

TAMILTTAY – TAMIL

Tamiḷttāy was created by Shiva (sometimes with the aid of the goddess Earth, but at other times single-handedly), and delivered to the world (through the intervention of that paradigmatic Tamil god, Murugan, in some versions) by the mythical sage Agastya. From his abode in the Potiyam mountains (in the Western Ghats), Agastya adorned her with her very first “jewel,” the legendary grammar called Akattiyam. Subsequently, she matured as a child in the antediluvian academies of the Pandyan kingdom, which flourished under the benevolent patronage of Shiva himself. She slowly moved out of cosmic time into history as she came of age in the last of the academies in Madurai, proudly fostered by the “triumvirate” (mūvēntar), the famed Pandya, Chera, and Chola kings celebrated in the Canḱam poems.

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From then on, as an ever-virginal maiden, she enjoyed the patronage of various Tamil rulers. During this time, she was gifted with some more spectacular “ornaments” which adorn her body—the five great epic poems (paṇcakāviyam), the Tirukkuraḷ, the Tiruvācakam, and so on. This is, of course, a biography with no end, for, being a deity, she has no end.