

The Other Way Round: From Print to Manuscript

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Among the fifty or more extant manuscripts from the *Tirumurukkārruppaṭai* (7th c. CE?) that I have been so far able to examine either in the libraries holding them or in the digital photos collected by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO, Pondicherry Centre) and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (SFB 950, Universität Hamburg), I had the surprise to find that four manuscripts are in fact copies of earlier printed editions.

The *Tirumurukkārruppaṭai* is one of the earliest Tamil texts to have been published in the first half of 19th c. in Tamil Nadu (first edition in 1834, by Caravaṇapperumāḷ). It is a poem in 317 lines praising the god Murukaṇ (a name attested only once in fact in the poem, while Muruku is used twice). The deity is already in this text combining northern Sanskritic and southern features. This text has been popular in at least three different circles. Firstly, it is one among the *Pattuppāṭṭu* of the so-called Caṅkam corpus (ten long poems and eight anthologies of shorter pieces). Secondly, it has been incorporated in the *Tirumuṟai*, the twelve-book compilation (12th c. CE?) which constitutes the canon of devotional Tamil Śaiva texts. Thirdly, it has also been transmitted as a devotional text, that is not forcibly in relation to an exclusive Śaiva devotion. The examined manuscripts show however that the *Tirumurukkārruppaṭai* is rarely found in serial *Tirumuṟai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* manuscripts. It is more often transmitted either alone (with or as a commentary) or in multiple-text manuscripts of Śaiva texts.

The questions I will ask are the following. Why would one have ordered a manuscript copy of a printed book? Is the reason for having such a copy made linked to economical, religious or ritual preoccupations? Was *ōlai* (palm-leaf) cheaper than paper? Was the printed book no more available? What was the use of such a manuscript? Are there other such manuscripts in India?