they appear outside of an Aiyanār temple complex (Whitehead 1921: 25, 33, 108), it is in principle inconceivable for Aiyanār to appear as the attendant god of some other deity[44]. In other words, for Aiyanār the accompanying presence of certain other gods (typified by Karuppu and Maturaivīraṇ) is a *sine qua non* or precondition of his very existence. Although Aiyanār would seem to be the 'leader' or 'chief' of the gods who are enshrined together with him, and is regarded as such by the villagers, in actual fact he owes his *raison d'être* to the gods under his command. Dumont argues that the meat-eating gods depend for their existence upon higher ranking gods and that Aiyanār holds the power of life and death, as it were, over Karuppu and the other gods (Dumont 1953: 266; 1986: 410). But one is forced to conclude that his discussion is based on no more than a one-sided observation of the actual facts.

Although it may appear somewhat paradoxical, on the basis of the above it becomes evident that Aiyanār of necessity anticipates and presupposes the existence of other gods. Insofar that his own being is found in the first instance in relation to others (in this case, a group of male deities), one is justified in understanding him as a deity whose basic characteristic is a certain 'heteronomy' or 'dependence'. Dumont points out that Aiyanār and Karuppu exist only in relation to one another (Dumont 1953: 267). An important aspect of Aiyanār is indeed that of a god immersed in relationships. One must not, however, overlook the fact that the 'relation' in this case is not one of equal implications for both parties, but has subtle differences of nuance. The two gods do not simply stand in a relationship of mutual contention, and they do not therefore constitute the twin stays of a single structure or framework. For this reason it is open to question whether the alleged "complementarity" (Dumont 1986: 440) of the two gods does in fact reflect the real situation in the true sense of the term.

The "Buried God"—Aiyaṉār as an Inconspicuous Deity

As has been noted in the above, Aiyaṉār is invariably enshrined together with certain other gods, and in such cases it may be said that the real object of the villagers' worship is not the chief god Aiyaṉār, but rather the other gods enshrined together with him. When performing what is styled an Aiyaṉār temple festival, the villagers will behead some goats, ranging in number from three or four to several dozen, in sacrifice to gods *other* than Aiyaṉār (namely, the so-called 'non-vegetarian gods' such as Karuppu) and make offerings of the meat after it has been prepared (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 29) (cf. Figs. 12, 13 and 16). If one carefully examines the structure of a temple customarily referred to by the villagers as, for example, a 'Karuppu temple', it is not unusual to find that it is in fact an Aiyaṉār temple complex (cf. Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 30). In my own investigations I even came across the example of a temple where, although there were bricks representing the other gods, the stone image of Aiyaṉār lay buried in the ground as if forgotten[45] (cf. Figs. 17 and 18). This may be regarded as a highly symbolic and suggestive instance.

Within the precincts of Aiyaṉār temple complexes one will also often notice huge erect figures. These are not, however, images of Aiyaṉār, but represent none other than Karuppu, Muṉiyaṉ and other attendant gods. This may be said to indicate that in the realm of actual 'faith' Aiyaṉār is not the foremost of the gods. This too clearly attests to the essential tenuousness of Aiyaṉār and his lack of any real sense of being (cf. Clothey 1982: 43).

It is known that there are rituals of divine possession and revelation connected with Aiyaṉār and performed by non-Brahman priests (*pūcāri*), but they all concern the aforementioned welfare of the village community as a whole, as is typified by the ritualistic and formalized questions and answers that are exchanged by the priest and the villagers or believers on the occasion of these divine revelations (*kuṟi*), and the ritual procedure is also marked by formalism. As an object of intense private worship and devotion, Aiyaṉār may be said to have become an entity estranged from the villagers.

CONCLUSIONS

Although my discussion of points raised in the latter sections of the above has been by no means adequate, on the basis of the foregoing general considerations it has been shown that while the god Aiyaṉār shares certain features with Karuppu and other male deities insofar that he is made the object of worship within a particular locality, in several important respects he also exhibits major differences from these gods, and that although on the one hand he exhibits evidence of Brahmanical characteristics, in regard to certain points, such as relations between the divine and the faithful, he is endowed with qualities fundamentally different from Śiva, Viṣṇu and other major *bhakti* gods (*perunteyvaṅkaḷ*).

This ambiguity and elusiveness of Aiyaṉār would appear to be connected to the essentially marginal character of this god. As was noted earlier, Dumont has commented that the character of this god is 'ill-defined,' but he does not seem to have paid any particular attention to the significance of this point. Yet is it not in fact this 'undefinedness' that expresses the true essence of this god? In other words, his 'undefinedness' arose, or was caused to arise, as a matter of necessity or inevitability on account of the eclectic (or marginal and syncretic) nature of this god, bestraddling as he does the two separate value systems of Brahmans and non-Brahmans, and one might even say that this ambiguity and nebulosity of character is in fact the principle or *sine qua non* that guarantees and sustains the existence of the god Aiyaṉār. It is the very indeterminateness of his character that acts as the decisive factor in making Aiyaṉār what he is.

For what functions and roles differing from those of other gods do the villagers, then, look to Aiyaṉār, with his character that is so 'ill-defined'? In answering this question, it is essential that one proceed on the basis of a careful examination of concrete examples, and I accordingly wish to leave this for a more detailed consideration on a future occasion.

[Note to Transliteration]

With a few exceptions, Tamil terms follow the transcriptions of the *Tamil Lexicon*, and Sanskrit terms the transcriptions applied in most Sanskrit dictionaries.

NOTES

1) I wish it to be understood that 'local Hinduism' as used here also encompasses Śrinivas's concept of 'regional Hinduism'.
2) C.J. Fuller (1988: 21–22) goes so far as to cast doubt on the very notion of 'village god', but in the present study I wish to tentatively define 'village god' (*nāṭṭuppuṟat-teyvaṅkaḷ ≒ ciṟuteyvaṅkaḷ*) not only in the narrow sense of *ūrteyvam* (Skt. *grāmadevatā*), but also in a broader sense embracing *kulateyvam* (Skt. *kuladevatā*) or *kuṭiyacāmi*, etc., and as a general term for the regional gods with strong non-Sanskritic tendencies centred on the villages (and forming a counterpart to the pan-Indian deities of the great tradition) (cf. Ramanujan 1973: 34).
3) For example, Elmore (1915: 152) defines Aiyaṉār as a 'demon'. There is also evidence of confusion with the attributes of the gods who accompany Aiyaṉār (Whitehead 1921:

33). As will be discussed later, this 'confusion' would in fact seem to be of considerable importance in considering the essence of Aiyaṉār.

4) If one wishes to ensure geographical exactitude, it must be pointed out that although the area to which Tirumāṉūr belongs adjoins the delta area, it does not belong to the delta itself. In 1989 the area in question was designated a part of the 'Kāvēri Delta' by the DMK administration under M. Karunanidhi, and a lavish festival in celebration of this was held locally. This was because by receiving the designation of 'Delta' from the state government, the local inhabitants could expect to be granted various favours and benefits in the spheres of agricultural management, etc.

5) The fourteenth-century commentator Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar identifies this term with Murukaṉ, and it is also interpreted as referring to Murukaṉ by Subrahmanian (1966: 178).

6) On trade caravans (Skt. sārtha) and caravan leaders (Skt. sārthavāha) in ancient India, see Yamazaki 1980: 392–394. Examples of the use of Tamil 'cāttu' ('trade caravan') appear in the Caṅkam literature in the Akanāṉūru, 39.10, 119.8, 167.7, 245.6 and 291.15; Kuṟuntokai, 390.3; and Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai, 80. Outside of the Caṅkam literature in the narrow sense, it is also found used in the same meaning in, for example, the Cilappatikāram, 11.190.

7) "Cāttaṉai makaṉā vaittār" (Tēvāram, 4486; cf. Clothey 1982: 38). Kaṇakarattiṉam (1986: 104, 106) considers that the existence of the deity Aiyaṉār was required by the Hindus in order to unite the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas and that he was adopted from Buddhism and Jainism.

8) On the sources and variants of this tale, see also Vettam Mani 1964: 505, 700; Adiceam 1967: 16–23; Shulman 1980: 307–308; and Gopinatha Rao 1914: 486.

9) One will find, although only rarely, that a Purāṇic tale relating to the demoness Mahiṣī (or Mahiṣi-mukhī), who has the head of a buffalo-cow, has been transmitted (primarily by Brahmans); for a summary of this tale, see Arunachalam 1977: 36–40. Dumont mentions a number of local myths about Aiyaṉār (Dumont 1986: 369–370, 445–446, etc.), but I was unable to collect any such myths in the area where I undertook my investigations. Is one to assume that these traditions are dying out?

10) Paṭala 32, Acura-kāṇṭam 68 (cf. Dessigane et Pattabiramin 1967: 86; Arunachalam 1977: 20; Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 105).

11) On the different views concerning the original meaning of 'Cātavākaṉaṉ' (from Skt. Sātavāhana or Śātavāhana?), see Nakamura 1966: 25–26. When considered in conjunction with n. 6, one should perhaps also take into account possible connections with the term for 'caravan leader' (Skt. sārthavāhana, Pāli satthavāhana). One is also, of course, reminded of the Sātavāhana dynasty in the Deccan (ca. 3rd century B.C. – 3rd century A.D.), on which see Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 107–108.

12) According to Irācamāṇikkaṉar (1959: 320), the vāhana of the Buddhist Aiyaṉār is a horse, while in the case of Jainism it is an elephant, but he gives no supporting evidence. There is even a classical source that gives his vehicle as the 'bull' (kāḷai) (Gopinatha Rao 1914: 490), and in contemporary villages it will actually be found that there are instances in which terra-cotta images of bulls have been presented as votive offerings to Aiyaṉār or images of Aiyaṉār riding a bull (Nandin) have been painted (or placed) on the walls of the temple buildings or on the roof of the main sanctuary. Nor can one ignore regional differences in regard to whether Aiyaṉār's vāhana is an elephant or a horse (Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 107).

13) This 'ceṇṭu' is considered to be a type of weapon, and it is depicted as a short stick with

a crooked point(cf. Fig.2). Arunachalam (1977: 27), Clothey (1982: 42), and many other scholars equate it with a 'whip'(cf.*Tamil Lexicon* p.1585), but there is no conclusive evidence as to what this term really does denote (cf. Adiceam 1967: 12). In modern usage, '*ceṇṭu*' means bouquet of flowers (cf. *Kriyāviṉ Taṟkālat Tamiḻ Akarāti*, p.468).

14) The presence of 'two consorts' is not at all unusual in the case of the Hindu gods of South India; see, for example, Shulman 1980: 267–294 and Zvelebil 1981: 52–53. The distinctions of colour, etc., in the case of Aiyaṉār's two consorts are vague (Dumont 1952: 270; Adiceam 1967: 39; Shulman 1980: 292; Zvelebil 1981: 52–53), and this fact was generally borne out by my fieldwork.

15) During the course of my fieldwork in the villages of Tamil Nadu I heard on several occasions a folk-etymological explanation which, through association with the word '*aiyam*' ('fear', 'concern', 'doubt'), would interpret the meaning of 'Aiyaṉār' as the 'fearsome one'.

16) Shulman (1980: 313, 421) also notes other shared features and looks upon Aiyaṉār as an "allotrope" of Murukaṉ. The parallelism between Murukaṉ and Aiyaṉār has also been pointed out by L'Hernault (1978: 121–122) and Kjaerholm (1986: 122–123). I hope to devote a separate study to a discussion of this question.

17) For reasons of space, I have in the present study refrained from giving the names of individual villages (except in special cases).

18) On some rare occasions Aiyaṉār does appear as the retainer of another god (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 30, 47), and I was able to ascertain one such example during my fieldwork (cf. Yamashita 1992a). This particular case involves some interesting questions, which I intend discussing in detail elsewhere, but here I wish it to be understood as representing no more than an exception. Whitehead alludes to the fact that numerous gods are enshrined in Aiyaṉār temples and that Aiyaṉār is regarded as their leader (Whitehead 1921: 25, 89–91, 109), but he does not evince any further interest in this matter (see also n.44).

19) On the general characteristics of Maturaivīraṉ, see Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 38 and Whitehead 1921: 25, 33, 89, 92–93, 98, 108, 113–114. He is a legendary figure said to have been a contemporary of Tirumalai-nāyakar (17th century). His wife is said to have committed suicide following his death and is looked upon as a paragon of feminine virtue (Raman and Shanmugam 1983: 44; Cu. Caṇmukacuntaram 1984). On Muṉiyaṉ, see Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 40–42.

20) In addition to these, Ceṅkamala-āṇṭavar and Vīrapattiraṉ(< Skt. *Virabhadra*) also appeared in the area surveyed.

21) Nor can one consequently ignore connections between the Aiyaṉār cult and ancestor worship (*muṉṉōr valipāṭu*; cf. Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 32), hero worship and the burning of widows (*satī*). These may in some way be related to the fact that Maturaivīraṉ is often enshrined together with Aiyaṉār. For details on the tradition of hero stones (*vīrakkal, naṭukal*) in Tamil Nadu, see Kēcavarāj 1978.

22) In the case of Tiruccirāppaḷḷi District, for example, Pāppāttiyammaṉ, Sapta-mātrikā (Ēḻu-kaṇṇimār: 'Seven Maidens'; cf. Dumont 1953: 258; Raman and Shanmugam 1983: 40; Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 29; see also Fig. 15), etc. In some cases, Kāmāṭciyammaṉ and Celliyammaṉ are also found. But Māriyammaṉ, Kāḷiyammaṉ (although Pattirakāḷi does appear), Reṇukāmmaṉ, etc., are never found in Aiyaṉār temple complexes. In the area surveyed on the present occasion, I was unable to discover any evidence of the coexistence of Aiyaṉār and Māriyammaṉ, such as has been pointed

out by scholars (Adiceam 1967: 96). In her discussion of Dumont 1953, Nishimura (1986: 7) describes Māriyammaṉ as the Consort of Aiyaṉār, but she has perhaps misunderstood the gist of Dumont's argument.

23) Gods that are found within the village and are worshipped in common by the villagers (such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Ammaṉ, etc.) are often called 'natta-tēvatai'. But the definition of this term is not necessarily fixed.

24) Aiyaṉār's location near water is also alluded to in many folk songs (Caṇmukacuntaram 1986: 220–221). His connections with water would suggest a correlation between Aiyaṉār and agricultural rites (Kjaerholm 1986: 122–123, 127). Aiyaṉār's festivals are often held shortly before the busiest farming season, and the pronouncements (kuṟi, kaṭṭu) of the possessed priest are frequently predictions of the coming harvest. In the rites of Aiyaṉār and other village gods, cases of spirit possession (āvēṣam koḷḷutal) taking place near water are especially noticeable. The water's edge (tuṟai, nīrtuṟai) has been generally recognized as the abode of the 'divine' ever since the time of Caṅkam literature (1st–3rd century); see, for example, Kuṟuntokai, 53, and Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, 28, 53, 174, etc. (cf. Yamashita 1987: 176, 181, 184).

25) Ci. Irāmacāmi, who has reported on cases in the vicinity of the area I investigated, states that Aiyaṉār is situated either to the west or to the south of a village (1982–84: 64).

26) Although frequently translated as 'hunting', in this case it is probably more appropriate to render it as 'driving away'.

27) "Aiyaṉār-kōyil ceṅkal attaṉaiyum cāmi" (cf. Arunachalam 1977: 42, 44; Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 17). There are said to be cases in which there is not only no image, but also not even any such symbol (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 16–17, 30), and I was able to ascertain one such example in Putukkōṭṭai District. On the question of 'anthropomorphism' in the religion of ancient Tamil Nadu, see Yamashita 1987, Yamashita 1988, and Yamashita and Furusaka 1989.

28) In addition to those from the so-called Paṇṭāram, mention may also be made of those from the Paṭaiyācci and Mūppaṉār. These are all dominant caste groups in this region (cf. Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 33). The special relationship that has been frequently noted to exist between Aiyaṉār and the caste of potters (cf. Inglis 1980) is not necessarily found in all villages.

29) This is also reflected in his old appellation of 'dharma-śāstā' (Kjaerholm 1986: 122–123). In addition, a number of old proverbs relating to Aiyaṉār would suggest that he is an 'adjudicator' (Jensen 1897: 59 [no. 539], 202 [no. 1833]).

30) It is reported that in the mediation of disputes and quarrels he is actually assigned the role of judge and the matter will be submitted to his sanction by the villagers (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 31).

31) There are, of course, cases in which Aiyaṉār is also looked upon as a lineage god (kulateyvam, kuṭiyacāmi). According to Sekine (private communication), Aiyaṉār is sometimes made the object of a vow. But it is at least true that, when compared with Karuppaṉ and other gods mentioned below, this is by no means a salient characteristic in the case of Aiyaṉār.

32) In addition to Aiyaṉār, the goddess Pāppāttiyammaṉ, for example, also appears in temple complexes as a 'vegetarian deity'. But this goddess is not particularly well-known in Putukkōṭṭai District. Nishimura (1986: 7; 1987: 57–63) maintains that differences in the offerings given to village gods (that is, whether the offering is vegetarian or non-vegetarian) reflect the dietary habits of the priests and are ultimately attributable to

differences in the priests' castes. She then goes on to mention a 'non-vegetarian Aiyaṉār' at an Aiyaṉār temple built in recent years (about 60 years ago). But on the basis of at least the results of my own investigations, it is difficult to dispute the fact that Aiyaṉār is a 'vegetarian god', and no principle such as that alluded to by Nishimura was observed. At all events, she gives only one instance as evidence, and since it belongs to a rather exceptional category (—the temple itself is new, a member of the Untouchable Vaḷḷuvar caste serves as priest, etc.), it is difficult to reach any general conclusions on the basis thereof. Fuller (1988: 20–24) emphasizes the qualitative differences between the animal sacrifices (*uyirppali*, Skt. *bali*) and vegetarian offerings (*caivappali*, Skt. *naivedya*) made to village gods. I do not wish to go into the matter in detail, but if one accepts this, then one is forced to question the attributing of differences in the two types of offerings to differences in the priests' eating habits alone, as in the case of Nishimura.

During my investigations, I was able to observe the case of a live hen (and even a horse) being offered to Aiyaṉār, but this was only for the purpose of allowing it to range freely in the temple compound, and it was not made the object of any sanguinary sacrifice (*irattapali*). According to Raman and Shanmugam (1983: 42), sacrifices of fowls and other animals *were* made to Aiyaṉār, but one cannot exclude the possibility that they have confused Aiyaṉār with other gods such as Karuppu and Maturaivīraṉ.

33) Judging from the general usage of the villagers, it is probably appropriate in this case to interpret '*cuvāmi*' (< Skt. *svāmin*) and the cognate '*cāmi*' as being used not with the connotations of Skt. *īśvara* (the Presider,the Almighty), but simply in the sense of 'god'.

34) I was also able to ascertain the existence of Cappāṇi-karuppu ('Lame' Karuppu), Kailāsa-karuppu (Karuppu of 'Mt. Kailāsa'), Koṅkāṇi-karuppu (Karuppu of the 'Leaf Umbrella'), Malaiyāḷi-karuppu (Karuppu of 'Kerala'?), Vēcatāri-karuppu (Karuppu in 'Disguise'), and Patiṉeṭṭāmpaṭi-karuppu ('Eighteen-Stage' Karuppu). On the variant forms of Karuppu, see also Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 28, 35, 39, etc.

35) See Ci. Irāmacāmi 1982–84: 65. Phonetically speaking, it is probably permissible to interpret the corruption of 'Maturai(vīraṉ)' to 'Marutaiyāṉ' as a type of *Fernmetathese*.

36) An interesting introduction to the subject of spirit worship (*āvivalipāṭu*) centred on Muṉi(yaṉ) in rural Tamil Nadu is to be found in Ñāṉacēkaraṉ 1987: 41–45.

37) Literally speaking, the antonym of '*tuṣṭa-tēvatai*' would be '*atuṣṭa-tēvatai*', but as a rule '*nalla-teyvam*' or '*nalla-cāmi*' ('good god') is used instead (cf. n. 42). Although Aiyaṉār is usually regarded as a 'good god', there would appear to be some who look upon him as a '*tuṣṭa-tēvatai*'. Here too one may see the influence of the ambiguity of Aiyaṉār's character discussed below (Tu. Irāmacāmi 1985: 31).

38) In describing the so-called '*dveṣa-bhakti*' (Skt.) seen in Tamil religion, Shulman makes the following comment: "Both hatred and love establish an intimate relationship with their object; when the latter is a god, the intimacy carries its own reward (1980: 180–181). Although the emotions of 'fear' cannot be discussed in exactly the same terms as 'dislike' and 'hatred', it is perhaps permissible to consider the gods that accompany Aiyaṉār in a context similar to the above.

39) Acts of penance and oblations that are performed for the fulfillment of a particular wish are collectively known as '*nērttikkaṭaṉ*' (Kaṇakarattiṉam 1986: 127–128).

40) Adiceam (1967: 4, 53, 96) also follows this interpretation. '*Karuppu*' is often spelt '*karuppu*', but if one takes into account the etymology of the word, '*karuppu*' is indisputably the correct spelling.

41) In this respect the Sapta-mātrikā(cf. Fig. 15), for example, may be said to be affiliated

to Aiyaṉār, while goddesses such as Māriyamman belong to the same group of gods as Śiva, etc. It is true that Śiva and Viṣṇu are also represented in forms such as that of the *liṅga* and *śālagrāma*, but these are to be regarded as nothing more than 'symbols', and they differ in significance from the stones and bricks (*pativu*) that serve as the abode of a god and become the objects of fetishism (in the narrow sense) (cf. Oguchi and Hori 1973: 377–379).

42) Although in Tamil slang the upper castes (*mēl-cāti*) may be referred to as '*nalla-cāti*' ('good caste'), the lower castes (*kīḻ-cāti*) are not called, for example, '*keṭṭa-cāti*' ('bad caste'), and the term '*ciṉṉa-cāti*' is used instead. In addition, good gods as opposed to evil gods (*tuṣṭa-tēvatai*) are not called '*atuṣṭa-tēvatai*', but are known as '*nalla-cāmi*'. On the basis of these facts, one may discern an eschewal or hesitation on the part of the villagers to unconditionally apply opposite concepts when alluding to certain entities such as, for example, the gods. See also n. 37.

43) Kjaerholm (1986: 127) states that Aiyaṉār faces east, while Caṇmukacuntaram (1986: 221) reports on the basis of a case study of Tirunelvēli District that the Aiyaṉār temple is located on the northern boundary of a village and that the god Aiyaṉār himself faces north. Raman and Shanmugam (1983: 42) similarly state that in Lālkuṭi Taluk in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi District Aiyaṉaṟ faces east. In view of the fact that the direction in which Aiyaṉār faces varies in this manner from one region to another, it is not possible to draw any general conclusions on the basis of a tendency observed in one particular region.

44) As a very unusual case encountered during the course of my investigations, mention may be made of Ceṅkamala-nācciyamman Temple in Tañcāvūr city. This temple constitutes a temple complex, with one of its shrines dedicated to Aiyaṉār. Ostensibly the principal deity of this temple is the goddess Ceṅkamala-nācciyamman, but judging from my observations of the sequence of the *kumbhābhiṣeka*, etc., apart from the veneration accorded the principal deity, foremost respect (*mutal-mariyātai*) is always shown to Aiyaṉār, and during the ritual he functions as the *de facto* principal deity. I briefly discussed this case in Yamashita 1992a. See also n. 18.

45) In the village of Putukkōṭṭai (Ariyalūr Taluk, Tiruccirāppaḷḷi District).

REFERENCES

Adiceam, M.E.
 1967 *Contribution à l'étude d'Aiyanār-Śāstā*. Publication de l'Institut Français d'Indologie, No. 32.
Arunachalam, M.
 1977 The Śāstā (Aiyanār) Cult in Tamiḻnāḍu. *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* 3–51. University of Madras.
Burrow, T. and M.B. Emeneau
 1961 *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (DED)*. Oxford University Press.
 1984 *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (revised edition) *(DEDR)*. Oxford University Press.
Caṇmukacuntaram, Cu.
 1984 *Maturaivīraṉ Katai*. Pūmpukār Piracuram Piras.
 1986 *Tirunelvēli Māvaṭṭa Nāṭṭuppuṟap Pāṭalkaḷil Camutāya Amaippu*. Kāvyā.
Clothey, F.W.
 1982 Śāstā-Aiyaṉār-Aiyappaṉ: The God as Prism of Social History. In F.W. Clothey

(ed.), *Images of Man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia*, 34–71. New
Era Publications.

DED   See Burrow and Emeneau 1961.

DEDR   See Burrow and Emeneau 1984.

Dessigane, R., et P.Z. Pattabiramin

    1967   *La légende de Skanda selon le Kandapurāṇam tamoul et l'iconographie.* Publica-
tion de l'Institut Français d'Indologie, No. 31.

Dumont, L.

    1953   Définition structurale d'un dieu populaire tamoul: AiyaNār, le Maître. *Journal
Asiatique*, tome 241: 255–270. (English translation in *Religion, Politics and
History in India*, Mouton, 1970.)

    1986   *A South Indian Subcaste: Social Organization and Religion of the Pramalai
Kallar.* Oxford University Press. (English translation of *Une sous-caste de l'Inde
du sud*, 20–32. Mouton, 1957.)

Elmore, W.T.

    1915   *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism: A Study of the Local and Village Deities
of Southern India.* University of Nebraska (repr. Asian Educational Services,
1984).

Fuller, C.J.

    1988   The Hindu Pantheon and the Legitimation of Hierarchy. *Man* (N.S.), 23(1): 19–
39.

Gopinatha Rao, T.A.

    1914   *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (2nd ed.), Vol. 2, Part 2. Law Printing House
(repr. Motilal Banarsidass, 1985).

Gros, F. et R. Nagaswamy

    1970   *Uttaramērūr: légendes, histoire, monuments.* Publication de l'Institut Français
d'Indologie, No. 39.

Hart, G.L.

    1979   The Nature of Tamil Devotion. In M.M. Deshpande and P.E. Hook (eds.),
Aryan and Non-Aryan in India, 11–33. University of Michigan.

Inglis, S.

    1980   *A Village Art of South India: The Work of the Velar.* Madurai Kamaraj Universi-
ty.

Irācamāṇikkaṉār, Mā.

    1959   *Tamiḻar Nākarikamum Paṇpāṭum.* Pāri Nilaiyam.

Irāmacāmi, Ci.

    1982–84   *Pārkkavakulam—Mūppaṉār Camutāya Vāḻviyal Muṟaikaḷ.* Unpublished M.
Phil. thesis submitted to Bharatidasan University.

Irāmacāmi, Tu.

    1985   *Nellai Māvaṭṭa Nāṭṭuppuṟat Teyvaṅkaḷ.* Ulakat Tamiḻārāycci Niṟuvaṉam.

Jensen, Rev. Herman

    1897   *A Classified Collection of Tamil Proverbs.* Publisher unknown (repr. Asian
Educational Services, 1982).

Kaṇakarattiṉam, Vai.

    1986   Aiyaṉār Vaḻipāṭum Īḻattu Vaṉṉimai Makkaḷum. *Journal of Tamil Studies*, 29:
101–136.

Kēcavarāj, Ve.

    1978   *Naṭukalvaḻipāṭu.* Carvotaya Ilakkiyap Pannai.

Kjaerholm, L.
    1986   Myth, Pilgrimage and Fascination in the Aiyappa Cult: A View from Fieldwork
            in Tamilnadu. In A. Parpola and B.S. Hansen (eds.), *South Asian Religion and
            Society*, 121–145. D.K. Agencies (P) Ltd.
Krishna Sastri, H.
    1916   *South-Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*. Publisher unknown (repr.
            Bharatiya Publishing House, 1974).
Kriyāviṉ   Taṟkālat Tamiḻ Akarāti (*Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil* [*Tamil-Tamil-
            English*]). Cre-A, 1992.
L'Hernault, F.
    1978   *L'Iconographie de Subrahmaṇya au Tamilnad*. Publication de l'Institut Français
            d'Indologie, No. 59.
Nakamura, Hajime   中村　元
    1966   *Indo Kodaishi*『インド古代史』　(The Ancient History of India), Part 2
            (Nakamura Hajime Senshū 中村元選集 [Selected Works of Nakamura Hajime],
            Vol. 6). Shunjūsha 春秋社.
Ñaṉacēkaraṉ, Te.
    1987   *Makkaḷ Vāḻvil Mantirac Caṭaṅkukaḷ*. Pārttipaṉ Patippakam.
Nishimura, Yuko   西村祐子
    1986   Sekaikan to shite no Shakuti: Minami Indo ni okeru Hindūkyō Shinkō no Chōsa
            kara「世界観としてのシャクティ—南インドにおけるヒンドゥー教信仰の調査
            から」(*Śakti* as a Cosmology: A Preliminary Study of the Modern South Indian
            Religious System). *Tōhōgaku*『東方学』, 76: 15.
    1987   *A Study on Māriyammaṉ Worship in South India*: *A Preliminary Study on
            Modern South Indian Village Hinduism*. Institute for the Study of Languages
            and Cultures of Asia and Africa　東京外国語大学アジアアフリカ言語文化研究
            所.
Oguchi, Iichi   小口偉一 and Hori Ichirō   堀　一郎 (eds.)
    1973   *Shūkyōgaku Jiten*『宗教学事典』(Encyclopaedia of Religious Studies). Tōkyō
            Daigaku Shuppankai 東京大学出版会.
Oppert, G.
    1893   *On the Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa or India*. Archibald Constable and
            Co. (repr. Daya Publishing House, 1990).
Perumāḷ, A.Kā.
    1990   *Tolpaḻam Camayak Kūṟukaḷ*. Payōṉiyar Puk Carvīcas.
Raman, K.V. and P. Shanmugam
    1983   Aspects of Village Settlements, Art Traditions and Village Deities in the Lalgudi
            Taluk. In N. Karashima (ed.), *Socio-cultural Change in Villages in Tiruccirapalli
            District, Tamilnadu, India*, Part 1 (Pre-modern Period), 1–52, 169–180. Institute
            for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa　東京外国語大学ア
            ジアアフリカ言語文化研究所.
Ramanujan, A.K.
    1973   *Speaking of Śiva*. Penguin Books.
Sekine, Yasumasa   関根康正
    1986   Tamiru Shakai no Kegare Kannen no Shosō: Hierarukī to Shutaisei no Sōkoku
            no Basho「タミル社会のケガレ観念の諸相—ヒエラルキーと主体性の相剋の場
            所」(The Conceptions of Ritual Pollution in South Indian Tamil Society: On the
            Field of Conflicts between Hierarchy and Subjectivity). *Minzokugaku Kenkyū*

『民族学研究』, 51(3): 11–33.

Shulman, D.D.
    1980   *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition.* Princeton University Press.

Śrinivas, M.N.
    1952   *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India.* Oxford University Press (repr. J.K. Publishers, 1978).

Subrahmanian, N.
    1966   *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index: Index of Historical Material in Pre-Pallavan Literature.* University of Madras (repr. 1990).

Tamil Lexicon (6 vols. + supplement). Madras Law Journal Press, 1926–32 (repr. University of Madras, 1982).

Tanaka, Masakazu　田中雅一
    1981   Hindukyō no Jinruigakuteki Kenkyū ni okeru Futatsu no Tachiba: 'Genshiron' to 'Zentairon'「ヒンドゥ教の人類学的研究における二つの立場—『原子論』と『全体論』」 ('Atomism' and 'Holism' in the Studies of Hinduism). *Ronshū*『論集』, 8: 81–100.

Vettam Mani
    1964   *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purāṇic Literature.* Motilal Banarsidass.

Whitehead, H.
    1921   *The Village Gods of South India* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press (repr. Asian Educational Services, 1983).

Yamashita, Hiroshi　山下博司
    1987   *Religious Aspects of Early South India with Special Reference to Tamil Classical Literature.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Madras.
    1988   Deivamu to Kadavuru: Kodai Tamiru Sekai no Kami「デイヴァムとカダヴルー古代タミル世界の神」 (*Teyvam* and *Kaṭavul*: Concepts of 'God' in Early Tamil Nadu). *Ronshū*『論集』, No. 15.
    1992a Aiyanāru Jiin-Fukugō no Kunbābishēka (Josetsu)「アイヤナール寺院複合のクンバービシェーカ (序説)」 (The Kumbhābhiṣeka of an Aiyaṉār Temple Complex of Central Tamil Nadu: An Introduction). *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*『印度学仏教学研究』, 40(2): 1038–1033.
    1992b Minami Indo Nōson no Danshin Sūhai, 1, 2, 3『南インド農村の男神崇拝　上, 中, 下』 (The Worship of Male Deities in Rural South India 1, 2, 3). *Chūgai Nippō*『中外日報』, August 3, 4 and 5, 1992.

Yamashita Hiroshi and Furusaka Kōichi
    1989   The Emergence of Murukaṉ: A Study on the Formation of the Tamil Myths of His Divine Birth. *The Memoirs of Ōsaka Kyōiku University*, Ser. 1, 38(2): 163–173.

Yamazaki, Gen'ichi　山崎元一
    1980   Gahapati, Sattavāha, Setti「ガハパティ、サッタヴァーハ、セッティ」 (*Gahapati, Satthavāha* and *Seṭṭhi*). In *Yamamoto Tatsurō Hakushi Koki Kinen: Tōnan Ajia-Indo no Shakai to Bunka*『山本達郎博士古稀記念—東南アジア・インドの社会と文化』 (Jubilee Volume Presented to Dr. Tatsurō Yamamoto on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday: The Societies and Cultures of Southeast Asia and Indian Subcontinent), Vol.2: 385–412. Yamakawa Shuppansha 山川出版社.

Zvelebil, K.V.
1981   *Tiru Murugan*. International Institute of Tamil Studies.

Fig. 1   Aiyaṉār (Ēlākuṟicci village)

Fig. 2   Aiyaṉār accompanied by his two consorts (Naṟpavaḷakkuṭi
village)

Fig. 3   An example of an Aiyaṉār temple in its most primitive
form, with Aiyaṉār in the centre and Kaṟuppu and
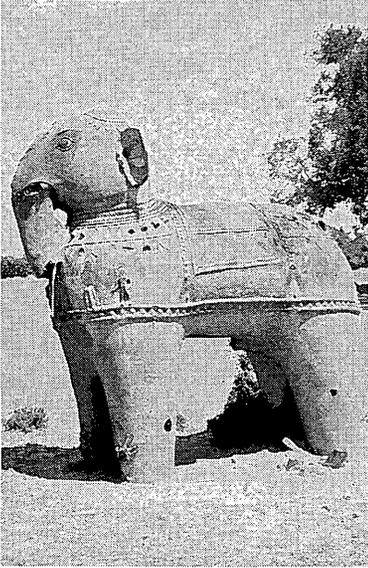Maturaivīraṉ in the foreground (Putukkōṭṭai village)

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

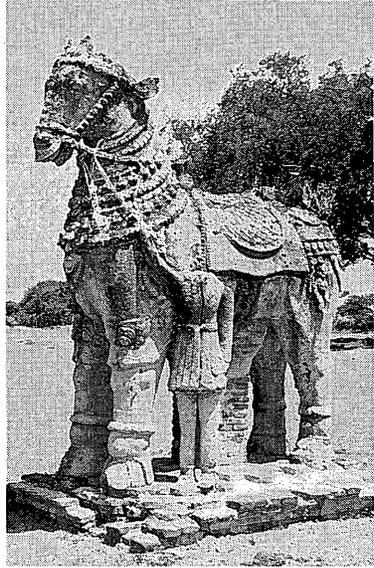**Fig. 4** Terra-cotta elephant (Aiyanār's *vāhana*) (Kōvilūr village)

Fig. 5 Stucco horse (Karuppu's *vāhana*) (Kōvilūr village)
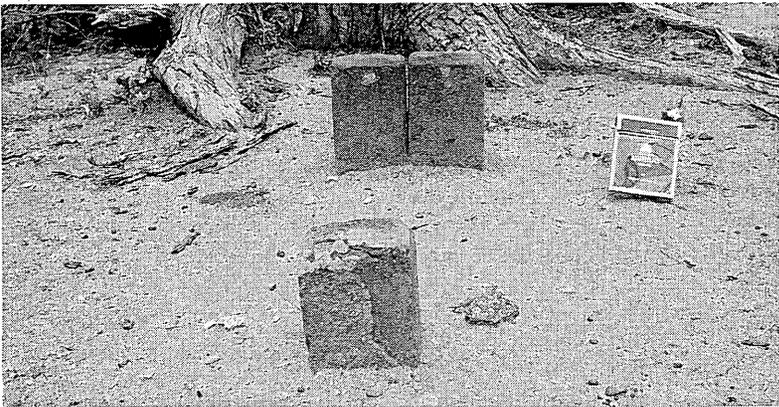
Fig. 6 Aiyanār represented by bricks; the two bricks standing in the background represent Aiyanār (compare with the size of the cigarette box) (Kīla-ecanai village)

Fig. 7
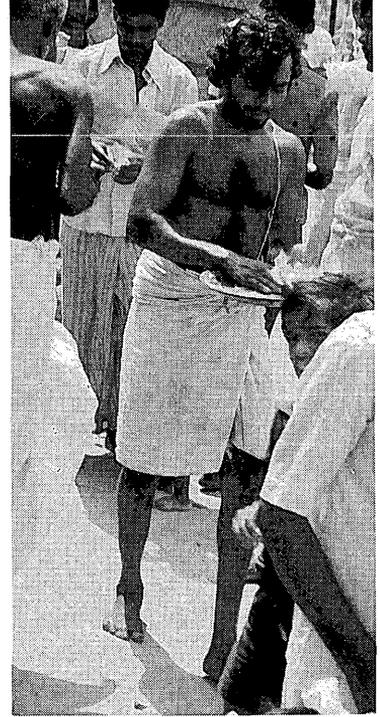
Fig. 8

Fig. 7 A Paṇṭāram priest singing hymns in praise of Aiyaṉār
(Paṉaṅkūr village)
Fig. 8 A Brahman priest presiding over the rites of a festival at an
Aiyaṉār temple (Vaṭukappāḷaiyam village)
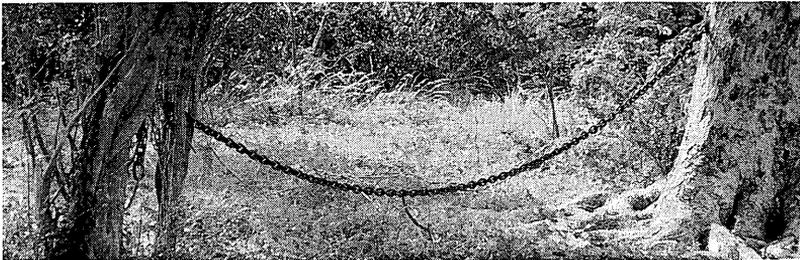
Fig. 9 Caṅkili-karuppu represented by a chain (Ceṭṭikkuḷi village)

Fig. 10 Village tutelary gods (from the left, Karumuṇi, Ceñcaṭaiyāṉ and Cemmalaiyappā) (Ceṭṭikkuḷi village)
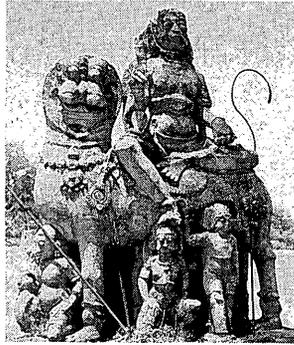
Fig. 11 Image of Muṉiyāntavar(= Muṉiyaṉ) (Kōvilūr village)

Fig. 12 A goat being sacrificed in an Aiyaṉār temple complex (Vaṭukappāḷaiyam village)
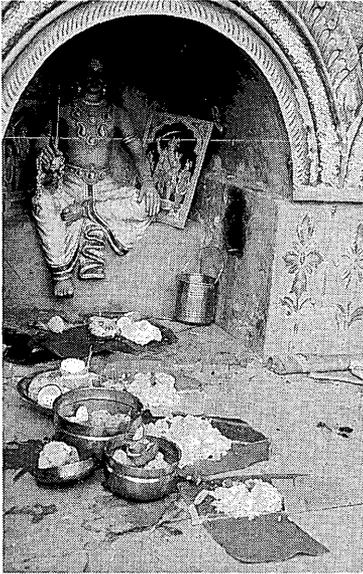
Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 13 Offering to the 'meat-eating god' Karuppaiyacuvāmi
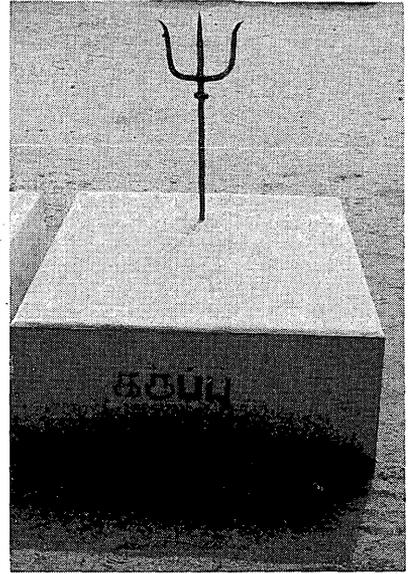(Vaṭukappāḷaiyam village)

Fig. 14 Kaṟuppu represented by a trident (Skt. *triśūla*) (Tañcāvūr
city)

Fig. 15 Sapta-mātrikā (or rather Ēḷu-Kaṇṇimār) within an
Aiyaṉār temple complex (Kaṇṭarātittam village)

Fig. 16 Devotees praying to Maturaivīraṉ, performing a sacrifice, and having their heads shaved in an Aiyaṉār temple complex (Kōvilūr village)
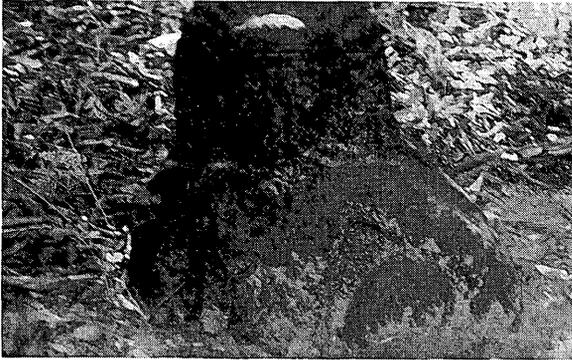

Fig. 17 Image of Aiyaṉār unearthed at the temple shown in Fig. 3 (Putukkōṭṭai village)
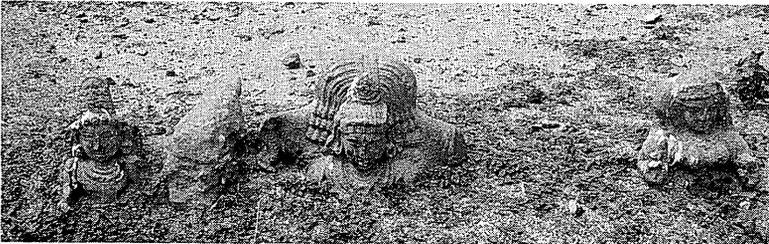

Fig. 18 Images of Aiyaṉār and his two consorts buried in the ground (Ceṅkarāyaṉ-kaṭṭalai village)