

“திரு சுடலைமுத்து பழனியப்பன் சிறந்த ஆய்வாளர். வரலாற்றில், குறிப்பாகத் தமிழக வரலாற்றில் நிறைய ஈடுபாடுடையவர். இதைக் குறித்த பல புதிய செய்திகளை வெளிக்கொணர்ந்துள்ளார். இவர் இடைக்காலச் சோழர்களின் கடற்படை பற்றி எழுதியுள்ள கட்டுரை குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது. சிவப்பிராமணர் பற்றிய இந்த நூல் மேலும் ஒரு நல்ல ஆய்வாகும்.”

பேரா. எ. சுப்பராயலு,
முன்னாள் தொல்லியல் பேராசிரியர்,
தமிழ்ப் பல்கலைக்கழகம், தஞ்சாவூர்

“In this meticulous study of the inscriptional record, Tamil Śaiva texts, and Tamil history, Palaniappan sketches with new clarity the history of the Tamil Śaiva priesthood. Taking clues from the most authoritative scholarship in the field, Palaniappan shows rather conclusively that the prescriptions of the Śaiva Āgamas regarding priestly qualifications begin to be adopted on a wide basis in only about the 12th century, at least four hundred years after records record the establishment of formal Śaiva temples. The epigraphic and literary record, in fact, shows that the Śivabrāhmaṇas or Ādiśaivas, who now perform the public worship in most Śaiva temples in Tamil Nadu, seem to base their claims of authority on Āgamic texts they themselves by and large composed and edited. Before this, most commonly Vedic Brahmins “who knew the Vedas” presided over temple ritual, but the epigraphic record shows that many priests in earlier times also were from non-Brahman social groups that began to be labeled as Śūdra. This thorough study should be read by every student of Indian temple history and deserves to become a part of the judicial record wherever claims to temple priestly authority are adjudicated.”

James Ryan, Professor Emeritus,
The California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco,
and author of The Upanishads as They Are (forthcoming, 2026).

Dr. Sudalaimuthu Palaniappan is President of South Asia Research and Information Society in Dallas, Texas. Through his interdisciplinary research he has established several findings that have revised long-held scholarly notions about early Tamil religious and social history. For instance, he has shown that the original form of the Tamil word for a Vaiṣṇava saint was *ālvār* (ஆள்வார்) ‘lord’ and not *ālvār* (ஆழ்வார்) ‘one who is immersed’ as has been used for almost nine centuries. (Hence the female Vaiṣṇava saint was called *Āṇṭāl*.) Palaniappan has also established that the early Tamil society did not have any caste or *varṇa* system. Continuing his contributions, in this monograph he shows that the priestly history of Tamil Śiva temples has had a far more egalitarian past than anyone has imagined so far.



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Tamil Śiva Temples, Āgamas, and Śivabrāhmaṇas/Ādiśaivas

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The Kulaśēkharasvāmin Temple in Cōlamātēvi in Tiruppur District