

*Bilingual Discourse and Cross-Cultural Fertilisation: Sanskrit and Tamil in Medieval India*. Edited by WHITNEY COX and VINCENZO VERGIANI with an introduction by DOMINIC GOODALL. Collection Indologie, vol. 121. Pondicherry: INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE PONDICHÉRY / ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT, 2013. Pp. x + 466. Rs. 900, €38.

Whitney Cox and Vincenzo Vergiani are to be congratulated for convening the group of scholars who produced this extraordinarily rewarding collection of essays. The careful, rigorous philology characteristic of IFP/EFEO publications is on full display here, paired with ambitious, even bold assertions about South Indian history and culture.<sup>1</sup> Many of the conclusions ventured are speculative, and the volume embraces this fact. It succeeds, as the editors put it, in demonstrating “how much work remains to be done,” but rather than causing frustration, the articles’ investigative productivity sparks an agreeable anticipation of the more comprehensive studies of the material that many of the contributors are in the process of preparing.

*Bilingual Discourse and Cross-Cultural Fertilisation* brings together eleven essays that the editors have organized into three sections: “Literary audience and religious community”; “Regulating language: Grammars and literary theories”; and “Written in stone? Shifting registers of inscriptional discourse.” The divisions do not imply interpretive limits. Essays range over the literary arts, poesis and technical form, and epigraphy in their pursuit of “very broadly conceived interactions between the two languages.” The emphasis is on their mutuality, the complexities of imbrication as literati moved across linguistic boundaries that Indological scholarship has tended to keep separate. The editors argue that this compartmentalization creates a conceptual impasse that veils the fluidity of medieval Tamil authors’ intellectual milieu. If interactions between Sanskrit and Tamil are disarticulated at discrete moments and in precise terms, the broad contours of the relationship between these two languages emerge (not so for the converse).

Relationship is a capacious term, extending across exchanges, responses, affinities, struggles, and fissures between Sanskrit and Tamil literary cultures. The mechanics are invariably complex, and the contributors seek to identify them clearly. A real advantage here, as the editors note, is the rich data available from the medieval period. Given this temporal focus, the volume engages with Sheldon Pollock’s description of cosmopolitan and vernacular literary interaction developed most prominently in *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (2006). As Pollock has himself noted, Tamil presents challenges to the historical model he asserts, and the editors make a strong case here, arguing that it “fails rather dramatically to adequately account for the long shared history of Sanskrit and Tamil” (p. ix).

Readers may debate the extent to which the collected essays transform the tectonics Pollock maps out. The essays are not all in agreement on this point, and distinguishing “Tamil” in words and discourse is by no means obvious. As these contributions engage points of tension that bespeak linguistic interaction, I was struck by the pervasive silence that veils these processes at work. One of the principal features of multilingual engagement with the literary in south India, it appears, is the authors’ propensity to keep quiet about it. The volume clearly demonstrates, however, that Tamil’s interactions with Sanskrit began early, were sustained in exchanges that valorize Tamil grammatical and literary norms understood to be distinctive and emblematic of cultural worth, and conditioned how Sanskrit was theorized and deployed in the Tamil-speaking south.

Charlotte Schmidt’s discussion of early Kṛṣṇa worship in the south offers a splendid beginning to the volume. She demonstrates with exceeding care how multilayered and complex patterns of literary transmission can be elucidated without taking recourse to unknowable orally transmitted “folk” currents. In her discussion of the manifold iterations of a chosen mytheme, Kṛṣṇa hurling a calf to destroy a demonic tree, she demonstrates literary transposition from Sanskrit to Tamil and back into Sanskrit in a “constant process of confluence and transformation. . . representative for a large part of the invention

1. This publication follows an earlier collaborative study also published by the Institut Français de Pondichéry / École Française d’Extrême Orient (*Passages: Relationships between Tamil and Sanskrit*, edited by Kannan M. and Jennifer Clare, 2009), and in its demand for a high level of language competency, it is well served by its counterpart, which offers a more general introduction to its subject.

of a Kṛṣṇa legend in South India” (pp. 25–26). Schmidt’s study of sculptured portrayals of the mytheme enriches her argument considerably, and her conception of “shadow motifs,” in which a narrative element is transformed decisively enough to create multiple registers in its new site of articulation, offers a promising way to understand the history of narrative reception within a continual process of cultural interaction.

Takanobu Takahashi addresses the Tamil verb *kol* ‘kill’ in an agricultural context, most prominently in the nominalization *kollai*, a difficult term that he argues should be understood as ‘killed land’: land made suitable for cultivation through tree-felling and slash-and-burn clearing. His further hypothesis that this indigenous Tamil equation of preparing a field with killing “must have been a critical and desirable factor for Jains to propagate their religions” (pp. 62–63) asks slim data to bear much weight (must the agricultural usage of *kol* be taken at a patently denotative level), but the questions he raises about Jain associations with internal trade in contradistinction to Buddhist maritime activity merit the further study he proposes.

Arguing that the *akam* landscapes (*tiṅai*) of Caṅkam poetry derive from Sanskritic music theory as most prominently expressed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Herman Tieken continues his attempt to demonstrate that Tamil’s Caṅkam literature “is not as early or as independent as it is often claimed to be” (p. 84). For some, the data used to advance the argument that *tiṅai* calques Sanskritic *jātis* (melody-types) may not be robust enough to warrant the claim that Tamil “seems to expressly acknowledge its indebtedness to a song tradition” (p. 88), but its conscientious presentation is to be commended for offering additional lines of approach for advocates of his larger project and objectors alike.

Eva Wilden’s illuminating study of a select array of technical terms presented in the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram* is a model instance of rigorous philology opening up broad cultural concerns. Her incisive grasp of this difficult material enables her to clarify discernably composite textual moments in this complex text and demonstrate how literature, poetic theory, and outside cultural stimuli such as aligned disciplines of knowledge affected its theoretical reception. The study beautifully illustrates how such moments of textual intersection are far more than translations and can reveal shifting priorities in reception and theoretical deployment.

Whitney Cox pursues the constructive work of twelfth-century scholars attempting to reconcile the vocabulary of Tamil poetics, in particular attention to text-internal emotive states (*meypṭāṭu*), with a shared horizon of problematics stimulated by Abhinavagupta’s exposition of *rasa* theory. In a particularly effective turn, he shows how the commentator Ḵampūraṇar’s lamination of *rasa* and *meypṭāṭu* into a “mutually constituting complex” (p. 146) shaped the priorities of Śāradātanaya’s *Bhāvaprakāśana* as it sought to characterize Sanskrit poetics: the focus on text-internal emotive states was not limited to Tamil, nor was it simply superseded by *rasa* theory. The essay raises crucial questions about the extent of a united textual and conceptual domain in the Tamil south and, consequently, the ability to argue for specific patterns of textual dependence rather than a broad level of shared intellectual conversation.

Vincenzo Vergiani’s study delves deeply into grammar in order to emphasize the complexities of textual adaptation and appropriation found in Tamil grammatical theory, as Pāṇinian concepts are invoked by Tamil authors who change them to suit grammatical realities and their own aims. His argument that the Tamil grammarian Cēṅṅavaraiyar pursued a “clear-cut case of conceptual borrowing” in the use of Bhartṛhari’s characterization of the grammatical object is persuasive, and he pursues the underlying possibilities of shared intellectual community with care, elaborating possibilities of interaction that range from full bilingualism to separate streams “occasionally brushing against one another” (p. 191).

The “apparent minutiae of grammar are . . . pregnant with the ideology of language,” Rich Freeman argues in one of the finest essays in the volume, his study of the fourteenth-century *Lilātilakam*. The close study of grammatical wrangling as regional actors in Kerala sought to formalize their language register as a literary standard—and simultaneously devalue the Tamil acrolect of the Pandya south as one of several regional dialects—beautifully reveals how the demands for “Dravidian-ness” and hyper-Sanskritization were intertwined. In a fascinating turn, he situates the text and the *maṅṅipravāla* literature it describes within the cultural efflorescence of the reign of the “Bhoja of the South,” King Ravi Varma, whose records claim political conquest over other Tamil kingdoms just as the *Lilātilakam* claims linguistic independence from the cultural authority of their polities (p. 228).

Jean-Luc Chevillard's meticulous treatment of Tamil metrics is the most challenging essay in the volume, and the diligent reader is rewarded. As he explores the work of three Tamil commentators, Chevillard reveals the tensions between an authoritative stipulation of the number of metrical lines given in the *Tolkāppiyam* and the commentaries that sought to reckon with it as Tamil poetics engaged with a living body of poetry. His probing questions about the poets' regard for theoretical specifications of their craft are pursued with an extraordinary array of statistical data, and his demonstration of how theoretical definitions adapted to the standards of regional phonology is a remarkable achievement.

"Why use Sanskrit?" Leslie Orr provocatively asks in her study of Sanskrit *āgamas* counterposed with Tamil temple inscriptions "in which Sanskrit words are combined with Tamil ones" (p. 328). With thoughtful attention to chirographic choice, language hybridity, and the conspicuous lack of overlap between Sanskrit and Tamil in reference to techniques of worship, she demonstrates how the valence of Sanskrit words, rather than indicating cosmopolitan prestige, shifts to become useful in the pragmatic context of Tamil worship. Language choice is bound to local strategy, with the knowledge and employment of Sanskrit dependent upon a regional vocabulary maintained by specialists (p. 345). Orr's questions about how local actors understood the discourse they preserved, as bilingual, fluidly hybrid, or an organic whole, are cogent and penetrating, and speak to questions sustained throughout the volume to the extent that it is well served by reading her essay first.

Emmanuel Francis focuses on Tamil panegyrics to challenge Pollock's assertion that, with very few exceptions, the Pallavas (fourth–ninth c.) did not employ literary Tamil in their public records. Appealing to seemingly bilingual lordly titles (*birudas*), usage of an emergent Tamil script, emulation of Sanskrit verse in Tamil, and a set of Tamil verses at Centalai praising a local lord, as well as the poem *Nantikkalampakam* written in honor of Nandivarman III (ninth c.), Francis argues that "Tamil as a cosmopolitan vernacular actually drew minimally on the superposed Sanskrit tradition but maximally, and more and more as time passed, on Tamil antecedents and specific traits" (p. 392). I believe the essay might have been better served by not using Pollock as the continual *pūrvapakṣa*: the direct links Francis asserts between Caṅkam literature, *Nantikkalampakam*, and the Cōla *meṅkīrtis* (p. 392) appear to be *post hoc ergo propter hoc* instances motivated by an opposition to Pollock's theory that isn't necessary to further Francis's own arguments.<sup>2</sup> His study stands on its own merits. It fosters, moreover, a particularly significant question, to which I hope Francis will return as he continues his work on the Pallavas: what does it mean to write "under" a royal dynasty?

Timothy Lubin concludes the volume with a fascinating essay on "legalese" in Old Khmer and Old Javanese, illustrating how its Sanskritic idiom shapes the perceived value of Brahmanical systems of law and administration. By assessing these adaptations in relation to Tamil inscriptional records, the piece is particularly deft at casting into relief "the analogous processes that were always at work in India" (p. 416). Throughout, writing serves the twin purposes of producing codes for training and for crafting documents with legal force (pp. 447–48). Once more, Sanskritic terminology shifts to meet requirements of usage in local context, as regional practices are inserted in śāstric discourse and the scope of theory extends over local purposes.

The use of the word "language" in relation to Sanskrit and Tamil provokes questions, as these essays emphasize. What makes a word "Tamil" or "Sanskrit" when potential marks of distinction are laminated so tightly together? This volume challenges us to realize how many factors are in play. Etymology, chirography, lexicography, morphology and dialectic phonology, semantic shifts of register and genre, ideological adaptation to local purpose: all move together across historically fluid intersections, and we are struck again and again by the silences. These languages recognize each other to the extent that they deny influence. Written in the heartland of literary Tamil, Śāradātanaya's *Bhāvaprakāśana* dispenses with the author's mother tongue as uncouth (10.176–77), and that is the end of it. Did actors

2. Are the discursively minimal *birudas* instances of the literary that Pollock describes? Are the Taḷavānūr Tamil *veṅpā* and the Centalai vv. datable, and are they "Pallava"? Francis's close discussion of one of the twenty-nine Centalai vv., in particular, merits reading this essay alongside Subrahmanya Aiyer's study of them in *Epigraphia Indica* 13. He is much more tentative about dating these verses than Francis's essay indicates (*EI* 13.135–36), and in my understanding states that they refer to the Muttaraiyan lord Kuvāvan Māraṅg's grandson (cf. Francis, p. 377).

within the shared intellectual domain variously described in this volume understand it to be separable into Tamil and Sanskrit knowledge fields? However we are to understand this shared domain, what choices led to its precipitation into languages that keep considerations of the other beyond the bounds of conversation? The scope of silence that authors maintained about their ability to traverse linguistic domains remains an extraordinary fact and an ideological commitment. Why did they choose to write in one language or the other, and what guided their strategies of interlinguistic appropriation? This volume shows the way forward. Rather than discussing Sanskrit and Tamil texts as uniform wholes interacting with one another, here discourse *within* texts is analyzed with care and precision, and broader cultural and historical arguments are grounded solidly in these analyses. Onward, let us hope, into studies that pursue the other southern languages! When volumes of this caliber pursue the focus on Sanskrit, Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit, and Tamil in the company of Kannada, Telugu, Sinhala . . . the rewards will be immense.

BLAKE WENTWORTH  
PORTOLA VALLEY, CALIF.

---

*The Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā: The Earliest Surviving Śaiva Tantra*, vol. 1: *A Critical and Annotated Translation of the Mūlasūtra, Uttarasūtra and Nayasūtra*. Edited by DOMINIC GOODALL in collaboration with ALEXIS SANDERSON and HARUNAGA ISAACSON with contributions of NIRAJAN KAFLR, DIWAKAR ACHARYA, and others. Collection Indologie, no. 128, Early Tantra Series, no. 1. Pondichéry: INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE PONDICHÉRY, Paris: ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT, Hamburg: ASIEN-AFRIKA-INSTITUT, UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG, 2015. Pp. 662. Rs. 1200, €52.

This is a very important publication in the Early Tantra Series from the French Institute of Pondicherry, the École française d'Extrême Orient, and the University of Hamburg. The overall aim of the series is to publish critical editions, studies, and translations of texts preserved by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project and from the collection of the Śaiva manuscripts of Pondicherry. The publication of the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā* is singularly important because it is the earliest surviving Śaiva Tantra and the “corner-stone” of the Early Tantra project, the earliest witness being a ninth-century manuscript found in the Nepalese collection. Although the main editor Dominic Goodall carried out the bulk of the work, reading the editors’ acknowledgements we see that this is very much a product of a collaborative effort sustained over a number of years.

A preface establishes the importance of the *Niśvāsa* for the history of Tantrism, showing its relation to earlier traditions. If we restrict the term “tantric Śaivism” to the Mantramārga (the Path of Mantras) as distinct from the earlier religions from which it arose, the Atimārga (the Higher or Outer Path) comprising the renunciate orders of the Pāśupatas, then the *Niśvāsa* marks a continuity between the two systems. Building on the work of Alexis Sanderson about the Atimārga, the editors show a doctrinal continuity especially in cosmography that is used in the context of initiation. In contrast to the Atimārga, the Mantramārga emphasised the two goals of liberation (*mukti*) and enjoyment of supernatural powers (*bhukti*), both attained by the use of spells (*mantra*, *vidyā*) in complex ritual and both requiring initiation (*dīkṣā*). Mantras for magical rituals and initiation are not new, being shared by the Atimārga and even by Vedic sacrifice, but what marks out the Mantramārga as distinctive is the way in which these elements are combined and the introduction of new practices. The mantras used in the *Niśvāsa* are not Vedic, with the possible exception of the five *brahmantras*, and initiation has become a transformative rite necessary for liberation, not merely allowing access to the tradition and its texts, but cutting the bonds of the soul by Śiva’s grace who acts through the initiating master, severing the soul’s bondage to the cosmos with mantras. This combination of soteriological and magical mantras, and the liberating force of initiation, ensured the appeal of the Mantramārga to a broad range of social groups and ensured its great success. The *Niśvāsa* marks the emergence of this new religion and influenced Buddhist sources as well. Indeed there is a non-soteriological common ground