The Dravidian Languages

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Old Tamil

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PART I

SOUTH DRAVIDIAN
3 Old Tamil

Thomas Lehmann

3.1 Background and History
Of all the Dravidian languages Tamil has the longest literary tradition, covering more than two thousand years. The earliest records are cave inscriptions from the second century BCE; the earliest extant literary text is the grammar Tolkāppiyam (100 BCE), which describes the grammar and poetics of Tamil during that period. During its two-thousand-year uninterrupted history, Tamil distinguishes three different stages: Old Tamil (300 BCE to 700 CE), Middle Tamil (700 CE to 1600) and Modern Tamil (1600 CE to the present), each with distinct grammatical characteristics.

Causation, for example, is expressed lexically in Old Tamil, morphologically in Middle Tamil and syntactically in Modern Tamil. Old Tamil has verb bases whose causative stem is idiosyncratic and must be listed in the lexicon, e.g. *iru* ‘sit’ and *iruvu* ‘make sit’, *akal* ‘disappear’ and *akāruru* ‘make disappear’. In Middle Tamil causative stems are productively formed by suffixing *-vi, -pi* or *-ppi* to a verb base where the suffix chosen depends on the phonology of the base, e.g. *cey* ‘do’ and *cey-vi* ‘make do’, *aru* ‘cut’ and *aru-ppi* ‘make cut’. And in Modern Tamil causation is expressed periphrastically by means of the auxiliary verbs *vaikk* ‘place’, *ceyya* ‘do’ and *pānṇa* ‘make’ following the infinitive of the main verb, e.g. *arukk-a vaikk* ‘make cut’. The techniques used to form causatives in Middle and Modern Tamil occur sporadically in Old Tamil, e.g. *cēr-vi* ‘make join’ (pari 12.74) and *vāz-a.c cey* ‘make live’ (puṟa 367.10). Thus, despite the grammatical individuality of each stage of the language, many features of Middle and Modern Tamil are anchored in Old Tamil, demonstrating a grammatical continuity from the old to the modern language.

During the period of Early Old Tamil (100 BCE to 400 CE), the Pāntiyaya, Cēṟa and Cōḻa dynasties ruled over much of South India. These kings and other chieftains patronised many bardic poets. Two anthologies of love and heroic poems composed by these bards survive: they contain 2,381 poems ranging in length from 3 to 782 lines. Totalling 32,000 lines, this corpus is known as Cankam (‘academy’) literature. During this period, with the propagation of Jainism and Buddhism in South India, a number of Prakrit and Sanskrit borrowings entered Old Tamil and appear in the Cankam anthologies. The literature of Late Old Tamil (400 CE to 700) comprises the two epics Cilappatikāram and Maṇimēkalai,
several ethical texts and certain poems conventionally included in the Caṅkam anthologies. The language of Old Tamil is thus embodied in a fixed corpus of poetic texts; conversely, poetic usage characterises the grammar of the language.

From its beginnings in Tolkāppiyam, traditional Tamil language study has linked grammar (ilakkanam 'that which characterises') and literature (ilakkiyam 'that which is characterised') so closely that the texts and their commentaries have become symbiotic. As noted later, these texts are not readily accessible without the help of commentaries written during the ancient and medieval periods. Although the Caṅkam corpus is ancient, many texts and commentaries were only recently rediscovered in the last century through the efforts of such scholars as U. Ve. Cāmināthaiyar. So, paradoxically, the modern study of Old Tamil grammar is quite new.

Abbreviations of Example Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ācār</td>
<td>ācārakkōvai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aiṅk</td>
<td>aiṅkuṇuṇūru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aka</td>
<td>akanāṇūru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kali</td>
<td>kalittokai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuṛi</td>
<td>(pattupāṭṭu) kuṛiṇcippāṭṭu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuṛu</td>
<td>kuṛuntokai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narri</td>
<td>narṅinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pari</td>
<td>paripāṭal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pati</td>
<td>patirrupattu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peri</td>
<td>periapurāṇam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puṇa</td>
<td>puṇanāṇūru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Phonology and Orthography

The traditional Tamil grammar Tolkāppiyam describes phonetic, phonological and orthographic aspects of the Old Tamil sound system without distinguishing these three aspects as is done in modern linguistics. The phonemic inventory of the language consists of ten vowels and seventeen consonants (see Table 3.1).

Old Tamil has ten vowels, five short and five long: /a/, /ā/, /ī/, /ī/, /ū/, /ū/, /ē/, /ē/, /ō/, /ō/. The seventeen consonants include six stops: /k/, /c/, /t/, /t/, /p/; five nasals: /n/, /n/, /n/, /m/; two laterals: /l/, /l/; two glides /y/, /v/; one tap /ɾ/; and one approximant /r/. The articulatory descriptions in Tolkāppiyam are often incomplete: they do not, for example, distinguish between retroflex and non-retroflex consonants, leading some scholars (e.g. Meenakshisundaram 1965: 55) to speculate that retroflexes were distinguished from alveolars and dentals only at later stages of Tamil. However, comparative Dravidian phonology indicates the presence of distinct dental, alveolar and retroflex series in the proto-language.

In addition to these phonemes, traditional Tamil grammar recognises two more vowels and two more consonants. The two diphthongs /ai/ and /au/,
### Table 3.1 The phonemes of Old Tamil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ï</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ë</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>ã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>ù</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>õ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>ñ (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laterals</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glides</td>
<td>v</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taps</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ( ) = allophone

grouped with vowels, are combinations of /a/ and /i/ and /a/ and /u/. In the case of other possible vowel combinations, e.g. */ai/, */ei/, */oi/, the final /i/ is treated as the glide /y/. Old Tamil thus has only two diphthongs. The two additional consonants are merely allophones of other consonants but are represented by separate graphemes. With one exception cited below, /yănnaṇam/, the velar nasal /n/ is an allophone of other nasals and occurs only before the velar stop /k/. The fricative /h/, called aytam and transliterated as k, occurs only between a short vowel and a stop, e.g. aktu ‘it, that’: it may be regarded as an allophone of /y/ since /y/ is the only consonant that does not occur in this context.

These phonemes have the following distribution. All vowels and the diphthong /au/ occur word-initially. All vowels and diphthongs occur after all consonants except /h/ and /k/. There is, however, one occurrence of /a/ after /h/: yănnaṇam ‘in which way’ (aka 27.12). All vowels and /au/ occur word-finally. Long vowels and /ai/ may be elongated for metrical purposes: this consists in the addition of a short vowel to a long vowel. For example, elām ‘everything’ (kali 65.8) may be elongated as elāām ‘id.’. This process may be repeated: a short vowel can be added to an already elongated vowel, as in cirār ‘small ones’ (pari 3.6) becoming cirāār (aka 107.17) and further cirāāār (pura 291.2). Only the nine consonants /p/, /t/, /c/, /k/, /m/, /n/, /ñ/, /r/, /z/ occur word-initially. Only the ten consonants /m/, /n/, /ñ/, /l/, /ñ/, /r/, /y/, /l/, /l/ and /z/ occur word-finally.

Internal and external sandhi processes involve deletion, insertion or assimilation either when a suffix is added to a stem or when two words are compounded or stand in a particular syntactic relation. A stem-final /u/ that follows a long vowel, a consonant or two syllables, traditionally called ‘extra-short u’, is deleted when followed by a vowel-initial suffix, as in nātu ‘country’ + in > nāṭin (pari 2.55), karpu ‘chastity’ + in > karpin (aka 6.13), varaku ‘coming’ + in > varakin...
When a stem-final vowel, except extra-short /u/, is followed by a vowel-initial suffix, a glide is inserted, e.g. \textit{pala} + /i/ > \textit{palavin} (aka 7.20), \textit{mozi} + /i/ > \textit{moziyin} (aka 13.8). When a stem-final retroflex consonant is followed by a dental-initial suffix, for example, that dental assimilates to a retroflex place of articulation, e.g. \textit{kăn} + /i/ > \textit{kănți} (pari 6.64).

The earliest records of Tamil are written in a southern version of the \textit{Asokan Brahmi} script (254 BCE), an alpha-syllabic form of writing (see Chapter 2). It was adapted to Tamil phonology in two respects: graphemes for non-occurring phonemes such as aspirated stops were omitted and graphemes for characteristic Tamil phonemes such as /\textit{i}/ were added. From the second century BCE to the third century CE, there appear to have been three different versions of Tamil Brahmi script (see Mahadevan 1990); the third and last system was assumed as early as \textit{Tolkëppiyam}. The principles of this writing system were maintained when Tamil Brahmi script evolved into Modern Tamil script, in which the \textit{Cankam} texts are conventionally printed. This script has moved toward an alphabet in one respect: the conjunct consonant symbols have been replaced by strings of consonant symbols (see Steever 1996).

### 3.3 Morphology and Parts of Speech

In what follows ‘morph’ refers to the parts into which a word form can be segmented and ‘morpheme’ to the lexical or grammatical meaning these morphs have. Old Tamil utilises six morphological operations: suffixation, incorporation, compounding, cliticisation, ‘doubling’, and stem mutation. The most frequent process is suffixation. Up to four inflectional suffixes may be added to a stem, as in the verbal noun \textit{atai-nt-ar-ku} ‘because of what happened’ (\textit{narri} 372.9) where the following suffixes are added to the verb stem \textit{atai-} ‘happen’: the past tense marker \textit{-nt-}, euphonic increment \textit{-an-} (\textit{-ar-} by sandhi), nominating suffix \textit{-atu} and dative case marker \textit{-ku}.

A number of words in Old Tamil are formed by means of incorporation where this is defined as the morphological collocation of two adjacent lexemes, with each retaining its independent syntactic function. All cases of incorporation in Old Tamil involve the incorporation of a pronominal head by its immediately preceding modifier, which may be an attributive verb, noun or adjective. For example, in the participial noun \textit{ariy-um-ön} ‘he who knows’ (\textit{pura} 137.4) the head nominal is incorporated as the pronominal suffix \textit{-ön} ‘he’ by the predicate of the preceding relative clause, the adnominal form \textit{ariyum} ‘who knows’ (< \textit{ari-} ‘know’). There are some instances of ‘doubling’ and stem mutation. Depending on the phonology of the noun stem, many nouns form an oblique stem when they are marked for case or function as a genitive attribute. Nouns ending in \textit{tu} and \textit{ru}, such as \textit{kōtu} ‘branch’ and \textit{eyiru} ‘tooth’, form oblique stems by doubling the consonant of the final syllable, as \textit{kōt.tu} and \textit{eyir.ru}. Stem mutation (vowel shortening) applies in the formation of oblique stems of the personal pronouns (e.g. \textit{năm} ‘we’ > \textit{nam-}) and in the formation of certain verb forms (e.g. \textit{kăn-ōm} ‘we do not see’ vs \textit{kantu} ‘seeing’).
Cliticisation occurs when certain grammatical morphemes, realised by bound morphs, are cliticised to fully inflected words, nouns and verbs, but not adjectives. For instance, the interrogative morpheme =¬ and the co-ordinating morpheme =um are expressed by postclitic particles. When suffixation, incorporation and cliticisation co-occur, still longer chains of bound morphs may be created. Thus up to five bound morphs can be added to a stem: punar-nt-icin-ôr-kk=ê 'even to those who united' (aka 367.16) consists of the verb stem punar- 'unite', past tense marker -nt-, inflectional increment -icin-, pronominal suffix -ôr, dative case -kk(u) and emphatic clitic =ê.

Old Tamil morphology is on the whole agglutinating, with a one-to-one correspondence between morpheme and morph. The noun form kilai-kal-ôtu 'with the herds' (kali 25.8), for example, consists of the three morphs kilai 'herd', -kal- and -ôtu which correspond to the three morphemes 'herd', 'plural number' and 'sociative case'. The morphology also has certain fusional characteristics in which two morphemes are conveyed by a single morph as in the verb form cey.y-um 'he/she/they do' where the two morphemes of non-past tense and third person agreement are expressed by the single morph -um. As the earlier example of pronominal incorporation indicates, Old Tamil morphology also exhibits some mild polysynthesis wherein several syntactic elements of a noun phrase occur as one phonological word.

Old Tamil has two major parts of speech: noun and verb. Most lexical stems belong to one of these two classes; some stems have a double categorial status such as col (DEDR 2855) which can be the verb stem 'say' or the noun stem 'word'. A small number of words behave grammatically unlike nouns or verbs, and may be assigned to two minor classes – adjectives and adverbs.

Nouns are classified according to semantic and formal criteria. Traditional Tamil grammar divides nouns into uyartinai 'rational' and akrinai 'non-rational'. The first consists of nouns denoting rational beings such as humans and gods, the second consists of all other nouns, including those denoting children. This classification is relevant to the distribution of plural suffixes, noted below.

Nouns inflect for number and case. Singular number is opposed to plural, with plural being formally marked by a suffix. Case is expressed by bound suffixes or by postpositions, as in the locative case. Apart from number and case markers, two kinds of semantically empty morphs, called inflectional increments, occur in noun inflection: suffixes to form oblique stems and optional euphony increments.

Where a noun is inflected only for case, the case suffix or postposition is suffixed to the oblique stem, where available; otherwise, directly to the noun stem.

(1) a. ulla-ttu-kku (kuru 60.6) b. annai-kku (aink 249.1)
heart-obl-dat mother-dat
‘for the heart’ ‘to (the) mother’

The euphonic increment -in- (-ir- by sandhi) optionally occurs before a case suffix.
Where a noun inflects only for number, a plural marker is suffixed to the noun stem. Where a noun inflects for number and case, the case marker is suffixed to the plural marker.

Old Tamil nouns may also take pronominal suffixes: \textit{pent-ir-ēm} ‘we (are) women’ \textit{(pūra 246.10)} consists of the plural noun \textit{pent-ir} ‘women’ and the first person plural agreement marker -ēm ‘we’. While it would thus seem that Old Tamil nouns inflect for person as well as number and gender class, this is a matter of incorporation rather than inflection.

Traditional Tamil grammar recognises eight cases, labelled serially with numbers or by their characteristic suffix. Western grammarians later applied latinate terms to the cases. Table 3.2 presents the Old Tamil case system in the form of a paradigm. Only singular forms are cited since plural forms inflected for case, as in (3b), occur very seldom. The various case markers occur with all nouns, rational and non-rational, unlike Modern Tamil where the choice of locative and ablative case marker depends on the class of the noun. In Old Tamil only the choice of plural marker depends on the class of the noun.

### Table 3.2 Declension of the noun \textit{malar} ‘flower’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Type</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>malar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>malar-ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociative-instrumental</td>
<td>malar-ōtu, malar-ōṭu, malar-āṇ, malar-āl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>malar-kku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equative-ablative</td>
<td>malar-īṇ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>malar-atu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>malar-il, malar-kaṇ, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominative, or first case is formally unmarked; hence a noun in the nominative is identical with the noun stem. However, since case markers are frequently elided, a noun in its stem form need not convey nominative case. The third, or instrumental-sociative case, has two case markers, each with two allomorphs: -ōṭu/-ōṭu and -āṇ/-āl. Both markers convey an instrumental meaning but whereas -ōṭu/-ōṭu frequently expresses a sociative meaning, -āṇ/-āl often has causal and locative meanings. The fifth, or equative-ablative case, marked by -īṇ, is peculiar to Old Tamil in that its characteristic marker did not survive into later stages of Tamil. Its predominant function is to mark the object of an
equation (‘like, as’).

(4) mayil-in olku-v-an-al ... (aka 158.5)
    peacock-abl walk-npst-euph-3sf
    ‘She walks like a peacock.’

In Modern Tamil this function is assumed by postpositions. Other functions of the fifth case are causal, instrumental and locative. Locative is expressed by the case suffix -il or by one of more than twenty postpositions. These latter are grammaticalised forms of various nouns with a locative meaning, e.g. kan ‘place’, kāl ‘proximity’, akam ‘interiority’. Depending on the phonology of the noun, the vocative case is marked by lengthening the final vowel, deleting the final consonant or adding the clitic =ē.

Traditional Tamil grammar sanctions the use of one case marker with the meaning of another. For example, in (5) the fifth case marker -in marks direct object, a function usually reserved for the second case suffix -ai.

(5) ninn-in vit-āa nizal (kali 61.8)
    you-abl leave-neg+adn shadow
    ‘the shadow which does not leave you’

Case markers and plural markers alike are often deleted so that the noun occurs in its stem or oblique form even though case has been syntactically assigned to it. Sandhi changes, such as a doubling of the initial stop of the following word, may indicate case marker deletion. In (6) the noun ūr ‘place’ indicates the goal of motion from which the dative case marker has been deleted while in (7) it signals the source of motion from which the ablative case marker has been deleted.

(6) num ūr.c cel-kam (aink 236.4)
    you(obl) place go-npst+lpl
    ‘we are going to your place’

(7) num ūr ... var-al aruvi (aink 251.3–4)
    you(obl) place come-vn waterfall
    ‘the waterfall which comes from your place’

Old Tamil has four plural suffixes, -kal, -ar, -ir, -mār, whose distribution depends on noun class. While -kal occurs with non-rational nouns, e.g. kan ‘eye’ > kankal ‘eyes’ (kali 29.42), the other three occur only with rational nouns, e.g. arivi ‘woman’ > arivi.y-ar ‘women’ (pati 68.19), penṭu ‘woman, girl’ > penṭ-ir ‘women (aink 271.3), girls’, tappai ‘elder brother’ > tappai-mār ‘elder brothers’ (puta 342.15). In Late Old Tamil -kal also occurs with rational nouns, e.g. pen ‘girl’ > pen-kal ‘girls’ (cila 30.50), and together with the plural suffixes of rational nouns as a double plural suffix, e.g. penṭ-ir-kal ‘women, girls’ (ācār 99.1).
Such double plurals with rational nouns occur generally in Middle Tamil, e.g. *matantai* 'woman' > *matantai.y-ar-kal* (peri 65.4).

Old Tamil has three kinds of pronouns: personal, demonstrative and interrogative, and indefinite pronouns. Personal pronouns mark person and number, but not gender. The first person plural, however, distinguishes an inclusive plural, which includes the addressee, from an exclusive plural, which does not. See Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 Personal pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>yāŋ, nāŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yām (exclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nām (inclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>nī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nīr, nīyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>tāŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tām</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Old Tamil demonstrative pronouns mark a three-way distinction with three demonstrative stems: proximal *i- ‘this’, distal *a- ‘yon’ and intermediate *u- ‘that’. There are also two interrogative stems, *yā- and *e-, which pattern like the demonstrative stems. A range of pronouns is formed by adding to these stems third person pronominal suffixes which distinguish number and gender, as noted in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4 Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximal</th>
<th>Medial</th>
<th>Distal</th>
<th>Interrogative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SINGULAR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>i.v-āŋ</td>
<td>u.v-āŋ</td>
<td>a.v-āŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>i.v-āl</td>
<td>u.v-āl</td>
<td>a.v-āl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>i-tū/i.k-tū</td>
<td>u-tū/u.k-tū</td>
<td>a-tū/a.k-tū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLURAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epicene</td>
<td>i.v-ār</td>
<td>u.v-ār</td>
<td>a.v-ār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>i.v-āi</td>
<td>u.v-āi</td>
<td>a.v-āi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most often demonstrative pronouns function as anaphoric pronouns, freely varying with third person pronouns. Indefinite pronouns distinguish rational and non-rational forms: the non-rational pronoun *onru* ‘one, something’ contrasts with three rational pronouns *oru.v-āŋ/ottāŋ* ‘some male person’, *oru-tti* ‘some female person’ and *oru.v-ār* ‘one person’ (epicene).

Verbs are marked for illocutionary force, tense, subject–verb agreement, and the relational categories of complementation and nominalisation. They are also marked for negative polarity. Old Tamil verb forms are syntactically classified as finite, non-finite and nominalised, based on their syntactic function in the
sentence. Non-finite and nominalised verbs play an important role in complex structures: they function as the predicate of an embedded clause or the first verb in a compound verb construction. Finite verbs are classified by illocutionary force into imperative, optative and indicative. Of these three, indicative forms are overtly marked for tense and subject–verb agreement, which marks the person, number and, in the third person, gender of the subject. Finite, non-finite and nominalised verbs have both positive and negative forms. Table 3.5 shows forms of the imperative and optative, with allomorphs.

Table 3.5 Imperative and optative forms of the verb olir ‘shine’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Singular/Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>olir, olir-āy</td>
<td>olir-mati, olir-miṅ, olir-m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative imperative</td>
<td>olir-al, olir-ēl, olir-ati</td>
<td>olir-āṅ-miṅ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optative</td>
<td>olir-i, olir-iya, olir-iyar, olir-ka, olir-mō</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imperatives are correlated with the second person; unless a verb stem itself functions as an imperative, in which case an irregular verb like varu ‘come’ has a stem alternant (viz. vā), second person suffixes are added to the stem. Some of these suffixes are indifferent to number. And, on occasion, second person indicative forms are interpreted as imperative, as in va-nt-ai ‘come-pst-2s’ (kali 63.12). The optative occurs in all persons; there are five suffixes for this category, displaying rich allomorphic variation.

Positive indicative verbs consist of three parts: stem, tense marker and personal ending. This tripartite structure is not always reflected, however, in the verb’s phonological realisation. There are four structural possibilities at the phonological level. First, positive indicative verbs may directly mirror this tripartite structure with three morphs for the three morphemes.

(8) cey-t-āy (kali 51.16)  
do-pst-3sm  
‘(he) did’

Second, positive indicative forms may also include a euphonic particle – an empty morph that serves as an inflectional increment – before or after the tense suffix.

(9) a. cey-t-āṅ-ai (aṅk 294.3)  
do-pst-euph-2s  
‘(you) did’

b. cey-ku-v-am (aṅk 288.2)  
do-euph-npst-1pl  
‘(we) do’

Third, tense and subject–verb agreement may be marked by a single
Among the various inflectional suffixes, tense and the personal endings have a relatively rich allomorphy. Old Tamil has two tenses, past and non-past. There are five allomorphs for past tense, \(-t\), \(-nt\), \(-in\), \(-i\), \(-tt\), and three for non-past tense, \(-v\), \(-p\), \(-pp\). These are lexically conditioned so that a verb stem selects a particular tense suffix. One class of verbs realises the past tense by doubling the consonant in the final syllable of the verb stem, e.g. \(tōtu\) ‘touch’ \(\rightarrow\) \(tōtt-ān\) ‘he touched’ (kali 55.19).

A system of three tenses develops in Middle Tamil when a series of present tense forms emerge and the inherited non-past assumes the function of the future tense. There are two suffixes for the innovated present tense, \(-āninr\) and \(-kĩr\). While they flourish in Middle and Modern Tamil, they first appear in Old Tamil, \(var-āninr-ap-al\) ‘come-prs-euph-3sf’ ‘she comes’ (aink 397.3) and \(cēr-kĩr-a\) ‘join-prs-adn’ ‘due to joining’ (pari 22.35). Diachronically, both forms are periphrastic constructions (see Steever 1989, 1993: 167ff). The suffix \(-āninr\) historically consists of the non-finite durative suffix \(-ā\) and the past stem \(nin-ru\) of the verb \(nil\) ‘stand’ while \(-kĩr\) is historically the past stem of \(kil\) ‘be able’.

Personal endings of verbs have up to four allomorphs in Old Tamil; their distribution is conditioned by the preceding tense or euphonic suffix, as noted in Table 3.6. All personal endings except the third person neuter have two allomorphs, one with a short and one with a long vowel. As Akattiyaliṅkam (1983) notes, those with short vowels predominate in Early Old Tamil while those with long vowels predominate in Late Old Tamil, making this one possible criterion for subdividing the language into Early and Late Old Tamil.

Characteristic of Old Tamil is the number of portmanteau, or cumulative, morphs which realise both tense and subject–verb agreement in a single morph (Table 3.7). In such instances, the tense morpheme is always non-past. For example, \(-ku\) simultaneously expresses non-past tense and first person singular agreement, as in \(ēttu-ku\) ‘(I) praise’ (kali 40.9).

Negation is expressed exclusively by verb forms in Old Tamil, either morphologically through verb inflection, lexically by means of negative verb stems or
syntactically with auxiliary verb constructions. For verb inflection there are three negative allomorphs, -ät-, -ä- and a zero morph. -ä- and the zero morph occur in finite forms between the verb stem and personal ending, that is, where the tense suffix occurs. Due to this complementarity, negative verbs never mark tense. The suffix -ä- occurs only in the third person neuter, e.g. vär-ä-tu ‘it didn’t/doesn’t/won’t come’, while the zero morph occurs everywhere else in the paradigm, e.g. vär-ën ‘I didn’t/don’t/won’t come’ (pati 61.11). Old Tamil has two lexical negative verbs, al ‘not be/become’ and il ‘not be’. Both are defective and occur only with copular and existential functions.

Importantly, they also function as negative auxiliaries in compound verb constructions. They may occur bound to the stem of the main verb, e.g. văr-al-al ‘live-be.not-3sf’ = ‘(she) doesn’t live’ (aka 12.4), uṇṭ-il-äy ‘know-be.not-3sm’ = ‘(he) doesn’t know’ (puṇḍa 310.6), or freely after a non-finite form of the main verb, in which case past tense is conveyed, e.g. va-nṭ-il-ar ‘come-nfv-be.not-3pl-hump’ = ‘(they) didn’t come’ (pari 9.25). Further, the negative auxiliary al ‘not become’ may also combine with a finite form of the main verb in a serial verb formation (Steever 1988). Here the main verb marks tense and the auxiliary negation, e.g. varu-v-ai all-ai ‘come-npst-2s not.be-2s’ = ‘(you) don’t come’ (aṅk 233.1) and aṛi-nṭ-an-al all-al ‘know-pst-euph-3sf not.be-3sf’ = ‘(she) didn’t know’ (aka 98.6).

Non-finite verbs in Old Tamil are classified as primary and secondary non-finite verb forms. Primary non-finite forms are generated by adding a suffix to the verb stem or, rarely, to the tensed stem. Secondary forms are generated by adding a clitic to a primary non-finite form. Both are illustrated in Table 3.8.

Old Tamil has four primary non-finite verb forms: the conjunctive, infinitive, conditional and adnominal forms. The suffixes for the conjunctive and the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.6 Pronominal suffixes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third: Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.7 Cumulative suffixes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epicene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.8 Non-finite and nominalised forms of the verb olir ‘shine’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctive</td>
<td>olir-ä, olir-ü, olir-ntu, olir-pu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative conjunctive</td>
<td>olir-ä, olir-ä-tu, olir-ä-mal, olir-ä-mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td>olir-ä, olir-iya, olir-iyar, olir-mär, olir-vän</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>olir-in, olir-nt-äl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adnominal: Past</td>
<td>olir-nt-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-past</td>
<td>olir-um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative adnominal</td>
<td>olir-ä, olir-ä-ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>olir-ni-enä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equative</td>
<td>olir-nt-änu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessive conditional</td>
<td>olir-in-um, olir-nt-äl-um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factive concessive</td>
<td>olir-a.v-änu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenseless verbal noun</td>
<td>olir-al, olir-kai, olir-tal, olir-pu, olir-vu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensed verbal noun: Past</td>
<td>olir-nt-a-mai, olir-nt-atu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-past</td>
<td>olir-v-atu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative verbal noun</td>
<td>olir-ä-mai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conditional have several allomorphs occurring in free variation. The infinitive comprises five subtypes with various semantic functions. The adnominal form has two tensed and two negative forms. The four secondary non-finite forms combine a primary form with a suffix or clitic: the causal (< conjunctive in -ntu + ena), the equative (< conjunctive in -ntu + änu), the concessive conditional (< conditional + =um) and the factive concessive (< infinitive + =um).

Nominalised verb forms or verbal nouns are divided into tensed and tenseless verbal nouns. The latter have five variants. As the predicate of a nominalised clause, verbal nouns are inflected for case according to context. Some verbal nouns, such as those with -pu, never mark case.

Old Tamil has two small sets of words that semantically encode various qualities and differ grammatically from nouns and verbs. The first includes aru ‘difficult’ (DEDR 221), nal ‘good’ (DEDR 3610), putu ‘new’ (DEDR 4275) and peru ‘big’ (DEDR 4411). Morphologically, these are uninflected words; syntactically, they do not behave like nouns or verbs in that they neither occur as subject or object nor subcategorise verbal arguments or assign case. They occur only as adnominal attributes with an adjectival function.

The second and smaller set of uninflected words occurs only as attributes of verbs, nouns and adjectives, and lacks the grammatical properties of these other three classes. Words such as ugu (DEDR 711), nagi and tava (DEDR 3106), all meaning ‘much’, are classified as adverbs. Some word forms are grammaticalised as adverbs with a particular lexical meaning, e.g. the conjunctive form azi-ttu from azi ‘finish’ idiomatically means ‘again’.

Old Tamil has several clitics which may be added to noun and verbal forms, but not adjectives. Although they morphologically combine with a noun or verb, their scope is an entire phrase or clause, whose head is that noun or verb. The clitic =um ‘and’ co-ordinates noun phrases and non-finite clauses; =ö and =kol mark a clause as an interrogative one; and =ê ‘even’ indicates emphasis.
3.4 Syntax

Old Tamil, like other Dravidian languages, displays the general properties of head-final languages. As head of a clause, a verbal predicate generally occurs in final position. Non-finite verbs, for instance, mark the end of an embedded or adjoined clause and must therefore be the final element in a clause. Old Tamil also has postpositions since these express the semantic relation between the preverbal NP arguments and the clause-final verbal predicate. Similarly, the nominal head of NPs occurs finally with all adnominal attributes and modifiers preceding it. Auxiliaries follow a main verb in a compound construction which is derived from a structure in which the main verb is a complement of the auxiliary (Steever 1983). Subordinate and dependent clauses precede main clauses.

Phrase and Compound

In noun phrases the nominal head element may be modified at the word level by a verb in root form, a noun in stem form and an adjective. None of these three types of modifier is morphologically marked in any way; they function as adjectival attributes simply by juxtaposition, as the following examples show.

(12) \[V \text{N} \]_{NP} 
malar tār \ (aka\ 82.18) 
be.wide garland
‘wide garland’

(13) \[N \text{N} \]_{NP} 
vaya nāy \ (aka\ 182.5) 
strength dog
‘strong dog’

(14) \[\text{Adj N} \]_{NP} 
nal mā \ (aṅiṅk\ 221.3) 
good mango
‘good mango’

Such uninflected modifiers may occur in any order.

(15) \[\text{Adj V N N} \] 
peru matar māzāi.k kān \ (kuri\ 248) 
big be.cheerful coolness eye
‘big, cheerful, cool eyes’

At the phrase level, a noun phrase may function as an adnominal attribute. The attributive noun phrase is either marked for genitive case, marked with the inflectional increment -iṅ or occurs unmarked in its oblique or stem form. Whereas an attributive noun phrase marked for genitive case always has a pos-
sessenive or partitive function, one that is either unmarked or marked with the increment -in can additionally have a locative, equative or appositive function.

(16) a. kōtīcći kural (aink 289.1) b. kāṇa maṇcai (kurū 38.1)  
girl voice  
'the girl's voice'  
c. tāmāraik kan (kali 39.2) d. tēm pali (aink 259.4)  
lotus eye  
'eye like a lotus'  
forest peacock  
'the peacock in the forest'  
honey food  
'the food which is honey'

If the head of a NP is pronominal, a special kind of compounding occurs, namely incorporation. In such a case two adjacent syntactic elements, the modifier and the pronominal head of the NP, are morphologically collocated while retaining their separate syntactic functions. Thus in the relative construction N => [S'] PRO, the verbal predicate of the relative clause S' incorporates the pronominal head PRO, resulting in a word form commonly known as a participial noun. Recall from the earlier example ari.y-üm-ōn 'he who knows' (purā 137.4) that the head pronominal element -ōn is incorporated by the adnominal form ari.y-üm. Depending both on the form and person of the pronominal head and on the form of the adnominal verb, four morphologically distinct variants of the participial noun may realise the same syntactic structure. First, an adnominal verb incorporates a pronominal suffix, as in the preceding example. Second, a verb in its tensed or negative stem incorporates a pronominal suffix, e.g. ari.y-āt-ēn 'know-neg-ls', 'I, who do not know' (kali 37.19). Third, a verb in its stem form with the non-past suffix -(u)n, which occurs only in this construction, incorporates a pronominal suffix, as ari.y-un-ar 'know-npst-3hon', 'he who knows' (nārī 309.7). And fourth, a verb in its tensed or negative stem form incorporates a remote demonstrative pronoun, as ari-p-avar 'know-npst-they', 'they who know' (kali 125.3).

In the structure NP => [NP] PRO, an attributive noun phrase incorporates a pronominal head, yielding a word form called an appellative or personal noun, e.g. vill-aṇ 'bow-3sm', 'he with the bow' (aka 48.12), tōl-ēṇ 'shoulder-1s', 'I, with (broad) shoulders' (aka 82.18), kūntal-āy 'hair-2s', 'you, with the hair' (kali 64.6). Finally, an adjective may incorporate a pronominal head, resulting in what has been called an adjectival noun, e.g. nall-āy 'good-2s' 'you who are good' (kali 39.30) and peri-y-an 'great-3sm', 'he who is great' (aka 100.2). The process is recursive; in putu.v-ōr-ttu 'the one with the new ones' (kurū 385.7), the adjective putu 'new' incorporates the pronominal head -ōr '3pl', resulting in putu.v-ōr 'new ones'. This intermediate form in turn incorporates the pronominal head -ttu '3sn', giving rise to putu.v-ōr-ttu 'new-3pl-3sn', 'the one with the new ones'.

Verbs combine with each other to form several types of syntactic compound verb constructions, V₀ => V₁ + V₂, which are distinct from the lexical compound verbs discussed in section 3.5. These constructions consist of a lexical verb V₁
in its stem, conjunctive or infinitive form, followed by an auxiliary verb \( V_2 \) – often a bound form – inflected according to context. These auxiliaries are lexical verbs which function non-lexically in this context. The passive auxiliary verb \( patau \) ‘experience, suffer’, for example, governs the infinitive of the main verb, e.g. \( en\text{-}a\text{-p} \ patau\text{-}tal \) ‘say-inf-experience-nom’, ‘being said’ (\textit{kuru} 263.5). The verb \( kil \) ‘be able’ is the only verb that functions with its literal meaning as a modal auxiliary; it governs the stem form of the main verb, e.g. \( kara\text{-}kira\text{-}p\text{-}en \) ‘hide-be.able-npst-1s’, ‘I am able to hide’ (\textit{kali} 39.40). In most instances, however, the function of Old Tamil auxiliary verbs is not well understood today. Subrahmanyya Sastri (1934: 152) even claims that they are used without any special sense. Examples are the verbs \( taru \) ‘give’, \( itu \) ‘put’ and \( i \) ‘bestow’. \( taru \) occurs after the stem form of the main verb, e.g. \( puku\text{-}ta\text{-}nt\text{-}än \) ‘enter-give-pst-3sm’, ‘(he) entered’ (\textit{kali} 40.32), while \( i \) occurs after the conjunctive form of the main verb, e.g. \( va\text{-}nt\text{-}i\text{-}m \) ‘come-cnj-bestow-imp’, ‘come’ (\textit{aka} 218.22).

**Simple Sentence**

The subject of a clause is a NP in the nominative case. While there are dative-subject constructions in many Dravidian languages, including Modern Tamil, so that such a construction might be projected to the proto-language, inspection of the Old Tamil corpus reveals that the subject of a clause is almost always a noun phrase in the nominative case. Only a few examples may be cited which are probable instances of a dative-subject construction, as in (17).

(17) \( nin\text{-}ak\text{-}k\text{o} \ ari\text{.y\text{-}un\text{-}al} \) (\textit{narri} 44.5)  
you-dat-int know-npst-3sf  
‘Do you know her (lit.: is she one known to you)?’

The predicate may be verbal or nominal. A nominal predicate may occur alone (18) or with the copular verb \( äku \) ‘become’ (19).

(18) \( turukal \ piti. \) (\textit{aink} 239.2)  
stone female.elephant  
‘The stone (is) a female elephant.’

(19) \( töl \ldots \ anañku \ äk\text{-}um \) (\textit{kali} 56.50-52)  
shoulder distress be-npst+3sn  
‘(Your) shoulder … is a distress (to me).’

Adjectives cannot baldly function as predicates, but must first be pronominalised in predicate position so that they incorporate a pronominal head coreferential with the subject.
Predicates agree with their subjects in person, number and gender. In the case of verbal predicates, only finite verbs are marked for subject–predicate agreement.

Predicate nominals show full agreement only for pronominalised nouns and adjectives, as in (22); otherwise agreement is restricted to the category of number. However, this often goes unmarked since the subject NP is not marked for plural number, as in (23).

Due to the poetical nature of the Cankam corpus, which imposes metrical and other constraints, any sentence element can be deleted, not just the subject or object but the verbal predicate of a clause as well. Thanks to subject–predicate agreement, the subject NP can readily be omitted in a clause with a verbal or a nominal predicate. The complex sentence in (24) illustrates both possibilities: both the subject aval 'she' of the embedded clause and the subject avar 'they' of the main clause are deleted, leaving tell-tale agreement features on their respective predicates.

The direct object of a transitive construction may also be deleted.
Any sentence element, nominal or verbal, can be marked with any of the three interrogative clitics =ö, =kol or =kol.l=ö to form a yes–no question from a declarative sentence.

(26) vēlan ... kēnmai ... ari.y-um=ö ... (aink 241.2-4)
priest friendship know-npst-3spl=int
‘Does the priest know friendship?’

(27) itu-v=ö nin cemmal (aka 306.9)
this=nt your greatness
‘Is this your greatness?’

Question words are formed by means of an interrogative pro-form, morphologically marked with one of the two interrogative stems e- (28a) or yā- (28b).

(28) a. iktu ottan e-vaṇ perāṇ (kali 61.1)
this someone what get-neg-3sm
‘What did this person not get?’

b. ivar yā-r ... (purça 201.1)
these people who-nom
‘Who are these people?’

Optionally, one of the three interrogative clitics marks may co-occur with a wh-question word in a question.

(29) yāṇ en cey-k=ö (aka 50.14)
I what do-npst+ls=int
‘What shall I do?’

Old Tamil word order is relatively free: argument NPs and adverbial adjuncts may occupy any position to the left of the predicate. As a rule, the predicate generally stands at the end of the sentence. However, any NP or adverbial adjunct may for stylistic reasons be moved to the right of sentence-final finite verb. In (30) the locative NP is postposed over the finite verb.

(30) pōy-āka vīz-nt-ēṇ [avan mārp-iṇ] (kali 37.12)
deceit-adv fall-pst-1s he-obl breast-loc
‘I fell on his breast in a deceitful manner.’

The constraint against arguments and adjuncts being postposed to the right of a non-finite verb, because it marks a right clause boundary, is often relaxed in the poetic usage of Old Tamil. In (31) the non-finite clause is postposed over the finite clause; moreover, the subject NP tinai ‘millet’ of the non-finite clause is also postposed over its non-finite predicate.
(31) *kili öpp-al-ar ... [vilai-nt-ena tinaī]NP (aīnk 260.4)*  
parrot chase-be not-3pl ripen-cnj caus millet  
‘Because the millet has ripened, they will no longer chase the parrots away.’

In the poetic usage of Old Tamil, stylistic word movements can even separate a head NP from its normally adjacent modifier. Although the NP *nāṭu* ‘country’ in (32) is the head of a relative clause, it has been separated from the adnominal verb form it combines with and moved from its conventional position *t*₁ to the end of the sentence.

(32) *kāntāl nār-um t₁ ... cel-v-ar ... nāt=t=ē (aīnk 254.2-4)*  
flower smell-npst+adn go-npst 3hon country-obl=emp  
‘He goes to his country, where the flowers smell.’

**Complex Sentence**

The formation of complex sentences in Old Tamil always involves embedding or adjoining. A clause may be embedded in a sentence as an adverbial or complement clause, as an adnominal complement or as a nominalised clause. Otherwise a clause is adjoined to another sentence as an adverbial or conjunctive complement of that sentence. There is, however, no co-ordination of two finite clauses; only two or more non-finite clauses may be conjoined.

Old Tamil has several strategies to mark an embedded or adjoined clause. The basic strategy is to use non-finite and nominalised verb forms to mark the end of an embedded or adjoined clause. Some non-finite verbs that function adverbially, such as the conditional or causative form, express one particular concept such as conditionality or cause.

(33) *[pakal var-in] kavvai aṅcu-tum (aka 118.6)*  
day come-cnd rumour fear-npst 1pl  
‘If (you) come during the day, we will be afraid of the rumours.’

(34) *[mā mazai vīz-nt-ena] aruvi iyamp-um (kuru 42.2)*  
great rain fall-cnj caus waterfall roar-npst+adn  
‘Because a great rain fell, the waterfall is roaring.’

The infinitive, by contrast, expresses many semantic functions such as purpose, time, cause, circumstance or result, as in (35).

(35) *[mēṇi ... nalam tolai.y-a] ... tuyarum cey-t-ōṅ (aka 278.13–14)*  
body beauty lose-inf distress do-pst 3sm  
‘(He) gave (her) distress so that her body lost its beauty.’

Annamalai (1980) shows that all these semantic functions persist in Modern
Tamil so that the infinitive in -a evidences the continuity from the old to the modern language.

To conjoin two or more propositions with temporal or non-temporal ‘and’, Old Tamil eschews co-ordinate structures of two or more finite clauses. Instead, one or more non-finite clauses in the conjunctive are adjoined to a finite clause. Where the subjects are identical, the finite verb form governs the preceding conjunctive forms with respect to tense, mood and subject–verb agreement.

(36) nāt-añ ... nōy ta-ntu ... nalam koñ-t-añ-an (aiñk 278.4–5)
country-3sm suffering bring-cnj beauty take-pst-euph-3sm
‘The man of the country brings suffering and takes beauty away.’

(37) annai ... en mukam nōkk-i ... nak-ūu ... peyar-nt-ōł ...
mother my face look-at-cnj laugh-cnj depart-pst-3sf
‘(Her) mother looked at my face, laughed and went away.’

(añk 248.14–16)

Old Tamil has a particular form not mentioned so far, the finite conjunctive form. Called murreccam in traditional grammar, it is a formally finite verb (murru) that functions in a non-finite (eccam) capacity. The murreccam always takes the form of the positive or negative verb on which it depends and thus marks concord with the governing verb. In the following example, despite its finite form, marantañan functions as a non-finite verb, the conjunctive form marantu ‘forgetting’, and varies freely with it.

(38) nāt-añ mara-nt-añ-an ... en nī-ṭṭ-ōn. (aiñk 265.3–4)
country-3sm forget-pst-euph-3sm I-obl leave-pst-3sm
‘The man of the country forgot (me) and left me.’

A murreccam occasionally functions as a purposive infinitive.

(39) ira-kku vār-ēn. (pati 61.11)
beg-npst+ls come-neg-ls
‘I am not coming to beg.’

The murreccam is an instance of the widespread serial verb formation (Steever 1988) in the Dravidian languages, not a peculiarity of Old Tamil.

The adnominal form, traditionally called a relative participle, is used to embed a clause as the complement of a noun or noun phrase. Adnominal clauses include relative (40) and appositive clauses (41).

(40) [nirām pāy-nt-a] kañai ... (kali 57.14)
breast pierce-pst-adn arrow
‘the arrow which pierced (his) breast’
In relative clause formation the head NP governs a co-referential NP within the relative clause, triggering its deletion. Old Tamil relative clauses with such an NP gap allow certain morphological variations in the embedded predicate. A simple verb root may occur in place of the adnominal form (42) or, occasionally, a nominalised verb form in -al may take its place (43).

(42) [mañcai arai in] muṭṭai ... (kuṟu 38.1) peacock rock breed-vs egg
‘the egg which the peacock lays on the rock’

(43) [nirai cel-al] ... konmü ... (kuṟi 50) row wander-vn cloud
‘the clouds which wander in rows’

Old Tamil has another strategy for forming relative clauses, correlative clauses which are widely used in Indo-Aryan languages. As Ramasamy (1981) shows, the correlative strategy is used where a variety of constraints prohibit use of the adnominal strategy. It is thus an integral part of Tamil syntax. In correlative clauses a demonstrative head NP, marked by the distal deictic stem a- ‘that’, subordinates a relative clause that contains a finite predicate and a co-referential NP, marked by the interrogative stem e- or yā- ‘which’. The correlated NPs e-vazi ‘which place’ and a-vazi ‘that place’ in (44) mark the correlative construction. Note that the correlative strategy must be used here because the subordinate predicate ātavar ‘men’, as a predicate nominal, lacks the adnominal form, a verb form, used in the adnominal strategy.

(44) [e-vazi nall-avar ātavar] a-vazi nall-ai... (puṟa 183.3–4) which.place good-3plm men-3plm that.place good-2s
‘You (are) good in a place where the men are good.’
Lit.: ‘At which place men are the good ones, at that place you are good.’

In this correlative construction a finite clause is directly embedded under a head NP without any embedding device; later in Modern Tamil, a correlative clause must be embedded with a clitic such as =ō or =ē.

When a clause functions as a noun phrase within a higher clause, as in (45), it is nominalised, taking the form of a verbal noun.

(45) [kuvalai ... malar-tal] ari-tu. (aink 299.2–4) flower blossom-nom rare-3sn
‘It is rare for the kuvalai flower to blossom.’
Nominalised clauses may be inflected with various case markers; the dative in (46) expresses purpose.

(46) [puravi pann-ar-ku] virai-ти. (puра 304.3–4)
horse make.ready-vn-dat hurry-npst+2s
'(You) are hurrying to make the horses ready.'

The use of non-finite and nominalised verbs to form complex sentences has certain limitations. No clause with a predicate nominal can be so embedded because, as a noun form, it lacks verbal morphology, finite or non-finite. Nor can finite clauses be embedded for the purposes of direct discourse. Old Tamil uses another strategy to embed such clauses, complementising verb forms. The verbs en ‘say’ (DEDR 868), āku ‘become’ (DEDR 333), pōl ‘resemble’ (DEDR 4517) and, to a lesser extent, ōr ‘know’ (DEDR 1059) have the non-lexical function of marking complements. In this capacity these verbs can embed a finite clause. As a complementiser, en embeds the complement of cognitive verbs.

(47) [varai-nt-an-ai nī en-a] kēt-tu yān (aṅk 280.4)
marry-pst-euph-2s you say-inf hear-cnj I-nom
'I heard that you are marrying her.'

Not only does āku embed complements of cognitive verbs, in its conditional and nominalised forms, where the latter is inflected for the ablative, it embeds a finite clause as an adverbial clause.

(48) [kolli āram ā-tal-iṇ] am pukai tavaz-um ...
firewood sandalwood become-vn-abl beauty smoke spread-npst+3spl
'Because the firewood was sandalwood, a beautiful smoke spread.'

(pura 108.2–3)

The verb pōl marks an embedded finite clause as a hypothetical comparison.

(49) [aiyan-ai ēttu-v-ām pōl-a] ... pātu-v-ām ... (kali 43.5–7)
Murugan-acc praise-npst-1pl resemble-inf sing-npst-1pl
'(We) are singing as if praising Murugan.'

Less frequently, ōr ‘know’ appears in root form in relative or appositive clauses to embed a nominalised clause of the -atu type under a head noun.

(50) [nāṭ-aṇ ... varu-v-āt] ōr kālai. (kuru 252.2–3)
country-3sm come-npst-nom know time
'The time at which the man of the country comes.'

Finally, Old Tamil has the conjunctive verb cettu ‘thinking’, unattested in other
forms, which embeds a finite clause as in *turukal piṭi cettu* ‘thinking the rock (*turukal*) was a female elephant (*piṭi*)’ (*aink* 239.2). This form is cognate with the Old Kannada form *gettī* ‘thinking’ (Steever 1988: 27), which has a similar function.

Apart from complementising verbs, Old Tamil has complementising nouns that can embed a clause. In such instances the head noun, which combines with the adnominal form of the embedded verb, lacks a strict lexical function, having instead the grammatical function of a complementiser. Such a complementising noun may have a semantic function, temporal or conditional, echoing its original lexical meaning. The noun *kāḷ* ‘time’ in (51), for example, combines with an adnominal verb form to create a conditional rather than a temporal clause. Similarly, the noun *māṟu* ‘manner’ in (52) marks a clause with a causal rather than a circumstantial adverbial function.

(51)  
\[ nāṟ-an\ māṇṆ-v-ā.k\ kāḷ=ē \ldots (aka 292.15) \]  
country-3sm marry-neg-adn time=emp  
‘if the man of the country does not marry (her)’

(52)  
\[ verp-an\ va-nt-a\ mār=ē \ldots (aka 42.13) \]  
mountain-3sm come-pst-adn manner=emp  
‘because the man of the mountains came’

Co-ordination in Old Tamil, in the sense of conjoining two or more elements of the same category with ‘and’, is restricted to noun phrases and to non-finite and nominalised clauses. Adjectives and adverbs cannot be conjoined, neither can finite clauses. Where nouns are co-ordinated, they represent full noun phrases. The clitic *=um* is used in Old Tamil after each element of the conjunction, as illustrated by the conjoined object NPs in (53) and the conjoined infinitival clauses in (54).

(53)  
\[ nāṟ=um\ kunṟ=um\ orūṅku\ ī.y-um\ \ldots (pūrā 109.18) \]  
country=co hill=co also bestow-npst+-3spl  
‘He also bestows countries and hills.’

(54)  
\[ nin\ men\ tōḷ\ ēnkiẓ-a.v=um\ tiru\ nutal \]  
your body shoulder grow.thin-inf=co beauty forehead  
paca.pp-a.v=um \ldots (aink 230.3)  
get.pale-inf=co  
‘so that your soft shoulders grow thin and your beautiful forehead pale’

The co-ordinator *=um* is frequently deleted in Old Tamil, resulting in asyndetic parataxis. In the relative construction in (55), for example, the co-ordinate NPs are conjoined without benefit of *=um*.
Old Tamil possesses at least two syntactic rules that move a sentence element to the right of the sentence-final verb for emphasis: one is Scrambling, illustrated earlier in (31) and (32), which moves a sentence element over a finite verb; the other is Clefting which simultaneously moves a sentence over the sentence-final verb and nominalises that verb.

The transformation of Raising to Object Position, postulated for Tamil by Steever (1981), is already attested in Old Tamil. It raises the subject NP of an embedded clause into a higher clause, changing its case from nominative to accusative.

Old Tamil has at least two productive processes of noun derivation. The suffix -mai creates abstract nouns from verbs, adjectives and other nouns, e.g. il ‘not be’ > in-mai ‘non-existence’, aru ‘difficult’ > aru-mai ‘difficulty’ and än ‘male’ > ân-mai ‘manliness’. Rational nouns are derived from non-rational by means of third person suffixes, e.g. kâtal ‘love’ suffixes masculine ân ‘male lover’ and with feminine -i to form kâtal-ân ‘male lover’.

Nominal compounds in Old Tamil are distinct from noun phrases which, like compounds, may also consist only of lexical stems. Nominal compounds are defined in this context as the formation of lexemes whose meaning is not just the sum of the meaning of their constituents (Zvelebil 1967: 40, 103). A verb,
adjective or noun stem may combine with a noun stem to form a nominal compound: *uyar* 'be high' + *nilai* 'state' > *uyarnilai* 'world of gods', *kaṭu* 'wild' + *miṅ* 'fish' > *kaṭuminiṅ* 'shark', and *āṅ* 'male' + *tālai* 'head' > *āṅtālai* 'cock'.

Verb stems, consisting of native stems, form a closed set in Old Tamil. Middle Tamil admitted borrowed verb stems but the set is once again closed in Modern Tamil. As noted earlier, the causative of some verbs is idiosyncratic and must be listed in the lexicon. Lexical compound verbs consist of a noun or verb plus a verb stem. Certain verb stems, such as *uru* 'experience', are added to nouns to create compound verbs, e.g. *pētu* 'bewilderment' + *uru* > *pētuṟu* 'be bewildered'. There are also some verb–verb compounds where the second stem appears to have no function, adding nothing tangible to the meaning of the first stem, e.g. *tuyal* 'swing' + *vara* 'come' > *tuyal-vara* 'swing'.

### 3.6 Special Features

One prominent feature of Old Tamil is the frequent omission of morphological or syntactic material which marks semantic relations, such as case markers, coordinators, attributive markers, etc. This often gives rise to strings of uninflected words, mainly noun and verb stems, as discussed earlier. For example, the verb root may occasionally stand in place of any inflected verb form, be it finite, non-finite or nominalised. Its use in place of the adnominal form in relative clauses is illustrated in (42). The verb root *il* 'not be' in (58) functions as a finite verb that subcategorises a nominalised subject clause while the verb root *urai* 'stay' functions as a verbal noun in (59), specifically as the object of the conditional verb *nīt-in*.

(58) *väzkka... eli-tu āk-al il ...* (aka 208.8–9)
living easy-3sn be-nom be not
‘it is not (the case) that living is easy’

(59) *avan urai nīt-in ...* (aink 269.3)
that.place stay prolong-cnd
‘if he prolongs (his) staying in that place’

Because of this, in many instances the syntactic and semantic relations between words, phrases and clauses can only be determined by referring to commentaries of the texts which contain fully inflected paraphrases.

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