

## Article

# From Tamil Pāṇar to the Bāṇas: Sanskritization and Sovereignty in South India

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**Abstract:** Historians include the Bāṇas among the important minor dynasties of South India. They are first mentioned as Bṛhadbāṇas in the Tāḷagunda inscription of the fifth century. Rulers with the Bāṇa name existed up to the sixteenth century in the Tamil country. During their history, they also married into major dynasties like the Cōlas and claimed to be descendants of a lineage starting from Bali. Many historians have noted the semantic similarity between the term Bṛhadbāṇa and the earlier Tamil bardic Perumpāṇaṇ of the Caṅkam literature. The historians, however, have not explicitly addressed the issues of whether the Bāṇas originated from the Tamil Pāṇar and why they chose to claim Purāṇic Bali to be their progenitor. In the present essay, based on an analysis of Caṅkam texts, and epigraphic data, it is shown first that the Bāṇas must have originated from the Tamil bards. Later, the reasons for the Bāṇas choosing to have Bali as the progenitor of their lineage are explored. It looks like Tamil bardic age values might have played a role in this.

**Keywords:** Pāṇar; Bāṇas; Tamil bards; Sanskritization; sovereignty



**Citation:** Palaniappan, Sudalaimuthu. 2021. From Tamil Pāṇar to the Bāṇas: Sanskritization and Sovereignty in South India. *Religions* 12: 1031. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12111031>

Academic Editor: Caleb Simmons

Received: 16 September 2021  
Accepted: 12 November 2021  
Published: 22 November 2021

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## 1. Origin of the Bāṇas

### 1.1. Introduction

Historians include the Bāṇas among the important minor dynasties of South India. They are first mentioned as Bṛhadbāṇas in the Tāḷagunda inscription of the fifth century CE. Rulers with the Bāṇa name existed up to the sixteenth century in the Tamil country, where they were called the Vāṇar. In many of their inscriptions, they are said to belong to the lineage of Bali, an Asura<sup>1</sup>. During their history, they also married into major dynasties like the Cōlas. For instance, Vallavaraiyar Vandyadevar, the Bāṇa chief, married Kuntavai, the elder sister of Cōla Rājarāja I (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 69). Earlier, Cōla Rājarāja I's father's sister, Ariṅcikaip Pirāṭṭiyār, was married to another Bāṇa prince (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 13, no. 197, p. 107).

Many historians have noted the semantic similarity between the term Bṛhadbāṇa and the earlier Tamil name Perumpāṇaṇ of the Caṅkam literature. Pāṇar (plural of Pāṇaṇ) were the bards of the Tamil country. These historians, however, have not explicitly addressed the issues of whether the Bāṇas originated from the Tamil Pāṇar and why they chose to claim Purāṇic Bali to be their progenitor.

The present essay consists of three parts. In this essay, I shall begin by discussing the role of bards in early Tamil society. Then, I shall look at what Tamil literary scholars have said regarding the origin of the Bāṇas vis à vis information from early Tamil literary texts and inscriptions in Tamil Nadu. Then, we shall explore if the early Tamil bards and warriors were from the same community. Next, I shall explore if descendants of some of the Tamil bards became chiefs called Pāṇaṇs ruling over a territory called Pāṇaṭu in the northern part of Tamil Nadu. Then, I shall discuss the Tamil terms Perumpāṇ and Perumpāṇaṇ and the Sanskrit term Bṛhadbāṇa since some historians seem to believe that the name of the chief Pāṇaṇ in the Caṅkam literature was really a Tamilized version of Sanskrit Bāṇa. In order to determine whether Bṛhadbāṇa became Perumpāṇaṇ or Perumpāṇ, I shall explore the dates of the poems in which these terms occur. Next, I shall look at linguistic and philological

aspects of the sound variation from Pāṇar to Bāṇa to Vāṇar. Finally, I shall summarize the findings regarding the origin and movement of the Bāṇas over time.

In the second part, I shall consider the main features of early Tamil kingship. Then, I shall look at how Sanskritization impacted the Bāṇas' identity. Next, I shall explore why the Bāṇas chose to trace their lineage to Bali, an Asura, while other dynasties were claiming a descent from a sage or Sun or Moon. Since Bali had lost his sovereignty over his domain, we shall compare Bali's story with the story of Tamil chief Pāri, perhaps the best-known philanthropist of the early Tamil society to speculate if the bardic age values of duty towards the bards might have influenced the Bāṇas to choose Bali as their progenitor.

Finally, in the third part, I shall conclude with findings regarding the Tamil bardic culture, openness of the Tamil society that led to the formation of the Pāṇar dynasty, later dynastic shift, Sanskritization, and the adoption of a unique Purāṇic identity influenced by the old bardic values

### 1.2. Bards in Early Tamil Society

In the early Tamil society, there were many types of bards. The Pāṇar are the most frequently mentioned bards, who sang and played the *yāl* or lute. Other bards included the Porunar, who sang and played a drum called *kiṇai* or *taṭāri*; the Kōṭiyar, who played a drum called *muḷavu* and acted in theater; the Akavar or Akavunar or Akavalar were the heralds, carried a slender divining rod, and sang on the battlefields; and the Viṛaliyar, who were females, who played the lute, and sang too. There were also other terms like the Ceṇṇiyar, synonymous with the Pāṇar; the Kiṇaiyar, synonymous with the Porunar; and the Kūttar, Vayiriyar, and Kaṇṇular, synonymous with the Kōṭiyar. These bards did not form separate castes in the early Tamil society. They were a vocational/professional community. The differences in names referred to their functional differences. The Porunar, Pāṇar, and Akavalar visited and sang in praise of the battlefields of their patrons.

The bards were considered as possessing *mutuvāy* 'ancient truth or wisdom'. Puṛaṇāṇūru 319.9 calls a bard *mutuvāy pāṇa* 'bard having ancient truth or wisdom.' According to Palaniappan (2008, p. 42) bards had an important role in ensuring the auspiciousness and prosperity of the community. When the bards visited the kings and chiefs, they were given valuable gifts as seen in the following example in the translation of Puṛaṇāṇūru 29.1–5 by Hart and Heifetz (1999, p. 24).

During the day, may the bards crowd around the festive  
sessions of your court and their dark heads and tangled hair  
turn radiant with fragrant garlands of gold, beautifully  
crafted of thin plaques fashioned in the shape of lotuses  
tempered in the fire and threaded onto fine pounded wires!

The bards were also given elephants as gifts, as mentioned in the example below from Akanāṇūru 106.10–12.

the Pāṇar who gets an elephant whenever Cēliyan,  
who has learnt faultlessly the art of war, and whose  
army with shining swords kills in the battlefields

Tamil bards not only received gifts like gold ornaments and elephants, but they also received land. Puṛaṇāṇūru 302.6–7 mentions that the Tamil bards had received villages as gifts as given below.

*kai vār narampiṇ pāṇarkku ōkkiya*  
*nirampā iyaviṇ karampaic cīrūr*

the villages on poor land with narrow paths,  
which were granted to the bards who pluck the strings with their fingers

The bards had also received a bigger territory, as shown by *Cirupānārruppaṭai* 109–11 as given below.

*kuṛum porai nal nāṭu kōṭiyarkku īnta*  
*kārik kutirai kāriyoṭu malainta*  
*ōrik kutirai ōri . . .*

The good country with small hills, which Ōri, whose horse was named Ōri and who fought with Kāri, whose horse was named Kāri, gave to the Kōṭiyar . . .

In a similar manner, the Pāṇar could have received some territory in the northern border area of the Tamil region, which could have become the base of the Pāṇar, who, as we will see, later became the Bāṇas.

Early Tamil poetry, known as the Caṅkam poetry, was modelled after the earlier oral poetry of the Tamil bards like the Pāṇar.

As [Thani Nayagam \(1995, p. 243\)](#) puts it,

The bards were so prominent and numerous members of early society and were so identified with panegyrics, that in subsequent development when poets compose panegyrics in praise of kings and chiefs they do so in a ‘bardic convention’, as if a bard were praising the hero of the poem.

However, it should be noted that, based on the names of the poets, there were poets of bardic origin, who have composed Caṅkam poems too. For instance, we find Netumpalliyattaṇār, a male, and Neṭumpalliyattai, a female, both names meaning ‘great one of many musical instruments’ among the Caṅkam poets.

The Tamil bards played as important a role with respect to Tamil kingship as the Brahmin played with respect to the Indo-Aryan kingship in north India. Saskia Kersenboom-Story says the following regarding the Tamil bards’ relationship with the Tamil kings.

While in the Indo-Aryan tradition the *purohit* (Brahmin priest) accompanies the king (*rāja*, *nṛpa-*, *bhūpa-*, *bhūpāla goptr-*, *nātha-*,) on his chariot to the battlefield, his Tamil colleague the *porunar* and/or *pāṇar* (two types of bards) fulfill a similar function in the king’s (*kō*, *irai*, *iraivan*) following. Although the Brahmin (*antaṇar*) is known at the Tamil court, and respected, he does not play any role of significance to be compared with the bards. ([Kersenboom-Story 1981, p. 32](#))

The Tamil situation may be considered the reverse of the Indo-Aryan. The Indo-Aryan king is steeped in Vedic and post-Vedic symbolism and ritualism due to which the Brahmins are of primary importance and far more indispensable than the panegyrists, genealogists and eulogists (*māgadhas*, *sūtas*). In contrast to the mythological equation of worldly power and (Vedic) cosmic power, the Tamil king lived for the immortality of glory (*pukal*) of his forefathers, his clan and his own person. In this milieu of glorious death on the battlefield, worship of hero-stones, gruesome celebrations of Victory on the battlefield and of the conception of the ‘world of heroes’, the Tamil king was far more dependent on his bards who had the power to ‘actualize’ glory and thus to confer immortality. Their mutual tie was one of *kaṭaṇ* ‘sacred duty’ which a king gladly fulfilled for his own sake as well as that of his forefathers and the entire clan. Cosmic equation by Vedic sacrifice was not on his mind; it was performed in course of time perhaps as a fashionable ‘showing off’ to his enemies. ([Kersenboom-Story 1981, p. 33](#))

Auvai Turaicāmp Pillai stated in his introduction to the decad called “Pāṇaṇ Pattu” (decad about the bard) in his commentary on the Caṅkam text, the *Aiṅkuṛunūru* (p. 1030) that depending on the activities in which they are engaged, Pāṇar are denoted in texts by several names such as Pāṇar, Akavunar, Kūttar, Kōṭiyar, Iyavar, and Porunar. That the same bard is addressed by different names can be seen in the *Porunarārruppaṭai*, a guide poem, in which a bard returning after having received rich gifts from a philanthropist encounters a

poor Porunaṅ and his family on the way looking for support from a philanthropist. The returning bard tells the poor bard the name and place of the patron, who gave him gifts. He also advises the poor bard to go to the patron and gives him directions to get to the patron's place.

In *Porunarārruppaṭai*, the poor bard is addressed as Poruna, Kōṭiyar Talaiva 'leader of the Kōṭiyar,' and Ēlīn Kilava 'one who possesses seven musical notes' and the female accompanying the Porunaṅ is called Pāṭiṇi, the female of the Pāṇar community, as given below.<sup>2</sup>

*vēru pulam muṇṇiya viraku ari poruna (Porunarārruppaṭai 3)*

O Porunaṅ knowing the appropriate conduct, who has sought different lands!

*pāṭal parriya payaṅ uṭai eḷāal*

*kōṭiyar talaiva (Porunarārruppaṭai 56–57)*

O leader of the Kōṭiyar, who has the lute, which provides musical enjoyment associated with songs!

*eḷumati vāli ēlīn kilava (Porunarārruppaṭai 63)*

O owner of seven notes! Get up. May you prosper.

*peṭai mayil uruviṅ perum taku pāṭiṇi (Porunarārruppaṭai 47)*

the Pāṭiṇi, who is of excellent qualities and looks beautiful like a peahen!

Since Ēlīn Kilavaṅ is an expert in music based on seven musical notes, the term most probably should indicate a Pāṇar, who is an expert in singing and playing the lute. Since ordinarily the Porunar are supposed to be players of the *taṭāri* or *kiṇai* drums, and the Kōṭiyar and Kūttar are supposed to be actors, the use of all three terms to address a single person means all these bards are from the same bardic community but only differing in their performative aspects. As the same person could perform as a singer in one instance and as an actor in another, one could be called a singer as well as an actor.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, whatever we find regarding the life of the Porunar, Kōṭiyar, and Kūttar will apply to the Pāṇar too.

In spite of their cultural importance and prominent role in the Caṅkam poetry, for more than a millennium, there has been an enormous misinterpretation regarding their status and role in the Tamil society. Some of the Tamil scholars have considered these bards to be of low caste especially during the medieval periods.<sup>4</sup> This should be attributed to a lack of interdisciplinary approach to analyzing the cultural history of the Tamils as has been shown earlier (Palaniappan 2008, 2016).<sup>5</sup> In fact, these bards continued to enjoy high esteem in the Tamil society as performing artists, right up to the advent of the Vijayanagara rule in the Tamil country.

However, scholars had not addressed how some of these bards also became rulers in their own right, later known as the Bāṇas, a dynasty with more than a millennium of history. This fact has important implications for addressing the question of whether the early Tamil society was open to members of different communities becoming rulers or it was *varṇa*-based to begin with. Palaniappan (2008, pp. 49–50) had used information from Sanskrit texts to explain away indirectly the mention of *nārpāl* 'four classes' in *Purānāṅṅuru* 183.8–10 by Āriyappaṭaikaṭanta Neṭuṅceliyaṅ 'the Pāṇṭiyaṅ Neṭuṅceliyaṅ who defeated the Aryan army', who states the following:

And even among the four classes with difference known, if a person from a lower class becomes learned, even a person from a higher class will submit to him to study.

What Neṭuṅceliyaṅ refers to is the *caturvarṇa* (four classes) which was prevalent among the Indo-Aryan speakers of North India and was absent in the Tamil areas. In fact, according to Manu, the Sanskrit lawgiver, all the Tamils (Drāviḍa) were Kṣatriyas who did not perform the Vedic rituals and, as a result, sank to the

rank of Śūdras. In this, they were similar to the Greeks, and Chinese in the eyes of the Brahmins. Neṭuñceliyaṅ may have based his statement on a story such as the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad story of Dṛpta-bālāki of the Gārgya clan and Ajātaśatru, the king of Kāśi. In this story, Dṛpta-bālāki, a Brāhmin, realizes that he lacks the knowledge of Brahman and seeks to become the pupil of Ajātaśatru, a Kṣatriya. (As his name suggests, it is likely Neṭuñceliyaṅ has had encounters with the Aryan culture.)

What Manu says regarding the Tamils cannot be taken literally as the words of a historian. However, if every Tamil was a Kṣatriya, then there was no *varṇa* system among the Tamils and Manu may have inadvertently alluded to the possibility of even a Tamil bard becoming a ruler of a territory! If it can be shown that a Tamil bard founded a ruling dynasty in early Tamil society, it will more directly and firmly establish the open nature of the society unconstrained by any birth-based social hierarchy.

### 1.3. Tamil Scholars' Views on the Origin of the Bāṇas

With respect to the origin of the Bāṇas, Auvai Turaicāmiṇi Piḷḷai made the following comments (as translated by me) in his introduction to the decad called “Pāṇaṅ Pattu” in his commentary on the Caṅkam text, the *Aiṅkuruṇūru* (pp. 1028–29)<sup>6</sup>.

There were also *pāṇar* who were involved in the field of fighting and excelled in wrestling and protecting the country without learning music and theater. Among them, one called Pāṇaṅ ruled the kingdom north of the river Pālār [*Akanāṇūru* 113, 155, and 325]; Caṅkam poets praise saying ‘in the north is the land of Pāṇaṅ of the strong spear<sup>7</sup>’; in that country, stone inscriptions mention Perumpāṇappāṭi<sup>8</sup> and Pāṇmalai situated on the northern bank of the Pālār river. His descendants lived as Vāṇar, Vāṇātirāyar, and Vāṇataraiyar. Their many inscriptions are in the Tiruvallam temple in the North Arcot taluk [South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 3, nos. 42, 43, 47 and 48]. In later times, they were spread all over the Tamil country; even those who were called Vāṇakōvaraiyar were also the descendants of the Pāṇaṅ. Another Pāṇaṅ excelled in wrestling and flourished in the Cōḷa court [*Akanāṇūru* 226]; an *Akanāṇūru* poem says that a person called Kaṭṭi from the region ruled by the Gaṅgas [in Southern Karnāṭaka] came to wrestle against Pāṇaṅ in the court of Veḷiyaṅ Tittaṅ and fled in fear as soon as he heard the sound of the *kiṇai* drum in the court preparing for battle [*Akanāṇūru* 226]; one Porunaṅ from the Āriya country to the north of Kuṭṭanāṭu, came with one Kaṇaiyaṅ of Kuṭṭanāṭu to wrestle against Paṇaṅ, but, being unable to withstand the strength of Pāṇaṅ, lost making Kaṇaiyaṅ shameful [*Akanāṇūru* 386].<sup>9</sup>

Following Auvai Turaicāmiṇi Piḷḷai, literary scholars like Varatarācaṅ (1973, p. 15) and Iḷaṅkumaraṅ (1987, p. 141) considered the chief Pāṇaṅ to be from the bardic community of Pāṇar.

### 1.4. Bards and Warriors

Views of Piḷḷai notwithstanding, there is a notion held by some scholars that the Caṅkam period Tamil bards and warriors were from different divisions of the early Tamil society. This was articulated by Hart (1975, pp. 56–57) in the following words:

The [Caṅkam] anthologies seem also to show a society divided into two different parts: on the one hand, there are the *uyarntōr*, or “high ones”, spoken of in the *Tolkāppiyam*, who are warriors and leaders of society and whose death is often commemorated by memorial stones; on the other hand, there are the *iḷintōr*, or “low ones”, represented by the *kiṇai* and *tutti* drummers, the Pāṇaṅ, the Vēlaṅ, washermen, leather workers, and others.

Let us see if what Hart says has been true regarding the Tamil bards and warriors during the Caṅkam period and later. With respect to the skills of bards and warriors, it is

not impossible for one to have both skills. In the famous Tanjavur temple inscription of the eleventh century CE, South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 2, no. 66, pp. 275–76, there are several members of the elite troops of Rājarāja I, who were given grants as musicians. These troops were selectively recruited into several elite military units named after different titles of the Cōla king such as Kṣatriyasikhāmaṇi or Śatrubhujamka (Śatrubhujamga). These military units fell under the category of Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar meaning ‘selectively recruited right hand troops who will die if they fail to protect the king’. For instance, Aiyāraṅ Antari of the Aḷakiya Cōlat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar<sup>10</sup> was a *pakkavādyar* or an accompanist who had belonged to the selectively recruited military unit called Aḷakiya Cōlat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar.

Here are some additional examples of *pakkavādyar* or accompanists:

- Catti Ārūr of Kṣatriyasikhāmaṇi Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar
- Catti Poṅṇaṅ of the Śatrubhujamkat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar

Similarly, there were many *gāndharvar* or singers from these elite troops. Here are some examples of *gāndharvar* or singers.

- Maṅkalavaṅ Maṇi of Mūrttavikramābharaṇat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar
- Taṅṅaṅ Kampaṅ of Mūrttavikramābharaṇat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar
- Ārūr Tēvaṅ of Mūrttavikramābharaṇat Terinta Valaṅkai Vēlaikkārar

Clearly, musicians and warriors were from the same community in the eleventh century CE. This was not a new development in the medieval period. Even in the Caṅkam period, Tamil bards and warriors came from the same community. For instance, the Tamil word *porunaṅ* (<\*poru ‘fight’) can refer to a bard or a warrior. In *Puṛaṇāṅṅūru* 386.19, some bards are called *porāap porunar* ‘non-fighting warriors. On the other hand, in *Puṛaṇāṅṅūru* 17.13, *aṭu poruna* ‘killing/conquering warrior!’ is used by the poet to address the warrior-making it explicit that by the vocative ‘*poruna*’ the warrior-king is addressed and not a bard.<sup>11</sup>

In Caṅkam poems, the arms of warriors are often compared to concert drums (*muḷavuv*) as in *Puṛaṇāṅṅūru* 88.6. Another example of such usage occurs in a Caṅkam text called the *Maturaik Kāñci*. This text is the longest narrative poem of the Caṅkam literature. It was authored by the poet Māṅkuṭi Marutaṅ to advise the Pāṅṅiya king Neṭuñceliyaṅ, who was the victor of the battle at Talaiyālaṅkāṅam. It narrates all that goes on over a whole day in the Pāṅṅiya capital of Maturai (Madurai) and advises the king on what he should do to achieve fame like his ancestors and lead an enjoyable life. *Maturaik Kāñci* 99 uses the description *muḷavut tōḷ muraṅ porunar* meaning ‘bards of fight with arms like concert drums’ to describe some bards who receive gifts typically given to bards such as elephants and flowers made of gold<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, in *Akaṅāṅṅūru* 386, a wrestling fight between one Pāṅṅaṅ and a Porunaṅ from the Āriya land is discussed. Here, Pāṅṅaṅ is described as having arms like concert drums and he kills his opponent. In *Akaṅāṅṅūru* 226.13–17, Kaṭṭi, a chief, came to fight Pāṅṅaṅ, a warrior, who was in the court of the Cōla king Tittaṅ Vēliyaṅ. However, after hearing the sound of the drum in the Cōla court, Kaṭṭi fled without fighting.<sup>13</sup> Finally, *Akaṅāṅṅūru* 189.5 employs the word *mallaṅ* to refer to bards. Everywhere else in the Caṅkam literature, *mallaṅ* has been used to refer to warriors.<sup>14</sup> So, the bards must be from the same community as the warriors and there was no division between warriors and bards in the society as postulated by Hart.

### 1.5. Bards as Chiefs

That descendants of some Tamil bards were not only warriors but also chiefs can be seen in *Akaṅāṅṅūru* 113.16–17. However, to see that, we have to go beyond the interpretations of some past scholars to obtain a philologically accurate interpretation. Wilden (2018)’s translation offers the latest interpretation of these lines as given below.

*Vilavu ayaṛtaṅṅa koḷum pal titti*<sup>15</sup>

*elāap pāṅṅaṅ nal nāṭṭu umpar*

beyond the good land of the bard who does not rise  
from many rich snacks as if engaged in a feast

The problem with this translation is that it takes *pāṇaṇ* ‘bard’ to be an ordinary resident of the land. Wilden has not compared the present text *pāṇaṇ nal nāṭṭu* with the text *nal vēl pāṇaṇ nal nāṭṭu* in *Akanāṇūru* 325.17 meaning ‘in the good land of Pāṇaṇ with the good spear,’ where Pāṇaṇ is clearly a warrior and not a bard. Moreover, in every instance in which the text ‘*x nal nāṭṭu*’ has been used in the Caṅkam literature, where *x* is a masculine singular person, *x* is always a ruler and not just an ordinary resident. Here are a few examples. *Āay nal nāṭṭu* (*Akanāṇūru* 198.14), ‘*Erumai nal nāṭṭu*’ (*Akanāṇūru* 253.19), ‘*Pulli nal nāṭṭu*’ (*Akanāṇūru* 311.12), ‘*Nannaṇ nal nāṭṭu*’ (*Akanāṇūru* 349.8), and ‘*Kaṭṭi nal nāṭṭu*’ (*Kuruntokai* 11.6). It should be noted that Āay, Erumai, Nannaṇ, Pulli, and Kaṭṭi were all chiefs. So, Pāṇaṇ should have been a chief as well. We also know that these names represent a generic name of a lineage of chiefs, best exemplified by Āy in whose lineage we have Āy Aṅṭiraṇ and Āy Eyiṇaṇ (Pillai 1967, p. 1463). (The extra ‘a’ in Āay is inserted due to metrical reasons.) Wilden also has taken *elāa* to be the negative adjectival participle of *elu* ‘to rise’ (DEDR 851). Other scholars have interpreted the word differently.

Rākavaiyaṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ, in their *Akanāṇūru* edition of 1933, interpret *elāap pāṇaṇ* as ‘Pāṇaṇ, who does not rise to fight those who flee from battle. In contrast, Nāṭṭār and Pillai in their *Akanāṇūru* edition of 1946 interpret *elāap pāṇaṇ* as ‘Pāṇaṇ, who does not flee from enemies.’ Such different interpretations arise due to the difficulty of making sense of *elāa*, considered by these scholars as deriving from DEDR 851 *elu* ‘to rise’. Tamil *elu* ‘rise’ also has a homophon given by DEDR 5156 which has cognate words such as *yāl*, *nāl*, ‘stringed musical instrument’; *elu* ‘to emit sound’; and *elāal* ‘musical notes of the *yāl*.’ For the affirmative use of *elī* in the sense of bards making music, see *Patirruppattu* 29.7–8.<sup>16</sup> So, if *elāa* in *elāap pāṇaṇ* is derived from DEDR 5156, it means ‘the bard who does not play the lute/make music’.<sup>17</sup> This leads to the following translation of *Akanāṇūru* 113.16–17.

beyond the good land of Pāṇaṇ, who does not make music,  
with many rich meat foods as if engaged in a feast

Here, ‘Pāṇaṇ, who does not make music’ makes it explicit that the poet is talking about a chief and not a bard. Not realizing the use of *Velippaṭai* technique in this poem involving *elu* of DEDR 5156, which gives a clear and direct meaning, the above-mentioned scholars have given widely diverging interpretations of *elāap pāṇaṇ*. Wilden’s interpretation, however, is partly right in that the origin of the chief is connected to a bard.

That the Pāṇar were also chiefs or warriors is brought out by *Kuruntokai* 328, which has been misinterpreted by scholars who thought that the Pāṇar had functioned only as musician bards. Consider the text below.

... *alarē*  
*vil kelu tāṇai vicciyar perumakaṇ*  
*vēntaroṭu poruta nāṇraip pāṇar*  
*puli nōkku uṛaḷ nilai kaṇṭa*  
*kali kelu kurumpūr ārppiṇum peritē*  
(*Kuruntokai* 328.4–8)

The gossip was louder than the roar of the noisy village in the arid tract, that saw the stance of the Pāṇar that resembled the look of the tiger, when the chief of Vicciyar of army abounding in archers fought against the kings.<sup>18</sup>

The Pāṇar in this poem should be interpreted as chiefs or warriors and not as bards based on philology. In all other occurrences of ‘*pāṇar*’ in Classical Tamil literature, *pāṇar* is mentioned with one or more of their usual attributes such as given below.

- The bard’s musical instruments;

- The bard's performance/music/song;
- The bard's poverty;
- The bard's hunger;
- Gifts received by the bard such as food, clothes, elephants, gold flower, and land;
- The bard's *maṅṭai*, a vessel, in which they received food;
- The bard's patron;
- The bard's large entourage of relatives.

*Kuruntokai* 328 is the only exception where none of the above attributes is mentioned. The only attribute given to these *pāṇar* is their '*puli nōkku*' (fierce look).<sup>19</sup>

It should also be noted that the Caṅkam poems also use plural forms like *Cōlar*, *Āriyar*, and *Vicciyar* to denote multiple members of a dynasty or the members of a dynasty's army as given in the example below.

*māri ampīṅ maḷait tōl cōlar*  
*vīl iṅṭu kurumpīṅ vallattup puramīlai*  
*āriyar paṭaiyiṅ uṭaika . . .*  
 (*Akanāṅṅūru* 336.20–22)

'Like the army of the Aryan kings at the external protective forest of Vallam strengthened by the bows of the army of the *Cōlas* with rain-like arrows, clouds-like shields'

Here, '*Cōlar*' really signifies the army of the *Cōlas*. Vallam most probably refers to the town called Tiruvallam, the capital of the *Bāṇas* in *Perumpāṇappāṭi* several centuries later.

That is why the *Pāṇar* in *Kuruntokai* 328 cannot be taken to be functioning as bards but as chiefs or warriors with the fierce look of a tiger. These "*Pāṇar*' chiefs or warriors must have been involved in fighting.

Therefore, Auvai Turaicāmiṭ Piḷḷai is right in characterizing a section of the *Pāṇar* community as being chiefs and warriors. However, Turacicāmiṭ Piḷḷai is wrong to interpret the name *Pāṇaṅ* as the given name of a person who founded this dynasty as he states in his commentary on *Narriṅṅai* 148. *Pāṇaṅ* represented the generic name of a member of the dynasty of *Pāṇar* in *Akanāṅṅūru* 113, 155, and 325 in the same way names like *Celiyan*, *Cēral*, and *Cempiyan* are dynastic names, which stand for individual kings of those dynasties in *Akanāṅṅūru* 36.13–20. We really do not know who the originator of the dynasty was.

#### 1.6. Is '*Pāṇaṅ*' (The Name of the Chief) from '*Pāṇaṅ*' or '*Bāṇa*'?

In terms of meanings referring to people, the *Tamil Lexicon* glosses *Pāṇ* as '*Pāṇar* caste' and *Pāṇaṅ* as 'an ancient class of Tamil bards and minstrels.' However, philologically, the word just means *Pāṇar*, i.e., the plural of *Pāṇaṅ* as can be seen in *Purāṇāṅṅūru* 348.4, where *pāṅcēri* (< *pāṅ* 'bards' + *cēri* 'street') is used to refer to the street, where the bards live. The *Tamil Lexicon* also glosses *Pāṇaṅ* as a Tamil rendering of Sanskrit *Bāṇa*, an Asura devotee of Śiva. How can we determine if the name of *Pāṇaṅ*, the ruler, is etymologically related to *Pāṇaṅ*, the bard, or is a Tamilized form of Sanskrit *Bāṇa*? The use of the verb *eḷu* of DEDR 5156 etymologically connected to making music in *Akanāṅṅūru* 113.17 in connection with the chief *Pāṇaṅ* makes it clear we are not talking about a Tamilized form of Sanskrit *Bāṇa*. There is also additional evidence from a Sanskrit text that there was a territory named after *Pāṇar*.

The reluctance of historians to identify the *Pāṇaṅ*, the chief, whom they identify as belonging to the *Bāṇa* dynasty, with the bardic community of *Pāṇar* is due to the implied assumption that the Caṅkam poems are Tamilizing the word *Bāṇa* as *Pāṇaṅ* because Tamil orthography has no separate character to denote the initial voiced obstruent '*b*' of *Bāṇa*. So, instead of voiced '*b*' the Tamil poets are assumed to have used the Tamil character representing voiceless '*p*' resulting in *Pāṇa*. The final '*ṅ*' in *Pāṇaṅ* results from the process of adding the masculine singular suffix to the Sanskrit name *Bāṇa* giving us the full name of the chief, *Pāṇaṅ*.

This unstated assumption seems to be behind historians like Vētācalam (1987, p. 5), who has identified Pāṇaṇ, the chief mentioned in Akanāṇūru 113 and Akanāṇūru 325, as belonging to the Bāṇa dynasty. However, they did not identify the chief as connected to the ancient bardic community of the Pāṇar.<sup>20</sup> This unstated assumption is also revealed by what Venkatesan (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 42, p. 175) says in connection with a sixth-century inscription from Paṛaiyanpaṭṭu in Gingee taluk in former South Arcot district. The inscription mentions a Jain teacher Vaccaṇanti from Pāṇāṭu. Venkatesan says,

**“The territorial division viz., Pāṇāṭu, is in all probability, the same as Bāṇāṭu i.e., the nāṭu of the Bāṇas.** (emphasis mine) The Bāṇas were an ancient line of kings, who also ruled a portion of the Tamil country. This is the earliest so far known inscription, which mentions their territorial division as Pāṇāṭu. The names Vāṇagōppādi-nāṭu and Perumbāṇappādi, etc., are employed in the Tamil inscriptions of the latter period to indicate the territory of the Bāṇas. This territory probably formed the southern portions of the modern North Arcot District and probably also a portion adjacent to it in the South Arcot District. The village Mēlvaṇṇakkambādi, possibly the corrupt form of Mēlvāṇagōppādi, may have been the western boundary of Vāṇagōppādi, and the village Kīlvaṇṇakkambādi near Dēvikāpuram may have been the eastern boundary of the same division. The provenance of our inscription viz., Paṛaiyanpaṭṭu was well within the Bāṇa territory.”

One has to note that the name Bāṇāṭu is not attested anywhere in texts or inscriptions. It is simply an assumption by Venkatesan that Bāṇāṭu was the original form and Pāṇāṭu was the Tamil rendering of it. Fortunately, we have clinching evidence from a Sanskrit text that resolves the issue.

Discussing the occurrence of *pāṇāṭṭu* in the Paṛaiyanpaṭṭu inscription, Mahadevan (2003, p. 629) says that *pāṇāṭṭu* is an oblique form of *pāṇāṭu* and that Pāṇāṭu is a compound made of *pāṇ* and *nāṭu*. He further explains:

Cf. LT *palvayinṅ payanirai cernta pāṇāṭṭu āṅkaṇ*. ‘there in Pāṇāṭu where at many places milch cows gather’ (Aka. 155:6–7). *pāṇāṭṭu* is taken to be the sandhi of *pāṇ* + *nāṭṭu* and also interpreted as ‘in the country of the *pāṇaṇ*, by R. Raghavaiyengar (1933)<sup>21</sup> and by N. M. Venkataswamy Nattar and R. Venkatachalam Pillai (1949) in their editions of *Akanāṇūru*, even though some old manuscripts give the variant reading *pāl nāṭṭu* (> *pāṇāṭṭu*) ‘the ruined country’ which does not suit the context. (I am grateful to Dr. S. Palaniappan, Dallas, USA, for the references. I consulted the unpublished notes of U. Ve. Swaminathaiyar at the Swaminathaiyar Library. While noting the reading *pāl nāṭṭu* in Aka. 155, he has given cross-references to verses 113 and 325 referring to *pāṇaṇ nal nāṭṭu* ‘in the good country of the *pāṇaṇ*’.) The present early inscriptional reference to *pāṇāṭṭu* is a valuable confirmation of the correct reading and interpretation of the expression.<sup>22</sup>

Mahadevan has not pointed out an important explanation regarding *Akanāṇūru* 155 by Rākavaiyaṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ in their 1933 edition. As Mahadevan has noted, they interpret *pāṇ* in *pāṇāṭu* as Pāṇaṇ. However, in order to buttress their interpretation of singular Pāṇaṇ, they cite the use of *pāṇvaravu* in *Purapporuḷ Veṅpāmālai* 12.30, describing the theme of the arrival of a Pāṇaṇ as a messenger in love poems. However, we have noted already that in the Caṅkam poems, Pāṇ is a synonym of plural Pāṇar. This means *pāṇāṭu* means ‘the land of the Pāṇar’ referring to the country of the dynasty of the Pāṇar.<sup>23</sup> In any case, what is important here is that Rākavaiyaṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ have related the Pāṇar dynasty to the bards.

The same connection is provided by a Sanskrit text. According to Lewis Rice (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 14, p. 334):

... the manuscript of a Digambara Jain work in Sanskrit, named Lōkavibhāga, has been discovered by the Mysore Archaeological Department (see the reports

for 1909 and 1910), treating of Jaina cosmography. The contents, it says, were first delivered by the Arhat Vardhamāna, and handed down through Sudharma and a succession of other teachers. The Rishi Siṃha-sūri (or Siṃha-sūra) produced the work in a translation (? From Prākṛit into Sanskrit). And the Muni Sarvanandin formerly (*purā*) made a copy of it in the village named Pāṭalika in the Pāṇa-rāṣṭra. The interesting point is that the precise date is given when this task was completed, namely the 22nd year of Siṃhavarman, the Lord of Kāñchī, and is 80 beyond 300 of the Śaka years . . . Pāṭalika, the village in which Sarvanandin made his copy, may be Pāṭalīpura, in the South Arcot District. The Periya-purāṇam makes it the seat of a large Jaina monastery in the 7th century. Pāṇarāṣṭra is no doubt the territory of the Bāṇa kings.

According to Jain (2007, p. 132), Lokavibhāga of Sarvanandi belonged to the sixth century CE. We also know that the sixth-century Paṛaiyanpaṭṭu inscription mentions the oblique form of Pāṇāṭu (<*pāṇ+nāṭu*). The first part *pāṇ-* in Pāṇāṭu refers to the bardic community of Pāṇar, whose adjectival form is Pāṇa. The latter part of Pāṇāṭu, *-nāṭu*, means 'country'. It is well-known that Tamil *nāṭu* is translated as *rāṣṭra* in Sanskrit. For instance, in Paṭṭattāḷmaṅkalam plates of Pallava Maṅkalanāṭu in Tamil is translated as Maṅgalarāṣṭra in the Sanskrit portion (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 18, pp. 1925–26, 116). Similarly, Larger Sinnamanur Grant renders Tamil Vaṭakaḷavali Nāṭu as Vaṭakaḷavali Rāṣṭra in Sanskrit (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 3, Parts 3 & 4, pp. 459, 462). Similarly, Muṇḍa Rāṣṭra was the Sanskrit name of Muṇḍa Nāḍu comprising part of Nellore District of erstwhile Madras Presidency (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 29, p. 94, n.2). Scholars also consider Veṅgorāṣṭra in Māṅgalūr copper plates refers to Vēṅki Nāṭu or Vēṅgi kingdom (*The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam 1966*, pp. 292–93). So, what we have in Pāṇa-rāṣṭra is a translation into Sanskrit of Pāṇāṭu, the country of the Pāṇar and not the Bāṇar. After all, Sanskrit with the separate phoneme of 'b' could have rendered the name Bāṇa-rāṣṭra, if indeed the original name of the rulers was Bāṇa.<sup>24</sup> However, we should note that while the name Pāṇāṭu has remained the same for about six centuries, the extent of the territory covered by the term over this time period could have fluctuated widely.

We have shown that a dynasty founded by the Pāṇar, the Tamil bards, had been established in the northern part of the Tamil country. Next, we have to determine whether the Pāṇar dynasty and the Bāṇas are one and the same.

### 1.7. Perumpāṇ versus Bṛhadbāṇa

Historians also make another assumption regarding the origin location of the Bāṇas, i.e., they originated north of the Tamil country and progressively moved south into the Tamil land. For instance, Vēṭācalam (1987, p. 5) states that one could say that the Bāṇas' political life began under the Sātavāhanas near Kurnool and Kolar regions, presently in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, respectively.

T. N. Ramachandran, the historian, states (Ramachandran 1931, pp. 300–302):

References to the Bāṇas are made in inscriptions dating from very early times. The earliest mention is in the Talaguṇḍa inscription of the Kadamba king Kakusthavarman (430–450 A.D.) in which it is said that Mayūraśarman, the first Kadamba king (345–370 A.D.) was helped by an ally of his called "Bṛhad Bāṇa" in his fight with the Pallavas in the forests of Sri Parvata and that he levied tribute from this "Bṛhad Bāṇa" as well as from other kings<sup>25</sup>. It would appear that the territory of this "Bṛhad Bāṇa" was very near Śrī Parvata, i.e., the present Śrīsailam in the Kurnool District . . .

The term "Bṛhad Bāṇa" in the Talaguṇḍa inscription corresponds to the Tamil term *Peruṃ-Bāṇa* of the territorial term *Peruṃ-bāṇappāḍi*. It was by the latter term that the Bāṇa dominions were denoted . . .

According to tradition the Bāṇa capital was known as *Paṛivipuri*, whose other forms were *Prapurī*, *Paṛvipura*, *Paṛivai*, *Paṛvai*, *Paṛvi*, *Paṛivaipura*, *Paṛivipurī* and

*Parigipura*. Indeed, the last term, *Parigipura*, has led the late Rai Bahadur Venkayya to identify it with Parigi in the Hindupur Taluk of the Anantapur District. The claim of Tiruvallam in the North Arcot District for the Bāṇa capital, inasmuch as it was also known by the appellation *Vāṇapuram*, is easily explained by him as merely meaning that Tiruvallam was one of the important towns, if not the capital, of the Bāṇa territory. Long after the Bāṇas had ceased to rule, their scion, wherever they were, claimed to be lords of *Parivipura* and of *Nandagiri*, another equally important place. *Nandagiri* is the present Nandi-drug in the Chikballapur Taluk, Kolar District, Mysore. The fact that most of the inscriptions of the Bāṇas have been found in the Arcot, Kolar, Anantapur, and Kurnool districts makes one believe that the term *Perumbāṇappādi* which denoted the Bāṇa territory was applied to the large tract of territory with Śrīsailam in the north, Kolar and Puṅganūr in the west, Kālahasti in the east and the river Pālār in the south. In the north they appear to have been the governors of the Pallava territory till the latter were driven down by the western Cāḷukyas in the latter part of the 6th century A. D . . .

. . . The rise of the western Cāḷukya power in the 7th century acted as a check not only to the Pallava power in the Telugu country but also to that of the local Bāṇas who appear to have guarded the Pallava territories there. Consequently, the Bāṇas, as Venkayya supposes, were forced into the northern portion of the North Arcot district . . .

Thus, according to Ramachandran and Venkayya, the Bāṇas were non-Tamils, originally hailing from the Telugu-Kannada region north of Tamil Nadu. They migrated to the Tamil country as a result of the pressure from the Western Cāḷukyas. However, Chopra et al. (1979, p. 32) state that Mayūraśarman of the Kadamba dynasty “is known to have levied tribute from the subordinates of the Pallavas particularly the Brihadbanas who are known to Tamil Sangam literature as the Perumbanar.”<sup>26</sup> One will notice that Chopra, Ravindran, and Subrahmanian do not explicitly state that the Bāṇa dynasty descended from the bardic community of Pāṇar.

However, in the Tamil Caṅkam literature, *Perumpāṇ* occurs in *Narriṇai* 40.3 and *Matu-raik Kāñci* 342 and *Perumpāṇaṇ* occurs in *Kalittokai* 96.35. In all three occurrences, *Perumpāṇ* or *Perumpāṇaṇ* refers to the bardic community of Pāṇar. If one can establish the dates of occurrence of Pāṇaṇ as a chief and *Perumpāṇ* in these Caṅkam poems as preceding the occurrence of Bṛhadbāṇas, then one can argue that ‘Bṛhadbāṇa’ is only a translation into Sanskrit of ‘Perumpāṇ.’ We can look at Tamil philology and Indian epigraphy to explore this issue.

#### 1.8. Dates of Tamil Texts with the Occurrence of Chief ‘Pāṇaṇ’ or Perumpāṇ

*Akanāṇūru* 325 was authored by the poet Māmūlaṇār. Regarding his date, Zvelebil (1975, p. 276) says, “There is unfortunately not a single reference giving a direct clue to his exact date; but by inference we may date him ca. 245 A.D.” Zvelebil has obviously missed an important reference regarding his date. *Akanāṇūru* 31.14–15, also authored by Māmūlaṇār, are given below followed by their translation.

*tamil keḷu mūvar kākkum*

*moḷi peyar tēetta paṇ malai irantē*

crossing the many mountains of the land, where the language changes, which the three kings with Tamil nature (Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇṭiya) protect<sup>27</sup>

What Māmūlaṇār talks about in these lines is the northern border region of the Tamil country, north of which the spoken language changes from Tamil to Telugu or Kannada. The most interesting fact brought about by these lines is that the border region is protected by **all three Tamil kings** even though only the Cēra and Cōḷa lands adjoin the northern border. The Pāṇṭiya kingdom lies south of the Cōḷa land. This means that Māmūlaṇār is

referring to a confederacy of Tamil kings which also is mentioned by the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravēla (mid-first century BCE) who claimed to have broken up the confederacy (Thapar 2002, pp. 211–12).<sup>28</sup> The confederacy was supposed to have lasted for 113 years (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 20, p. 88).<sup>29</sup> The existence of the confederacy is also suggested by some Caṅkam poems as given below.

*potumai cuṭṭiya mūvar ulakamum*

*potumai inri āṅṭicīṅōrkkum*

(*Puranānūru* 357.2–3)

even for those who ruled without sharing

the land to be shared in common by the three (kings)

... *vaḷuti*

*taṅ tamil potu enap porāṅ ...*

(*Puranānūru* 51.4–5)

... The Pāṅṭiyan king *Valuti*

will not tolerate the statement that the cool Tamil land is common (to Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṅṭiya kings)

Since Māmūlaṅār uses the non-past tense form *kākkum* ‘protect’ to describe the action of the confederacy, it was in existence when he authored the poem. So, Māmūlaṅār must have lived in the first century BCE before Khāravēla broke it up. This means that Pāṅaṅ, the chief, mentioned by Māmūlaṅār in *Akanānūru* 325 and the territory ruled by him, *Pāṅaṅ nal nāṭu* or Pāṅāṭu, must have existed at that time, if not earlier.

As for the occurrence of Perumpāṅ in *Maturaik Kāñci* 342, Zvelebil (1975, p. 273) dates the *Maturaik Kāñci* to ca. 215 CE. Since Tāḷagunda inscription of the fifth century is the only inscription mentioning Bṛhadbāṅa, Bṛhadbāṅa seems to be the translation of Tamil Perumpāṅ. To confirm this, we shall look at Dravidian linguistic data as well as the inscriptions mentioning the Bāṅas as they first shifted out of Tamil areas to Telugu and Kannada areas and moved back to the Tamil area later.

### 1.9. Pāṅar Dynastic Movement

Next, we consider the question of how the Pāṅar rulers geographically moved over time. The original home of the Pāṅar rulers, Pāṅāṭu, was in the Tamil country in the first century BCE. The place name had persisted up to the sixth century CE, as shown by the Paraiyanpaṭṭu inscription. However, between these two timepoints, major movements of people had taken place. Kalabhras north of the border of Tamil country moved into the Tamil country.<sup>30</sup> A branch of the Tamil Cōḷas established themselves in Andhra as the Telugu Cōḷas of Rēnāṅḍu or Rēnāḍu.

H. Krishna Sastri, in his discussion of Mālēpāḍu copper plates of Puṅyakumāra, a Telugu Cōḷa of the seventh century CE<sup>31</sup>, says the following (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 11, pp. 339, 344–45).

After an invocation to Śiva, the record introduces us to a king Nandivarman of the Kāśyapa-gōtra. He was born in the family of Karikāla who was “the (celestial) tree *mandāra* on the mountain Mandara—the race of the Sun, the doer of many eminent deeds such as stopping the overflow over its banks of the (*waters of the*) daughter of Kavēra (i.e., the river Kāvēri), who made his own the dignity of the three kings (*of the South*) ... ”<sup>32</sup>

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has discussed many Telugu Cōḷa records collected in 1947–1948 from Anantapur and Cuddapah districts (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, pp. 220–51). On paleographical grounds, these records of the Rēnāṅḍu Chōḷas range from the second half of the sixth century to the end of the eighth century CE. (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, p.220).

He further says, “We have therefore to assume the existence of the Telugu-Chōlas in the Telugu country earlier than the Pallava conquest of the Chōla country of the Kāvēri basin.” (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, p. 247).

One of the records of these Telugu Cōlas is the Chāmalūru inscription of Pṛthvīvallabha Vijayāditya Cōla (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, pp. 242–44) found in the village of Chāmalūru in the Jammalamadugu taluk. This inscription mentions a Bāṇa as **Vāṇarāja**, who was ruling at ca. 750 CE in Pāmbuliggi possibly identified with Hāvalige in the Gooty taluk in Anantapur District. Sastri writes in connection with this inscription (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, p. 243):

It would be of interest to trace here the activities of the Bāṇas during the period prior to their subjugation by the Telugu Chōla Vijayāditya of the present record. Several inscriptions of Chālukya Vijayāditya found in the locality around the place where the present record has been discovered, mention a number of Bāṇa chiefs ruling over this region . . . The Perbāṇa family to which some of these Bāṇas of the Ceded Districts are stated to belong, may have, as their family name indicates, belonged to the Bṛihad-Bāṇa line, the foes of Kadamba Mayūśarman, mentioned in the Talaguṇḍa inscription of Kākusthavarman.

Additional inscriptions mentioned by Sastri (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, 243) include one of 719 CE at Koṇḍupalli in Anantapur District of Vikramāditya Bali Indra Bāṇarāja, son of Balikulatilaka Narasiṃha Bāṇādhirāja and one of Western Cālukya Vikramāditya I (eighth century) at Arakaṭavēmula in Cuddapah district. Additionally, the Sāliggāme grant of the Ganga king Konguṇi Muttarasa of the eighth century from Nandaguḍi in Bangalore district mentions a Bāṇa chief by the name **Perbbāṇa Muttarasa** (*Annual Report for the Mysore Archaeological Department for the Year 1941*, pp. 132–33). *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* (no. 418 of 1940–1941) from the eighth century of the Western Cālukya king Kīrttivarman Satyāśraya (II) from Korrapāḍu in Jammalamadugu taluk in Cuddapah district registers a gift of land made by **Per-Bāṇādhirāja**. A Tamil herostone inscription in Pāppampāṭi in Dharmapuri District (fifth century CE) mentions a Bāṇa chief **Vāṇaperumaraiçaru** as dying in a fight with the Ganga ruler in the 4th regnal year of Kōvicaiya Viṇṇaparumaṇ (*Tarumapuri Kalvetṭukaḷ (Mutal Tokuti)*, p. 57).<sup>33</sup> Another herostone inscription (fifth or sixth century CE) in the same location mentions possibly the same Bāṇa chief as **Vāṇaparuma araiçaru** (meaning **Bāṇavarma Rāja**) (*Tarumapuri Kalvetṭukaḷ (Mutal Tokuti)*, p. 56). A Tamil herostone inscription in Cantūr in Krishnagiri district during 7th regnal year of Pallava Mahendrarvarman I (597 CE) mentions a **Perumpāṇaviḷavaraiçar**.<sup>34</sup> Another herostone inscription of 18th regnal year of Mahendrarvarman I in Taṇṭampaṭṭu in Ceṅkam area in Tamil Nadu mentions a Bāṇa chief named **Perumpāṇaraiçar** (*Ceṅkam Naṭukaṛkaḷ*, no. 1971/77). A herostone inscription of ca. 697 CE set up in Tā. Vēlūr in the Ceṅkam area during Pallava Narasiṃhavarman II’s rule mentions a Bāṇa chief by the name Vāṇakōo **Atiraiçar** (*Ceṅkam Naṭukaṛkaḷ*, no. 1971/54). Another herostone of ca. 705 CE in Tālaiyūttu in the Ceṅkam area in Tamil Nadu mentions a Bāṇa chief named **Perumpāṇatiyariçar** set up during the same Pallava Narasiṃhavarman II’s rule (*Ceṅkam Naṭukaṛkaḷ*, no. 1971/73). A herostone inscription from the 30th regnal year of Kaṭṭāṇaiparumaṇ of the eighth century CE in Cantūr in Krishnagiri District mentions a **Perumpāṇilavaraiçar** (*Kiruṣṇakiri Māvattak Kalvetṭukaḷ*, p. 28). Five years later under the same ruler, another herostone inscription from the same location mentions a **Pāṇilavarai[çar]** (*Kiruṣṇakiri Māvattak Kalvetṭukaḷ*, p. 30).<sup>35</sup> The Rāyakkōṭṭai copper plates of Skandaśiṣya (a possible enemy of Nandivarman Pallavamalla) mentions a **Mahāvalivāṇarājar** (*The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam 1966*, p. 104). The Pullūr copper plates of Nandivarman Pallavamalla mentions **Bāṇādhīpa** (*The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam 1966*, p. 186). Thus, we see that in the Tamil area, **Vāṇa-**, **Perumpāṇ-**, and **Perumpāṇa-** occur interchangeably at least from the sixth century. Even during the Caṅkam period, some kings had the prefix Peru- and others did not. A ninth-century herostone inscription of Pallava Kampavarman in Kīlputtūr in Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu mentions a person by the name **Perumpāṇa** Cakkaṭi Araiçar (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 12, no. 102, p. 46).

The following table summarizes all the epigraphic data regarding the Bāṇas we have discussed above.

The locations of inscriptions included in Table 1 are shown in Figure 1. The distribution of Perbāṇa- or Perbbāṇa- components in Bāṇa names in non-Tamil areas not earlier than the fifth century and the names Perumpāṇ or Perumpāṇaṇ in Tamil areas from approximately 215 CE to the ninth century confirm the direction of borrowing for Bṛhadbāṇa, i.e., Perumpāṇ or Perumpāṇaṇ > Bṛhadbāṇa.

**Table 1.** References to the Bāṇas in Various Inscriptions.

Number	Date	Local Language	Place	Name
1	fifth century	Kannada	Tālagunda, Shimoga district <sup>36</sup>	<b>Bṛhadbāṇa</b>
2	fifth century	Tamil	Pāppampāṭi, Dharmapuri District	<b>Vāṇaperumaraicar</b>
3	fifth or sixth century	Tamil	Pāppampāṭi, Dharmapuri District	<b>Vāṇaparuma araicaru</b>
4	sixth century	Tamil	Cantūr, Krishnagiri District	<b>Perumpāṇaviḷavaraicar</b>
5	seventh century	Tamil	Taṇṭampāṭṭu, Ceṅkam area	<b>Perumpāṇaraicar</b>
6	seventh century	Tamil	Tā. Vēḷūr, Ceṅkam area	<b>Vāṇakōo Atiraicar</b>
7	seventh century	Telugu	Arakaṭavēmula, Cuddapah District	<b>Perbāṇa vaṃṣa</b>
8	eighth century	Tamil	Tālaiyūttu, Ceṅkam area	<b>Perumpāṇatiyaraicar</b>
9	eighth century	Tamil	Cantūr, Krishnagiri District	<b>Perumpāṇilavaraicar</b>
10	eighth century	Tamil	Cantūr, Krishnagiri District	<b>Pāṇiḷavarai[*car]</b>
11	eighth century	Tamil	Rāyakkōṭṭai, Krishnagiri District	<b>Mahāvalivāṇarājar</b>
12	eighth century	Tamil	Pullūr, North Arcot District	<b>Bāṇādhipa</b>
13	eighth century	Tamil	Tiruvallam (Vāṇapuram), North Arcot District	<b>Mahāvalikulotbhava Śrīmāvalivāṇarāyar, Mahāvalivāṇarāyar</b>
14	eighth century	Telugu	Chāmalūru, Cuddapah District	<b>Vāṇarāja</b>
15	eighth century	Telugu	Koṇḍupāḷli, Anantapur District	<b>Bāṇarāja</b>
16	eighth century	Kannada	Nandaguḍi, Bangalore District	<b>Perbbāṇa Muttarasa</b>
17	eighth century	Telugu	Korrapāḍu, Cuddapah District	Perbāṇādhirāja ( <b>Perbāṇa-adhirāja</b> )
18	ninth century	Tamil	Kiḷputtūr, Chingleput District	<b>Perumpāṇaṇ</b>

All the epigraphic data presented above show that the Telugu Cōḷas as well as the Bāṇas were present in Anantapur, Cuddapah, and Kurnool Districts at least from the seventh or eighth century, if not earlier. If Cōḷas could migrate to this region from the Tamil country, so could the Bāṇas to the same region as well as southern Karnataka.

This means that ca. first century BCE the original home of the Bāṇas, known as Pāṇar then, was in the northern part of the Tamil country. Between then and the fourth century CE, when Kadamba king Mayūravarma levied tribute on the Bṛhadbāṇas, the Bāṇas seemed to have migrated to the region north of the Tamil country into Telugu and Kannada regions. In approximately the fifth century CE, when the Tālagunda inscription was authored, they must have been called Perumpāṇar in Tamil, which became Perbāṇa or Perbbāṇa in Telugu and Kannada regions, respectively, and translated into Sanskrit as

Br̥hadbāṇa. Later, under pressure from the Western Cāḷukyas, the Bāṇas moved south and returned to the region straddling the northern border of the Tamil country as well as the southern Telugu and Kannada regions.

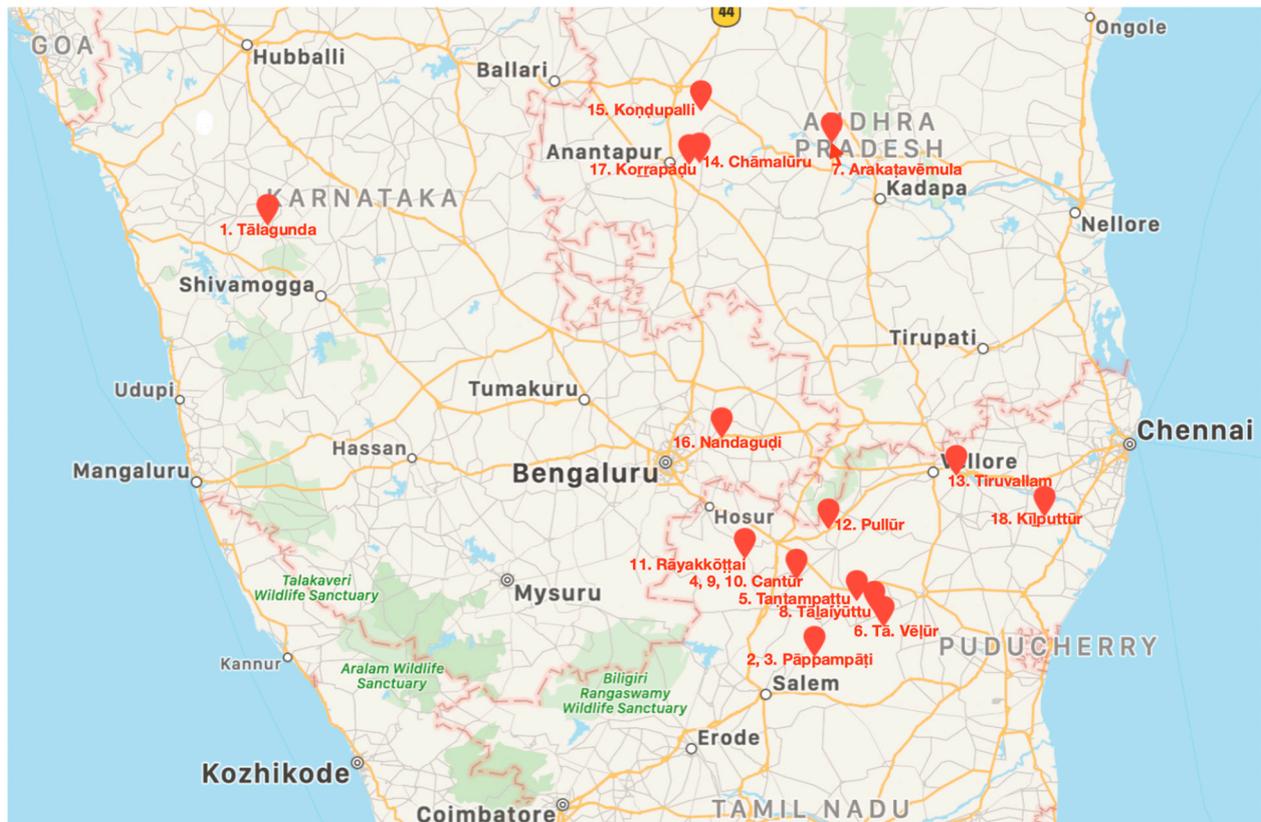


Figure 1. Locations of Inscriptions Mentioning the Bāṇas Shown in Table 1.

### 1.10. Linguistic Variation from Pāṇar to Bāṇa

The reasons for considering Sanskrit Br̥hadbāṇa as a borrowing from Tamil Perumpāṇar are discussed below.

The use of Peru- in combination with the name of a dynasty or profession as a title or name to denote recognition of excellence is an indigenous Tamil tradition. Examples include Peruñceral (*Patirrupattu* 8th Patikam, line 10), Peruñcōlan (*Patirrupattu* 9th Patikam, line 6), Peruvaluti (*The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam* 1967, p. 22), Perumuttaraiyan (*Nāḷaiyār* 200.1), and Perumpāṇan (*Kalittokai* 96.35). In contrast, the Sanskrit dynastic title, Br̥hadbāṇa is very unusual. The only other known dynastic title beginning in Br̥hat or Br̥had, Br̥hatphālāyana, is not a dynastic title at all. In fact, in the case of Br̥hatphālāyanas and Sālankāyanas, according to Gopalachari (1941, p. 151), the scholars have simply used the gotra names in the absence of dynastic names. (Gopalachari 1941, p. 151, n.1). Moreover, it is only in the Talagunda inscription we find the occurrence of Br̥hadbāṇa. Everywhere else in non-Tamil inscriptions, the members of the dynasty are called with names beginning in Bāṇa-, Perbbāṇa, Perbbāṇa, and Vāṇa-. In other words, we do not find Br̥hadbāṇa anywhere else. However, in Tamil, we find many instances of Perumpāṇaraiyar, and Perumpāṇan. This leads one to infer that the author of the Talagunda inscription was simply translating the name Perumpāṇan into Sanskrit. One of the features of Dravidian languages is that voiceless obstruents become voiced in post-nasal positions (Krishnamurti 2003, pp. 144–45). In Tamil, -p- following nasal -m- is pronounced as -b-, but it is still written in Tamil with -p- due to Tamil orthography. This means what is written as Perumpāṇan in Tamil is pronounced as Perumbāṇan. The author of the Talagunda inscription has translated the first component of this name, Tamil Perum-, as Br̥had- in Sanskrit and

rendered the second part as *-bāṇa*. This suggests that the original form of the dynastic name should have been *Pāṇaṇ*, which was later re-analyzed as *Bāṇa*.

It is also possible that in the Kannada and Telugu areas 'Pāṇa-' was being pronounced as 'Bāṇa' due to *p-/b-* variations in word-initial positions such as in Tamil *poykai* 'natural spring or pond', Kannada *bugge*, and Telugu *bugga* (DEDR 4533) independent of the post-nasal pronunciation of *-p-* in Perumpāṇaṇ (*Krishnamurti 2003*, pp. 130–31). Another such example is Tamil *pomma* 'puppet, doll, effigy' (DEDR 4530), Kannada *bombe*, and Telugu *bomma*. The *Periyapurāṇam* mentions two Śaiva devotees from the bardic community of Pāṇar. One was from the Pāṇṭiya country and known as Pāṇaṇār Pattiraṇār, where Pāṇaṇār<sup>37</sup> is an epithet indicating that he is a respected person of the bardic community and Pattiraṇ (<Sanskrit Bhadra) is his given name. The other one was Tirunilakaṇṭa Yālpāṇar from the Cōla country.<sup>38</sup> For details regarding their stories, see *Palaniappan (2016)*, pp. 316–22). The *Periyapurāṇam* was authored during the rule of Cōla Kulottuṅga II, who reigned from 1133–50 CE. The name Pāṇaṇār Pattiraṇār has been Sanskritized as Bāṇabhadra in Sānskrit works possibly due to the influence of Kannada or Telugu. A Kannada inscription from Ablūr in Karnataka mentions a Śaiva devotee by the name Bāṇan (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 5, 246). The editor of the inscription identifies Bāṇan with Bāṇabhadra since the inscription also mentions Malayēśvara, presumably referring to the saint-king, Ceramāṇ Perumāl, who interacted with the bardic devotee from Madurai (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 5, 254–55, n5). If this inscriptional Bāṇaṇ represented one of the two bardic devotees, since the inscription is dated ca. 1101 CE, the inscription must reflect knowledge about that devotee on the part of the Kannada Śaiva tradition before 1101 CE i.e., anterior to the *Periyapurāṇam*.<sup>39</sup>

The Sanskritized name Bāṇabhadra could also result from hypercorrection changing Pāṇa- to Bāṇa-. Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavata, a well-known composer of Carnatic music songs and erstwhile palace musician of Mysore, has used the name Bāṇabhadra in a Sanskrit composition beginning in "*pāṇcavaktram āśraye'ham*" in which Śiva is praised as one who is pleased with the music of Bāṇabhadra (*Subramanian 1946*, p. 313).<sup>40</sup> In his biographical dictionary of Carnatic composers and musicians, *Rajagopalan (1992)*, p. 59), refers to the Pāṇar devotee Pattiraṇ as Bāṇabhadra. Elaine Fisher, in her summary of the story of the same Pāṇar devotee, calls him Bāṇabhadra too (*Fisher 2017*, p. 199). Thus, it is possible for Tamil Pāṇar > Bāṇa also with word-initial *p-* changing to *b-*.

An extreme form of such hypercorrection is seen in the following excerpt from the book *Mirror of Tamil and Sanskrit* describing the content of a twelfth-century inscription in the Tiruviṭaimarutūr temple (*Nagaswamy (2012)*, pp. 373–74). The inscription discusses the order by Cōla Kulottuṅga II<sup>41</sup> to appoint a Pāṇaṇ to sing before the deity, appoint other Pāṇar, and train two classes of temple women to sing.

A new service was started in the temple of Thiruvaidaimarudūr creating an enactment for singing the Thirup-padiayams [*sic*] and also arranging for the dancing girls of the temple to sing in the 9th year of Vikramachola, the son of Kulottuṅga II. The service was called "*Bāṇap-peru*" (*Bāṇap-pani*). This was a royal appointment issued by Vikramachola [*sic*] and a certain Irumudi Cholan alias Acanala Peraraiayan [*sic*] was appointed to do the service...The record states that he was to sing in the presence of God of the Thiruvaidaimarudūr temple and direct other Bāṇas for arranging the Dancing girls to sing (*Thiruvaidai marudur—udaiyārukku—pādavum, ikkoyil Taliyilārai pāduvikkavum ikkoyil Devaradiyārai pāduvikkavum Bānapperāka*). The Bāṇas were great singers from the Sangam age and we find the Bāṇas, Yālpāna was a close friend of Jnāna-sambandar and again we find the Bāṇas were appointed in the Great temple of Thanjavaur [*sic*]. According to this inscription the service should be added to the temple service and the Bāṇa should be paid one *kalam* of paddy per day to the Peraraiayan [*sic*] for singing. He should be allotted one residence as *Bānak-kudiyiruppu* as before ... It is interesting to note that the singing service is called **Bānapperu**.

In the above excerpt, except for Yālpāna, all other instances of original Pāṇa- have been hypercorrected to Bāṇa!

Thus, whether due to the influence of post-nasal voicing of *-p-* in Perumpāṇaṇ or voicing of word-initial *p-* in Kannada and Telugu or due to hypercorrection, Tamil Pāṇaṇ changed into Bāṇa- in Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit.

Finally, there seems to be a difference between early literary sources and inscriptions when it comes to rendering Bāṇa in Tamil. As seen in inscription 10 in Table 1, Bāṇa is only rarely rendered in Tamil as Pāṇ-. However, early Tamil literature has consistently rendered Bāṇa as Vāṇaṇ. There is an instance in the *Maturaik Kāñci*, where the name Vāṇaṇ seems to refer to Bāṇa, the Asura, in the context of referring to his fabulous wealth as given below.

*teṇpula maruṅkiṇ viṇṭu niraiya*

*vāṇaṇ vaitta viḷuniti peṇṇum (Maturaik Kāñci 202–03)*

even if (you) obtain the excellent wealth, which Bāṇa, the Asura, stored so that it filled the mountains in the southern region

We should note that the *Cilappatikāram* refers more explicitly to the same Bāṇāsura as Vāṇaṇ and not as Pāṇaṇ as given below.

*vāṇaṇ pērūr maruḷitai naṭantu*

*nīl nilam aḷantōṇ āṭiya kuṭamum (Cilappatikāram 6.54–55)*

the pot dance performed by the one who measured the vast world

having walked along the street of the city of Bāṇa

The *Maṇimēkalai* describes the dance of Kṛṣṇa's son Pratyumna on the streets of Bāṇa's city in words reminiscent of the words of the *Cilappatikāram* above.

*vāṇaṇ pērūr maruḷitait tōṇri*

*nīl nilam aḷantōṇ makaṇ muṇ āṭiya*

*pēṭik kōlattup pēṭu . . . (Maṇimēkalai 3.123–25)*

the transgender dance, which the son of the one who measured the vast world

having appeared on the street of the city of Bāṇa as a transgender person and danced

Clearly, the Tamil texts that had been composed in the sixth century CE or earlier consistently refer to the name Bāṇa as Vāṇaṇ. When the Caṅkam poems were authored, if they had to refer to a Bāṇa chief, since Tamil did not have the phoneme 'b', they would have referred to him as 'Vāṇaṇ' and not as 'Pāṇaṇ'. Since *Akanāṇūru* 113, 226, 325, and 386 refer to chief 'Pāṇaṇ', the original pronunciation of the chief's name should have been 'Pāṇaṇ' and there was no association of these chiefs with Bāṇa, the Asura.

Even *Peruntokai* 1190, a medieval poem of ca. twelfth century, maintains the distinction between Bāṇa, the chief, and Pāṇaṇ, the bard, as given below (*Irākavaiyāṅkār* 1935–36, p. 272).

*ulaikku uriya paṇṭam uvantu irakkac ceṇṇāl*

*kolaikku uriya vēlam koṭuttāṇ—kalaikku uriya*

*vāṇar kōṇ ārai makatēcaṇukku intap*

*pāṇaṇōṭu eṇṇa pakai*

When I went to solicit provisions meant for cooking

he gave a male elephant meant for killing.

For Makatēcaṇ of Āṛakaḷūr, the chief of the Bāṇas, renowned for art,

what is the enmity towards this Pāṇaṇ, the bard?

The original name of the Pāṇaṇ chiefs changed to 'Bāṇa', when their territory shifted outside the Tamil region. When contemporary dynasties were Sanskritizing and inventing Purāṇic pedigrees, the Bāṇas connected their lineage to Bāṇa, the Asura. Later when they moved south under pressure from the Western Cālukyas, 'Bāṇa' became 'Vāṇa' following long-established linguistic and philological patterns. Thus, we have the following sound variation in the name of this dynasty:

Pāṇaṇ > Bāṇa > Vāṇaṇ

### 1.11. Summary of the Arguments for the Origin of the Bāṇas from the Tamil Pāṇar

In the discussion so far, the following have been established.

#### 1.11.1. The Bards Were Also Warriors

The usages, *porāap porunaṇ* and *aṭu porunaṇ*, show that Tamil bards and warriors were from the same community but differed in their functions. The description of arms like the concert drum (*muḷavuttōl*) in the case of the bards just like in the case of warriors and Pāṇaṇ with such arms killing a fighter in *Akanāṇūru* 386 establishes the bards to be from the same warrior community. Moreover, *Kuruntokai* 328 also establishes the Pāṇar as warriors/chiefs. Additionally, *Akanāṇūru* 189 employs the word *mallaṛ* (warriors) to refer to bards.

#### 1.11.2. A Section of Pāṇar Being Rulers

There was a country the Pāṇar possessed that was called the good land of Pāṇaṇ (*Akanāṇūru* 113 and 325) or Pāṇāṭu (*Akanāṇūru* 155). It has been shown using Tamil philology that Pāṇaṇ was the chief of his land.

#### 1.11.3. Bāṇas Originating from Tamil Pāṇar

The link between the Pāṇar, the bards, and the Bāṇas is provided by the use of Bṛhadbāna in the Tālagunda inscription (fifth century CE), the first inscription dealing with the Bāṇas and the use of Perumpāṇ and Perumpaṇāṇ in Caṅkam literature. The use of 'Bṛhadbāna' is seen a few centuries later than the use of 'Perumpāṇ' (*Narriṇai* 40.3 and *Maturaik Kāñci* 342). Thus, while the direction of borrowing could work both ways between Bṛhat- and Perum-, the Tamil attestation of Perumpāṇ clearly precedes Bṛhadbāna giving primacy to Perum- > Bṛhat- in this case.

Can one argue that the only evidence for the presence of Bāṇas at the time of Caṅkam literature (because no written evidence of Kannada or Telugu existed that early) is given by the Tamilized name Pāṇaṇ mentioned above (<Bāṇa) and associated Pāṇāṭu? This is ruled out because of Pāṇāṭu translated into Pāṇarāṣṭra is attested in the *Lokavibhāga*. If the original name of the Bāṇa dynasty indeed began with B-, since the Bāṇas had continued to exist as the Bāṇas (as shown by the Tālagunda inscription), Sanskrit *Lokavibhāga* of the sixth century would have presented their land as Bāṇarāṣṭra. It did not. However, the Caṅkam period usage of the name Pāṇāṭu had continued up to the time of the Pāraiyāṇpaṭṭu inscription (sixth century CE).

Considering all this, we can conclude that a section of the Tamil bards, Pāṇar, became rulers of a territory in the northern part of the Tamil country. They migrated to Kannada and Telugu lands and came to be known as the Bāṇas. Later, they moved back into the Tamil country and the region under their control was known as Perumpāṇappāṭi. Later, they also claimed to be descendents of Mahābali, the Asura. In the next part, we shall explore the motivations for such a claim of theirs.

## 2. Sanskritization and Sovereignty of the Pāṇar/Bāṇas

### 2.1. Tamil Idea of Kingship

Tamilakam, the name for the Tamil country, was ruled by a confederacy of three kingdoms of Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇṭiya for a long time. The kings belonging to the three dynasties were called the *mūvēntar* (three kings) or *muṭiyuṭai vēntar mūvar* (three kings with crowns). In addition to these three, there were also several minor kings or chiefs called

*kurunila manṇar* (kings of small territories), who often allied with one or the other three kings. Indeed, one dynasty of these chiefs is mentioned in the second rock edict of Aśoka as Satiyaputō, known in Tamil as Atiyamān or Atiyaṇ. The Brāhmī inscription at Jambai mentions Satiyaputō Atiyaṇ Neṭumān Añci, a member of this dynasty (Mahadevan 2003, pp. 399, 588–90). Another dynasty of chiefs was the Pāṇar, whose members had survived at least from the first century BCE for more than 11 centuries. They were also known as the Bāṇas.<sup>42</sup>

The early Tamil concept of kingship is expressed in the following Classical Tamil poem (*Puranānūru* 186) translated by Hart and Heifetz (1999, p. 119).

Rice is not the life of the world nor is water the life!

The king is the life of this world with its wide expanses!

And so it is incumbent upon a king who maintains an army

wielding many spears to know of himself: “I am this world’s life!”

Thus, the Tamil view of kingship focused on the king’s life which is the life of his country. In the Caṅkam society, the legitimacy for the king’s sovereignty did not depend on any divine intervention or grace or descent from Indo-Aryan gods. It depended on his ability to sustain and protect his subjects. This often involved warfare in the heroic age in which they lived. Their success in warfare and their ability to protect the subjects earned for them and their ancestors lasting fame.

## 2.2. Sanskritization

The Caṅkam literature also shows the beginnings of an influx of Indo-Aryan myths that were used by poets to praise the kings. The Cōla kings were praised as descendants of Śibi, who saved a pigeon that took refuge with him, by offering his own flesh to the hawk that was pursuing the pigeon.<sup>43</sup> Another poet praised the chief Iruṅkō alias Iruṅkōvēl as the chief among chiefs who ruled the City of Tivarai (Dvāraka?) for 49 generations with their progenitor having been born in a pot or sacrificial pit of a sage in the northern region. There is really no evidence for any ruler basing his legitimacy on such stories, in spite of the poets using them. This will, however, change as Sanskritization increased over the centuries.

By the eighth century CE, South Indian kings were buttressing their claims of royal legitimacy with descent from gods like Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Sun, Moon, or Vedic sages.<sup>44</sup> For instance, we saw earlier that the Telugu Cōlas claimed to belong to the lineage of the Sun, and the Pāṇṭiyas claimed to belong to the lineage of the Moon (The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam 1967, p. 33). The Rāyakkōṭṭai plates of Pallava Skandaśiṣyavarman of the eighth century claim the Pallavas to belong to the lineage of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Aṅgiras, Bṛhaspati, Śaṃyu, Bharadvāja, and Droṇa (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 5, p. 52). The Udayēndiram plates of Prithivīpati II issued in the early tenth century CE include a Cōla genealogy including Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kaśyapa, Sun, Rudrajit, Candrajit, Śibi, Kōkkilli, Cōla, and Karikāla.<sup>45</sup>

The Tamil Buddhist epic, the *Maṇimēkalai*, mentions that the queen of the Tamil Cōla king was the daughter of a descendant of Māvāli (Mahābali). Although it does not explicitly mention the name Pāṇa or Vāṇa, given the absence of any other ruling dynasty claiming to belong to the lineage of Mahābali, it is obvious that it is the earliest mention of the Mahābali Bāṇas. The earliest inscriptional mention of Mahābalivāṇarājar occurs in the Rāyakkōṭṭai plates of Pallava Skandaśiṣyavarman of the eighth century CE, we noted earlier. Thus, the Bāṇas alone claimed to be descendants of Asuras or demons.

The Bāṇa dynasty’s choice of Bali as the progenitor of the lineage seems to have been based on the fact that the Sanskrit mythology had named Bali’s son as Bāṇa or Bāṇasura.

## 2.3. Bali Mythology in Bāna Inscriptions

In an eighth-century inscription in Tiruvallam in North Arcot District,<sup>46</sup> the expression “*sakala-jagat-tray-abhivandita-sur-āsura-ādhiśa-Parameśvara-pratihāri-kṛta-Mahābali-*

*kulotbhava-Śrīmāvalivānarāya*” is found, which is translated by E. Hultsch as “the glorious Māvalivānarāya, –born from the family of Mahābali, who had been made door-keeper by the lord of gods and demons, Paramēśvara (Śiva), who is worshipped in all three worlds.”<sup>47</sup> However, Venkayya says the following (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 11, p. 232, n. 4) regarding an alternate interpretation:

The expression *sakala-jagat-tray-ābhivandita-sur-āsura-ādhiśa-Paramēśvara-pratihārī-kṛta-Mahābali-kulodbhava* is translated by Mr. [Lewis] Rice, on the strength of some Kanarese tradition, “born of the family of Mahābali, who had made Paramēśvara, lord of gods and demons worshipped in all the three worlds, (his) door-keeper;” *Ep. Car. Vol. X. p. ii, Note 5.*

While being a doorkeeper may not be attractive for a dynasty trying to showcase its legitimacy of sovereignty, having Śiva as a doorkeeper would certainly add to its prestige. A more detailed genealogy of the Bānas is provided in the Udayēndiram Plates of the Bāna king Vijayabāhu Vikramāditya III<sup>48</sup> of the tenth century.

(Verse 1.) May that Śiva promote your well-being, whose true nature even the Vēda cannot fully reveal, from whom the creation, the preservation, and the destruction of all the worlds proceed, on whom the devotees meditate, (*and*) whose two feet are tinged with the collections of red rays of the rows of jewels in the diadems of the crowds of the chiefs of the gods who in person bow down before him!

(V. 2) May that Nārāyaṇa, whose body ever rests on the lord of serpents, (*and*) whose two feet are worshipped by crowds of gods, guard you! He, whom the gods and Asuras, desirous of churning the matchless sea of milk, discarding the Mandara laid hold of, as it were, to obtain a second time the nectar of immortality, (*and*) who then shone, even more than ordinarily, as if he were the Añjana mountain!

(V. 3.) There was the regent of the Asuras, named **Bali**, whose sole delight it was to engage in acts of violence towards the gods, while his one vow was, to worship the two feet of Śiva. He, after having presented as an excellent sacrifice a respectful offering to the primeval god, the enemy of the Daityas, with great joy (*also*) gave to him who bore the form of a dwarf the earth with its islands and with all things movable and immovable.

(V. 4.) From him sprang a mighty son, a treasure-house of good qualities, towards whom was ever increasing the great pure favour of Śambhu on whose head are the lines of the lustre of a portion of the moon, –**Bāna**, the foe of the gods, who with his sword struck down the forces of his enemies.

(V. 5.) As the cool-rayed moon rose from the sea of milk, so was born in his lineage **Bānādhirāja**, who, possessed of never-failing might, with his sharp sword cut up his enemies in battle.

(V. 6.) When **Bānādhirāja** and many other **Bāna** princes had passed away, there was born in this (*lineage*), not the least (*of its members*), **Jayanandivarman**, the fortune of victory incarnate, and an abode of fortune.

(V.7.) This unique hero of great might ruled the land to the west of the **Andhra** country, like a bride sprung from a noble family unshared by others, having his feet tinged by the crest-jewels of princes.

...

(V.15.) To him was born a son **Vijayabāhu**, named **Vikramāditya** a unique light of the **Bāna** family, who has followed the path of prudent conduct, before whom the assemblage of opponents has bowed down, (*and*) who has **Kṛishṇarāja** for his friend. Eminently prosperous (*he is, and*) free from evil and distress.

(Line 45.) This (*prince*), the dust of whose feet is tinged with the lustre of the jewels on the edges of the diadems of all princes without exception, and whose two arms are filled with ample fame, gained in victories over the multitude of arms of the adherents of many different hostile princes, after pouring out a stream of water from the beautiful golden jar, held by the palms of his hands the bracelets on which are thickly covered with various bright jewels,—(*has given*) to the excellent twice-born, dwelling at **Udayēndumaṅgala**, who delight in, what is their proper duty, the knowledge of the truth of all the Vēdas and Vēḍāṅgas and philosophy, (*and*) are eager to impart the knowledge of things which is stored up in their minds, . . .

Here, we can see the explicit connection between Bāṇa, the Asura, and the Bāṇa chiefs. The aim of the plates was to issue a grant to the twice-born or Brahmins. What is interesting in this genealogical description of the Bāṇa king is that verse 3 notes how Bali gave the entire earth with great joy to the enemy of Asuras, Viṣṇu, who took the form of a dwarf.

The seemingly strange thing about the choice of Bali as the progenitor of the lineage is that according to Sanskrit mythology, his grandfather was Prahlāda (Taylor 2021, p. 141). The Bāṇas' choice of Bali seems strange also because, the stories of Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu in the extant Sanskrit texts mention that Bali lost his sovereignty of the world and was forced to live in Pātāla.<sup>49</sup> Here is how Bali's story is presented in the *Mahābhārata* (12.326.74–76).

The great Asura Bali, the powerful son of Virocana, will arise and cause Indra to fall from his kingdom. When the triple world has been stolen by him despite the opposition of the husband of Śacī, I will take birth as the twelfth son of Aditi and Kaśyapa. Then I shall restore the kingdom to Indra, of infinite glory. I shall return the Devas to their positions, O Nārada, and Bali I shall cause to dwell in the region of Pātāla.

(Hospital 1984, pp. 25–26)

Here, Bali is presented as stealing what was not his. However, over time, his portrayal in Sanskrit texts changes. Hospital (1984, pp. 262–63) says:

We can see Bali bearing different kinds of relationships to Indian attempts to conceptualize what is significant, valuable and real. In the earlier phases of the Epic-Purānic [*sic*] texts, Bali represents forces inimical to a central idealized reality of the universe., that of *dharma* (virtue, righteousness, and order). Thus Viṣṇu, often seen as upholding *dharma*, is portrayed in his Dwarf *avaṭāra* as overcoming this disorderly and disturbing force.

But gradually, the focus shifts, and in the period of the middle and later Purāṇas the total corpus of Bali presents something of a debate or tension between different foci of significance—*dharma*, *bhakti*, and prosperity. In Bali there is an exploration of the relation between these features, of which the total effect is to suggest that although Bali may be good, and a great devotee, that does not necessarily mean that his kingly role is legitimate. The fact that his kingdom is eminently prosperous may even be seen as problematic. But from another viewpoint within the same arena of debate, Bali can be shown as the true devotee who has learned not to be attached to anything. Bali lost his kingdom but found his Lord.

Some Sanskrit texts that have Bali losing his sovereignty also have stories of Bāṇa, the son of Bali, ruling as a king. For instance, the *Harivaṃśa* makes it clear that Bali was still in Pātāla, when Bāṇa was ruling as a king (Broadbeck 2019, p. 312). For a group trying to establish its legitimacy of sovereignty, to choose a king who lost his sovereignty would be a strange choice indeed. There must be some other reason outside the Sanskrit world. What could it have been?

Unfortunately, Hospital (1984) did not address the question of the Bāṇa chiefs claiming Bali to be their progenitor. We do not know the relative dating of all the texts vis à vis the Bāṇas' claim to belong to the lineage from Bali.

#### 2.4. Why Choose Bali as the Progenitor of the Dynasty?

Let us look at the possible reasons as to why the Bāṇas could have chosen Bali as their progenitor. It would make sense if there was a different tradition of stories in South India that had a different outcome for Bali's encounter with Vāmana. After all, the earliest mention of Mahābali connecting him to a dynasty occurs in the sixth-century text, the *Maṇimēkalai* mentioned earlier (Richman 1988, p. 161).

The Vāmana avatāra is mentioned in *Tirukkuraḷ* 610 dated 450–500 CE (Zvelebil 1975, p. 124). *Cilappatikāram* 6.55 of ca. 450 CE (Zvelebil 1975, p. 114) calls Viṣṇu as *nīl nilam aḷantōṇ* (one who measured the extended world). Later *Cilappatikāram* 17.34.2 mentions Viṣṇu covering all the three worlds in two steps and *Cilappatikāram* 17.35.1–2 mentions Viṣṇu covering all the three worlds in under two steps. There is no mention of Bali here.

The *Cilappatikāram*, however, has stories connected to Bāṇa, the son of Bali, which are not found in the Sanskrit texts. The *Cilappatikāram* mentions that Mātavi, the dancer, with whom the hero Kōvalaṅ fell in love, knew how to perform well the following 11 dances.<sup>50</sup>

Koṭukoṭṭi—dance of Śiva clapping his hands at the time he burnt down the triple cities

Pāṇṭaraṅkam—dance by (Śiva in the form of) Bhārātī who applied ash all over the body at the time he destroyed the triple cities

Alliyam—dance by Kṛṣṇa when he broke the tusk and killed the elephant sent by Kaṃsa to kill Kṛṣṇa

Mal—dance by Viṣṇu when he defeated the demon (Bāṇāsura) in wrestling<sup>51</sup>

Tuṭi—dance by Murukaṅ with the *tuṭi* drum when he killed the demon standing as a Mango tree in the sea

Kuṭai—dance by Murukaṅ with an umbrella/parasol when he defeated the demons

Kuṭam—dance by Kṛṣṇa with pots on the streets of the city of Bāṇa (Bāṇāsura) when Bāṇa had imprisoned Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa

Pēṭu—dance by Kāma, who took the form of a transgender person (in Bāṇāsura's city)

Marakkāl—dance by Durgā when she wore wooden legs to defeat the demons

Pāvai—dance by Lakṣmī in the form of beautiful Kollippāvai at the time she defeated the demons

Kaṭaiyam—dance by Indrāṇi at the northern gate in the city (of Bāṇāsura)

In the above list of 11 dances, four involve stories related to Bāṇāsura, Bali's son. *Cilappatikāram* 17.35.3 also mentions the destruction of the fort of the City of Cō (Sōṇitapura) of Bāṇa by Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. This shows the popularity of stories connected with Bāṇa in the Tamil country in the fifth century CE. However, these stories are not found in any Sanskrit texts such as the *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Broadbeck (2019, pp. 311–43); Taylor (2021, pp. 424–28). Discussing the history of the story of the *Cilappatikāram*, Parthasarathy (1993, p. 318) says:

It is generally accepted that the *Cilappatikāram* existed long before it was put down in writing. Scholars are of the opinion that the epic, with the rest of early Tamil literature, must have had a long oral existence before it acquired its present form. For generations, bards (*pāṇans*) have recited or sung the story of Kōvalaṅ throughout the Tamil country, embellishing it with myths. It was this story from

the oral tradition that was at some point transcribed by a learned poet (*pulavaṅ*). Thereafter, both the oral and written versions freely circulated, each drawing upon the other. One such written version that has come down to us from the distant past is attributed by tradition to Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ, a prince of the Cēral royal family and Jaina monk.

These, along with the Kannada tradition of Śiva being the doorkeeper of Bāṇa according to Lewis Rice mentioned earlier, suggest the possibility that there could have been stories related to Bali too, in which he might not have lost his sovereignty. The present Kerala tradition of Mahābali and Ōṇam, which considers Bali to have been a good king, who returns to Kerala once a year, might contain traces of an early tradition regarding Bali in the Tamil country, which had not been picked up by early written literature.

Beyond the question of whether there was a tradition of Bali in South India different from what is found in the Sanskrit texts, the story of Bali might have had a special resonance for those familiar with the Tamil bardic culture and especially participants in that culture, the bards.

### 2.5. Pāṅ Kaṭaṅ of the Bardic Culture

One of the Caṅkam era Tamil chiefs was Pāri, who ruled the territory which included the hill called Parāmpu Malai. Pāri was one of the seven famous Tamil chieftains of the Classical Tamil period known for their philanthropy. The three Tamil kings wanted to marry the daughters of Pāri. However, for some reason Pāri refused and the angry kings formed an alliance and laid siege to his hill. However, it was of no use. The hill was self-sufficient in all respects and Pāri did not surrender. The siege went on for a long time. Pāri's close friend was a poet called Kapilar. Kapilar wanted to tell the three kings their efforts were useless. One day he went down to the kings and told them:

*maram torum piṇitta kalirriṇir āyiṇum*  
*pulam torum piṇitta tēriṇir āyiṇum*  
*tāḷil kollalir vāḷil tāralaṅ*  
*yāṅ arikuvaṅ atu kollum āre*  
*cukir puri narampiṅ cīriyāḷ paṅṅi*  
*viraiyoli kūntal num viraliyar piṅ vara*  
*āṭiṇir pāṭiṇir celiṅē*  
*nāṭum kuṅrum oruṅku iṅummē (Puraṇānūru 109.11–18)*

Though you have tied your elephants to every tree there,

though your chariots are spread all over the fields,

you will not defeat him through your efforts!

He will not give in to your swords.

But I do know how you can obtain his possessions!

If you, [as Pāṅar,] would only play on a small lute with its polished twisted strings

while your [queens follow you as] Virālis with their rich fragrant hair,

and you come dancing and singing,

he will give as gift his country as well as his hill.

Although Kapilar's advice was meant to dissuade the kings from continuing the hostilities, according to Tamil tradition, the three kings took up the idea of passing off as bards seriously and did succeed in capturing the chiefdom of Pāri, and also killed him<sup>52</sup>. What this story highlights is the concept of *pāṅ kaṭaṅ* 'the duty or obligation towards the

bards or minstrels' held dear by the Tamil kings during the heroic age or the bardic age of the Tamils. According to [Kailasapathy \(1968, p. 57\)](#),

... the word *kaṭaṇ* is used in the particular sense of duty or responsibility. It is in this sense that a responsibility for the bards is prescribed for the kings. It may not have been as rigid as legal enactments. But the conduct of the heroic society was itself bound by a code of honour and the obligation to adhere to it was almost absolute ...

When one compares the attitude of Pāri, who was willing to lose his sovereignty and even life for upholding his duty towards the bards, with that of Bali, who was willing to lose his sovereignty for honoring his word to give three 'steps' of land to the Brahmin Vāmana, one can see a willingness to carry through one's philanthropic commitment to another person in both. In the case of Prahlāda, Bali's grandfather, he was known for his steadfastness in his religious devotion, but not a philanthropic commitment to somebody else. That Bali's philanthropic commitment was valued by the Bāṇas can be seen in the Udayēndiram Plates' mention of Bali giving with joy the whole earth to his enemy, Viṣṇu in the form of a dwarf. Considering that it was most probably due to the concept of *pāṇ kaṭaṇ* that the Pāṇar/Bāṇas obtained their territory to begin with, it is probably because of Bali's philanthropic commitment that the Pāṇar/Bāṇas chose to have Bali as the progenitor of their lineage instead of Prahlāda.

Moreover, even towards the later part of the Caṅkam period, when chiefs known for philanthropy like Pāri had been long gone, the rulers treated alike the bards, poets, and the Brahmins with regard to philanthropy. For example, according to *Cirupāṇārruppatai* 203–206, the entrance to chief Nalliyakkōṭaṇ's well-guarded palace was always open to bards, poets, and Brahmins. So, the bards, who had earlier received villages and territories from rulers could probably relate to the Brahmin Vāmana receiving land from Bali. Given the parallelism between the importance of the Brahmin to the Indo-Aryan king and the importance of the bard to the Tamil king of the bardic age as laid out earlier by Saskia Kersenboom-Story, the Bāṇas could probably appreciate Bali's solicitous attitude towards Vāmana.

As Sanskritization increased over the post-Caṅkam period, and other rulers invented Purāṇic pedigrees, the Pāṇar/Bāṇas did not resort to an origin from a Vedic sage or Sun or Moon but seemed to have settled on Bali as their progenitor. In this, while the lineage of Bāna, the Asura, might have been chosen because of the name Bāṇa, the choice of Bali as the progenitor was probably due to his philanthropic nature similar to the *pāṇ kaṭaṇ* of early Tamil kings.

After all, if anybody tried to belittle their origin, they could claim that it was Bali who magnanimously gave Viṣṇu-Vāmana his land just like earlier Tamil rulers had given the bards their territory. It also happened that Bali's son was their namesake.

### 3. Conclusions

The Bāṇas were an important minor dynasty of rulers in South India. They survived for more than a millennium and married into royal dynasties like the Cōḷas. The Bāṇas were referred to as Br̥hadbāṇas in the Tāḷagunda inscription. Many historians have noted its semantic similarity with the Tamil term Perumpāṇaṇ, a term to denote excellent bards. However, no scholar has analyzed how this similarity has come about. In this essay, I first looked at the role of bards in early Tamil society and any socio-political changes that might have happened over time. Then, I looked at the epigraphic records of the Bāṇas from a wide area of South India as well as literary texts in Tamil from first century BCE up to the twelfth century CE. I hoped to arrive at a reasonable conclusion regarding the origin of the Bāṇa dynasty. However, that is only half the story. The Bāṇas have been unique in Indian history in Sanskritizing their origin story in which they claimed as their progenitor Bali, the Purāṇic Asura, who lost his sovereignty and was exiled to the netherworld by Viṣṇu-Vāmana. I hoped to explore the possible motivations behind this claim too. Here are the findings.

The early Tamil bards had an important role in the society and especially with respect to kings and chiefs. The bards were known by different names depending on what they performed. They were considered to have ancient wisdom and believed to bring auspiciousness and prosperity. By their oral poetry and performance of music and dance, they disseminated the valorous deeds of the rulers and their ancestors contributing to their lasting fame. Consequently, the bards were treated with respect by the kings and chiefs, who offered them gifts like elephant and gold ornaments. However, more importantly, they also gave them land which could range from small villages to large territories. This much has been known already.

What has not been widely known till now is the fact that there was no difference between the bards and warriors in terms of social origins. They were all from the same community. Sometimes they were even called by the same name such as the Porunar and Maḷḷar. Given these facts, it is easy to imagine how a bard, who has received a large territory as a gift, might choose to become a ruler himself. This has happened very early in the Tamil history with a ruler or rulers mentioned in Caṅkam literature as Pāṇar. Tamil scholar Auvai Turaicāṁip Piḷḷai was the first to suggest this ruler's lineage as the origin for the Bāṇas. While some Tamil scholars accepted this finding, historians have been reluctant to do so. These historians looked on the Bāṇas as non-Tamils with an origin in the Telugu-Kannada areas.

A careful analysis of the literary and epigraphic data shows that the Tamil Pāṇar dynasty got its start in the northern part of the Tamil country as early as the first century BCE. Then, for some political reasons such as possible Kalabhra incursions into their region, they moved further north into Telugu and Kannada areas. In this, they were similar to the Cōḷas, a branch of whom established themselves as the Rēnāṇḍu Cōḷas or Telugu Cōḷas at the same time.

Concomitant with the move into non-Tamil areas, there was a linguistic variation introduced into their name, which changed from Pāṇar to Bāṇa. Later, when they came under pressure from the Western Cāḷukyas, the Bāṇas moved back into the northern part of the Tamil area known as Perumpāṇappāṭi. Their move back into the Tamil area introduced another linguistic variation in their name from Bāṇa to Vāṇar. The linguistic history of their name can be shown as Pāṇar > Bāṇa > Vāṇar.

Their move into non-Tamil areas was also the time when their contemporary neighboring dynasties were Sanskritizing their origins and claiming themselves to be descendants of Vedic sages or gods, Sun and Moon, with a view to claiming to be paramount overlords of the world as discussed by Ali (2000, p. 185). May be because their name happened to be Bāṇa at that time, the Bāṇas seemed to choose to link themselves to Puraṇic Bāṇa, the Asura. However, Bāṇa's father was Bali, whose father was Virocana, and whose father was the famous Prahlāda. Prahlāda's father was the notorious Hiranyakaśipu, who was killed by Viṣṇu-Narasimha. Given this lineage, one would not expect the Bāṇas to claim Hiranyakaśipu to be their progenitor. Prahlāda was a devotee of Viṣṇu and the Bāṇas might have been expected to choose him as their progenitor. They did not. Instead, they chose Bali, who lost his sovereignty and was exiled to the netherworld by Viṣṇu-Vāmana.

Why did the Bāṇas choose Bali as their progenitor? The Tamil texts like the *Cilappatikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* as well as local traditions in Kannada-speaking areas point to differences in stories related to Bāṇa that seem to suggest that what we find in Sanskrit texts form only a subset valorized by the authors of those texts. This means that the local traditions involving Bali might possibly have presented a more positive view of him, which made him acceptable as a progenitor.

Alternately, if one considers the context in which Bali lost his sovereignty, there might be another reason for the choice by the Bāṇas. Viṣṇu-Vāmana went to Bali as a Brahmin dwarf and asked for three strides of land. True to his philanthropic attitude, Bali agreed to that request. However, then Viṣṇu-Vāmana grew into his cosmic form and took all the land Bali had. In effect, Bali lost his sovereignty to a deception perpetrated by Viṣṇu. Having come from the Tamil Bardic tradition, the Bāṇas would have been familiar with the story of

Pāri, who was committed to upholding the heroic age's code of *pāṇ kaṭaṇ*, which required the ruler to protect and support the bards. However, Pāri was treacherously deceived by the three Tamil kings who possibly disguised themselves as bards and took his kingdom and killed him. Originating in the bardic community, the Bāṇas might have valued the philanthropic attitude of Bali highly and disregarded his loss of sovereignty.

An important result of this research is the finding that the *varṇa* system did not apply to the early Tamil society. Palaniappan (2008, pp. 49–50) had indirectly shown that the four-fold *varṇa* system did not apply to the early Tamil society. We know that bards in early Tamil society fished<sup>53</sup> and sold fish<sup>54</sup> as well as made music. In other words, the same community would have done jobs that belonged to different *varṇas*. This work shows that the early Tamil society was open enough for a bard to become a ruler of a territory and establish a dynasty that lasted more than a millennium.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgments:** I gratefully acknowledge E. Annamalai for reviewing an earlier draft of this article and providing valuable comments. I also thank the two anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this article for their helpful comments that have improved the article. I acknowledge the help by Robert Zydenbos and Caleb Simmons in clarifying some Kannada texts. I also acknowledge the help by S. Rajagopal and Michael Lockwood in getting some key epigraphic data. I thank N. Ramanathan for providing access to Harikesanallur L. Muthiah Bhagavata's compositions. Any remaining errors are my own.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> From the *Mahābhārata* to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, the story of Bali varies in its details. Bali, an Asura, had defeated the Devas and Indra and ruled the triple world as a king. When the Devas pleaded with Viṣṇu to intervene, Viṣṇu incarnated as Vāmana, a dwarf Brahmin. He went to Bali who was performing a sacrifice. At the sacrifice when Bali asked Vāmana what gift he wanted, Vāmana requested that he be given land that could be measured in three steps. Bali agreed to the request. Immediately Vāmana grew into the giant cosmic form of Trivikrama and covered the triple world in two steps. There was no place for him to place his foot for the third step. Then, Bali asked Viṣṇu-Vāmana to put his foot on Bali's own head. Viṣṇu-Vāmana put his third step on Bali's head and sent him to Pātāla, the netherworld. Viṣṇu-Vāmana restored Indra as the king of the Devas. For more details of the Bali story, see [Hospital \(1984\)](#).
- <sup>2</sup> Poruna, Kōṭiyar Talaiva, and Ēḷiṇ Kiḷava are the vocative forms of Porunaṇ, Kōṭiyar Talaivaṇ, and Ēḷiṇ Kiḷavaṇ, respectively.
- <sup>3</sup> In a Tanjavur temple inscription (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, no. 66, p. 274), Maraikkāṭṭuk Kaṇavatiyāṇa Tiruveḷḷaṇṇaikkai was given a grant to sing for dance programs. His name can be translated as 'Maraikkāṭṭu Ganapati, who is the Cākkai Theater performer from the village of Tiruveḷḷaṇṇai.' Evidently, he was a performer of Cākkaiḷḷu, a dramatic art as well as a singer. The same inscription has two Pāṇar grantees with the title Cākkai.
- <sup>4</sup> See ([Arunachalam 1977](#), pp. 27, 49; [Hart and Heifetz 1999](#), p. 322). However, [Zvelebil \(1992, p. 29\)](#) considered the bards to be part of the elite strata of the Tamil society.
- <sup>5</sup> Using data from Tamil philology, epigraphy, Jainism, and Dravidian linguistics, [Palaniappan \(2008\)](#) showed there was no notion of untouchability during the Classical Tamil period. Using Tamil philology as well as epigraphy, [Palaniappan \(2016\)](#) showed that notwithstanding their portrayal as a low caste in hagiographic works, in real life, the Tamil Pāṇar enjoyed high status, performed in Sanskrit theater, sang in front of the deities in Brahmanic temples, and trained temple women to sing until the advent of the Vijayanagar rule in the Tamil country. Even during and after the Vijayanagara rule, the Tamil Pāṇar never became untouchables. [Palaniappan \(2016, p. 307\)](#) also noted, "[Ludden \(1996, p. 123\)](#) has presented demographic data from 1823 from the Tirunelveli area that showed that the Pāṇar were one of several castes that formed the large non-untouchable Śūdra category. Additionally, [Thurston \(1909, p. 29\)](#) has presented ethnographic information, according to which the Pāṇar employed Brahmins and Veḷḷālas as priests and could enter temples".
- <sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise stated, translations in this essay are mine.
- <sup>7</sup> *Akanāṇṇūru Maṇimiṭai Pavaḷam* 226.
- <sup>8</sup> Perumpāṇappāṭi is mentioned in *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 3, no. 52, p. 112 as 'jayaṅkoṇṭaṭaḷamaṇṭalattu tiyākāparaṇavaḷaṇṇaṭṭu perumpāṇappāṭi karaivali brāhmadeyam tiruvallattu tiruvallamuṭaiyārkoyil'. This can be translated as 'the temple of Tiruvallamuṭaiyār in the Brāhmadeyam of Tiruvallam along the riverbank in Perumpāṇappāṭi of Tiyākāparaṇavaḷaṇṇaṭṭu of Jayaṅkoṇṭaṭaḷamaṇṭalam'.
- <sup>9</sup> For consulting *Akanāṇṇūru* 113, 226, 155, 325, and 386, see the 1933 edition by Rākavaiyāṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ as well as the edition by Nāṭṭar and Piḷḷai. However, two corrections need to be made. In *Akanāṇṇūru* 113, my interpretation of *eḷāp pāṇaṇ* is

‘non-music making Pāṇaṇ’ instead of ‘Pāṇaṇ . . . who never shows his back in battle.’ In *Akanāṇūru* 226, as Turaicāmp Piḷḷai states Kaṭṭi came to fight against Pāṇaṇ, who was in the Cōḷa court. Pāṇaṇ did not accompany Kaṭṭi.

10 This occurs in the inscription as “*pakkavādyar alakiyacōlatterintavalanikaivēlaikkāraril aiyāraṇ antari* . . . I have differentiated between long ē/ō from short e/o while the inscription does not do so. The square brackets indicating indistinct letters as shown in the *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, no. 66 are not shown here for the sake of readability.

11 DEDR 77 *aṭu* means ‘kill, destroy, conquer’. In fact, there is a specific grammatical term called *Velippaṭai* to refer to such usages where the intended meaning is made explicit.

12 Cōmacuntaraṇār, the modern editor, following the fourteenth-century commentator Naccinārkkiniyar, explains it as ‘Porunar bards with *taṭāri* drums who have arms like concert drums and who have the nature of opposition/disagreement due to education.’ Cāminātaiyar in his *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition explains, “Having arms like concert drums’ refers to their ability to oppose with physical strength rather than education.” My translation above is based on possible meanings related to physical strength. In fact, according to the *Tamil Lexicon*, the possible meanings of *muraṇ* are 1. Variance, opposition; perversity; 2. Spite, hatred; 3. Fight, battle; 4. A mode of versification in which there is antithesis of words or ideas; 5. Strength; 6. Greatness; 7. Roughness; stubbornness; 8. Fierceness; 9. A flaw in rubies. It should be noted that *tōḷ* is often interpreted as ‘shoulder’ (Hart 2015, p. 387). It really means ‘arm’ as is clear from *Kalittokai* 109.13–15. The gift of flowers made of gold is a certain indication that the recipients were bards as in *Puraṇāṇūru* 29.1–5 we saw earlier.

13 Many scholars interpret Pāṇaṇ as an ally of Kaṭṭi who fled without fighting in the court of the Cōḷa king. That is not accurate. It was Pāṇaṇ, who was in the court of the Cōḷa king, the intended adversary of Kaṭṭi. Modern scholars like Nāṭṭār and Piḷḷai unnecessarily add a word ‘*kūṭi*’ meaning ‘having joined’ to “*Pāṇaṇoṭu*” to come up with the misinterpreted meaning. The nature of the verb ‘*poru*’ ‘to fight’ is that it is preceded by the adversary being fought/intended to be fought by the subject of the verb marked with the case marker ‘*oṭu*’. Perhaps Nāṭṭār and Piḷḷai were influenced by Rā. Rākavaiyaṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ, who interpreted Pāṇaṇ as an ally of Kaṭṭi in their edition. Hart (2015, p. 232) has followed Nāṭṭār’s interpretation.

14 See the Cōmacuntaraṇār edition of the *Akanāṇūru*.

15 Wilden has chosen the reading *titti* ‘snack’. I prefer the reading *tirri* ‘meat’ as do earlier editions of the *Akanāṇūru*. Moreover, *titti* is used nowhere else in the Caṅkam literature in the sense of food and *tirri* is related to *tiṇ* ‘eat’ in *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary Second Edition* (DEDR hereafter) entry 3263 and *titti* is not.

16 *vayiriya mākkal paṇ amaittu eḷi* ‘the Vayiriyar bards having set the melody and making music’.

17 Wilden has not compared the present text *pāṇaṇ nal nāṭṭu* with the text *nal vēl pāṇaṇ nal nāṭṭu* in *Akanāṇūru* 325.27 which means ‘in the good land of Pāṇaṇ with the good spear’ where Pāṇaṇ is clearly a warrior and chief as he has a spear and possesses the good land.

18 In the Caṅkam tradition, the term *vēṇṭar* in the poem could only refer to the kings of the Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṇṭiya dynasties.

19 The proper way to interpret such occurrence is given in the commentary for Aka. 113 in the *Akanāṇūru Kaḷiriyānai Nirai* edited by Vē. Civacuppīramaṇiyaṇ. (In addition to earlier manuscripts, this edition also used a paper manuscript with commentaries for 170 poems discovered in the Tākṭar U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar Nūl Nilaiyam during the publication process for this 1990 publication.) Here is the relevant excerpt from the commentary for *Akanāṇūru* 113.17, which mentions Pāṇaṇ, the chief.

*pāṇaṇ—ōr kuru nilamaṇṇaṇ . . . pāṇar eṇru pāṭamāyiṇ naṇṇar pāṇṭiyar eṇpaṇaṇṭlak koḷka.*

Pāṇaṇ—a minor king or chief . . . if the reading is *pāṇar*, interpret it like Nannar and Pāṇṭiyar, where Nannar and Pāṇṭiyar refer to the dynasties of Nannar chiefs and Pāṇṭiyaṇ kings, respectively, or their warriors.

20 *Akanāṇūru* 113, and 325 refer to a chief by the name ‘Pāṇaṇ’. *Akanāṇūru* 155 refers to ‘Pāṇaṇu’ the land of Pāṇ, which the commentator of the 1933 edition of *Akanāṇūru* equates to Pāṇaṇ. Each of *Akanāṇūru* 226 and 386 refers to a warrior or wrestler referred to as Pāṇaṇ.

21 In the transliteration system followed in this essay, the name is Rākavaiyaṅkār. What Mahadevan refers to as Raghavaiyaṅgar (1933) is the same as the 1933 edition of *Akanāṇūru* by Rākavaiyaṅkār and Irājakōpālāryaṇ.

22 ‘Aka.’ is abbreviation for the *Akanāṇūru*.

23 This is similar to the land of the Cōḷas mentioned in *Akanāṇūru* 201.12–13 as *cōlar veṇṇel vaippin nal nāṭu* ‘the good land of the Cōḷas with areas growing white paddy’

24 *The Periyapurāṇam* (PP) mentions two places, Pāṭaliputtiram, and Tiruppāṭirippuliyūr but never identifies one with the other (1303.1 and 1396.4). In fact, PP does not clearly state where Pāṭaliputtiram is located, either in South Arcot district or elsewhere. Modern scholars like Rā. Pi. Cētuppillai (aka R. P. Sethu Pillai) have identified Pāṭaliputtiram with Tiruppāṭirippuliyūr near Cuddalore on the Bay of Bengal (Cētuppillai 2007, p. 228). This identification is based on the fact that Tamil name ‘Pātiri’ and Sanskrit ‘Pāṭali’ refer to the same tree with the botanical name *Bignonia suaveolens* or *Sterospermum chelonoides* (the tree bearing the trumpet-flower). Additionally, the god in the temple at Tiruppāṭirippuliyūr is called Pāṭaliśvarar with the temple tree being Pātiri. However, the Pātiri tree is not confined to one location in Tamil Nadu and there are many villages with the name Pātiri in Tamil Nadu. There is a hilly village called Pātiri (Pin Code 635703) in Tiruvannamalai district approximately 50 km by road to the west of Pōḷūr in Javvadu Hills. We have one Pātiri approximately two km from Vandavasi sharing the same Pin Code 604408. We also have a Mel Pātiri (west Pātiri) in the same Pin Code. We have a village called Pātiri (Pin code 603201) approximately 23

km southeast of Vandavasi. Additionally, there is a village near Acharapakkam in Chengalpattu district called Pātiri too. Like the place names associated with the above locations, a place name Pātiri would offer better possibilities for direct translation into Sanskrit as Pāṭalika (with the addition of suffix ka) than Tiruppātirippuliyūr. Given all these possibilities, we do not have to accept the location near Cuddalore as the ancient location of Pāṭalikā. Consequently, Pāṭalikā could have been located in the region known later as Perumpāṇappāṭi or Vāṇakōppāṭi. One does not have to worry about the Pāṇar dynasty controlling an area as far south as Tiruppātirippuliyūr.

25 Although Ramachandran cites *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 8, p. 30 as his source for the information, the correct page number should have been 35. Here Mayūraśarman is said to have levied taxes on the Great Bāṇa, but there is no mention of the Bāṇa being an ally of Mayūraśarman.

26 This article follows the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon system of transliteration. However, often epigraphists and historians transcribe Tamil words and do not transliterate according to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon system. In quoting their work, the text in the source document is not changed. Here, Perumbanar mentioned by Chopra, Ravindran, and Subrahmanian is the same as Perumpāṇar according to our system of transliteration. Additionally, Sanskrit vocalic *ṛ* in Bṛhadbāṇa has been rendered as *ri* here. In excerpts quoted from *Epigraphia India* articles it is rendered as *ṛi* as given in the publications. Elsewhere, it is rendered as *ṛ*.

27 My translation is based on Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, a modern commentator, who explains those lines as:

*‘Tamiḷppaṇṇu poruntiya Cēra Cōla Pāṇṭiyārākiya mūṇru muṭi maṇṇarum cenḱōṇmaiyaṭaṇ kāvāḷ ceykiṇra molī mārupaṭṭa vēṇru nāṭṭiṇ kaṇṇuḷḷaṇavākiya palavākiya malaikaḷaiyūm kaṭantū’.*

28 It should be noted that long after the Tamil confederacy ceased to exist, the Tamil land was denoted by the term *trairājya* in Sanskrit inscriptions like the Kēndūr Plates of Kīrtivarman II (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 9, pp. 202–5). Pathak (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 9, p. 205) has translated *trairājya* in South Indian Sanskrit inscriptions and literary texts as “the confederacy of three kings”. Pathak quotes a commentary of the *Ādipurāṇa* (XXX, 35) which explains *trairājya* as meaning “Choḷa, Kerala and Pāṇḍya”. The Pārtivacēkarapuram *śālā* grant of 866 CE specifies that the students of the *śālā* should be learned in *trairājya vyavahāra*, i.e., administrative matters of the Cēra, Cōla, and Pāṇṭiya kingdoms ([The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam 1967](#), A-5 and A-15). There were administration officials under the Cōlas with the title *Trairājyaghaṭikā Madhyasthaṇ* (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 30, no. 117, pp. 98–99) in 961 CE. The fact that the royal officials of the Pāṇṭiya, and Cōla kingdoms were continued to be given the title *mūvēntavēḷāṇ* as late as the twelfth century CE (where the prefix *mūvēnta-* refers to the adjectival form of *mūvēntar* meaning ‘three Tamil kings’) as in *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 14, no. 233, p. 137, i.e., more than a millennium after the three kingdoms ceased to have any semblance of a confederacy, indicates the vestiges of a tradition that must have been developed during the days of the confederacy. The Vakkaleri Plates of Kīrtivarman II also mention *trairājya* (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 5, p. 203). The Jejuri grant also mentions *trairājya* (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 19, p. 64). A discussion of the significance of the term *trairājya* is presented by [Tieken \(2001\)](#), p. 134.

29 Jayaswal and Banerji prefer the interpretation of *terasa-vasa-satikam* as 113 years while some other scholars interpret it as 1300 years. See *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 20, p. 88, n. 5.

30 [Sastri \(1987\)](#), p. 144 says, ‘A long historical night ensues after the close of the Śāṅgam age. We know little of the period of more than three centuries that followed. When the curtain rises again towards the close of the sixth century A.D., we find that a mysterious and ubiquitous enemy of civilization, the evil rulers called Kalabhras (Kaḷappāḷar), have come and upset the established political order which was restored only by their defeat at the hands of the Pāṇḍya and Pallavas as well as the Chālukyas of Bādāmi. Of the Kalabhras, we have as yet no definite knowledge; from some Buddhist books we hear of a certain Accutavikkanta of the Kalabhrakula during whose reign Buddhist monasteries and authors enjoyed much patronage in the Chola country . . . The Cholas disappeared from the Tamil land almost completely in this debacle, though a branch of them can be traced towards the close of the period in Rayalaseema-the Telugu-Chodas . . .’ The latest work on Kalabhras is by [Gillet \(2014\)](#), who summarizes the work of many scholars after Sastri, who have tried to trace the origin of the Kalabhras. She is skeptical about the Kalabhras occupying the Pāṇṭiya kingdom. However, she has left out an important work by [Kācinātaṇ \(1981\)](#), who discusses a ca. ninth-century inscription at Poṇṇivāṭi that mentions a ruler of the Koṅku region, *kali niruva(pa) kaḷvaṇ āiṇa kōkkaṇṭaṇ iravi* ‘King Kaṇṭaṇ Ravi alias Kali king Kaḷvaṇ’. Based on this inscription, he equates the Kalabhras with the lineage of Kaḷvar mentioned in *Akanāṇūru* 61.11 ([Kācinātaṇ 1981](#), p. 14). For more details regarding this inscription, see *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 38, pp. 37–39. Additionally, Gillet has not considered *Kallātam* 57.12–13 of the tenth century CE, and *Periyapurāṇam* 991.2 of the twelfth century, which mention a king from Karnataka ruling over Madurai. These are discussed by [Kācinātaṇ \(1981\)](#), pp. 20–22.

31 The updated date of seventh century for Mālēpāḍu plates follows Sastri (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 27, p. 251).

32 The important expression in the plates in this connection is ‘*trairājya-sthitim-ātmasāt-kṛtavataḷ*. Even though it comes several centuries after Khāavela, what Mālēpāḍu plates suggest is the possible historical fact of Karikālā becoming the sole overlord of the whole Tamil region at a cost to the confederacy of the three Tamil kingdoms mentioned earlier. Indeed, these plates may offer an independent corroboration of the existence of the confederacy and the possible reason for its defeat by Khāavela. The ‘three kings’ in the quote above is the translation of Sanskrit ‘*trairājya*’ in the inscription attesting to the earlier state of Tamil confederacy. It should be noted that the Telugu Cōla claims descent from the Tamil king Karikālā. As seen earlier, Māmūlaṇār also has mentioned the joint defense of the northern border of the Tamil region by the three Tamil kings in *Akanāṇūru* 31. We know that

Karikāla is praised by Māmūlanār in *Akanāṇṇūru* 55 as having won a fierce battle against the Cēra king. Thus, Māmūlanār must have witnessed in his lifetime the Tamil confederacy in operation as well as its possible weakening or collapse under Karikāla. This suggests that Khāravēla either defeated a weakened Tamil confederacy or the confederacy's defeat led to an internecine struggle that ultimately led to Karikāla becoming the sole overlord of the Tamil country.

33 The corrected date of fifth century is noted in the errata.

34 *Kiruṣṇakiri Māvattak Kalvetṭukal*, p. 29. The name Perumpāṇaviḷavaraicar < *perum+pāṇa+v+iḷa+v+araicar*, where -v- is due to sandhi and *iḷavaraicar* indicates a prince. Here, *pāṇa* functions as an adjective. The name Perumpāṇaraicar < *perum+pāṇ+araicar*. Here, *pāṇ* functions as an adjective.

35 The letters 'car' are missing in the inscription but can be inferred.

36 *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 8, p. 28.

37 *Periyapurāṇam* 3773.3. Pāṇanār is the honorific form of the masculine singular form, Pāṇan.

38 *Periyapurāṇam* 2159.3. According to legends associated with the founding of Jaffna or Yālpṇāṇam in northern Sri Lanka, a Yālpṇāṇam meaning 'a Pāṇan playing a lute' came from India and performed before the local king, who presented him with some uninhabited land in northern Sri Lanka. After receiving the land, the bard returned to India and encouraged some other bards to go to Sri Lanka and settle in the land the bard had received. Over time, that settlement grew to be known as Yālpṇāṇam. The Tamil Saint Aruṇakirinātar of the fifteenth century CE conflated this bard with Saint Tirunilakaṇṭha Yālpṇāṇa Nāyanār and called Yālpṇāṇam as Yālpṇāṇāyan (Yālpṇāṇ+Nāyan) Pattiṇam (Rasanayagam 1984, pp. 245–49). This legend also supports the tradition of the bards receiving land as gift.

39 However, it should be noted that Palkuriki Sōmanātha in his *Basavapurāṇam* mentions a Bāṇa, who is depicted more along the lines of Bāṇāsura than Bāṇabhadrā (Rao and Roghair 1990, p. 160). However, Sōmanātha's work came at least a century later. So, we cannot equate his ideas with whatever the author of the inscription had in 1101 CE.

40 Handwritten notebook of A. Subramanian, Lecturer in Veena, Banaras Hindu University, containing Harikesanallur L. Muthiah Bhagavatar's compositions available at Music Research Library, Chennai. 1946. It can be downloaded from <http://musicresearchlibrary.net/omeka/items/show/1822> (accessed on 14 November 2021).

41 Vikramachola was not the king who issued the grant. See *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 5, no. 705.

42 Although we come across persons with titles beginning with Bāṇa- and Vāṇa- even up to the sixteenth century CE, their real affiliation to the early Bāṇas is suspect. There is a thirteenth-century CE Pāṇṭiya Māravarman Kulacēkara Tēvar inscription in Tirutturaippūṇṭi that mentions a Kaikkōḷar by the name Tiruvāṇṭārāṇa Cīṅkaṇamarāyarāṇa Vāṇarāyar (a Kaikkōḷar named Tiruvāṇṭār alias Cīṅkaṇamarāyar alias Vāṇarāyar) (*Tirutturaippūṇṭik Kalvetṭukal*, p. 108). Cīṅkaṇa was the name of a general of the Hoysala king Somēśvara killed before Māravarman Kulacēkara began his reign in 1268 CE (Sastri 1987, pp. 215–16). Kaikkōḷars were part of elite Cōḷa military units. In post-Cōḷa times, they gradually shed their association with military units and emerged as an occupational status group according to Ali (2007, p. 509). Clearly, this Kaikkōḷar was not affiliated with the Bāṇa chiefs by descent. He had been given or assumed the title Vāṇarāyar. Because of problems like these, Orr (2018, p. 347) says, "Indeed, we cannot be sure of the actual filiation among the rulers who took up the titles and claims to fame of the Bāṇas in successive times and various places, although a good deal of scholarship has in the past been devoted to aspects of the political history of the Bāṇas and the clan's relationships with the kings belonging to South India's major dynasties".

43 For details about this story, see (Cane 2019, p. 35).

44 Ali (2000, pp. 185–89) sees an influence of Rāṣṭrakūṭas from the eighth century in the claims of the Cōḷas of Tanjavur and the Pāṇṭiyas of Madurai to belong to Solar and Lunar descents, respectively, with an objective of claiming paramount overlordship of the world. However, as noted earlier, Puṇyakumāra, a Telugu Cōḷa of the seventh century, claimed to belong to the race of the Sun.

45 *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, parts 3& 4, p. 386. The Mahābhārata's Śibi belonged to the Lunar lineage. However, the Cōḷas claiming to belong to the Sōlar lineage included Śibi in the Sōlar race, since he was already mentioned in *Purāṇāṇūru* 37, 39, 43, and 46.

46 *South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 3, no. 42, p. 91; Ramachandran (1931, p. 305)

47 *kulotbhava* is corrected as *kulodbhava* in other inscriptions.

48 While Kielhorn (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 3, pp. 74–79) has called him Vikramāditya II, Ramachandran (1931, p. 309) has corrected it to Vikramāditya III based on updated information up to 1931.

49 Pāṭāla is netherworld.

50 Based on *Cilappatikāram* 6.39–63 and its commentary by Aṭiyārkkunallār. Explanations within parenthesis are based on Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary.

51 That Kṛṣṇa performed this dance after killing Bāṇāsura is Aṭiyārkkunallār's explanation. The *Arumpataavurai*, the earlier commentary, does not say anything about this dance. In fact, Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ's own text allows for the interpretation that Kṛṣṇa performed two dances in the capital of Kaṃsa—one after killing the elephant sent by Kaṃsa and the other after killing a demon. In the *Harivaṃśa* some seers are supposed to say to Kṛṣṇa that Cānura, the wrestler, was a Dānava or Asura. Moreover, according to the *Harivaṃśa*, Bāṇāsura is not killed by Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa only cuts all his arms except two and spares his life due to Śiva's request.

However, it should be noted that none of the dances performed by Kṛṣṇa in Kaṁsa's and Bāṇa's cities are mentioned in the Sanskrit texts. So, Aṭṭiyārkkunallār might have been mistaken about the locale of the Mal dance or he could be drawing on a different narrative tradition.

52 **Pillai and Ponipās (1966, pp. 16–18).** Although not explicitly stated in the *Puṛaṇāṅgūru*, according to Tamil tradition, the three Tamil kings did not defeat Pāri in battle. They killed him by treachery. In his commentary on *Puṛaṇāṅgūru* 108, Auvai Turaicāmi Pillai says that the Tamil kings realized that waging war against Pāri and defeating him was difficult. So, they disguised themselves as suppliants and solicited Pāri as a gift. Following the righteous conduct of alleviating the poverty of solicitors, Pāri went with them and was killed by them. Additionally, in his commentary on *Puṛaṇāṅgūru* 110, Auvai Turaicāmi Pillai says, “*Kapilar kūṛiyatu pōlavō, atu pōlvatoru cūlcciyiṅṅaiyō avarkaḷ ceytu Pāriyaik koṅṅar enpa*” meaning “They say that they [the three kings] did either as Kapilar said or engaged in a similar treachery and killed Pāri.” Pillai and Ponipās say that the three kings disguised themselves as bards and performed before Pāri. At the end of the performance Pāri asked what the bards wanted as gifts, and they asked for his kingdom and his life. Pāri offered his own kingdom and life to the three disguised kings overruling the objections from his warriors and people. Then, the three kings killed him. In a literary poetic work called the *Pāri Kātai* by Rā. Rākavaiyaṅkār, the famous Tamil scholar, who was an editor of the *Akanāṅgūru*, says that the three kings sent a soldier disguised as a bard to sing before Pāri. After the performance, when Pāri asked the disguised soldier what gifts he wanted, he asked for Pāri himself. Pāri gave himself to the disguised soldier and followed him. The soldier took Pāri to the center of the gathered armies of the three kings. There the three kings killed him (*Pāri Kātai* 412–28). The important thing to note here is that there was treachery involving disguise to defeat a philanthropist. This is what I find important in the story of Pāri because in the story of Bali and Vāmana too, we have Viṣṇu, in effect, disguised as a Brahmin dwarf and deceptively asking for land that is measured in three strides. However, when Bali granted that request, the dwarf Vāmana grew into his giant cosmic form and took away Bali's sovereignty and exiled him to the netherworld. Pāri lost his sovereignty due to his enemies using treachery to exploit his sense of duty towards the bards. Bali lost his sovereignty due to his enemy, Viṣṇu, using treachery to exploit his sense of duty towards philanthropy towards the Brahmins. In both cases, the kings honored their personal code of philanthropy even when it meant a great loss to themselves personally.

53 *Akanāṅgūru* 196.1-5 (Cōmacuntaraṅṅar Edition).

54 *Aiṅkurunūru* 49 (Cāminātaiyar Edition).

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