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A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Our Best Wishes for a happy, prosperous and academically glorious New Year to all members, readers, contributors and well-wishers of DLA, IJDL, ISDL and DLA NEWS

ANNOUNCING THE 40th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTS

18-20 June 2012

at

HYDERABAD
(Andhra Pradesh)

Organized by

Central University, Hyderabad
Dravidian Linguistics Association

&

International School of Dravidian Linguistics
Thiruvananthapuram

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION FROM TAMIL CLASSICS TO OTHER DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

15-24 February 2012

The DLA/ISDL propose to conduct a ten-day Translation Workshop-cum-Training Programme for research level (M.Phil./Ph.D./Lecturer/Asst. Professor) academics. It is a residential training programme in which problems of translation from Tamil to Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit and Arabic will be taken up for discussion and detailed academic interaction. Subjects of discussion include:

1. Sangam and Post-Sangam Classics
2. Linguistic/Grammatical and Literary Theories of Classical and Post-Classical Tamil
3. Social, Cultural and Political Aspects of Ancient Tamil Nadu, Study of Epic Literature with special reference to *Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai*
4. Language and Culture of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan and Other Related Areas covering a period up to 6th century A.D.

CONTENTS

Announcing the 40th AICDL	1
Workshop on Problems of Translation	1
On the Pre-Asokan Origin of the Ancient Tamil Script (Tamil-Brahmi)	2
Guruvayur Narayaniyam Fete	2
Comments	3
Guest to ISDL / DLA	4
Centenary of <i>Janaganamana</i>	4
Seminar cum Workshop on Linguistic Knowledge in Language Technology	4
Neglect by Linguists	5
Traces of Proto-Tamil-Malayalam Linguistic Features ...	5
ISDL Chairman to visit DLA	6
Classical Tamil Literature ...	6

Interested candidates may apply to the Hon. Director immediately.

ON THE PRE-ASOKAN ORIGIN OF THE ANCIENT TAMIL SCRIPT (TAMIL BRAHMI)

In the *DLA News* October 2011, K. Ravindran has drawn the correct conclusion that "the Tamil Brahmi Script was used in ancient Tamilakam during pre-Asokan periods". Since then, another Porunthal sample has been AMS (Accelerated Mass Spectroscopy) dated to 450 B.C. (*The Hindu*, 15.10.2011). This brief note of mine draws the threads together and points out that the two Porunthal datings (August 11: 490 B.C.; October 11: 450 B.C.) are clinching evidences for my hypothesis in "Date of Early Tamil Epigraphs" (*Journal of Tamil Studies* No. 65, June 2004) and that of the doyen among Indian epigraphists, Dr. K.V. Ramesh in his "*Indian Inscriptions - A Study in Comparison and Contrast, 2006*" (Indian Council of Historical Research : Southern Regional Centre; Law College Premises, 1, Palace Road, Bangalore - 560 009), viz. the hypothesis that the Damili (Tamil-Brahmi) script was definitely pre-Asokan and that the Asokan script itself ought to have been evolved by suitably modifying the pre-Asokan Damili script. Dr. Ramesh's brochure should be required reading for any serious scholar of South Indian and Indian Epigraphy. In this brief notice, it is possible to mention only the basic postulates of Ramesh (to which there can be no reasonable cavilling by anyone who studies his works).

1. There was the Damili script, fully answering to the phonetic needs of ancient Tamil in use in the Pandyan tract of the extreme south of the peninsula even before the days of Asoka, though we have, at present, no means of asserting how much before.
2. The script is found used, without the need for using any Indo-Aryan phonetic symbols, not found in ancient Tamil, for writing out a three-letter word *arama*, of Buddhist import on a potsherd found at the 5th - 4th century B.C. levels of an excavated site in northern Sri Lanka, which sherd should have belonged to the boat people who were plying between the eastern coastline of North India and northern Sri Lanka.
3. Those very boat people carried this Damili (Polindi) script first to Bhattiprolu and then to Bengal, eastern UP and Rajasthan, all the time displaying gradual transformations as demanded by Prakrit and Sanskrit phonetics.
4. It is this script that the composers, writers and engravers of the Asokan edicts used in their writings, introducing in that process, many far-reaching changes and developments which we find in the North Indian vernacular script.

As detailed in my 2004 paper, the dating 850 B.C. - 660 B.C. made in 1970 for the findings at Korkai excavations (in which I was also involved) also supports the Porunthal date. So does the Adichanallur 2005 findings dated prior to 500 B.C., as mentioned by K. Ravindran. A very detailed justification of the pre-Asokan dating of numerous Ancient Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) inscriptions is given by K. Rajan in his 2007 paper "Archaeological Context of Tamil-Brahmi Script - Some Issues".

The Hindu, 29.7.11 attributes to the eminent Epigraphist Dr. Y. Subbarayalu the view: "the word 'vayra' is an adapted name from the Prakrit or Sanskrit 'Vajra' and it is difficult to explain convincingly the generally dominant Prakrit elements in Tamil Brahmi inscriptions found on rock and potsherds if Tamil-Brahmi is indigenous and pre-Asokan, and transported from South India to North India". In the light of the probable scenario of northern Indians adopting the Ancient Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) script in the manner suggested by Ramesh and under the chronology mentioned by him, this difficulty will not arise at all. Further, Tamil etymologists and scholars like K. Aracendiran and R.L. Haldorai point out that even if *Vajra* is Prakrit, it is likely to have been derived originally from a Tamil root *Vayir*: *Val - val - vay - vayir* = "hard, adamant, short", as already established by G. Devaneyan in his *Vata Moli Varalaru* (1966). There is unanimity among all scholars (e.g. Burrow, Emeneau, Trautmann et al) that at the time of intrusion of Indo-Aryan speakers in circa 1500 B.C., Dravidian languages would have been the vernaculars even in north-western India (Indus civilization area) and North India.

Natana Kasinathan

GURUVAYUR NARAYANIYAM FETE

In a cultural function organised in connection with the 425th anniversary of *Narayaniyam* at Melputhur Auditorium, Guruvayoor on 16th December 2011, Dr. M. Leelavathy, President of the DLA, spoke on the relation between the *Bhagavatha* and *Narayaniya*. She dwelt with the indebtedness of the poet in the epic.

The Kerala State Minister for Health, Sri. Adoor Prakash inaugurated the seminar chaired by poet Akkitham Achuthan Namboodiri, winner of Jnanpith (Poetry Award).

N.P. Unni

M. Sreenathan's *Nostratic - Genesis and Current Status* in *DLA News* December 2011 is a good summary of the issue.

2. The current consensus in all the relevant disciplines is that language, i.e. the Mother Tongue of Man, evolved only once and that too only among the species *Antomically Modern Humans* to which all the 700 crores of people now living on the earth belong; that the Mother Tongue had evolved before AMH migrated out of Africa (just a few thousands migrated) circa 70,000 BP - 50,000 BP along the Continental Shelf via South India right up to Australia by 50000 BP; and that scholarly hypotheses on macro families like Nostratic or Eurasiatic (a slight variant of Nostratic, postulated by J.H. Greenburg) which macro families can be considered to be the daughters of the Mother Tongue are not to be looked askance. To cite only a select few among the latest authorities:

Chris Stringer. 2000. "Palaeoanthropology: Coasting out of Africa", *Nature* Vol. 405.4 May 2000, pp. 203-205.

Andrew Carstairs McCarthy. "Origins of Language". Chapter 1 of Mark Aronoff and another, 2001, *The Handbook of Linguistics*. London: Blackwell.

Masica, Colin P. 2001. In his paper in *The Yearbook of South Asian Languages and Linguistics*.

R.M.W. Dixon. 2002. *Australian Languages*. Cambridge University Press.

Partha P. Majumdar. 2003. "Peopling of India: Insights from Genetics" in David N. Cooper, *Encyclopaedia of the Human Genome* Vol. 4, pp. 538-541.

Rudolph Both & Chris Knight (Eds.). 2009. *The Grade of Language: Studies in the Evolution of Language*. (Mentions on page 15: "In any event, long before anatomically Modern Humans left Africa, our ancestors would appear to have been cognitively modern", i.e. would have acquired language in the modern sense.)

Richard K. Larsen and two others. 2010. *The Evolution of Human Language: Biolinguistic Perspectives*. Cambridge. pp. 122-123.

W. Tecumsch Fitch. 2010. *The Evolution of Language*. Cambridge University Press. (Mentions on p. 273: "human linguistic and cognitive capacities were already

fixed in our species by the time the first wave of human pioneers exited Africa and made it to Australia at least 50000 years ago".)

Quentin D. Atkinson. "Phonemic Diversity supports a Serial Founder Effect Model of Language Expansion from Africa". *Science* Vol. 332, 15 April 2011. (Summary published in *DLA News* September 2011.)

Michael Dunn et al. 2011. "Evolved Structure of Language shows Lineage-Specific Trends in Word-Order Universals". *Nature* Vol. 473, 5 May 2011, pp. 79-82.

3. In his *IJDL* papers *A Word for Horse in Chinese and Dravidian* (June 2007) and *Fortunatov's Law and Dravidian* (January 2010), he has set out in detail how the close affinities between Proto-Dravidian and Proto-Australian Aboriginal languages are likely to go back to many tens of thousands of earlier than 10,000 BP, since the Australian Aborigines remain cut off from the rest of the world after circa 10000 BP. His hypothesis endorses:

- (i) a remote genetic connection, perhaps earlier than 10000 BP among Dravidian, Elamite, Ural-Altaic and Japanese suggested by K.V. Zvelebil (1990) in *Dravidian Linguistics - An Introduction*. P. 144.
- (ii) Joseph H. Greenberg's October 2000 observation to Bhadriraju Krishnamurti (see page 46 of his *The Dravidian Languages*, 2003) that Dravidian could be a sister of Eurasiatic (more or less akin to Nostratic Macro family) and not its sister; and
- (iii) Colin Masica's view that pre-Dravidian might go back even to the original peopling of the world (see Masica 2001).

4. In the light of the above, there are now valid grounds to hypothesise that proto-Dravidian speakers have been autochthons of South India and India many tens thousands years ago before 10000 BP. The ruling dogma of descent of proto-Dravidian or Dravidian speakers into India and South India after 3000 B.C. or so (as part of farming dispersals or as part of movement of Megalithic burial tradition) is no longer tenable. Once the erroneous earlier model of "Dravidian descent" into India circa 3000 B.C. is replaced by the model of Dravidian (or proto Dravidian) Ascent, in the light of the latest findings in relevant disciplines mentioned above, many real insights in Historical and Comparative linguistics (including Nostratic studies) are likely to emerge. Most valuable will

be studies on connections of Dravidian with (i) Australian Aboriginal languages and (ii) Papuan languages. Studies from the Nostratic angle on relations between Dravidian languages on the one hand and other Indic languages ("Indo-Aryan" and Austro-Asiatic, etc.) on the other will further promote National Integration.

P. Ramanathan

GUEST TO ISDL / DLA

Professor Mahidas Bhattacharya, Professor of Linguistics, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and a well-known Linguist, made a visit to DLA/ISDL campus set up in honour of Prof. Dr. V.I. Subramoniam. Professor Bhattacharya worked in the Bengali Unit of ISDL for 14 years and in 2009 he left for Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

In a meeting chaired by the Hon. Director Dr. M. Rama, on 19th December 2011, Prof. Bhattacharya spoke about his long association with ISDL and his present activities at Jadavpur University. He also spoke about the role of ISDL in his career as a linguist. He mentioned the importance of running a Bengali unit in the southernmost part of the country as it is maintaining Kerala-Bengali relations for a long period of time.

Dr. Rama adorned a shawl on behalf of DLA and ISDL. Dr. T.P. Sankarankutty Nair, Senior Fellow, ISDL presented him with a memento on behalf of the Institute of Kerala Studies. He spoke at length about Prof. Bhattacharya and his dedication to ISDL and Dr. V.I.S. Mr. T. Madhava Menon, Senior Fellow, ISDL spoke in the meeting and participated in the discussion that followed. Some of the academic and administrative staff of ISDL were present in the meeting.

Mr. Sourav Chakraborty, Lecturer, Bengali Unit, ISDL, tendered a vote of thanks.

Sourav Chakraborty

CENTENARY OF 'JANAGANAMANA'

The centenary of the National Song *Janaganamana* composed by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was celebrated at DLA on 28th December 2011. Mr. Saurav Chakraborty, the Bengali scholar, spoke on the occasion detailing the history of the song and the controversy generated by it.

Dr. M. Rama, Dean, DLA presided over the function. Sri. T. Madhava Menon, Dr. N.P. Unni and Dr. Naduvattom Gopalakrishnan participated in the discussion.

N.P. Unni

SEMINAR CUM WORKSHOP ON LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE IN LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Linguistics, Madurai Kamaraj University in collaboration with the Linguistic Data Consortium For Indian Languages (LDC-IL), Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore organized a five-day National Seminar cum Workshop for Assistant Professors and Research Scholars on *Linguistic Knowledge in Language Technology*. The inaugural function was held at Sethupathi Arangu on 21st November 2011. Dr. M. Rajiakodi, Registrar (i/c), Madurai Kamaraj University presided over the function and delivered the inaugural address. He stressed the importance of the usage of computers in modern world. Education or Language without the knowledge of computer is not valuable. Those who are not having knowledge of computers are considered to be illiterate. He also stressed on the importance of three things in life: 1. Improvement of communication, 2. Improve computer knowledge or acquire more computer knowledge, 3. Personality development. His lecture sorted out the prominence of Tamil language usage in the computer and the development of softwares solely for our own language.

Dr. L. Ramamoorthy, Head, LDC-IL gave a brief sketch on the activities of the LDC-IL, Ministry of HRD, CIIL, Mysore. He pointed out the critical situation of the languages of India, which are yet to be brought to the next level. He insisted on the importance of Machine Translation and the Systematic aspects of language; how language technology can rescue the endangered languages; the role of linguistics to develop language technology; how human knowledge predicts the language through computer; computer-analysed, computer-mediated grammar which is the objective of the LDC-IL. Dr. A. Athithan, Head, Department of Linguistics, Madurai Kamaraj University gave the Welcome address and Dr. V. Renuga Devi, Professor, the organizing secretary of the programme proposed the vote of thanks.

The programme was organized for five days from 21st to 25th November. Illuminating and thought-provoking lectures on topics such as Phonetics, Morphology, Syntax,

Semantics, Approaches to NLP, Corpus Linguistics, Encoding and Balanced Corpus, Linguistic Knowledge and Corpus Extraction, Linguistic Analysis, Local Word Grouping, POS Tagging, Spellchecker, Word Net and Syntactic Parsing were given by eminent professors like G. Ravisankar, V. Thiruvalluvan, K. Rangan, V. Renuga Devi, S. Arulmozi, S. Rajendran, V. Dhanalakshmi, R. Vijay, N. Deiva Sundaram, M. Ganesan and S. Thennarasu.

Nearly 60 participants hailing from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, Pondicherry University, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamil University, Thanjavur, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Madurai Kamaraj University and from various colleges in Madurai attended the seminar cum workshop. All the participants felt the seminar cum workshop was very informative, useful and thought-provoking.

V. Renuga Devi

NEGLECT BY LINGUISTS: GOPALAKRISHNA GANDHI

It was out of the word *calico* that the place name Calicut emerged. Calicut was for a time an important centre of calico business. But linguists or place-name experts do not care to explore further in this direction. So we have no definite views about places and words as linguistic research is in a poor shape, observed Sri. Gopalakrishna Gandhi, Ex Governor of West Bengal State and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. He was delivering the 20th Sree Chithira Thirunal Memorial Lecture at the Kanakakunnu Palace at Thiruvananthapuram on 24th November 2011. He paid glowing tributes to the late Maharaja who really modernised Travancore princely state. The focus of his lecture was on Gandhi and Kerala. Gandhiji during his five visits studied Kerala's problems at length and in-depth. Gandhiji treated the temple entry Proclamation of the Maharaja in 1936 as a miracle of the century.

Further research in linguistics and place names proves to be the need of the hour. There is no meaning in lamenting over work not done by linguists. Sri. K.P.S. Menon (Jr.) IFS, Ex Foreign Secretary presided over the function. Sree Uthradam Thirunal, the head of the Travancore Royal Family, honoured selected members of the Samiti. Sri. T. Ravindran Thampi, Secretary offered a welcome address while Sri. Sarat Chandra Prasad tendered a vote of thanks.

T.P. Sankarankutty Nair

TRACES OF PROTO-TAMIL- MALAYALAM LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN EARLY GRAECO-ROMAN NOTES

(Continued from last issue)

Phonemic inventory

Segmental Phonemes

1. Vowels

<i>i</i>	High	Front
<i>e</i>	Mid	Front
<i>a</i>	Low	Central
<i>u</i>	High	Back
<i>o</i>	Mid	Back

2. Consonants

<i>p</i>	voiceless	labial	stop
<i>t</i>	-do-	dental	-do-
<i>ɽ</i>	-do-	alveolar	trilled continuant, e.g. <i>paralia</i>
<i>ʈ</i>	-do-	retroflex	stop
<i>k</i>	-do-	velar	stop
<i>m</i>	voiced	bilabial	nasalstop
<i>ɳ</i>	-do-	dental	-do-stop
<i>n</i>	-do-	alveolar	-do-stop
<i>l</i>	-do-	-do-	lateral

Here, it is to be kept in mind that the Graeco-Roman language used in geographers' notes is influenced by the peculiar phonetic laws of their language which does not admit Dravidian group of consonants: alveolar stop *ɽ*, alveolar nasal *n*, retroflex palatal *ʈ* and retroflex *ʈ*. Limited corpus gives the following phonetic correspondences.

1. initial *a* usually remains unchanged. eg. *aoi* (*Āy*) *algum* (*akil*): exception *oruz* (*arisi* - rice)
2. medial *a* also remains unchanged. eg. *karpion* (*karuppu*)
3. *e* appears as *e*. E.g. *podoperoura* (might be *putuppērūr*)
4. *i* is always represented by *i*. eg. *muziris* (*mucirī*)
5. *o* appears as *u*. eg. *tuki* (*tōkai*)
6. Consonants



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- k* by *k*. eg. *kērobothras L*, *karoura* (*kanūr* - ancient capital of Cēra)
- p* by *b*. -do-
- c* by *z*. Muziris
- v* by *b*. Becare, Balita (Vaikkara, Viliññam)
- t* by *t*. *tuki*
- r* by *r*. *onuz* (rice)
- ñc* by *ng*. ginger
- l* by *l*. *Balita*
- ññ* by *t*. -do-
- l* by *l*. *paraliya* (*parali*)
- k* by *g*. *Armagara* (*Dharmmakara?*)

Robert Caldwell observes: Though the Greek geographers have not given us any information respecting the language of India, beyond little is furnished by the names of places contained in their works, the information derived from those lists is exceedingly interesting. The earliest extant traces of the Dravidian languages which possess reliable authority are those with which we have been furnished by the ancient Greeks; and from an examination of the words which they have recorded, we seem to be justified in drawing the conclusion, not only that the Dravidian languages have remained almost unaltered for the last two thousand years, but probably also that the principle dialects that now prevail have a separate existence at the commencement of the Christian era and prevailed at that period in the very same districts of country in which we now find them (*Comp. Grammar* 105).

The phonological features enumerated here uphold the view that the Proto Tamil Malayalam spoken at the dawn of Christian era in the West coast possessed its own distinctive linguistic elements (it can be termed more correctly as '*malaināṭṭuvalakkam*') which are found still in Malayalam. However, in later Tamil, the archaic

phonological features noted here became extinct. In the retention of Proto Dravidian linguistic elements, Malayalam stands far ahead among Dravidian languages.

Naduvattom Gopalakrishnan

ISDL CHAIRMAN TO VISIT DLA

Dr. R. Krishnamurthy, Editor, *Dinamalar* and Chairman of ISDL will be visiting DLA on 23rd January 2012 between 10 a.m. and noon.

CLASSICAL TAMIL LITERATURE AND VEDIC CULTURE

(Continued from last issue)

Not only was there the extensive use of horses in warfare during the period of classical Tamil but also the horse became part of 'traditional conventions' (*Tolkappiyam*: 1552), which supports the stand that Tamil culture was fully or partially influenced by the Vedic culture as the horse is one of the important cultural factors of Vedic people like *veeLvi*. It may be further stated that the Vedic gods, namely, NeDumal / Tirumal - the god of the Mullai landscape, Indiran - the god of the Marutam landscape and VaruNan, the god of the Neytal landscape became part of the classical Tamil cultural tradition. As the other two landscapes, namely, KuRinci and Paalai, have Tamil gods, namely, Ceey / Murugan and Turkai respectively, it seems that this must have been a transition period.

[To be continued]

N. Ramaswami

Contribution to Prof. V.I. Subramoniam Endowment Fund

TOTAL AS OF LAST MONTH	Rs. 3,41,020.00
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