

X. S. THANI NAYAGAM - FRANÇOIS GROS [Eds.]: *Compte-Rendu de la Troisième Conférence Internationale — Proceedings of the Third International Conference Seminar, Paris 1970*. Pondichéry: Institut français d'indologie 1973. 279, XIII p. (Publications de l'Institut français d'indologie. No 50.)

Tamil Studies flourish at the beginning of the last quarter of this century, and one of the most active centres of Tamil Studies is the Institut français d'indologie at Pondichéry whose fiftieth publication is here under review. When I had the honour and pleasure to act as one of the founding members of the International Association of Tamil Research at New Delhi in 1964, I might have shared with my colleagues a somewhat different vision of its activities than it actually developed; I probably hoped for an involvement in research which would be both more active and more austere, more strictly scholarly and vigorous but at the same time more energetic and coordinative. But there is at least one task which the Association has kept fulfilling: to convene regularly international conference-seminars of Tamil studies. The first, held in Kuala Lumpur in 1966, was a good, indeed a sparkling starting point; the second, held in Madras in 1968, was very grand, and very rich in all kinds of activities-presided by the late ARIÑAR AṆṇĀTURAI (the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu), and inaugurated by the president of India, Dr. ZAKIR HUSSAIN. The third conference, much less splendidous but very active and scholarly, was held in July 1970 in Paris. The fourth Conference had to be postponed till early 1973, and was held in Jaffna, Ceylon. Since Tamilology, and even Dravidology, are still sufficiently 'limited' and relatively 'small' subjects (in terms of participating scholars) it has some sense to hold such regular meetings, congresses or conferences, provided they are restricted to scholarly (and the necessary organisational) activities; let us therefore hope that further conferences will follow. The present 'compte-rendu' under the editorship of X. S. THANI NAYAGAM and FRANÇOIS GROS is a fair reflection of what the Third Conference in Paris was about. In its introductory portion it gives, in addition to the report, the programmes and the list of delegates, the five speeches of the inaugural session (J. FILLIOZAT, M.S. ADISESHIAH, M. KARUNANIDHI, K.A. MATHIALINGAM, A. SUBBIAH).

The first working session of the conference was devoted to archeology and epigraphy, and, quite naturally, dominated by a problem which was then very much alive and irresistibly urgent: the then recent attempts at reading

the Indus script as symbols of a Dravidian language. Two different protagonists of the Dravidian hypothesis, ASKO PARPOLA and IRAVATHAM MAHADEVAN, spoke of some partial problems or results of their 'decipherment' (MAHADEVAN discussed an additional technique to arrive at a linguistic interpretation of the inscriptions — viz. FORRER's observation of parallel phenomena — illustrating it with the two examples of the 'jar' symbol and the 'arrow' symbol, while PARPOLA discussed the methodology of his latest studies on the 'world view' of the Indus people). The present reviewer had the doubtful honour to offer a criticism of the views of PARPOLA and his colleagues, attacking them from the point of comparative Dravidian linguistics, in the presence, on the one hand, of Dravidianists and Sanskritists like EMENEAU and BURROW, and, on the other hand, exposed to the certainly not very friendly gaze of the right honourable chief minister of Tamil Nadu and some other Tamil dignitaries. It is of course redundant to review once again PARPOLA's contribution, and one's own critique of the recent decipherment-attempts. Let me add two things, and with that leave the matter at rest: first, my sole motivation in rather stubbornly refusing to accept with shouts of enthusiasm those recent attempts was that of scholarly objectivity and honesty; and, second, whatever may be the opinion prevalent in certain quarters, the Indus inscriptions have to this day withstood any attempt at decipherment, and, even in 1975, ten years after KNOROV and six years after PARPOLA, we cannot say, alas, who the Indus people were and what language(s) they spoke. We cannot ignore at least one other recent serious attempt at decipherment: that of J.V. KINNIER WILSON: *Indo Sumerian*. Oxford 1974, which seems to indicate once more that the Sumerian and the Indus scripts have something in common; and, if D.W. MCALPIN is on the right track (cf. the present reviewer's report in: JAOS 94 [1974], 384—5), then we should probably search for linguistic ties which would connect Dravidian with Elamite and possibly Uralian. In this light, WILSON's recent attempt becomes even more attractive.

R. NAGASWAMY's paper (pp. 56—71), informative in nature, reveals a number of recent striking discoveries in the field of Tamil archeology and epigraphy, and only too briefly evaluates some results reached in these disciplines.

It mentions excavations in prehistoric (is the succession of neolithic people by megalithic people at Payyampalli an over-all South Indian phenomenon?) and historic periods (a wharf of the 3-rd cent. B.C. and a Buddhist *vihāra* of the 4-th cent. A.D. uncovered at Kāvīripūmpaṭṭinam, a large number of inscribed potsherds of the 1-st cent. B.C.—2-nd cent. A.D. from Uraiyūr, urn-burials and inscribed potsherds of 1st cent. B.C.—2-nd cent. A.D. at Korkai, continuous occupation of Kāñci from almost the Megalithic period); these are among some of the more striking results of the labours conducted in this field. Of the other interesting topics mentioned in NAGASWAMY's paper one should notice in particular the C 14 dating for charcoal samples from Korkai which reveals the earliest human activity there as taken back as far as 785 B.C., which gives a firm datum for a megalithic habitation in Tamil India; the discovery of Irulappatti hero-stones dating back to the 4th—5th cent. A.D.¹; they are not only the earliest hero-stones with inscriptions noticed so far but also represent the earliest

¹ R. NAGASWAMY: *Irulappatti Hero Stone Inscription*. In: *The Hindu* 28,7 (1968).

portrait sculpture noticed; the discovery of the two layers of paintings on sculpture — the earliest going possibly back to the Pallava-period — in the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñci; beautiful pre-Mahendra period sculptures of dancers in various poses found in a little-known temple in Kāñci (p. 65); the characterisation of the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñci as the only surviving temple in India retaining all the deities in their positions as prescribed by the Āgamas (p. 63).

There are three papers under the head of 'Sangam Literature': V. I. SUBRAMONIAM's attempt at the dating of Sangam literature, a thought-provoking and controversial paper which dates the so-called Sangam anthologies between 180 B.C. and 290 A.D.; the late M. VARADARAJAN's (died 1974) short note on the *tūtu* (Skt. *dhūta*) type of 'apostrophes' in 'Sangam' texts, and R. PANNEERSELVAM's report on the computer-aided concordance to the 'Sangam' literature as prepared by the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. V. I. SUBRAMONIAM tries to devise a method "by which differences in the language of the [Sangam] works can be systematized for the purpose of serialization and to utilize them to infer the time depth". His 'serialization' and dating, arrived at by a rather attractive method, goes against most of the evidence offered by other methods; his conclusions disregard internal historical evidence pointing to different authors in the anthologies as belonging to different periods; he takes the anthologies as monolithic, undifferentiated wholes of one chronological level; this makes his absolute dates hardly acceptable, while the relative sequence of the anthologies is rather suggestive, and may in general be accepted.

The late Prof. VARADARAJAN deals with the possible development of 'messengers of love' in early Tamil poetry; there are, according to him, six 'apostrophes' in Sangam literature, two to the bee, one to the parrot, two to the crane, one to the crab, which personify the animals as love-messengers, and are very probably the earliest of this type in Indian literature: the archetype of the *dūta* genre?

Three papers were presented under 'Tamil and Sanskrit': a summary of Prof. FILLOZAT's conception of the 'peaceful coexistence' and intermixing of Sanskrit and Tamil cultures all through their joint history in the South of India (the two cultures being not in rivalry, and Sanskrit being freely and without any prejudice accepted by Tamilians) — a conception which might be questioned by some, but which is definitely more constructive than any other, developed under the impact of racial, linguistic, or communal prejudices. Whether it is in agreement with historical development remains still to be proved.

The second paper, by S. LIENHARD of Stockholm University, deals with some parallels between classical Tamil *akapporuḷ* poetry, and the *muktaka* poems in the *śṛṅgāraśā* composed in Sanskrit, Prākṛit, and Apabhraṃśa. A. MUTHUCCUMARU has dealt with the characters in *Civakacintāmaṇi*, and the indebtedness of its author to Sanskrit works.

The greatest number of papers is devoted to 'exterior relations of the Tamil countries' (session V). In a broad and very informative survey, which, however, lacks somewhat in depth and precision, Prof. T. P. MEENAKSHI-SUNDARAM has treated the relationship of Tamil to other cultures: he has traced the spread of the *bhakti* cult, of Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa*, he has dealt with mutual contacts between Malayalam and Tamil, Kannada and Tamil, and Telugu and Tamil literatures, and the spread of Tamil to Ceylon and the Far East. In a somewhat controversial paper, H. W. TAMBIAH describes the

evolution of Aryan laws as a result of the external relations of the Tamil country (160—79), whereas S. ARASARATNAM deals in a solid and well-documented paper with politics and society in Tamilnad between 1600—1800. More papers of this kind are certainly a great desideratum.

In an interesting, though somewhat superficial paper, HEINZ BECHERT discusses the cult of Skandakumāra in South India and Ceylon (199—206). Tamil studies and Mon-Khmer linguistics are briefly dealt with by P.N. JENNER (207—11).

Section VI, dedicated to "Tamil Society" contains three papers: on the study of contemporary Tamil groups in different parts of the world by X. S. THANI NAYAGAM (the paper contains an interesting discussion of the definition of the term "Tamil" — ethnical, linguistic, and cultural, and demographic statistics of Tamil speakers or groups of Tamil descent, as well as a list of important references); on the Tamil immigration in French Guyana by JEAN CHAIA; and on the Tamil society in Singapore between 1945—59 by R. RAMANI.

Finally, there is section VII which deals in three papers with modern literature: R. E. ASHER has traced some trends in contemporary poetry and prose, concluding that there is a vigorous modern literature in Tamil manifesting every literary form known in the West (237); N. D. SUNDARAVADIVELU offers a note on S. Bharati's (1882—1921) views on education; and V. M. GNANAPRAGASAM gives an interesting analysis of a few selected Tamil journals and magazines which play such an important role in Tamil society. As may be expected, the author of this paper concludes: "... the danger remains that these publishers and writers may forget their mission as preachers and prophets, in their effort to become popular and increase sales. In becoming only popular they may entertain the majority but may infuriate a minority which thinks and judges".

Concluding we may say that the publication fairly well reflects the spirit and purpose of the third international Tamil conference held in Paris in 1970: it was mainly a working session, supposed rather to outline problems in their manifold diversity, than to solve them in any depth and definiteness. For the care and clarity which characterise the volume as a printed account of the conference we must indeed be grateful to Father X. S. THANI NAYAGAM who collected the papers, and to Dr. FRANÇOIS GROS, who carried out the printing process in Pondichéry.

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