



Rituals of the Tantric Traditions of South India – the Text (Canon, Rule) versus the Practice*

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Abstract

The text concerns the Tantric traditions of India, especially the South Indian Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra. It addresses some issues connected with the relationship between canonical literature and actual religious practice as well as the reasons for doctrinal and ritualistic changes. Among these reasons were the activity of the great religious teachers and philosophers, but also the changing historical, social and economic situation of the community of followers and of the region in which the tradition was developing. Other reasons for these changes were the controversies as well as the rivalry of the groups representing different sects and priests' families active in the temples.

Słowa kluczowe: indyjskie tradycje tantryczne, literatura kanoniczna, religijne praktyki, zmiany i kontrowersje

Keywords: Tantric traditions of India, canonical literature, religious practice, changes and controversies

How do the traditions existing over a very long span of time refer to their canonical literature vis-à-vis actual religious practice? How do they adjust to differing religious, historical, social and economic situations? How do they deal with the more trivial problems and changes which result from interactions among different groups active within the religious communities and temples? I would like to explore these issues, basing my considerations on specific examples of particular religious traditions of India, namely Tantric ones.¹

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¹ The issue of specific features of South Asian religious traditions and their rituals has been discussed by some scholars in the field of Indology, and in that respect worth mentioning are for example the volumes edited by J. Timm (*Texts in Context. Traditional Hermeneutics in South India*, New York 1992), by

The Tantric traditions of South India, especially of Tamilnadu, which are mainly Śaivasiddhānta as well as Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa,² have over the course of their long history mostly referred to the vast body of religious and ritualistic literature, partially perceived as canonical. Nevertheless, they have also had to react to the problems resulting from the contemporary situation and new challenges. These new challenges were caused by new ideas connected with the appearance of new religious traditions and by new ideas within the old traditions themselves, but there were also many external and non-religious and non-doctrinal reasons. Indologists have already reflected on some of these issues, referring, for example, to the notions of canon and charisma, and pointing to the fact that charisma is embodied in charismatic personages. Stietencron writes, “Thus, while canon stands for permanence, charisma stands for innovation. This leads us directly into the dialectics of timelessness versus time-governed life, of transcendence versus worldly existence, of permanence versus change. They are opposing yet interacting principles that are constitutive for all religions and, indeed, for all human effort at creating and implementing order in a cosmos that is materially and biologically constituted and, therefore, equally liable to chaotic growth and decay. The canon, while attempting to preserve the essential, also fixes it in a particular historical expression: in the language of a certain region and time; in stories, examples, arguments and prescriptions that relate to that particular social and cultural context in which the charismatic founder of the movement or the redactors of the canon lived. The result is a snapshot that preserves for collective memory one moment out of many in cultural evolution.”³ Heinrich von Stietencron also draws attention to the very important role of commentaries, which are sometimes equally important as the canonical scriptures, or even become canons themselves.⁴

In the case of India, the specific features of the growth of religious and philosophical literature has to be considered. This developed through the growth of exegetical literature characteristic for its specific style and language, which made it possible to reconstruct the line of transmission of the texts and presented the opinions of subsequent generations of commentators. This specificity lies, for example, in recalling the opinions of the predecessors, both supporters as well as opponents of the commentator.⁵ Thanks to this procedure, it was possible to trace the development of the ideas

J. Gengnagel, U. Huesken and S. Raman (*Words and Deeds. Hindu and Buddhist Rituals in South Asia*, Wiesbaden 2005), and by Huesken and Neubert (*Negotiating Rites*, New York 2012), etc.

² These have been developing since the second half of the first millennium AD.

³ I mentioned this issue in my book, *Studia nad pañcaratrą*, cz. 2, *W poszukiwaniu tożsamości*, Kraków 2011 (p. 11), and in one of the footnotes (no. 9) I referred to the opinion of some scholars, among them Stietencron, and his essay entitled *Charisma and Canon: The Dynamics of Legitimization and Innovation in Indian Religions* [in:] *Charisma and Canon. Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*, V. Dalmia, A. Malinar, M. Christof (eds.), Oxford 2003, pp. 15–16.

⁴ Further (*Charisma and Canon...*, pp. 15–16) Stietencron writes, “It is here that charisma comes again. The original message must be translated, transformed and made meaningful for a changed society and altered circumstances. The commentary now becomes an exegetic tool of prime importance, so much so that it too requires charismatic legitimization. Often it becomes canonic scripture in its own right, as evident in India, for instance, in the various Vedānta traditions.”

⁵ See for example M. Czerniak-Drozdowicz, *Studia nad pañcaratrą. Tradycja i współczesność...*, chapter II.

as well as to identify the methods of argument used by a given commentator.⁶ Due to its specific exegetical tradition, Indian culture addresses its canonical literature in a specific way – while commenting on the canon, it introduces new ideas and even enlarges the canon by adding new texts. Exegesis was connected with the direct transmission from the teacher (*guru*) to the disciple in the framework of the traditional line of transmission (*saṃpradāya*) as well as succession of teachers (*guruparaṃparā*). Its specific procedures mentioned above made it possible to introduce quite radical changes within a canon. Even in the case of the Vedic literature, exegetical literature permitted many speculations.⁷

The specific exegetical tradition of India was also strengthened by the peculiarity of Sanskrit language. Its richness and ambiguity led to the very prolific development of commentaries which modified many elements of the philosophical and religious traditions.⁸

In this process, an important role is played by Brahmins, for whom the commentary stands for a tool for their re-interpreting of the doctrines. This effort was undertaken in order to relate the tradition to the changing world. It is the commentary which has the ability and authority to introduce innovation.⁹

⁶ The need for more substantial usage of the traditional Indian hermeneutical perspective appears more and more frequently in the works of indologists. An interesting contribution to the research on the Indian exegesis and hermeneutics is the texts collected in the volume *Texts in Context. Traditional Hermeneutics in South India* edited by Jeffrey R. Timm (New York 1992). In the Introduction (p. 5), Timm writes, “The most recent scholarship on scripture, coupled with J.Z. Smith’s urgings to listen to the voice of native exegetical traditions, has shaped each chapter in the present volume. In one manner or another, from the standpoint of varied interests and diverse methodological sensibilities, each author is committed to the view that traditional hermeneutical perspectives may no longer be ignored if something meaningful is to be said about sacred texts in the South Asian context. (...) In an important sense each chapter may be viewed as a collaboration with the native exegete, giving voice to our traditional counterparts who themselves engaged in a self-conscious reflection on the sacred words of their own text traditions.”

⁷ See for example W. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection. Explorations in Indian Thought*, Albany 1991, chapter *The Idea of the Veda and the Identity of Hinduism*, p. 3.

⁸ See for example M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, *O problemach przekładu indyjskich tekstów religijnych [Problems with translating the Indian religious texts]* [in:] *Oriental Languages in Translation, No 2, Second Cracow Conference May 20–21st, 2005*, B. Podolak, A. Zaborski, G. Zajac (eds.), Kraków 2005.

⁹ Christof writes in his essay entitled *The Legitimation of Textual Authority in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa (Charisma and Canon...)*, pp. 63–64: “Most traditional cultures have specialists whose task it is to interpret the canon and relate it to the changing world. In the Indian tradition, the prototype of these specialists is the brahmin. A central method of fulfilling his function is the writing of a commentary. The canonic commentary must relate the text to the world, mediate between the closure of a canon and the openness of reality – which it claims to interpret comprehensively. To put it differently, the canon is the result of an often arbitrary limitation whereas the commentary represents an effort to overcome this limitation by ingenuity on the part of an exegete, whose task it is to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that is known or exists (...). The commentary, in turn, serves as the legitimizing basis for innovation. Thus, the conservation of meaning – if it does not end in dogmatism – may lead to new interpretations and new meanings.”

See e.g. M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, *Studia nad pañcaratṛ. Część 2...*, chapter II – *A few Remarks about Indian Religious Literature and Its Exegesis [Kilka uwag o indyjskiej literaturze religijnej i jej egzegezie]*; and also M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, *Studia nad pañcaratṛ. Część 2...*, part II.

Apart from the commentaries, which address mostly theological, theoretical and doctrinal issues, many texts of more practical usage existed and still exist, namely different types of manuals called, for example, *paddhatis* or *prayogas*, in which more detailed descriptions of the ritualistic procedures were given. Appearing over a long span of time, they also document the changes in the ritualistic procedures.

In the case of the Pāñcarātra, one of the most important Tantric Vaishnava cults, which possibly has its roots in the North of India but flourishes especially in the South, several important factors had an impact on the further development of this tradition and influenced the relationship between scripture and actual practice. One of these factors was the need to prove Pāñcarātra's consistency with the brahmanical orthodoxy. Pāñcarātra therefore had to discuss the crucial theological points of its doctrine, explaining them in accordance with the main orthodox ideas. Apart from addressing these issues in the Pāñcarātrika texts themselves, namely in the canonical *saṃhitās*, Pāñcarātra found its exponents and supporters among the great religious teachers and philosophers active from around the 10th century AD, especially Yamunācārya, Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika. In modern times, the discussion was undertaken by the famous South Indian Śrīvaiṣṇava pundit, Uttamūr Virarāghavācārya.¹⁰ These authors tried to explain and prove that the Pāñcarātra is as authoritative as the unquestionably orthodox Smārta and Vedic traditions.

I have already referred to this issue, for example in my paper presented at the *World Sanskrit Conference* in New Delhi in 2012, when I talked about the concept of the *Ekāyanaveda* (*The Only Veda, The Veda of the One*). This notion is mentioned several times in the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrika sources as well as in the texts that undertake the problem of the authority of the Pāñcarātra tradition. It is the concept of the lost, authoritative Veda which was the source for the Pāñcarātra and its literature, *saṃhitās*. This concept was used to strengthen the position of the Pāñcarātra, especially where the objections formulated by the orthodox tradition are concerned. The discussion begun with the Śaṅkara's critique based on the statement of the Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtras*, expressing doubts over the status of the Pāñcarātra. Śaṅkara commented on four particular *sūtras*¹¹ and presented several objections concerning the relationship of the highest god and his forms. These objections were subsequently discussed and removed by later thinkers, especially by South Indian philosophers, Śrīvaiṣṇavācāryas, beginning from one of the first, Yāmunamuni (Yāmunācārya), who commented on this issue in the *Āgamaprāmānya* (*Authoritativeness of āgama [texts]*; 10th/11th c. AD). The subject was then continued by Rāmānuja in his *Śrībhāṣya* (12th c. AD), and then Venkaṭanātha in his *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* (*Defence of Pāñcarātra*; 13th/14th c. AD). Nevertheless, the critical opinion expressed by Bādarāyaṇa in his *Brahmasūtras* (usually dated to c. 200 BC–200 AD)¹² and then undertaken by

¹⁰ See e.g. M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, *Studia nad pañcaratṛq. Część 2...*, part I.

¹¹ 1) *Utpattayasambhavādhikaraṇa*, Tarka-pāda, *Vedāntasūtra* II.2.42–45: *utpattayasambhavāt*, 2) *na ca kartuḥ karaṇam* 3) *vijñānādibhāve vā tadapratishedhaḥ* and 4) *vipratishedhāt*. About this discussion see e.g. M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, *Studia nad pañcaratṛq. Część 2...*, part I.

¹² The date of the *Brahmasūtra* is of import inasmuch as the appearance of the reference to the Pāñcarātra attests that the tradition had already been known and worthy of the attention of Bādarāyaṇa.

Śaṅkara, prejudiced later attitudes towards Pāñcarātra. Even in modern times, the discussion was taken up by traditional pundits connected with the Śrīvaiṣṇava milieu as well as, in a way, by Indologists commenting on the discussion of Indian philosophers and religious teachers.¹³

The changes, as we said, were also connected with charismatic individuals. An important input into the theology, but also the ritual of the Pāñcarātrikas is connected with the activities of religious teachers and philosophers, among them the abovementioned Śrīvaiṣṇavācāryas. They built a theological system which continues to dominate among the Vaiṣṇavas of South India even today. Apart from that, they added to the development of the temple cult through their personal involvement in temple life – they not only visited several important Vaiṣṇava shrines, but were the priests and organisers of the religious communities based around particular temples. Such was the case of Rāmānuja, who spent many years in Śrīraṅgam, and Melkoṭe or Vedāntadeśika, active in Kāñcīpūram and in Śrīraṅgam.

The case of Rāmānuja is especially important, since it was he who reorganised the temple life and temple routine of many South Indian temples, introducing the Pāñcarātrika ritual as dominant. He was a great reformer of the temple life of the one of the biggest and most influential temples of India, the Śrī Raṅganātha temple in Śrīraṅgam. His reforms were described, for example, in the temple chronicle *Koīl Olugu*. Rāmānuja structured temple life by organising various groups of temple functionaries: priests, musicians, umbrella holders, fan and lamp holders, etc. He also classified the groups of Brahmins connected with the temple and described their rights and obligations there. The rules introduced by Rāmānuja in this particular temple created the point of reference for subsequent generations.¹⁴ As Jagannathan observes, “No other temple of Viṣṇu has an administrative system so complex and so meticulously attentive to the procedural details of the method of worship as has been in vogue there. The credit for it goes entirely to Rāmānuja.”¹⁵

Tradition has it that Rāmānuja was invited by another distinguished Śrī ācārya, Yāmunamuni, to take a pontifical seat in the Śrīraṅgam temple. Rāmānuja, known there under the name of Uḍayavar, from the very beginning started to reform the temple administration. Though he had to overcome the problems and dissatisfaction of the existing temple staff, he managed to reorganise temple life completely and, as Jagannathan writes, “It is no exaggeration to say that it could have taken thousand years perhaps for a legislative institution to accomplish through enactment of laws and regulations and proper implementation – whatever Rāmānuja, a single dynamic religious administrator had achieved within his own lifetime.”¹⁶

¹³ In all these discussions the notion of *Ekāyanavedaḥ* has been one of the most important ones, and in the 20th century it was undertaken in the work of the knowledgeable pundit Uttamūr Vīrarāghavācārya, presented in his text entitled *Ekāyanavedaḥ*, published in his volume entitled *Śrīpāñcarātrapāramyam* (U. Vīrarāghavacharya, *Śrīpāñcarātraparāmya*, L. Bhatta (ed.), Tirupati 1991).

¹⁴ S. Jagannathan, *Impact of Śrī Rāmānujācārya on Temple Worship*, Delhi 1994, especially the chapter *Temple Organisation by Rāmānuja, Namely the Four Temples – Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati, Melkoṭe and Kāñcīpūram*; also the *Nityagrantha* of Rāmānuja.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Apart from administration, Rāmānuja introduced the Pāñcarātra ritualistic scheme as obligatory, instead of previous Vaikhānasa rituals. In Srīraṅgam the temple ritual was then performed according to the prescripts of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, one of the crucial Pāñcarātrika texts. Rāmānuja also put in order and prescribed a specific system of daily rites for the individual Vaiṣṇava devotees in his work called the *Nityagrantha*.¹⁷

As for the temple rituals, it was Rāmānuja who introduced, not without objections, the recitation festival – *adhyayanotsava* – and in his time the recitation of the *Divyaprabandham*, a collection of Tamil hymns of Ālvārs, was introduced. At this time, the images of Nammālvār and other saints were established in the temples and the *gośālas* (cowsheds) for constant supply of milk for offerings were created on the temple premises. Rāmānuja also added to the temple organisation of another important South Indian Vaishnava temple – Varadarājā in Kāñcīpuram.¹⁸ Therefore, he is without doubt one of the most important figures in the history of the development of the temple cult of the Vaiṣṇavas in the South of India.

Apart from this field, namely the activity of great religious teachers and reformers, the other reason for modifications and adaptations was the mutual relationship between the canon, represented in the case of the Pāñcarātra by a vast body of texts called *saṃhitās*,¹⁹ and practice, which includes the way in which the canonical rules were practically applied to the ritual. This aspect is also connected with the changing religious, but also historical/political and economic, situation. Tantric traditions often had to adjust to the more orthodox milieu which resulted in a diminished role of purely Tantric rites, especially of the *kāmya* type, which were intentional rituals performed for the accomplishment of supernatural powers. The texts sometimes even abandon the portions describing such rites, or change the meaning of them, and such was probably the case of the *narasiṃhakalpa* described in the *Sātvatasāṃhitā*. The rite, which was probably originally connected with the accomplishment of the supernatural powers and was available for advanced devotees, with the passage of time was transformed into an element of the regular initiation.²⁰ This process of adjusting

¹⁷ See e.g. M. Rastelli, *Unaltered Ritual in Transformed Religion. The pūjā According to Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā 28 and the Nityagrantha* [in:] *Words and Deeds. Hindu and Buddhist Rituals in South Asia*, J. Gengnagel, U. Huesken, S. Raman (eds.), Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 115–152.

¹⁸ Some research on the ritualistic system of this temple as well as the way of negotiating and introducing ritualistic changes has been done by my colleague Ute Huesken; see e.g. U. Huesken, *Pavitrotsava. Rectifying Ritual Lapses* [in:] *Jaina-Itihāsa-Ratna. Festschrift für Gustav Roth zum 90. Geburtstag*, U. Huesken, P. Kieffer-Puelz, A. Peters (eds.), Indica et Tibetica 47, Marburg 2006, pp. 265–281 and U. Huesken, *Contested Ritual Property. Conflicts over Correct Ritual Procedures in a South Indian Viṣṇu Temple* [in:] *When Rituals Go Wrong. Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, U. Huesken (ed.), Leiden 2007, pp. 273–290.

¹⁹ Tradition speaks of more than 200 texts of this class. Apart from Smith's catalogue of 1978, the most recent catalogue is that of Sadhu Paramapurushdas: *Catalogue of Pañcarātra Saṃhitā*, Sadhu Paramapurushdas, Sadhu Shrutiprakashdas (eds.), Amdavad 2002.

²⁰ See e.g. E. Dębicka-Borek, *Ritual Worship of the mantra as depicted in the Sātvatasāṃhitā* [in:] „Cracow Indological Studies” 2013, no. 15, pp. 167–207 and *idem*, *To Borrow or not to Borrow? Some Remarks on vaibhaviyanarasiṃhakalpa of Sātvatasāṃhitā*, „Journal of Indian Philosophy” 2014, doi:10.1007/s10781-014-9248-1).

to more orthodox rules can be observed in the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātriḱa sources, which, with the passage of time, lost their Tantric flavour, at the same time reinforcing a devotional, *bhakti* element.²¹

The changes in the ritualistic procedures, and sometimes incoherence with the canonical sources, also resulted from the interactions and rivalry of different groups active within the temples. Examples of such interactions might be the Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai controversies, as well as the rivalry of the groups representing various priests' families.

The two sects within South Indian Vaiṣṇava tradition (Śrīvaiṣṇava, Vaikhānasa and Pāñcarātra), namely Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai, though referring to the same body of scripture, differentiate mostly with respect to their understanding of the attitude of the devotee towards god, which is described in two terms: *bhakti* and *prapatti*. The first term (*bhakti*) describes the devotional attitude, yet this implies the active engagement of the devotee in worshipping god and accomplishing his grace. Such an attitude, characteristic of the Vaṭakalai, is described as an analogy to the baby monkey, which has to cling firmly to his mother (*markata nyāya*). The other attitude was that with the dominant element of *prapatti*, namely total dedication to god, with a strong feeling of the devotee's own imperfection. It is characteristic of the Teṅkalai sect, and described as the analogy to the cat (*marjara nyāya*), which refers to the position of the kitten being always assisted and carried by its mother, despite its own efforts.

The predilection to the Tamil religious hymns of the Ālvārs, very emotional in their attitude towards god, and their more frequent usage in the ritual, differentiate Teṅkalais from Vaṭakalais, who have a predilection to Vedic texts and using mantras in the ritual; they both, however, refer to the same canonical Āgama texts. Nevertheless, between these two sects there is a long-lasting rivalry. Huesken describes some examples of such rivalry in the case of the Śrī Varādarāja temple in Kāñcīpuram. Referring to the rectifying rite – *pavitrotsava* – she writes about the dissonance between text and performance. Though the temple uses the *Pādmasaṃhitā* as the main scripture, the actual performance of some elements of the rite, for example the way the *pavitrās* (holy threads) are prepared, is different from what the scripture says. However, such deviations are possible only if done by ritual specialists.²² Huesken writes, “With regard to the ritual specialists it is safe to say that in many cases it is only the performer himself or herself who decides whether a ritual – or a part of it – is ‘correct’ or ‘distorted’. Instances of unsanctioned ‘deviations from the norm’ on the part of the performer can also be viewed as pointing to the core of the ritual specialists’ ritual competence: only they are in the position to ‘make the right mistakes’. It is largely through their legitimate deviation from the norm that their superior ritual authority is made apparent.”²³

²¹ See e.g. M. Czerniak-Drozdżowicz, *Pāñcarātra Scripture in the Process of Change. A Study of the Paramasaṃhitā*, Vienna 2003.

²² U. Huesken, *Pavitrotsava...*, p. 270.

²³ *Idem*, *Contested Ritual Property. Conflicts over Correct Ritual Procedures in a South Indian Viṣṇu Temple [in:] When Rituals Go Wrong. Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, U. Huesken (ed.), Leiden 2007, pp. 273–290, p. 272.

Huesken also speaks about additional Vedic recitations, not prescribed in the scripture, but giving an opportunity to appear in the ritual of the representatives of the Vaṭakalai community involved in the temple life. She closely observes the problem of the existence of the community of Teṅkalais in the temple dominated by the Vaṭakalais, and presents not only the problems of “deviations” and “failures” in the ritualistic procedures, but also the complicated net of “shares” (*paṅku*) and honours (*mariyātai*) connected with the redistribution of the temple property.²⁴

The description of the fascinating network of mutual relations of the two groups and the ways they try to solve the contentious, often ritualistic points which can be found in Huesken’s articles introduces us to the field of the internal situation within the temple community. The problems of organisation of the temples, distribution of the property and negotiations concerning shares and rights were also the subjects of works not only of indologists, but also sociologists and cultural anthropologists, for example Appadurai and Breckenridge.²⁵

Sometimes the only way to solve the conflicts within the temples is to submit cases to court. Also worth noticing is the fact that the South Indian temples are nowadays under the supervision of the government operating through the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, and that these cases concern the interests of many temple functionaries and families traditionally active in the temples for many centuries. Court cases connected with ritualistic issues are a not unusual element of the religious and temple life in South India. When the conflicts cannot be solved by the religious leaders – ācāryas – especially in modern times, they become regular court cases. Some examples are described by Ramaswamy,²⁶ who refers for example to several cases from Kāñcīpuram. While in the past it was often the ruler who decided on debatable cases, in the 19th century the British decided to introduce their rules and bureaucracy into temples, although this was only for about 20 years. The cases were then sent to the court and became subjects to the British judicial system.

One of the early court cases referred to by Ramaswamy is the Krishnaswami Tatacharyar and others versus Krishnamacharyar and others (1882). This concerns the right of a particular group of Brahmins active in the Śrīvaṣṇava community of the Varadarāja temple in Kāñcīpuram, namely Tatacharyas. This particular group claims the right to recite the hymns of Tamil saints, Ālvārs from time immemorial. This case also concerned the formulae which commence the recitation. However, it was not just the problem of depriving Tatacharyas, being Teṅkalais, of their hereditary right of recitation of the particular texts, but was also connected with a particular income that was a result of this office. Though the court, after several appeals, stated that it was not its role to interfere in religious tenets and to regulate religious ceremonies, it nevertheless ascribed to Tatacharyas the right they claimed and mandated

²⁴ U. Huesken, *Pavitrotsava...*, p. 270.

²⁵ A. Appadurai, *The Past as a Scarce Resource* [in:] *Temples, Kings and Peasants: Perceptions of South India's Past*, G.W. Spencer (ed.), Madras 1987, pp. 196–221, A. Appadurai, C. Breckenridge, *The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honor and Redistribution* [in:] “Contributions to Indian Sociology”, (n.s.) vol. 10/2, pp. 187–211.

²⁶ T.S. Ramaswamy, *Juridical Solutions for Temple Disputes. A Critical Analysis*, Chennai 2003.

Vaṭakalais not to interfere with Teṅkalais in the recital of the mantras and Tamil *Prabandham*.

There were, however, also court cases in which the representatives of the same family were rivals, and Ramaswamy gives the example of the 1912 case between two Tatacharya groups quarrelling about some particular hereditary rights. The solution of the court, following the demands of many representatives of the community of devotees connected with the Varadarāja temple, was to establish a board of supervision consisting of three people from different groups.

To conclude: Tantric traditions, for example those developing in the South of India, during their long history had to face problems arising from the mutual relationship of the canonical sources and their actual, practical application to religious life, especially to the ritualistic system. The traditions were subject to many changes documenting the changing situation in which they existed. The changes thus concern scriptures, but also the temple cult, which developed as the most typical element of South Indian religiosity. The management of the big religious institutions, such as South Indian temples, is the task joining purely religious and theological issues with the more practical needs of many individuals active in temple life. The religious needs, adjustment and allegiance to the theological ideas and canonical literature, had and still have to be harmonised with the needs of the changing culture and society. Smooth management, guaranteeing the proper functioning of the temples, on the one hand demands that the scriptures be followed, but on the other it requires that the obligations and rights of the priests, administrative functionaries and various kinds of devotees with different, hereditary roles and rights be dealt with carefully and acknowledged.

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