

*Why Write about Books that One Has Not Read  
Completely or Not Read in the Original? The Case  
of Beschi's 1742/43 Tamil-Latin Dictionary*

Jean-Luc Chevillard

**1. Dealing with non-English primary sources concerning Tamil**

The present article will present some primary evidence gathered through the exploration of two witnesses of a text that is rarely examined nowadays, mainly for two reasons/obstacles: (1) the first one, which has now been overcome, in principle, thanks to the ubiquity of the internet and to the existence of Archive.org, being the very small number of copies available, and (2) the second one being the fact that not many people can read Latin in the modern world, even when it would be useful to them for a better mastery of their field of study.

Before however examining that text, I shall first evoke other texts, on which researchers have worked in the last 60 years, trying to draw a few lessons from the way their efforts have been deployed and received. All these texts belong to a corpus which could be called “Grammatici Tamulici,”<sup>1</sup> and it is desirable that they be made available to modern researchers, in a suitable manner to be partly discussed here, and that the position and historical role of those texts in the development of Tamil studies, as an international

<sup>1</sup> See Chevillard 2017.

field, be clarified. More specifically, one can mention for instance, although there are also other important texts, the following three texts, all in Portuguese:

1. Proença's 1679 *Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significaçam Portuguesa* (VTCSP), published as a facsimile by Thani Nayagam in 1966.
2. Henrique Henriques (HH)'s *Arte*, concerning which important publications appeared thanks to Xavier Thani Nayagam (1954), Hans J. Vermeer (1982), and the team consisting of Jeanne Hein and V.S. Rajam (2013), who were respectively the discoverer, the editor, and the translators of that text, and to whom one should add E. Annamalai, who gave the necessary impulsion for the translation to see the light of day, as will be seen in (1).
3. Baltasar da Costa's *Arte Tamulica*, published in 2022 by Cristina Muru.

Elaborating on my terse description of item (2) in this list, which is a 16th-century draft Tamil grammar, I shall clarify that its manuscript was identified in Lisboa by Thani Nayagam in 1954, that a critical edition of the Portuguese-Tamil text was published in 1982 by Hans J. Vermeer, and that an English translation appeared in 2013 in the Harvard Oriental Series. Inside that 2013 publication, the second introduction, dated 2011, by Norvin Hein, which is found on pages iii–vii, contains a reported statement of evaluation, which has been reproduced below in (1). The content of that evaluation, by Professor E. Annamalai, then a visiting professor at Yale, comes after a narration that explains how the unpublished English translation of HH's grammar, which had been a manuscript since 1979, could have remained an unpublished manuscript in the library of Yale Divinity School, because the primary author of the translation, Jeanne Hein, who is also the author of the first introduction, dated 1978–1979, had been struck by Alzheimer disease:

- (1) Before turning the volume over, however, I asked Professor Annamalai, then a visiting professor at Yale, if he would kindly examine the volume of Henriques materials. He came, and leafed through the many pages with care, and

made a quiet report. It was momentous. The publication of the book at the present time would be quite possible. After a quarter of a century, it was clear that Vermeer's book had not fulfilled its purpose. Its failure did not lie in anything that Vermeer did, but in what he did not do. He had not faced the difficult job of translating the grammar. He had presented it in its original and left it to his readers to read it for themselves. What readers had been able to make of it was not much. The original grammar was not a book in which anyone could browse. The only persons who could possibly use the grammar were those remarkable persons, hardly existent in East or West, who could read both old Tamil and old Portuguese. (Norvin Hein, second introduction dated 2011, pp. vi–vii, in HOS-76, 2013)

Thanks to the positive evaluation given by E. Annamalai and reproduced in (1), a new impulsion was given to the stalled project, which was described in the first introduction, dated 1978–1979, by Jeanne Hein. This is why the second introduction, dated 2011, by Norvin Hein, is followed by a third introduction, dated 2012, by V.S. Rajam, whose energy allowed her to complete single-handedly, what had earlier been a joint task. It is of course not my purpose here to examine whether the 2013 English translation of HH's grammar by Hein and Rajam, in combination with the 1982 edition of the same text by Vermeer, has now finally allowed HH's grammar to reach an elusive audience of new readers. Trying to draw lessons from these episodes and from E. Annamalai's evaluation reproduced in (1), my task here will be, from the next section onward, to examine another text, which is a dictionary and not a grammar, and to try to imagine how this text could be made to reach an audience, or rather to reconnect with an audience, because there is no doubt that this text once was read, as shall become clear when we examine the textual evidence and the position of this text and its author in what one can call the graph of scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Chevillard (2019) for an earlier attempt at defining a scholarship graph, called UNIVERSUM.

## 2. Two witnesses of Beschi's 1742 (or 1743)<sup>3</sup> Tamil-Latin dictionary

The present section is devoted to a preliminary description of what seems to be two witnesses<sup>4</sup> of the same text, although there are significant differences between them. The first witness is the initial section of a book printed in 1882 in Trichinopoly. That book, donated along with many others by the late François Gros to the University of Toronto,<sup>5</sup> has been digitized, and is now available on archive.org.<sup>6</sup> Its title appears on the fifth page of that PDF as “*Vulgaris Tamulicae Linguae Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*,” and I shall refer to it as B-1882. A first rough description of its content is given inside the third large column of Table 1 (below). The second witness, which I shall refer to as B-1778, is a MS copy made in 1778 and preserved in Copenhagen. I have had access to it through a set of 363 digital photographs, with a few gaps and a few duplicates, which were kindly sent to me in April 2014 by Professor P. S. Ramanujam.<sup>7</sup> He had photographed the AsK 1450b Manuscript in the Danish National Archive (Rigsarkivet) while doing research for his 2021 book on Tranquebar.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of those photographs, it appears that the MS is a notebook, containing two subsets of numbered pages. The first group contains 8 pages, numbered by means of roman numerals, up to “VIII.” The second group contains 346 pages but makes only a sporadic use of numbering, by means of Arabic numerals. An interesting feature is that all the 34 pages which are multiples of 10 are numbered, although most of the other pages are unnumbered, with a few exceptions, such as the last page, which is numbered “348” but should have been numbered “346.” As for the date of the MS, we find at the bottom of the (unnumbered) logical page 337, an

<sup>3</sup> Gregory James (2000, 746–747) gives in his bibliography the date of 1742 for the *Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*, but Julien Vinson (1900, 26) argues that the final redaction of the dictionary can be dated to 1743.

<sup>4</sup> Other witnesses exist, as testified for instance by Gregory James's 1991 and 2000 books on Tamil lexicography but I have not yet had the possibility to examine them myself.

<sup>5</sup> See Chevillard (2024).

<sup>6</sup> <https://archive.org/details/dictionariumtamuoopcon>.

<sup>7</sup> Technical University of Denmark, emeritus.

<sup>8</sup> See Ramanujam (2021).

indication that the copy was completed on 22 July 1778. This is the page where the main list of entries ends, and we are informed about the total number of entries, said to be ca. 9,000 (“ad novem millia”), inside a group of lines where we read:

- (2a) FINIS // Primae Partis // In qua ad novem millia Tamulica // Vocabula latine explicantur // Finitum d: 22 Julii // 1778 (Copenhagen, Det danske Rigsarkiv, Archives of the Asiatic Company. no 1450c: Tamil-Latin dictionary, [logical] page 337)
- (2b) End of the first part, in which *circa* nine thousand Tamil words are explained by means of Latin. Finished copying on 22nd July 1778 (My translation)

This is however not the end of the MS, because a short supplementary list is found after the main list, taking up eight pages until we reach the final page. Table 1, which follows, compares the organizations of B-1778 and B-1882, and the second column will be used here for pointing out globally what is common to both witnesses, namely Component  $\alpha$  (Preface), Component  $\beta$  (Charts and abbreviations), Component  $\gamma$  (Dictionary entries), and Component  $\delta$  (appendix), even though the order may differ, as is seen for  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . To this can be added that the first column allows finer references to smaller individual components.

Rows	Content that is common to both witnesses is referred to by means of the Greek letters $\alpha$ , $\beta$ , $\gamma$ and $\delta$	B-1778 (8+346 pages)	B-1882 (906 pages including 252 pages without counterpart inside B-1778)
1			Title page
2	$\beta$		Alphabetical charts
3			Abbreviations list
4	$\alpha$	Preface	pp. I to VI
5	$\beta$	Alphabetical charts (p. VII)	pp. 1-16
6		Abbreviations list (p. VIII)	
7	$\gamma$	Entries starting with vowels	pp. 1-150 (not yet counted)
8		Entries starting with consonants	pp. 151-590 (not yet counted)
9	$\gamma^1$		Errata (1 page)

10	$\gamma^2$	(see section 3)		Addenda (pp. i–vii)
11	$\delta$	Appendix: Catalogue of items that are easily confusable by learners	pp. 339 to 346	pp. i–xviii
12				Supplementum (pp. 1–247)
13				Errata, vel omissa (pp. i–v)

**Table 1.** Comparing the content of B-1778 and B-1882 (state of the art).

As is seen on this chart, the 8+346 pages of B-1778 correspond to only a part of what is found inside B-1882, mostly because of the presence inside B-1882 of a large *Supplementum*, although there are also differences inside the content which is common to both witnesses. We shall examine those differences more in detail in the following sections.

### 3. Comparing extracts from the main list of entries in B-1778 and B-1882, and imagining their common prototype

We have seen inside the previous section, in (2a), that the number of items in the B-1778 main list of entries is said to be *ad novem millia* “approximately nine thousand.” I have performed so far a precise count only for the entries of B-1882, obtaining as a result the total count of 8,546, which obtains by adding the 971 entries starting with a vowel and the 7,575 entries starting with a consonant (see Table 1, row 7 and row 8). This count was obtained as a by-product of the preparation of a preliminary table of contents, in which figured for each of the two columns in each page of the  $\gamma$  component of B-1882 the headword of its first entry and the number of entries that it contains, in order to be able to easily verify which Tamil words are found in B-1882. A similar table, indicating first entries, is under preparation for B-1778 but does not yet contain the entries’ information count, because it is more complex to deal with a set of photographs of unnumbered handwritten pages than to deal with the scan of a printed book in which pages are

regularly numbered, and also because I have discovered that my set of photographs contains two gaps.<sup>9</sup>

As appears in Table 1, there are several differences between B-1778 and B-1882. Some of those differences are unimportant, such as the position of component  $\beta$  (i.e., alphabetical charts and list of abbreviations), which precedes component  $\alpha$  (i.e., the preface) in B-1778 (see rows 2 and 3 in Table 1) but follows it in B-1882 (see rows 5 and 6). Other differences are more significant, such as the one connected with the presence inside B-1882 of the *Addenda*, a component mentioned on row 10 of Table 1. That component, which takes up seven pages, numbered from i to vii, and printed on two columns per page, contains 54 entries in the Tamil alphabetical order. Among those 54 items, the seventh item, which is on the second page of the *Addenda* section, is sufficiently short to serve here as a concise illustration, and will now be reproduced in (3b), immediately preceded by item (3a), which is itself part of the main list of 8,546 entries (see table 1, row 7) of B-1882

- (3a) ஒலிசை. V. in fine. “see final section.” (B-1882, component  $\gamma$ , p. 144)
- (3b) ஒலிசை. In oris maritimis *munus*, quod pater, fratres aliique proximiores // sponsae consanguinei 4° nuptiarum die dant sponso. “In the maritime shore area, gift (*munus*) which the father, brothers and other close blood relatives of the bride (*sponsa*) give to the bridegroom (*sponsus*) on the fourth day of the marriage” (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. ii).

Since (3a) and (3b) are found in the same book, printed in 1882, where (3a) precedes (3b), it should be clear to the reader that entry (3a) contains a reference to entry (3b). We shall now move to the B-1778 MS and reproduce an item that is part of its main list of entries (component  $\gamma$ ).

- (3c) ஒலிசை. In oris maritimis *munus*, quod pater, fratres aliique proximiores // sponsae consanguinei quarto nuptiarum die dant sponso. (B-1778, component  $\gamma$ , (logical) page 75, Copenhagen MS, same translation as for [3b]).

<sup>9</sup> I currently do not have photographs for (logical) pages 48, 49, 116, and 117.

If we now try to imagine what the original shape of Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary was, on the basis of those two witnesses, we can for instance imagine that the original dictionary, possibly compiled in 1742 or 1743, did not contain the entry ஒலிசை, but that a supplementary list was progressively compiled, either by Beschi, or by those who copied his dictionary after his death. On that basis, it may have happened

- that those who made the 1772 copy that is preserved in Copenhagen decided to incorporate the supplementary entries inside the main text, as if they had always been there,
- that the editors of the text that was printed in 1882 had access to an early MS that they were reproducing in a faithful philological manner, limiting themselves to introducing a pointer to the additional entry in the main body in order to facilitate the word search for the readers.

We shall now examine, in (4a), (4b), and (4c), a more complex example, where what was put in the supplementary list was not an additional word but an additional meaning for a word already present, if the genesis scenario just sketched conforms to what happened.

- (4a) குடங்கை. *Brachium inflexum* veluti ad amplexum: item *pars interior* brachii correspondens cubito. V. in fine. [see (4c) for a translation] (B-1882, component γ, p. 204)
- (4b) குடங்கை. Item quantum v.g. paleæ, lignorum &c., sub uno brachio auferri potest. Tandem quidam ornatus in curru triumphali, et in eorum architectura. [see (4c) for a translation] (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. iii)
- (4c) குடங்கை. *Brachium inflexum* veluti ad amplexus. It. *pars interior* brachii correspondens cubito. It. *Quantum* paleae v.g. lignorum etc. sub uno brachii auferri potest. Tandem quidam ornatus in curru triumphali et in eorum architectura. “arm which is inflected, as if for embracing. ITEM interior part of the arm, which has the length of a cubit. ITEM as much straw or wood as one can carry under one arm. ITEM a certain ornament that is seen in triumph



chariots and in architecture.”<sup>10</sup> (B-1778, component  $\gamma$ , [logical] page 108, Copenhagen MS)

Before moving to the following section, I shall first state that I have verified that all the 54 items that are seen in the seven pages of the *Addenda* do have a counterpart in the  $\gamma$  component of B-1882, and that 46 of those counterparts contain an explicit reference, which is similar to the “V. in fine. ‘see final section’” seen in (3a) and (4a), although the wording may differ. For the remaining eight, there is no explicit link. This is the case for instance for the word *வியாழம்*, as seen below in (5a), (5b), and (5c).

- (5a) *வியாழம்*, *planeta Jupiter*. Hinc *வியாழக்கிழமை*, *dies Jovis*. [see 5c for a translation] (B-1882, component  $\gamma$ , p. 567)
- (5b) *வியாழம்*: cum autem Jupiter 12 fere annos in suo cursu insumat, ஒருவியாழ வட்டம் sunt 12 anni; et sic venit in publicis tabellis. [see (5c) for a translation] (B-1882, *Addenda*, p. vii)
- (5c) *வியாழம்*, *Planeta Jupiter*. Hinc *வியாழக்கிழமை*, *Dies Jovis*. Cum autem Jupiter 12 fere annos in suo cursu insumat, ஒருவியாழ வட்டம் sunt 12 anni. Et sic venit in publicis tabellis. “*வியாழம்*, the planet Jupiter. Thence *வியாழக்கிழமை*, Thursday [‘day of Jupiter’]. Since moreover Jupiter takes roughly twelve years for completing its revolution, [the expression] ஒருவியாழ வட்டம் ‘one Jupiter circle’ is/means 12 years. And it appears in this manner in public charts.”<sup>11</sup> (B-1778, component  $\gamma$ , [logical] page 324, Copenhagen MS)

<sup>10</sup> My translation is adapted from the one seen in the corresponding entry found BnF indien 215, which is a French version of Beschi’s Tamil-Latin dictionary. In the online version, the entry is on view 82 (which combines f79v and f80r in the physical MS), and is as follows: குடங்கை 1<sup>er</sup> bras courbé comme pour embrasser. 2<sup>e</sup> partie intérieure du bras, répondant à une coudée. 3<sup>e</sup> autant de paille, bois etc. qu’on peut emporter sous le bras. 4<sup>e</sup> certains ornements d’architecture et/ou d’un char de triomphe.

<sup>11</sup> My translation is adapted from the one seen in the corresponding entry found in BnF indien 215 (see previous footnote). In the online version, the entry is on view 197 (which combines fol. 194v and fol. 195r in the physical MS), and is as follows: “*வியாழம்* Jupiter, planète; *வியாழக்கிழமை* jeudi: ஒருவியாழ வட்டம், espace de douze ans (temps que dure la révolution de Jupiter).”

#### 4. Replacing B-1778 and B-1882 in their larger historical context

Although the group of three entries provided at the end of the previous section might appear a little repetitive, one of my criteria for choosing them, besides the fact that they are short and illustrate the absence of cross-reference between (5a) and (5b), was the fact these entries also allow us to see the gradual progress that westerners were making in acquiring local knowledge. This can also be shown by contrasting these three entries with the following two entries, which are taken from the 1679 VTCSP (*Vocabulário Tamulico com a Significação Portuguesa*), compiled in the 17th century by Antam de Proença.

- (6a) வி யா ல ம. O planeta Jupiter. “The planet Jupiter” (VTCSP, 436\_L\_o)
- (6b) வி யா ள க கி ள மை. Quinafeira. “Thursday” (VTCSP, 436\_L\_p)

The “progress” that I am referring to can be seen from two points of view:

- One concerns the field of scientific knowledge, in the field of astronomy, because the terminology explained in (5b) and in (5c), namely ஒருவியாழ வட்டம், is not visible in the VTCSP, where that item is not found.
- Another one concerns the dimension of standardization. This is first seen in (6a), where there is an obvious “mistake,” in the use of wrong type of l, namely ல (l). This is also seen in (6b), where the regional spelling வியாளக்கிளமை (*viyāḷakkilamai*), with two occurrences of ள (l), instead of the orthodox வியாழக்கிழமை (*viyāḷakkilamai*), seen in (5a) and (5c), with two occurrences of ழ (ḷ), betrays an insufficient command of what the traditional poets considered important.

Regarding that second point, it will not be out of place to allude here to some remarks made by Beschi in his dictionary, concerning the absence of distinction between the pronunciations of ழ and ள in Madurai. These remarks are found on pp. 586–587 in B-1882 and on logical page 335 inside B-1778. Beschi starts by mentioning one of the names given to ழ, in order to disambiguate it from the letter ள. That name is மகரழகரம் and alludes to the visual

resemblance between the shapes of  $\mu$  and  $\mathcal{M}$ . The object referred to being thus firmly grounded in the realm of visual perception, Beschi then ventures in an exposition of the severe inconvenience that results from the fact it is not possible in Madurai in his time to pronounce differently அளிக்கிறது *dare, seu custodire* “to give, or to take care of” and அழிக்கிறது *destruere* “to destroy,” and he says that there are 600 other examples of the same type (*sexcenta alia hujusmodi*).

##### 5. Evoking the $\alpha$ component of Beschi’s Tamil-Latin dictionary after encountering a Beschi citation by P. R. Subramanyam

This section will start by visiting a remark found in a 2006 article by P. R. Subramanyam, who is one of the fathers of modern Tamil lexicography, appearing as the chief editor for the dictionary team of the Cre-A dictionary (1992), in which E. Annamalai was the chairman.

- (7) . . . we find formalization of *centamīl* (standard Tamil) and *koṭuntamīl* (colloquial or spoken Tamil) in the writings of Fr. Beschi who brought out grammars for both. Emboldened by his writings on Tamil grammar, Beschi had definitive ideas in compiling dictionaries. He was not in favor of mixing up the two systems, a conviction that led him to take exception to the mix-up:

**“I have never been able to approve of a dictionary in which all the words of both dialects are mixed up together”**  
([Beschi] as quoted by James 2000, 118)

The criticism of Fr. Beschi was largely ignored by the missionaries of Tamil-English dictionaries who continued to draw words from both the sources . . . (Subramanian 2006, emphasis added by me [jlc])

The Beschi citation that is embedded in the P.R. Subramanian quotation is reproduced from Gregory James (2000), where we find the following larger citation:

- (8) Between these two dialects there is a much difference as . . . between Latin and Portuguese. Although there are many

words common to both Latin and Portuguese, no one would think of compiling a dictionary in which the words of both languages are combined. **I have never been able to approve of a dictionary in which all the words of both dialects are mixed up together.** Having already written a Dictionary and a Synonymy of the elevated dialect alone, which I explain via the ordinary, just as someone might use Portuguese to explain Latin words, the present work deals only with the ordinary dialect, and contains only those terms which are in use by everyone . . . in speech or in writing.<sup>144</sup> (Beschi, translated by James 2000, 118, emphasis added by me [jlc])

The text in which the sentence marked in bold in (7) and (8) is found is Beschi's preface to his *Dictionnaire Tamoul-Français*, of which there are copies both in the British Library and in the Paris BnF (Bibliothèque nationale de France). The immediate context for the Beschi quotation by Gregory James is the appraisal of the intellectual relationship between Beschi and his immediate predecessor, a French Jesuit, called "de Bourzès,"<sup>12</sup> who was also his superior in the hierarchy of the Jesuits. Gregory James writes that:

- (9) Beschi's main criticism of his superior was that the latter's process of compilation was apparently indiscriminating so that the product was inappropriate for its intended users. Beschi was perturbed over de Bourzès' juxtaposition of H and L Tamil in one compilation, and he gave his rationale for separating the two in his dictionaries, using the not quite parallel analogy of Latin and Portuguese, in the preface to his *Dictionnaire Tamoul-Français*. (James 2000, 117–118)

As should be clear to the reader, the statement that is at the center of our current attention is translated into English from French. The endnote reference of 144 at the end of (8) takes us to

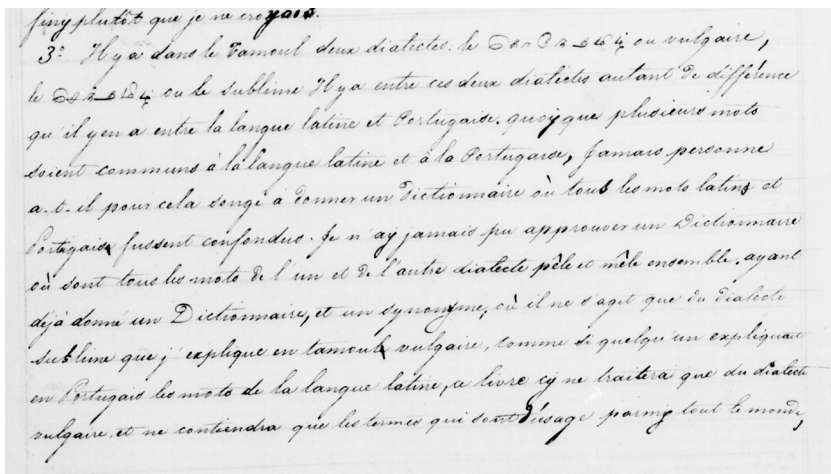
<sup>12</sup> As remarked in James (2000, 137n127), there is some variation in the spelling, frequently seen as Bourzès without diacritic, or as Bourges. I am following the spelling seen in Gros (1980). A detailed account of his career is in Vinson (1899).

another page inside James (2000) where we find the original citation which I shall now partly reproduce:

- (10a) Endnote 144. Original: “[...] Je n’ai jamais pû approuver un Dictionnaire, ou sont tous les mots de l’un et de l’autre Dialecte pele mele ensemble, aÿant deja donné un Dictionaire, et un Sÿnonime, ou il ne s’agit que du dialecte sublime, que j’explique en Tamoul vulgaire, comme si quelqu’un expliquoit en portugais les mots de la langue Latine, ce livre ne traitera que du Dialecte vulgaire et ne contiendra que les termes, qui sont d’usage parmi tout le monde, soit qu’ils parlent, soit qu’ils Ecrivent.” (MS Or. 1308, BL, London, f. 2) (Beschi, cited by James 2000, 139)

A modern native speaker of French will notice the particular spelling. James strives of course to be faithful to the spelling seen in the British Library (BL) manuscript. When examining the same passage in the BnF copy of that text, we see a slightly different spelling, as appears in (10b), below:

- (10b) (Figure 1) BnF, indien 215, view 5<sup>13</sup>



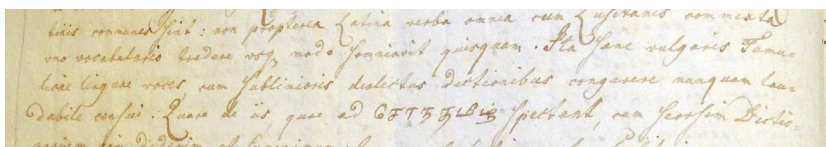
<sup>13</sup> <https://gallica.bnf.fr/iiif/ark:/12148/btv1b100915980/f5/full/full/o/native.jpg>.

After this long digression, we must now return to the general topic of this article, which has been centered on the text that I refer to as Beschi's Tamil-Latin dictionary (*Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum*) and that has been so far introduced through a comparison between two witnesses, namely B-1778 (Copenhagen) and B-1882 (Toronto, Gros donation). The statement by Beschi, which we have seen in English translation in (7) and in the French "original" in (10a) and (10b), was most probably originally made in Latin. This seems to be Julien Vinson's opinion.<sup>14</sup> This is also what my intuition tells me, on the basis of a number of punctual comparisons that I have made between entries inside BnF indien 215,<sup>15</sup> on the one hand, and entries inside B-1778 and B-1882 on the other hand. This would mean that the preface to the 1744 Tamil-French dictionary is a French translation of the preface to the 1742 (or 1743) Tamil-Latin dictionary. If this is the case, the real (Latin) original for the French "original" that is translated into English in (7) and in (8), is the following Latin sentence, which is found identically inside the  $\alpha$  components of B-1778 and B-1882, if we make use of the notations defined inside Table 1.

(11a) Ita fane vulgaris Tamulicae linguae voces cum sublimioris dialectus dictionibus congerere nunquam laudabile cenfui.

(B-1778, Ad Lectorem, p. 2) (B-1882, Ad Lectorem)

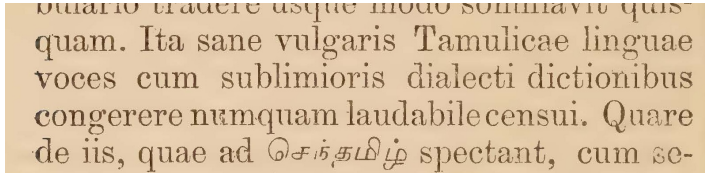
(11b) (Figure 2) Extract from B-1778 ( $\alpha$  component, p. 2, extract)



<sup>14</sup> See also Julien Vinson's remark concerning Beschi's "dictionnaires tamoul-français et français-tamoul" in RLPC\_33, p. 31, where he writes: "Il est probable que ces ouvrages n'ont pas été proprement faits par Beschi lui-même, mais composés peut-être à Pondichéry, d'après son dictionnaire tamoul-latin et son dictionnaire portugais-latin-tamoul."

<sup>15</sup> *Dictionnaire tamoul-français, pour expliquer le tamoul vulgaire, composé par le R.P. Constat Joseph Beschi, l'an 1744.*

(11c) (Figure 3) Extract from B-1882 (α component, p. 4, extract)



quarum tradere usque modo somnavit quis-  
quam. Ita sane vulgaris Tamulicae linguae  
voces cum sublimioris dialecti dictionibus  
congerere numquam laudabile censui. Quare  
de iis, quae ad செந்தமிழ் spectant, cum se-

## 6. Which variety of Tamil does Beschi's dictionary deal with?

It was my original intention to explain here briefly, on the basis of a few well-chosen examples taken from B-1778 and B-1882, that Beschi does not strictly adhere to the principle that he has enunciated in (11a) and for which P. R. Subramanyam lauds him in (7). Nevertheless, Beschi had the explicitly stated good intention of maintaining the separation between what he calls two dialects, while making clear by his analogy with the difference between Latin and Portuguese, that he rather somehow would prefer to call the two dialects distinct languages.

Space limitation however does not permit me to prove here what I have just said concerning the incomplete success that Beschi obtains in his attempt to limit his dictionary to what he calls “Vulgaris Tamulica Lingua,” the main reason being of course that he is fascinated by செந்தமிழ், as is clear at every page.<sup>16</sup> The only efficient way, in any case, for really proving something concerning a book that one has not read completely (respectively not read in the original) is to read it completely (respectively to master the language in which it is written) and to turn it into a database, to be made available to future generations. If one makes that effort—and I shall try—one will hopefully see the future appearance of “those remarkable persons, hardly existent in East or West” that Professor E. Annamalai was evoking in the quiet but momentous evaluation mentioned in (1).

<sup>16</sup> More information on Beschi's deep immersion in the world of செந்தமிழ் “Poetical Tamil” can be found in Ebeling and Trento (2018), as well as in Trento and Chevillard (2025, forthcoming).



## Bibliography

### Manuscript Sources

- BnF indien 215, Tamil-French Dictionary, by Costanzo Beschi, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France.
- B-1778: MS AsK 1450b, Tamil-Latin dictionary, by Costanzo Beschi, Dated 1778, Rigsarkivet [Danish National Archive], Copenhagen, Denmark.

### Printed Books

- Annamalai, E. 2011. *Social dimensions of Modern Tamil*. Chennai: Cre-A.
- B-1882: Beschi, Constantius Joseph. [1742/1743] 1882. *Dictionarium Tamulico-Latinum additis in præfatione aliquot regulis necessario prælegendis*. [Tamil-Latin Dictionary, with a preface in which there are several rules one needs to read beforehand]. Trichinopoly: South India Times Press.
- Chevillard, Jean-Luc. 2019. "L'amour des langues enchâssées." In Valentina Bisconti, Anamaria Curea, and Rossana De Angelis (eds.), *Héritages, réceptions, écoles en sciences du langage: avant et après Saussure [volume d'Hommage à Christian Puech]*, 59–68. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle.
- Chevillard, Jean-Luc. 2017. "How Tamil Was Described Once Again: Towards an XML-encoding of the *Grammatici Tamulici*." *Histoire Epistémologie Langage* 39 (2): 103–127.
- Chevillard, Jean-Luc. 2024. "François Gros (1933-2021)." *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 109: 11–14.
- Ebeling, Sascha, and Margherita Trento. 2018. "From Jesuit Missionary to Tamil Pulavar. Costanzo Gioseffo Beschi SJ (1680–1747), the 'Great Heroic Sage.'" In Tiziana Leucci et al. (eds.), *L'Inde et l'Italie: Rencontres intellectuelles, politiques et artistiques*, 53–89. Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- Gros, François. 1980. "Review of A. Dhamotharan, *Tamil Dictionaries: A Bibliography* (1978)." *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 67: 346–358.
- Hein, Jeanne, and V. S. Rajam. 2013. *The Earliest Missionary Grammar of Tamil. Fr. Henriques' Arte da Lingua Malabar: Translation, History and Analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- James, Gregory. 1991 *Tamil Lexicography*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. Reprint, 2017, Lexicographica, Series Maior, De Gruyter.
- James, Gregory. 2000. *Colporul. A History of Tamil Dictionaries*. Chennai: Cre-A.
- Muru, Cristina. 2022. *The Linguistic and Historical Contribution of the Arte Tamulica by Baltasar da Costa, S.J. (c. 1610–1673). Annotated and commented Portuguese transcription and English translation from Portuguese and Tamil by Cristina Muru*. Centro de Estudos em Letras / Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro.
- Proença, Antam (de). 1679. *Vocabulário Tamulico com a Significação Portuguesa* (VTCSP). [See Thani Nayagam 1966]. [The original is available online on the Vatican Library web site at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Borg.ind.12](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.ind.12)].



- Ramanujam, P.S., 2021. *Unheard Voices. A Tranquebarian Stroll*. University Press of Southern Denmark.
- Subramanian, P. R. 2006. "Tamil Lexicography Past and Present." In M. Kannan and Carlos Mena (eds.), *Negotiations with the Past: Classical Tamil in Contemporary Tamil*, 269–284. Pondicherry: IFP and Berkeley: Tamil Chair, University of California.
- Thani Nayagam, Xavier. 1954. "Tamil Manuscripts in European Libraries." *Tamil Culture* 3: 219–228.
- Thani Nayagam, Xavier (ed.). 1966. *Antão De Proença's Tamil-Portuguese Dictionary A.D. 1679, Prepared for publication by —*. Kuala Lumpur: Department of Indian Studies, University of Malaya. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Trento, Margherita, and Jean-Luc Chevillard. (Forthcoming in 2025). "Fishing for Words with Beschi in Tamil Traditional Poetical Vocabularies." In Eva Wilden and Emmanuel Francis (eds.), *South-Indian Manuscripts in Hamburg and Paris: Paratexts and Provenance*, University of Hamburg.
- Vermeer, Hans J. 1982. *The First European Tamil Grammar. A Critical Edition*. [English version by Angelika Morath]. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag.
- Vinson, Julien. 1899. "Notice sur quelques missionnaires jésuites qui ont écrit en tamoul et sur le tamoul au dernier siècle." *Revue de Linguistique et de Philologie Comparée* 32: 101–146.
- Vinson, Julien. 1900. "Notice sur quelques missionnaires jésuites qui ont écrit en tamoul et sur le tamoul au dernier siècle (suite)." *Revue de Linguistique et de Philologie Comparée* 33: 1–48.
- VTCSP (= *Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significação Portuguesa*). See Proença 1679.



## For the Love of Tamil

Margherita Trento, Constantine V. Nakassis, Sascha Ebeling,  
Navaneethakrishnan Govindarajan

### ► To cite this version:

Margherita Trento, Constantine V. Nakassis, Sascha Ebeling, Navaneethakrishnan Govindarajan (Dir.). For the Love of Tamil. UniorPress. , 2025, Series Minor, 978-88-6719-338-7. 10.6093/978-88-6719-338-7 . hal-05297836

**HAL Id: hal-05297836**

**<https://hal.science/hal-05297836v1>**

Submitted on 22 Oct 2025

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE  
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

*Series Minor*  
CVIII

ISMEO - ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE  
DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE

*Serie Orientale Roma*  
n.s. 48

## **For the Love of Tamil:**

Essays in Honor of E. Annamalai

a cura di  
Margherita Trento, Constantine V. Nakassis  
N. Govindarajan, and Sascha Ebeling



Napoli  
2025

**For the Love of Tamil:**  
Essays in Honor of E. Annamalai

UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE  
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

*Series Minor CVIII*

*Direttore*

Francesco SFERRA

*Comitato di redazione*

Riccardo CONTINI, Martin ORWIN, Junichi OUE,  
Roberto TOTTOLI, Giovanni VITIELLO

*Comitato scientifico*

Anne BAYARD-SAKAI (INALCO), Stanisław BAZYLIŃSKI (Facoltà teologica  
S. Bonaventura, Roma), Henrietta HARRISON (University of Oxford),  
Harunaga ISAACSON (Universität Hamburg), Barbara PIZZICONI (SOAS, University  
of London), Lucas VAN ROMPAY (Duke University), Raffaele TORELLA (Sapienza,  
Università di Roma), Judith T. ZEITLIN (The University of Chicago)

ISMEO - ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE  
DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE

*Serie Orientale Roma n.s. 48*

*Editor*

Adriano V. ROSSI

*Scientific Board*

Timothy H. BARRETT (East Asian History, School of Oriental and African  
Studies, London), Alessandro BAUSI (Sapienza, Università di Roma),  
Peter KORNICKI (East Asian Studies, Cambridge University),  
Daniel POTTS (Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and History,  
Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University)

UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI L'ORIENTALE  
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

*Series Minor*  
CVIII

ISMEO - ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE  
DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE

*Serie Orientale Roma*  
n.s. 48

**For the Love of Tamil:**  
Essays in Honor of E. Annamalai

a cura di  
Margherita Trento, Constantine V. Nakassis  
N. Govindarajan, and Sascha Ebeling



Napoli  
2025

*This volume has been conceived,  
edited and printed with the support of*

- Centre d'études sud-asiatiques  
et himalayennes (CESAH, CNRS/EHESS), Paris
- The Committee on Southern Asian Studies (COSAS),  
University of Chicago
- Dipartimento Asia, Africa, Mediterraneo,  
L'Orientale University of Naples
- "Digital Tools and Language Resources for Writing the History of  
South Asia" (project led by Florinda De Simini at L'Orientale Uni-  
versity of Naples, financed by the Ministero dell'Università e della  
Ricerca under the 'Fare ricerca' financing scheme 2020-2025)
- ISMEO - Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e  
l'Oriente, Rome. Progetto MUR "Storia, lingue e culture dei paesi  
asiatici e africani: ricerca scientifica, promozione e divulgazione"



UniorPress

ISSN 1824-6109

ISBN 978-88-6719-338-7

© Università di Napoli L'Orientale  
[www.unior.it](http://www.unior.it)

Distributed by:  
Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo  
e-mail: [daam@unior.it](mailto:daam@unior.it)

## Table of Contents

### Introduction: For the Love of Tamil

MARGHERITA TRENTO and CONSTANTINE V. NAKASSIS Bibliography of E. Annamalai's works .....	9
---	---

### Part I. Literature, Language Encounters, and Poetic Form

DAVID SHULMAN "A Tall Mountain Singing Fine Words": Aracakecari's <i>Irakuvammicam</i> .....	33
GEORGE L. HART The Story of Pāri .....	53
JACKSON CYRIL How to Read a Classic? The <i>Tirukkural</i> and Various Ways of Reading the Text in Medieval Tamil Country .....	67
TALIA ARIAV The <i>Mohinīvilāsa Kuravañci</i> : Performed Hybridity from Early Maratha Thanjavur .....	85
N. GOVINDARAJAN Poems of Protest by a Tamil Dalit Woman: Editing and Translating <i>Pāyccalūr patikam</i> .....	113
JESSE PRUITT A Preface to Purism: Pāmpaṇ Kumarakurutāca Cuvāmikal's <i>Cēntaṇ Centamīl</i> .....	133
VICTOR B. D'AVELLA Defining Poetry in the <i>Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram</i> .....	157

### Part II. Linguistics, Grammar, and the Social Life of Language

EVA WILDEN Class-Changing Verbs in Classical Tamil Literature: A First Exploration .....	193
SANFORD B. STEEVER Complement Adjectival Clauses in Tamil: A Construction, an Analysis, and a Warning .....	219
PROBAL DASGUPTA Content Poverty and Complementizer Omission in Bangla .....	249



## Table of Contents

K. RANGAN	
Aspects of Pragmatics in <i>Tolkāppiyam: Valuvamaiti</i> as Logically Deviant but Appropriate to Social Contexts .....	273
VASU RENGANATHAN	
The Phenomenon of Lenition and the Evolution of High and Low Varieties of Diglossia in Tamil .....	297
RAMA KANT AGNIHOTRI	
Linguistic Ecology of India .....	315
<b>Part III. Culture, History, and Social Meaning</b>	
JEAN-LUC CHEVILLARD	
Why Write about Books that One Has Not Read Completely or Not Read in the Original? The Case of Beschi's 1742/43 Tamil-Latin Dictionary .....	339
CRISTINA MURU	
Vanishing Life Aspects among the Paniya in the Nilgiris .....	357
SWARNAVEL ESWARAN and CONSTANTINE V. NAKASSIS	
Doubled Meaning .....	387
SASCHA EBELING	
The Scandal of the Devadasi in Nineteenth-Century Tamil Theater and Early Tamil Cinema: Caitapuram Kacivicuvanata Mutaliyar's drama <i>Tampacari vilacam</i> .....	415
JUSTIN W. HENRY	
Tamil Literature and Historical Imagination in Sinhala Translation .....	439
MARGHERITA TRENTO	
Early Modern Tamil Prose: A Note on Some Manuscripts of the Tiruvāṇṇatūrai Ātīṇam .....	455
WHITNEY COX	
Bricks from a Tamil Pagoda .....	479
<b>Part IV. Afterwords</b>	
DENNIS B. MCGILVRAY	
From Chicago to Sri Lanka: How I Tackled Tamil in the Field .....	507
ROBERT PHILLIPSON	
A Collegial Tribute to Annamalai .....	517
MARGHERITA TRENTO	
For a Tamil Teacher .....	523
Index .....	527





E. Annamalai and his life-companion Nageswari (1940-2025) stand in front of a map of the world they traveled together.

