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EARLY TAMIL CULTURAL INFLUENCES
IN
SOUTH EAST ASIA

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S. J. Gunasegaram, M.A. (Lond.)
Member, Tamil Cultural Society

WITH A PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR
and

- Appendix I — THE TAMIL CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD'S CIVILIZATION
- Appendix II — RECENT ARCHÆOLOGICAL FINDS IN CEYLON

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SOUTH EAST ASIA

by

S. J. Gunasegaram, M.A. (Lond.)

DECEMBER, 1957.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR	III
EARLY TAMIL CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA	1
BIBLIOGRAPHY	19
APPENDIX I—THE TAMIL CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD'S CIVILIZATION	21
APPENDIX II—RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN CEYLON	23

PREFACE

The subject-matter forming this brochure was originally delivered as a lecture under the auspices of the Tamil Cultural Society, Colombo. Though there are many who have a vague idea of the spread of early South Indian cultural contacts with the countries known as South East Asia—Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Malaya and the Islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Bali, Celebes, the Philippines—few have had the opportunity of studying in greater detail the early commercial and cultural activities of the Dravidian peoples, particularly of the Tamils in these far flung regions.

At the All-India Oriental Conference, 1955, held at Annamalainagar, presided over by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Mr. T. P. Meenakshisundaram Pillay, emphasised the fact that—

“The contact with the East, which developed into a cultural empire of a Greater India, has been studied with the help of the inscriptions of the Pallava and Chola period. There are Tamil inscriptions in those distant places.”

Islamic and European penetration into this area was comparatively late. The Indians, the Dravidian merchants and adventurers from the Tamil and Andhra countries mainly, have had contacts of a peaceful nature during a period extending nearly a thousand years before the Christian era. The widespread cults of Siva and Vishnu and the teachings of the Great Buddha were carried to these distant lands for the first time through the maritime enterprise of these ancient sea-faring peoples. For the researches done in connection with these movements we are indebted to European scholars, chiefly French and Dutch. The quotations from, and references to, the works of Lajonquiere, M. Coedes, Reginald Le May and Philippe Stern appearing in the body of this lecture, will to some extent indicate the interest taken by these foreign scholars. In more recent times H. G. Quaritch Wales in his books, ‘The Road to Angkor’ and ‘The Making of Greater India,’ has shed new light on this subject.

My interest in this subject was first roused by the allusions made in Jawaharlal Nehru's, ‘World History’, in which he pays a handsome tribute to the peoples of South India, in particular to the Tamils, in the building up of Greater India. Nilakanta Sastri in his, ‘History of South India,’ and in the smaller but fascinating book, ‘South Indian Influences in South East Asia,’

has given valuable summaries of the views of scholars who have been engaged in the task of studying the Culture, Art, and Architecture, and commented on many of the early inscriptions found in these regions. My debt to him has been great as the contents of the lecture will reveal.

It will be of interest to note what Quaritch Wales states in his work, 'The Making of Greater India':

"Indian scholars seem often to have tended to over-emphasise the overseas influence of their own part of the country. But M. Coedes in summing up the evidence concludes that, 'all regions of India contributed more or less to this expansion, and it is the South that had the greatest part.' I accept the conclusion unhesitatingly for the Southern half of Greater India."

The contribution made by the Dravidian peoples to the Art, Architecture, Religion, Literature and Administration of our own Island has not yet been fully and correctly estimated by the historians of Ceylon. Prejudice, racial and religious, and what appears to be an ineradicable obsession of a 'superior' Aryan Origin pervading the minds of a large section of our people, combined with their ignorance of their own language as well as those of the Tamils, Telugus, Malayalis and Kanarese (the nearest neighbours of Ceylon who through the centuries have had uninterrupted association with the administration and cultural trends, and the Royal dynasties which held sway over this island), have blinded us to an objective and impartial assessment of these influences.

Ceylon is now at the crossroads. The era of European domination of the island has ceased. A fresh and balanced interpretation of those factors which had helped to shape the culture of this Island will have to be made, if Ceylon is to rediscover the true pattern of the fabric of her culture and to reshape it to serve the needs of a new synthesis in a changing world. This task will have to be accomplished by the co-operative efforts of scholars representing the Sinhalese and Tamil speaking peoples without, of course, ignoring the tremendous stimulus given to the peoples of this Island by the impact of the Christian Western Culture.

S. J. GUNASEGARAM

EARLY TAMIL CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

REFERENCES made in the early Sangam Literature of the Tamils, foreign notices found in the writings of the Greeks and Romans, and Tamil loan words found in Hebrew and Greek along with other evidences brought to light by excavations in Ur of the Chaldees and Palestine, give us some idea of the early trade and cultural contacts of the Dravidians, (and in particular of the Tamils) with ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome and Arabia.

The extent of this trade and a critical estimate of these contacts require a separate lecture. As a result of the more recent excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, Chittaldrug in Mysore and at Adichanallur further south, the probability that civilization spread from India to Egypt and Babylonia, and not, as it was believed earlier, from the Valley of the Nile or the Euphrates to India, has been strengthened.

K. M. Panikkar in his, "A Survey of Indian History (1954)," says:—"One thing, however, is certain and can no longer be contested—civilization did not come to India with the Aryans. This doctrine of the Aryan origin of Indian civilization which finds no support in Indian Literature (which does not consider the Dasyus (Dravidians) as uncivilized), is the result of the theories of Indo-Germanic scholars who held that everything valuable in the world originated from the Aryans. Not only is Indian Civilization pre-Vedic, but the essential features of Hindu religion as we know it today were perhaps present in Mohenjo-Daro."

"There is enough in the fragments we have recovered," says Sir John Marshall, "about the religious articles found on the sites to demonstrate that this religion of the Indus people was the lineal progenitor of Hinduism. In fact, Siva and Kali, the worship of the Linga and other features of popular Hinduism, were well established in India long before the Aryans came."

This civilization and culture were not destroyed by the Aryans, and the Indus Valley religious ideas which centred round the worship of Siva (the oldest monotheistic religion known to the world) who combines in himself the male as well as the female principle in creation, continue to be cherished in Dravidian India, and particularly in the Tamil countries, to this day.

“The clearest evidence of the Dravidian origin of Siva worship,” says Panikkar, “is found in the Aryan attitude towards Linga and the God whom it symbolises. In Rig Veda (vii) Ch. 21-5 we have the significant statement:—

‘Let those whose deity is the Phallus not penetrate our Sanctuary’ . . . Siva assumes increased importance only in the later Vedas, and from the period of the Yajur Veda, Siva definitely assumes the aspect of Maheswara—or the Great God.”

Hall in his, “Ancient History of the Near East,” wrote long ago, “The Culture of India is pre-Aryan in origin. As in Greece, the conquered countries civilized the conquerors. The Aryan Indian owed his civilization and his degeneration to the Dravidians as the Aryan Greek to the Mycaeneans.”

Hall also believes that “the Sumerians derived their culture from India. . . Investigators have been struck by the fact that similar seals found both in Babylonia and in India belong to the *earliest* phase of the Mesopotamian culture, but² to the *latest* phase of the Indus civilization, which suggests the priority of Dravidian India. (Will Durant, “Our Oriental Heritage” p. 395n).

Childe, another historian, confirms this when he states, “the Indus civilization was ahead of the Babylonian at the beginning of the third millenium B. C. This, it should be noted, is a later phase of the Indian.”

Will Durant, a living American historian, speaking of the Dravidians in his book, “Our Oriental Heritage,” says:—

“They were already a civilized people when the Aryan broke down upon them; their adventurous merchants sailed the sea even to Sumeria and Babylon and their cities knew many refinements and luxuries. It was from them, apparently, that the Aryans took their village community and their system of land-tenure and taxation. To this day the Deccan is still essentially Dravidian in stock and customs, in language, literature and arts.”

Who were these adventurous merchant seamen who sailed the seas? Their descendants are present today in this very hall to listen—not to their glorious ventures across the Arabian and Mediterranean seas—but to their building of Greater India and their spread of Indian Culture in the regions now known as South-East Asia.

The Dravidians who were identified with (Dramilas) (Tamils) were also known as Thirayar—the men who rode the waves, the

race which in the very dawn of history carried its trade and culture across the waves to the West and to the East—the harbingers of civilization.

They were able to declare through the lips of their incomparable poets,

யாதுமுரே யாவரும் கேளிர்.

The one world idea, new to the modern world, was already old to the Tamils of the Sangam age—ocean rovers, dauntless Thirayars who sang—

திரை கடலோடியுந் திரவியந்தேடு.

In an old Tamil poem of the Medieval period the writer mentions 17 countries where the Tamil Language, and consequently the Tamil culture, were known. I quote the words of the verse:—

சின்களஞ் சோனகஞ் சாவகஞ் சீனத்துருக்குடகங்
கொங்கணங் கன்னடங் கொல்லந் தெலுங்கம் வங்கங்
கங்கமதங் கடாரங் கவடங் கடுங்குசலங்
தங்கும் புகழ் தமிழ் சூழ் பதினேழ் புவி தாமிவையே

Among the seventeen countries referred to are: Ceylon, Java, Malaya, Cambodia and China. The word சோனகம் should be taken to include Arabia and neighbouring countries.

Some South Indian Brahmins with an Aryan complex, in their histories of the Tamil language and of South India, have attributed such references to ignorance on the part of early Tamil writers. Since the appearance of such works, thanks to the energy of European scholars, much research has been done which has revealed unmistakably traces of the Tamil language and culture in these and other lands across the seas.

Similarly, Chinese historical sources which refer to the maritime traders bringing typical Indian products to China as far back as 7th Century B.C., ‘were generally regarded with incredulity.’ These accounts have received striking confirmation by the discovery in the Philippines of a number of iron age finds bearing close resemblance to objects found in South India of about the same period—the first millenium B.C.¹

1. According to Paul Pelliot there is evidence in Chinese literature of diplomatic relations between South Indian Courts and the Chinese Empire as early as the 2nd Century B.C. A Chinese writer, Pau Kou, who lived at the end of the 1st Century, mentions that in the time of the Hun Emperor the Chola Kings sent embassies to China.—K. M. Panikkar, “India and China,” pp. 17, 18.

“ Professor Beyer conducted a remarkable series of excavations during the years 1926 to 1930, and the evidence has been summed up by R. B. Dixon who did a first-hand examination of the objects brought to light by Prof. Beyer. Among the finds were a large variety of iron weapons and implements and glass beads and bangles made in the Tamil country.” (K.A.N.). I shall quote what Dixon has to say of these :

“ Now both the iron and glass objects are similar to, and in some cases identical with, the prehistoric glass and iron finds in the South of India. They occur in the dolmen tombs and urns which are found by hundreds and thousands, and which almost ante-date the historic Chola, Chera, Pandyan kingdoms whose history goes back to the beginning of the Christian era or before. As finds of similar glass beads and bangles have recently been excavated in the Malay Peninsula, in dolmen tombs in Java and in North Borneo, the inference is inescapable that we have clear evidence of trade contact with the Northern Philippines and Southern India, running well back into the first millenium B.C.

“ The extensive trade and colonization and later conquests of South Indian kingdoms in Sumatra and Java as well as in Indo-China in the early centuries of the Christian era, of course, are well known. This new material, however, seems to make it clear that this was far from being the beginning of such contacts, but rather the last stages in an association reaching as far as the Northern Philippines which had begun many centuries before.”

At Adichanallur, an ancient site on the banks of the Tambraparani in the Tinnevely district, extensive prehistoric urn burials and iron implements related to those found in the Philippines and Palestine have been unearthed. A remarkable find was the three-pronged fork or trident of iron. Many such tridents were discovered at Adichanallur. This evidence suggests that the worship of Murugan or Velan, the son of Siva (known as the God of Kataragama in Ceylon), was popular in the Tamil country even in those remote times. This Muruga worship would appear to have been carried by the Tamils to Palestine and Syria in the West, to Ceylon in the South, and to the distant Philippines across the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

In 1200 B.C. at Adichanallur, the Tamils were found to have cultivated rice, and it was in this region that the iron industry had its origin. There is every evidence to prove that the Tamils were the earliest people to introduce the cultivation of rice and the use of iron implements to the countries in the West as well as in South-East Asia.

In support of this contention I would quote two distinguished authorities—

Piggott in his “ Prehistoric India,” page 43 (Pelican Books, 1952), says with regard to rice—

“ It seems probable that rice cultivation began earlier in India than it did in China and that the knowledge reached the latter country about 2000 B.C.” He adds in page 259, “ The Rig Veda knows nothing of rice.” In other words, the Aryan immigrants into India learnt the cultivation of rice from the Dravidians.

In the light of these facts, it is amusing to find that our local historians have been at pains to show that rice cultivation was introduced into Ceylon by the Aryans. This, of course, is the least of the glaring historical inaccuracies in some of our so-called histories of Ceylon.

With regard to the centre of origin of iron, I give an extract from the Bulletin of the British Iron and Steel Federation—1949. Sir William Larke, Director of the British Iron and Steel Federation, says—

“ The centre of origin is variously placed in India, where there are historical traditions and remains indicating a highly developed iron culture. Hyderabad and Trichinopoly are considered by many to have been the centres of production of wootz. . . . This steel was noted for centuries, being carried by merchants from India to Damascus and Toledo.”

It will be noted that both these sites are in South India (Deccan). Sir William gives the date of this origin of the iron age as 1400 to 1500 B.C. The iron implements found in the Adichanallur site about the same period, and the transport of iron hoes and tridents to distant countries such as Palestine and the Philippines confirms this conclusion.

* * *

For the purpose of studying the influence of Indian Art and Culture in the countries of South-East Asia, Quaritch Wales in his recent work, “ The Making of Great India,” divides South-East Asian countries into two zones—the Western Zone and the Eastern Zone.

Under the Western Zone he includes Ceylon, Burma, Central Siam, Malaya and Sumatra; while he includes Java, Champa (Siam) and Cambodia in the Eastern Zone.

The author (Quaritch Wales) points out that Indian scholars—most of them North Indians and a few Aryanised Brahmins of South India—seem often to have tended to over-emphasise the overseas influence of their own part of the country—the implication being that they have exaggerated the role played by North Indian and Aryan culture in South-East Asia. He, however, accepts unhesitatingly the conclusion arrived at by M. Coedes, another great authority on South-East Asian Culture, that—

“All the regions of India contributed more or less to this expansion, and it is South India that had the greatest part, for the Southern half of the Greater India—consisting of Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Malaya and Bali—was naturally most exposed to South Indian influence.”

More recently, M. Stern has shown that even in Champa (Siam) and Cambodia which are included in the Eastern Zones by Quaritch Wales, Pallava (Tamil) influences have played a significant part from very early times in the evolution of their culture.

The Indianisation of these countries in the Western as well as in the Eastern Zone would appear to have proceeded in successive waves of cultural expansion.

The first wave which may be termed the Amaravati period (2nd and 3rd centuries) represents the Art of Andhra which is Dravidian and South Indian.

The second wave—which may be termed the Gupta period—represents North Indian Art modified by Greek influences. The Guptas were Hindus but they did not persecute Buddhism.

The third—Pallava Art—was mainly Dravidian and Tamil Hindu Art. It must be remembered that the Pallavas (Tondayar or Tondaman) were at the same time promoters of Sanskrit learning in the Tamil country.

The fourth—Pala period—lasted from the 8th to the 10th centuries. This Art had its origin in Bengal and was mainly Buddhist.

The fifth—Chola Art—lasted from the 10th to the 12th centuries. It was again South Indian and Tamil. This wave was purely Hindu. “Their great achievement,” says Panikkar, “was in plastic art known as Chola bronzes.” The Nataraja figures and images and portrait of the Tamil Saints found in Polonnaruwa and in South India have been recognised as coming among the masterpieces of the world (Reginald Le May).

All five waves of Indian cultural expansion affected the countries in the Western as well as the Eastern Zones of South East Asia. In the Western Zone which includes Ceylon, Burma, Central Siam, Malaya and Sumatra, Quaritch Wales states **that Indianisation was so intense that no indigenous art or culture ever developed, and that the bulk of the upper classes were mainly Indian Colonists. There was no evolution of any art or culture for lack of local genius to act as a shaper of evolution. “The archaeological remains represent simply the reflection of one or other waves of Indian cultural expansion. They may be justly called, colonial or Indianesque.”**

In the light of these facts we in South Ceylon have very little reason or right to speak of an indigenous culture. From very early times the culture of Ceylon has been one imposed on its people by successive waves of Indian cultural contacts. In more recent centuries the people of South Ceylon came under Portuguese, Dutch and British cultural influences and they absorbed them with equal avidity, though apparently devotees of “Buddhist Culture.” With the coming of Independence and a “Sinhalese only” Government we witness their struggle to get back to their ‘ancient culture,’ the shape and nature of which they themselves do not appear to be certain of.

It will be remembered that the earlier cultural influences brought to bear on Ceylon were Pandyan and Cholian, though no archaeological remains of any consequence are available. The truth of this contention, however, is admitted by the author of the Mahavamsa who says that Vijaya and his 500 followers got their wives from the Pandyan country, and that these ‘brides were followed by craftsmen and a thousand families of eighteen guilds.’ He adds that all this multitude of men disembarked at Mahathitha (*i.e.*, Mantota near Mannar, a city sacred to the Hindus.)

Could any reasonable person believe that the Tamil men and women described as a ‘multitude’—the women of the court, the craftsmen and the members of the thousand families of eighteen guilds, spoke to one another and taught their children in an Aryan tongue, which the modern Sinhalese assumes Vijaya and his 500 followers spoke, or that they developed a culture and followed a religion alien to their ancestral heritage? Who could doubt that the culture of these people was Dravidian, their language Tamil, and their religion Hinduism pure and simple?

The Mahavamsa itself associates Vijaya with the Kalingas—a Dravidian people—whose ruling family seems to have had marriage alliances with the Pandyan Tamils. The Mahavamsa records further that when Vijaya died childless he was succeeded

by Panduvasudeva, a Pandyan in name, whose mother was the daughter of the King of Madda (now Madras.) (*vide* Mahavamsa Geiger's translation, Chapter VII). Tamil and Tamil culture are not likely to have been something strange either to Vijaya or to his successor Panduvasudeva. We cannot escape the assumption that the early rulers of Ceylon were drawn either from the descendants of Panduvasudeva or imported from South India, when no heir was available in Ceylon.

These rulers were in fact not Sinhalese but strictly speaking 'the kings of the Sinhalese.' In course of time the term 'Sinhalese' appears to have been used to designate the indigenous people of the country, and not the rulers or their kith and kin and their followers.

Emerson Tennent in his 'Ceylon,' Vol. I, pp. 370,1, has noted this when he points out that—

"The Mahavamsa and the Rajaratnacari, in order to vindicate the inferiority of the natives to their masters, speak of their labours as that of 'men and snakes,' 'men and demons'." Because they were so numerous in number, they were given seats of equal eminence with the king on festive occasions. "The feeling was encouraged and matured into a conviction which prevailed to the latest period of Sinhalese Sovereignty, that no individual of pure Sinhalese extraction could be elevated to the supreme power, since no one could prostrate himself before one of his own nation."

If you care to read the brief history of Ceylon published in the latest Ceylon Observer Directory, you will notice that whenever a recognised Tamil Hindu Dynasty took over Ceylon, the occasion is referred to as 'Tamil Usurpation.' You will be puzzled to discover whom the Tamil usurped—the kings of the Sinhalese who seem to be accepted as Sinhalese even when they happen to be Dravidians, provided they had a Pali-Buddhist name and professed the Buddhist religion,—or the large mass of people whom the rulers looked down upon as not fit to be considered their equals, or to supply a single individual of their species to occupy the throne of the Sinhalese!

This is but a brief reference to Tamil cultural influences in Ceylon. This subject, which concerns us vitally, requires a book by itself.

Burma

From very early times Hinduism and Buddhism appear to have flourished side by side in Burma. From the archaeological excavations made at Prom, the chief city of old Burma, Harvey

says that the finds were mainly Hindu rather than Buddhist. In later times, though Burma became predominantly Buddhist, Hindus lived with a Buddhist population and worshipped in their own temples.

This early entry of Saivism was probably an event in the great Tamil trade movement which started in the 2nd millennium B.C., and swept across the seas to the Southern Islands and Malaya as far north as the Philippines.

The earliest colonists to exercise authority over Burma appear to have been again South Indians. The city of Prom was also known as Vanadesi, the name of the capital of the Kadambas in South India. The earliest inscriptions discovered at Prom is in the South Indian Kadamba script of the 5th C. A.D.

In the 5th and 6th centuries, however, Burma became the centre of Southern Buddhism. A number of terracotta plaques carrying the effigy of Buddha were found inscribed in South Indian characters. The contact of South Indian merchants with Burma in the early centuries of the Christian era is attested to by Ptolemy who had noticed that large ships used to sail from the East coast of South India to Burma.

The rise of Hinayana Buddhism in the 5th C. A.D., was mainly due to inspiration received by Burma from the great movement which started at Kanchi (Kanchipuram) in the Tamil country. Kanchi it will be remembered is referred to in Manimekalai, the great Tamil Buddhist epic. It was the home of that illustrious Tamil Buddhist Scholar Dharmapala 6th C. A.D., who was the Head of the Nalanda University. He should not, however, be confused with the other Dharmapala, a Tamil himself and a Buddhist scholar, who came to Ceylon and wrote the famous commentaries.

In the excavations made in 1926-1927, a relic chamber of a stupa containing many finds of great interest were found. The chamber was found closed by a stone slab bearing a representation of a stupa having a cylindrical dome with a rounded top and five umbrellas above, indicating that these had a South Indian origin. Though most Burmese became Buddhists, the worship of Siva and Vishnu continued to be popular, the majority of the Hindus being South Indian settlers and colonizers from India.

Most of the old kings of Burma, it will be noted, have the Varman ending and the scripts used in almost all the inscriptions found in the country are South Indian in character. The Pallavas of South India—Tondayar or Tondamans—have contributed the greatest share towards the culture and greatness of ancient

Burma. Of the magnificent Buddhist temple of Ananda, Quaritch Wales says—"Here we have a South Indian temple crowned with a North Indian Sikara."

Scott, an authority on Burmese Archaeology and History—in his account of the reign of Alaungsithu (1112–1187), observes :—

"The connection with India was still maintained and the form of the many Pagan temples suggests architects from the Deccan . . . Many of the images and the attitudes are quite South Indian."

"The presence of a considerable number of South Indian Tamils through the centuries is attested by the well-known Grantha—Tamil inscription of Pagan attesting the existence of a Vishnu temple built there by Nanadesi Merchants and a gift to the temple made in the 13th C. by a merchant from one of the port towns on the Malabar Coast."—(*Epigraphia Indica*)

The Malay Peninsula

It has been found that in the Malay Peninsula early South Indian colonists had founded a number of independent states. There are no records except Chinese notices to form an exact idea of the nature and origin of these states. By the end of the 13th century the entire region came under the power of the Sailendras and later fell an easy prey to the Siamese.

Malacca was an early Indian Hindu colony as proved by the Makara fragment built into the retaining wall near an ancient Portuguese Church. The Portuguese generally had no regard for antiquities or relics except for those of their own faith. The find, however, is an indication that the Pallavas of South India had exercised authority in Malaya in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Perak, another district, has been identified as an ancient Hindu colony. 'A seal with an inscription in a South Indian script of the 5th C., or earlier was found.'

Kedah was an unmistakable Hindu settlement. Dr. Quaritch Wales investigated no fewer than 30 sites round about Kedah. The results show that this site was in continuous occupation by South Indians—Hindus and Buddhists—mainly Tamils. On a low spur of the Kedah peak to the south have been discovered traces of a Siva Temple. A large Siva Temple also had been identified as such by a four-armed Ganesh figure and a bronze weapon of Muruga. This temple is assigned to the 11th C. M. Coedes believes that Kedah is the same as Kadaram of Tamil (*Chola*).

Takua—Pa

Lajonquiere's investigations at Takua-pa, which is a town situated north of the Perak district, brought to light a number of old sculptures and monuments which go to prove that Takua-pa was a well-known harbour and an early trading centre resorted to by South Indian and particularly Tamil traders. This has been supported by a Tamil inscription discovered in 1902 by Mr. Bourke, a mining engineer of the Siamese Government. Further in the interior on a hill in a dilapidated condition were found the figure of Siva and Parvati and a danseuse. Describing the finds, Lajonquiere observes :—

"The costumes in numerous folds treated with details, the profusion of jewels, the elegant movements of the body, recall very nearly the oldest sculptures of Dravidian India."

Near this sculpture is a slab which carries a Tamil inscription. It records the construction of a tank by one who describes himself as the Lord of Nangur. The tank is placed under the protection of the members of the Manigramam, under the residents of the Cantonment described as Senamukham and one other group of which the nature is obscured by a gap in the inscription.

No one, however, knows who maintained a Senamukham at Takua-pa, and for what purpose. Was the Lord of Nangur a Tamil military Chieftain or just a Merchant Prince? The term Manigramam implies the large and influential guild of Tamil merchants of whom we read in diverse connections. These historical associations would have been lost to us but for the scientific zeal of Western explorers. (K.A.N. Sastri).

Pierre Dupont has pointed out that Pro No' Visnu of Takua-pa is a pure Pallava product of the 7th C. A.D., while the seventh century Siva temple remains excavated in Kedah by Quaritch Wales have been ascribed by him to South Indian Colonists, most of whom were from the Tamil country.

Among the statues found belonging to different periods and styles was the admirable bust of Lokeswara (Siva) discovered by Prince Dumrong and now in the Bangkok Museum. M. Coedes says of this statue :—

"The benevolent serenity of the face, the noble bearing of the shoulder and the magnificence of dress and adornment class this statue, badly mutilated, among the masterpieces of Indian sculpture."

At Ligor on the eastern coast of the peninsula was found a Tamil inscription dated in a Saka year in words. The word for

the hundred figure is lost. "The record mentions some charity in favour of Brahmins instituted according to the orders of a Dharmasenapathi."

Malaya and Islam

The Malay Peninsula continues to be in debt to South India and Ceylon to this day to thousands of Tamil and Tamil-speaking Muslim merchants, Tamil educationists, doctors, engineers and labourers. The Malaysans themselves would appear to have appreciated the value of this contact by recognising Tamil as a language to be taught at the Malayan University. The results on the cultural side of these contacts have struck all observers.

"There are many similarities," says Annandale, "between the Muhamadanism of the Labbies of the Indian shore of the Gulf of Mannar and that of the Malays. I think it would not be impossible to find striking parallels between objects in daily use, and especially in the pattern, with which these objects are adorned among the two races."

It has been established that an old type of South Indian water vessel known in Tamil as kendi, the kendi with a spout, is in use by the Malays and called by the Tamil name. Again, "The importance of Rama and Hanuman in the folklore of the Malays, Buddhists and Muhamadans alike agree with legends which link these with the region round Adam's Bridge region, whence came the bulk of the Tamils resident in Malaya."

Annandale goes on to add, "I would even hazard the suggestion that it is largely owing to the commercial activities of the Labbies and their ancestors that the Malays of the mainland were first converted from Shamanism to Hinduism and then from Hinduism to what they call, in phraseology of curiously mingled derivation, the Agama Islam."

Several common Malay words like those for washerman, kind or sort, marriage pledge, leaf, couple, and so on, have been traced indubitably to Tamil origins and these are some of the results of an unbroken contact throughout the centuries that follow the early period of colonisation. (K. A. N. Sastri, "South Indian Influences in the Far East.").

Java

By about A.D. 400, Indian culture and Hinduism had obtained firm footing in Java. Though the extant inscriptions in West Java are of a later date than those of Borneo: "There can be no doubt," says Nilakanta Sastri, "that Hindu culture must

have reached Java, if anything a little earlier, from South India, than it reached Borneo." The inscriptions of West Java are engraved in the distinctly South Indian type of characters, and these are actually half a century later than the inscriptions of Mularvarman found in Borneo.

The West Javan inscriptions refer to the 'Illustrious Purnavarman' who once ruled at Taruma in Java. The inscriptions are all in South Indian characters identical with the Grantha alphabet used by the Pallavas of South India (300 to 800 A.D.).

Another inscription found at Changal (732 A.D.) describes the consecration of a linga by King Sangaya of Central Java, whose ancestors came from Kunjara-kunjadesa in South India. Another at Dinaya of the year A.D. 760, describes the erection of an image of Agastya. In all these the era used is Saka era, an essentially South Indian reckoning. The Northern Vikrama era is unknown.

On the Dieng Plateaux, 6,500 feet above sea level, there are five groups of temples of an earlier period, all dedicated to Siva. The style of architecture is Dravidian and South Indian. Kroom points out that the Dieng Art shows 'most agreement with, or properly least difference from, South Indian Art, specifically from the square plan, symmetry, roof stages and stresses on horizontal lines.'

Though Siva worship had been introduced by Tamil merchants and colonists in pre-Christian centuries, the later Pallava-Tamil influences are strongly indicated by the presence of Kala Makara over doorways, 'for the Kala-Makara combined motif was a Pallava innovation in Indian Art.'

The Sailendras, who ruled over Java and Sumatra and whose origins have not been finally decided upon by scholars, were Mahayanist Buddhists, and in all probability a dynasty that had its origin in South India. Throughout their imperial authority they had been in contact with South India and South Indian Buddhists till they were overpowered later by the Chola Empire.

Here is what K. M. Panikkar says in his 'India and China' p. 20:—

"Its relations with India were of the most intimate kind. We know, for example, that Sri Vijaya Kings endowed institutions in Nalanda and had monasteries erected at their expense in Nagapatam... The Sailendra monarchs of Sri Vijaya enjoyed great prestige in India, and their envoys frequently visited Indian Courts,"

It is interesting to note that while in Java there has been a fusion between Saivism and Mahayanist Buddhism, Bali has always remained Hindu. That South Indian culture is bound up with the Art of Java is clearly evidenced in the dance forms and worship of the Balinese. The Saiva form of Hinduism ante-dated Buddhism in Java, while Bali still remains Hindu; and Saivism was in all probability introduced by Tamil merchants and colonists in pre-Christian times. The majestic Sivan Temple in Perambanam in Java is thought by many competent judges to contain the finest sculptured panels to be found in Java. Krocma considers the Perambanam to represent 'the apotheosis of Saivism as Borobodora does of Buddhism.'

"In the organisation of rural economy and village communities, the institution and ideas appear unmistakably to have been brought from South India. Institutions of Village Government are either unknown or quite different in their nature in non-Hindu parts. The proceedings in village meetings in Java even today strongly remind one of the conditions of village administration in South India in ancient days as it is vividly portrayed in the numberless inscriptions of the Chola monarchs." (K. A. N. Sastri).

Java has had continuous contacts with South India in later times. The Chola Empire in the 10th and the 11th centuries had close association with Java, and Javanese culture was further influenced by Tamil culture after the Cholas defeated the Sailendras of Java. Bhikkhus from Kanchipuram praise the Javanese ruler Hayam Wuruk in the 14th C.; Jayanagara adopted the characteristic Pandyan title Sundarapandya at the coronation in the 14th century, and adopted the Pandyan Emblem of the two fishes for his seal.

Sumatra

The rulers of Sumatra, according to Chinese historical records, were in communication with China during the period 450-562 A.D. The names of these rulers, judged from the Chinese transcriptions, are typical Hindu names, and the manners and customs similar to the South Indian customs of Champa and Kumbuja (Siam and Cambodia).

In Sumatra are found certain names of tribal sub-divisions which are unmistakably South Indian, and specifically Tamilian names such as Choliya, Pandiya, Maehliyala, and also Pallava as well as Tekam (or Tekkanam or Deccan).

"The social organisation of some of these tribes seems to date from a very remote past and it is quite probable that these

names were taken over when they were still powerful realities in South India," says Nilakanta Sastri.

No temples in Sumatra belonging to this ancient period have survived as they had probably been built of wood following the South Indian practice in pre-Christian times. This contact with Sumatra was kept up by South India for well over a thousand years.

In the 11th century A.D. the Cholas invaded Sumatra which was at that time under the Sailendras. Tamil inscriptions of this period have been found at Luba Tua, dating from the year 1088. Tamil tribal names are still found among the Batak of Sumatra.

Thus Sumatra had not only been colonised by the Tamils but it also became an integral part of the Greater Indian Cultural Area.

Celebes

In Celebes, a large island further east of Borneo and Java and south of the Philippines, traces of South Indian influences have been found. The Buddha images there show affinities with the earliest form of the Amaravati Art (Second century A.D.) Archaeologists have not been able to decide how far this culture had penetrated into the interior of the island. Recently, however, an ancient bell and a pair of cymbals have been discovered. The bell and cymbals are very similar to those still in daily use in South India in domestic worship and otherwise. The probability is that South Indian cultural influence had preceded the arrival of South Indian Buddhism."

The Pallava-Tamil period was the age of South Indian colonisation par excellence, and unmistakable marks of evidence of Pallava rule are found scattered all over South East Asian countries including Celebes. "But," says Sastri, "palaeography and art styles are the two unmistakable marks of the antiquity of objects belonging to really early times and attesting direct contact of these lands, and the tests, as we have seen, point to a time much earlier than that of the rise of the Pallavas."

Borneo

The earliest archaeological evidence in Borneo is a Sanskrit inscription, fully and decidedly South Indian, referring to the conquest of Mulavarman, a Pallava king. There is also evidence of the Agastya cult in Borneo already noticed in Java, a cult which is essentially South Indian. The Ganesha image found in Sarawak, North Borneo, a linga and yoni found in West Borneo and a Pallava inscription in the East coast of Borneo, prove unmis-

takably the early colonisation of Borneo by the South Indians, and particularly by the Tamils.

Philippines

In the early stages of this lecture, I have already referred to the iron age finds in the Philippines bearing close resemblance to objects found in South India about the same period, more than a thousand years before Christ, and also to other evidences of trade contact with Malaya, Indo-China, North Borneo and Philippines in those remote times. The Spanish who dominated the Philippines in recent centuries are not likely to have preserved religious and cultural antiquities of other Faiths. In 1820, however, a copper image of Siva was discovered in one of those islands which points to a remote period in which the worship of Siva had been introduced by South Indian merchants.

That these facts are by no means unsupported by other evidence may be shown by the remarks made by Mr. Phiroz Kutar, Technical Director, which were reported in the Madras 'Hindu' (October, 1954).

“ Researches into the cultural and racial origins of the people of Ceylon and of countries lying eastward have shown that they were once colonised from South India and in particular, the Filipino script has striking similarities with that of Tamilark. These researches have also shown that Filipino dialects belonged to the Dravidian family.”

Cambodia

I have so far not been able to touch on Tamil cultural influences in Central Siam, Champa and Cambodia. I am afraid that the lecture is already long and that this aspect of the subject would require a separate lecture. I would crave your indulgence to refer to a state ceremony in Cambodia¹ where Saiva Tamil hymns are sung even today, to indicate the extent of Tamil cultural influence in these regions.

Cambodia had come under Saiva Tamil influence, not to speak of Southern Buddhism, from very early days. Though Buddhism continues to be its State religion, the old Saiva ceremonies conducted by the Tamil Brahmin priests are still found incorporated in its Coronation ceremonies. The Saiva Brahmins

1. “The Cambodian kings bore the title of Varman, which reminds one of the Pallava kings of South India. The magnificent temples of Angkor-Vat and of Bayon are similar to those of Southern India. Taking all these facts together, as well as the introduction of Nataraja Siva from South India one thinks that the colonists perhaps came from Southern India.”

(P. Nath Bose)

of Cambodia would appear to have come originally from Rameswaram in South India. Many of these, with the ascendancy of Buddhism and the adoption of the Siamese themselves as Brahmins, seem to have taken along with them, elsewhere, valuable documents which would otherwise have revealed more fully the nature of South Indian Tamil influence in the religious ceremonies and court life of the Siamese in Cambodia.

Quaritch Wales, in describing the swinging festival on the occasion of the crowning of Cambodian Kings, says :—“The King seated himself on a throne beneath an umbrella of seven tiers which, after the King was crowned, was replaced by one of nine tiers emblematic of full sovereignty. The high priest of Siva then came to him, and after rendering homage, pronounced the Tamil mantra, the name of which means ‘Opening of the Portals of Kailasa.’”

Wales adds that the Siamese priests now know neither Sanskrit nor Tamil, but that in an earlier period there were Brahmins who did understand these Indian languages.

The texts which the Siamese priests still possess are Sanskrit and Tamil hymns with instructions in Siamese for the preliminary rites intended to be used in daily worship.

The Rev. Fr. Thani Nayagam, a member of the Tamil Cultural Society and the Editor of ‘Tamil Culture,’ visited the Brahmin Temple in Bangkok last year and heard the Brahmin priests recite the Tamil verses used in the ‘Triambavay—Tirupavay’ a swinging festival at the coronation of their Kings. He has shown that the verses are actually the first two songs of Manickavasagar’s Thiruvempavai.

For a further account of this ceremony and a discussion on further research that should be undertaken by Tamil scholars in South-East Asian countries, I would refer you to the excellent article by Fr. Thani Nayagam appearing in the 1955, July Number of the ‘Tamil Culture’ Magazine.

Before I close, I would bring to your notice certain facts which will enable you to understand more fully the study of the Indian influences in these colonies.

1. In most of the South-East Asian colonies the strong Dravidian cultural influence is stressed by the fact that the Saka Era, a distinctly South Indian Calendar, as opposed to the Vikrama Era of the Northerner, has been in vogue.

2. The New Year celebrated in many of these countries including Champa (Cambodia) and Ceylon is the Tamil New Year 13th-14th April. This is an ancient Tamil astronomical fixture going back to the Mohenjo-Daro period and continued through the Sangam Age. In Ceylon under the British it was termed Hindu, and has now come to be called 'Hindu' or 'Sinhalese'.

3. The Brahmins, most of them Saivites, mentioned in connection with the Indian Colonies were Tamils or South Indian 'adopted' Brahmins. This is a process referred to in one of the Upanishads, where it is stated that of the white, brown and dark Brahmins, the last were the cleverest because they knew all three Vedas, while the others knew only one and two respectively (Brihadaranayaka Upanishad).

4. In the purely religious inscriptions in these colonies Sanskrit was used by Vaishnavites and Mahayana Buddhists and Pali by the Hinayana Buddhists, though they came from the South, because these languages alone were considered fit vehicles for their respective religious pronouncements. Again, the Pallava Kings (Tondayars), though they were patrons of Sanskrit, became champions of Tamil after their conversion to Saivism.

5. Rigid caste divisions were unknown among the early Tamils. The caste system, as we know it today, was brought into the South of India by Brahminism. In the maritime activity of the early Dravidians, the men who lived along the sea-coast, apparently, played the largest part. With the introduction of the Brahminical prejudice against fish and sea-faring activities (intentional or otherwise), may be said to have commenced the gradual weakening of the maritime enterprise and cultural expansion of the Dravidian peoples and of the Tamils in particular.



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APPENDIX I.

THE TAMIL CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD'S CIVILIZATION

AN APPEAL

There is no doubt that the culture of the Tamils belongs to the great and immortal treasures of the world's civilization. From my own experience, however, I can say that even those who claim to have a wide outlook and deep education, both Indians and Europeans, are not aware of this fact. And it is the task of the Tamils themselves, and of those sympathetic *mlecchas* who try to interpret Tamil culture, to acquaint the world's cultural public with the most important contributions of Tamil culture to the world's civilization. As far as literary works are concerned, it is necessary before all to make them accessible to a wide public of readers by means of artistic translations into the world's great languages ; with regard to works of arts and architecture, it is necessary to make them a common treasure of the world with the help of publications giving detailed and perfect reproductions. This may be achieved through the UNESCO as well as through the work of individual scholars and local institutions ; this should also be one of the main tasks of the Academy of Tamil Culture.

The following works of art and literature are among the most remarkable contributions of the Tamil creative genius to the world's cultural treasure and should be familiar to the whole world and admired and beloved by all in the same way as the poems of Homer, the dramas of Shakespeare, the pictures of Rembrandt, the cathedrals of France and the sculptures of Greece :

1. The ancient Tamil lyrical poetry compiled in **எட்டு தொகை** (The Eight Anthologies) ; this poetry is so unique and vigorous, full of such vivid realism and written so masterfully that it can be compared probably only with some of the pieces of ancient Greek lyrical poetry ;
2. The **திருக்குறள்** (Kural), one of the great books of the world, one of those singular emanations of the human heart and spirit which preach positive love and forgiveness and peace ;

3. The epical poem சிலப்பதிகாரம் (Cilappathikaram), which, by its "baroque splendour," and by the charm and magic of its lyrical parts belongs to the epic masterpieces of the world;
4. The school of Bhakti both Vaishnava and Saiva, which is one of those most sincere and passionate efforts of the man to grasp the Absolute; and its supreme literary expression in the works of மாணிக்கவாசகர் (Manikkavasagar), ஞானசம்பந்தர் (Gnanasambandar), நம்மாள்வார் (Nammalwar) and ஆண்டாள் (Andal);
5. The philosophical system of Saiva Siddhanta, a system which may be ranked among the most perfect and clearest systems of human thought;
6. The South Indian bronzes of the Chola period, those splendid and amazing sculptures belonging to the best creations of humanity;
7. The Dravidian temple-architecture, of which the chief representatives are perhaps the temples of Tanjore, Chidambaram and Madurai.

These seven different forms of contribution, without which the world would be definitely less rich and less happy, should engage the immediate attention of all who are interested in Tamil culture; they should all dedicate their time and efforts to make known (and well and intimately known) to the whole of the world these heights of Tamil creative genius.

DR. KAMIL ZVELEBIL

'Tamil Culture,' Vol. V, No. 4, October, 1956.

(Dr. Kamil Zvelebil is the Head of the Department of Dravidology, University of Prague. He has translated many Tamil works into Czech and is a research worker.)

APPENDIX II.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN CEYLON

Reports in the local Press of Archaeological finds of great significance have been brought to the notice of the public in recent months. The age and the nature of these finds will have to be studied with care and interpreted—not by amateurs or by officers selected to prove a pre-conceived theory in keeping with sectional prejudices—but by Archaeologists who have had experience in the study of similar finds discovered, particularly, in South India and in the area termed South-East Asia.

These are undoubtedly connected with the waves of cultural expansion, Hindu and Buddhist which have had their origins in India. The interpreters should not merely be acquainted with Sanskrit and Pali but also with the Dravidian languages—particularly Tamil—and with the origin and nature of the types of scripts used in the inscriptions.

This warning is necessary because we have been made to believe by local Archaeologists in the past, that the short Brahmi inscriptions, for instance, found in the caves of Ceylon were an old form of Sinhalese, while it has been shown that similar cave inscriptions are also in existence in the Pandyan country in South India, and that all these were actually Tamil written in a Brahmi Script of the South Indian variety of the 3rd Century B.C. (*vide* 'History of South India' by N. K. Sastri (pp. 14 and 87) Oxford Press).

The temptation to consider that everything Buddhist in Ceylon is necessarily Sinhalese has to be resisted, as it must be remembered that the Kalingas, Andhras and Tamils also were at one time Buddhists, and had a very large share in the dissemination of Buddhist culture in the countries of South-East Asia.

Dr. Paranavitarane's discovery of urn-burials at the Puttalam—Marichukaddai road was rightly associated by him with those found in the Tinnevely district in South India. It was not, however, shown that there are a large number of other sites scattered all over South India where such urn-burials have been unearthed. There is ample evidence in the Sangam literature of the Tamils and in Tholkappiyam to prove that this is an essentially Dravidian culture seen in the use of such terms as

'Mudu Makal Thali' (urns or burial-jars), Imatalli (funerary urns), 'Nadu Kal' (menhir), 'Pandava Kuli' (dolmens), Kar-Kidai (stone circle) and Kurrukupadai (Megalithic site)—a culture that dates back to the 2nd millenium B.C.

These have been found in a very large number of sites in South India—at Adichanallur (1926—30), Sanur (1950—52), Amirthamangalam (1955), Kunathur (1956).

Their appearance in Ceylon no doubt points, as Dr. Paravitarane has himself suggested, to a period before the arrival of Vijaya. But what he has failed to note is that it is essentially Dravidian and Tamil. Mr. Deraniyagala similarly found traces of a Megalithic culture in the Northern portion of the Island, but he has failed to connect it with the widespread Megalithic culture noted as belonging to Pre-Aryan times in India. At the International Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnologists held in Vienna in 1952, Furer Haimendorf, defined the Dravidians as, "South Indian iron-age Megalithic builders who introduced iron into India."

The headless statue of Buddha unearthed recently in the Eastern Province is reported to have traces of Amaravati Art. The Amaravati period in Art belongs to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D., and is Andhra and Dravidian. The other finds in the same area are said to reveal the use of the Makara-Thorana. The introduction of the Makara Motif in Indian Art has been recognised as an essentially Pallava innovation. Kanchipuram was the great centre of Buddhism during the Pallava period in the history of the Tamil country—a centre from which Buddhist Art and learning spread throughout South-East Asia, including Ceylon.

We in Ceylon have had the benefit of several waves of cultural influences. It is necessary that we should assess them with a certain amount of objective impartiality and admit the contributions made to our country by others. Our culture in the past has been a synthesis of different cultures, and in evolving a new culture these influences have to be taken into consideration.

S. J. GUNASEGARAM

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