

8th NETamil Workshop, April 2017, CSMC Hamburg

Colophons, Prefaces, Satellite Stanzas

Paratexts are an ubiquitous feature in any manuscript culture, and in premodern South-India they are one of the primary means, in fact often the only one, for trying to follow up transmission history. The word “paratext” may be understood, in this context, as a textual element that mediates and mirrors the relationship between a textual artefact in a manuscript and its environment, that is, the people who conceived, produced and used it. Paratexts capture the threefold tie a manuscript has with time, namely, firstly, with the time anterior to its production, when the text it carries was composed, secondly, the period when the individual manuscript was copied, and, thirdly, its more or less long history of storage and use. The word can be used as a cover term for a huge number of subcategories that partly overlap with literary sub-genres, which can be arranged by function and by position within the layout of a manuscript.

For this workshop we plan to adopt the latter scheme which seems particularly suited to the format of a palm-leaf manuscript where additions most easily can be made at the beginning and at the end. We want pursue the discussion on colophons where evidence has already been brought forward to show that it does not make sense, not even in terms of language, to talk about Tamil colophons, Sanskrit colophons and so on, but that we are dealing with a category of South Indian colophons. Moreover we want to initiate a broader discussion about prefatory materials in general, and about prefaces in particular, called *pāyiram* and *patikam* in the Tamil case, the former more often associated with theoretical texts, the latter with literary ones. Prefaces hover on the thin edge between a paratext and a literary genre, as can be seen for instance from the fact that there are cases where commentaries include the preface in their discussion of the text. Prefaces have also received their share in the commentarial reflections on the elements of a treatise.

An even smaller, but important unit are the satellite stanzas, free-floating verses that can appear integrated into the prefatory material or the colophon, but that can also range even more free by simply preceding the beginning or following the end of a text in a manuscript. As has been shown by Wilden 2015a+b(forthcoming), they are of crucial importance for our understanding of the text tradition in terms of corpus organisation, text structuring and authorship. This time we want on the one hand to look at a further range of texts for which such stanzas have been transmitted, but on the other hand we want to compare the free-wheeling, anonymous type with traditions where a very similar type of verse has been codified and made part of the text transmission itself. One indication of such a process is whether a stanza has a named author or not. Cases in point are the Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition and the *Tirukuraḷ*, the one “classical” anthology to possess not only satellite stanzas but a whole satellite text, the *Tiruvalluvamālai*.