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PORUNTHAL - TAMIL BRAHMI - NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

Megalithic cyst burials were excavated in Porunthal village southwest of the pilgrim town of Palani, and during these excavations some interesting facts came to light regarding the age of the Tamil-Brahmi script. The excavation of the site was carried out in 2009 and 2010 under the supervision of Dr. K. Rajan of the Pondicherry University. The cyst burials yielded several grave goods, which included a four-legged jar containing 2 kg. of paddy inside and two ring stands inscribed with Tamil-Brahmi script, read as *va-y-ra*. Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating of the paddy by the Beta Analysis Inc., USA assigned the paddy to 490 BCE (*The Hindu*, 29.8.2011). As the entire grave goods in the cyst burial can only be in one deposit at the time of construction of cyst burial, it can be construed that the age of the paddy and the age of the Tamil-Brahmi script shall be the same. The Tamil-Brahmi script, read as *va-y-ra*, may be the name of the chieftain whose bones were kept in the cyst.

An earlier discovery of paddy and husk was made during the excavation of the Megalithic Urn burial site at Adichanalloor, 24 km. east of Tirunelveli town. The A.S.I. recommenced excavations in February 2004, after a gap of 100 years, and in subsequent excavations, one hundred and fifty seven Urns were excavated. The paddy and husk were kept in smaller grave pots inside the larger Urns, where the skeleton was also kept.

Motifs showing a tall majestic woman and a swathe of standing paddy near her were found on broken pieces of Urn kept inside larger Urn. A piece of writing was found inside an Urn and that an epigraphist suggested that it is in Tamil Brahmi, though in a rudimentary form, and the seven-letter script was read as *ka ri a ra va(na) ta*. In this case also, the inscribed script may represent the name of the person whose bones were found in the Urn.

In the Porunthal case, the attempt had been to find out the age of the script in relation to the age of paddy found in the cyst and the result is that the script belongs to 490 BCE. In the Adichanalloor case, on the basis of 'preliminary thermo-luminescence dating', the A.S.I. officials arrived at the conclusion that the pottery found at the site, including the pots found in the Urn, might date back to circa 500 B.C. (*The Hindu*, 17.2.2005). Though a confirmation is required by carbon 14 dating of the materials found in the Urn, the result of such a test has not been published. The suggestion that the inscription is in the Tamil-Brahmi script has not been subjected to scrutiny by other authoritative scholars in the field.

The paddy found in the smaller grave pots have a bearing on the date of the script, and there is no evidence of any AMS dating of paddy having been undertaken to arrive at a conclusion on the date of the script. The conclusive evidence at Porunthal and the findings so far in Adichanalloor would go on to prove that:

1. The Tamil-Brahmi script was used in ancient Tamilakom during Pre-Asokan periods, and
2. There was cultivation of paddy in Tamilakom around 500 B.C.

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K. Ravindran

Deputy Accountant General (Retd.), Thiruvananthapuram

'ELAVA' AND 'KORACHA' LANGUAGES

Two Peculiar Dravidian Languages spoken in Hyderabad-Karnataka Area

Elava

'Elava' is the common name used by the people who speak the language. In north Karnataka, the people called 'Helava' were engaged in telling the family history and forecasting the future of the family. They used to visit each of the selected houses at different villages and tell the family history and future events. Each householder presents them money, cloth and grains, etc. every year. Helava in Kannada means 'Teller'. But as per our experience, Helavas and Elavas are not one and the same. Another meaning for Helava in Kannada is 'lame'. This is also not connected with the people speaking Elava. Elavas are nomadic people who entered Karnataka long back from Andhra Pradesh. Ezhavas of Kerala State are not connected with Elavas of North Karnataka.

There is another community called 'Korava' or 'Korama', among whom women are engaged in foretelling. They are called 'Koravanji'. The main occupation of the Koravas is preparing baskets, mats, etc. by using bamboo. They also recite a local musical instrument called *Sanadi* (*Shahanayi*) at marriages and other ceremonies. Koravas are also called Bhajantri, Konchi Koravas. But Elavas do not recite Sanadi. The rest of the occupations, foretelling and knitting baskets, etc. are common to both Elavas and Koravas. Both of these communities have scattered over the whole of north Karnataka areas. Koravas are found in many parts of Karnataka State. Korcha, Korava (Korama, Bhajantri, Kunchikorava) and Elavas are differentiated from one another at social, territorial and religious levels. They may be divided into different exogamous clans. So far no serious study of these people has been carried out. The Koravas, Koramas, Kunchikoravas and Elavas are semi-nomadic people. Presently, a number of families have settled in a few areas of North Karnataka. Elava people opine that they have migrated from Andhra Pradesh. They do not know their original place. Elava language is something like a mixture of Telugu and Kannada.

According to Elava, there are hundreds of sects in their caste. They are listed under Scheduled Castes. Though Elavas are engaged in basket-making and mat-knitting, some of them are beggars; some are engaged in piggery, poultry-farming, etc. They classify themselves into different sects, of which four major sects are as follows:

(1) 'ca:pi' Elavas

(3) 'a:di' / 'alli' Elavas

(2) 'haladi' Elavas

(4) 'kukkani' Elavas

Apart from these, they are having nine to ten sub-sects, namely, andakulaku, abbattina:ru, boyinga:ru, bhi:masettaru, ta:ramani, pura:tanallo:ru, vankga:lu, ammate:ru, pettalo:lu.

Elavas worship a few gods, and they have faith in different religious customs. Therefore, though they are Dravidian, some of them worship even non-Hindu gods.

Elavas are found in the following places of Gulbarga District:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Shahapur Taluka | Gogi, Doranahalli, Doddanagar, Maddarki, Hosageri. |
| 2. Surpur Taluka | Evur, Karnali, Yamanur, Kakkri, Hunasagi. |
| 1. Jevaragi | Yalwar, Chigarahalli, Magodi, Ijri, Kelluru. |
| 2. Yadagiri Taluku | Nalawar, Kumbarahalli, Malakappa halli, Ramappa halli. |
| 3. Sindagi Taluku | Kembhavi, Yalagi, Yankanchi, Malli (B). |

Koracha

According to the people who speak Koracha, it is mainly spoken in the districts of Bellary, Chitradurga and Shimoga of Karnataka State. The population of Koracha is not known exactly. As per the senior speakers, it is more than 2,00,000. Korachas are semi-nomadic people. They have migrated long back to Karnataka probably through Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The main occupation of Korachas earlier was making ropes, but presently they are engaged in different occupations including agriculture and other petty jobs.

The name Koracha is wrongly connected with Korava / Korama. Korava or Korama is entirely different from Koracha. Korava / Korama people are spread over North Karnataka. They are also semi-nomadic people. They probably entered North Karnataka from north-east Andhra Pradesh. Korava / Korama tell family history, fortune, tattooing, reciting Shahanayi, etc. whereas Korachas prepare ropes and sell them to the farmers; secondly, they used to act as the mediators for selling bullocks or selling the bullocks directly to the farmers. No matrimonial relations are established even today among Korachas and Koravas. Korava / Korama people celebrate Diwali festival whereas Koracha people do not celebrate Diwali. The differences exist in Korava / Korama and Koracha languages. A few examples are quoted here:

| Koracha word | Korava / Korama word | Meaning |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <i>hangoddu</i> | <i>elimi / elmud</i> | 'buffalo' |
| <i>pusa</i> | <i>kosti</i> | 'cat' |
| <i>lekka</i> | <i>kellu / pon</i> | 'money' |
| <i>mavu</i> | <i>kali</i> | 'powder' |
| <i>tanyo</i> | <i>swala</i> | 'jawar' |
| <i>pondu</i> | <i>mundu</i> | 'wife' |
| <i>tepo / ava</i> | <i>ayya</i> | 'father' |
| <i>maccado</i> | <i>perimava</i> | 'son-in-law' |
| <i>irdi</i> | <i>randpat</i> | 'twenty' |
| <i>kalitinu</i> | <i>serinu / sermuggu</i> | 'take meals' |
| <i>soyyi</i> | <i>chevi</i> | 'ear' |

The following words found in Korava are absent in Koracha:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>hakkli</i> ('vegetable') | <i>pesigi</i> ('hunger') |
| <i>kouūi</i> ('chaddar') | <i>setti</i> ('pot') |
| <i>sadma</i> ('house') | <i>ava</i> ('father') |
| <i>amma</i> ('mother') | <i>mil</i> ('stop') |
| <i>varaga</i> ('stomach') | |

Similarities: Some words resemble in both the languages:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>magara</i> ('hair') | <i>sedī</i> ('tree') |
| <i>tanni</i> ('water') | <i>arisi</i> ('rice') |
| <i>abasedi</i> ('tamarind tree') | <i>ond</i> |
| <i>rond</i> | <i>mud</i> |
| <i>nal aro ett</i> | <i>ommida</i> |
| <i>pat</i> | <i>padnond</i> |
| <i>payid</i> | <i>padnud</i> |
| <i>padnog</i> | <i>padnut</i> |
| <i>ondkadimi</i> | |

These similarities are on peripheral level and may be due to the influence of Telugu, Tamil languages. But, interestingly, a lady-informant told us that their language is called 'Kudra', which may be attributed to Kudukh - a North Indian Dravidian language.

These facts reveal that both Koracha and Korava may be dialects of Proto North or South Dravidian language but they have developed many differences in the course of time. Hence, it is to be established that Koracha and Korava languages are two different languages.

In Andhra Pradesh, Koracha is known as Korasollu (Korasa + sollu). Korasollu is spoken in Anantpur and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh State. Koracha people are found abundantly in Karnataka,

especially in the districts of Bellary, Chitradurga, Davangere. Koracha people are thickly populated in Kudlgi taluk of Bellary district, Harapanahalli and Chennageri taluks of Davangere district, Jagalur taluk of Chitradurga district.

Koracha people classify themselves into four sub-sects as follows:

1. Putti Koracha
2. Kō:ti Koracha
3. Eccina Koracha
4. Kunchi Koracha

But, Korava sub-castes are different. A few may be mentioned: kawa:di, shya:ta:pa:di, mya:na:pa:di and mya:nagutti.

One interesting thing is the gender and number system of Koracha language. The gender-number system resembles the system of north Dravidian group of languages such as Brahui, Kudukh, Malto, etc. No gender distinction is made in third person, singular and plural. Plural suffixes do not resemble South or South Central Dravidian group of languages. I quote here a few examples. We can compare the person singular and plural forms of Brahui with Koracha:

Third person (Koracha)

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Singular | Masculine <i>adu</i> ('he') | Plural <i>ayya</i> ('they') |
| | Feminine <i>adu</i> ('she') | <i>ayya</i> ('they') |
| | Neuter <i>adu</i> ('it') | <i>ayya</i> ('those') |

- E.g. 1. *ada sa:ki ho:su* ('He / she / it went to school')
 2. *ayya utuku vanta* ('They / those came to the home')

Third person (Brahui)

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Singular | Masculine <i>o:d</i> ('he') | Plural <i>o:fk</i> ('they') |
| | Feminine <i>o:d</i> ('she') | <i>o:fk</i> ('they') |
| | Neuter <i>o:d</i> ('it') | <i>o:fk</i> ('those') |

Another interesting thing is that the Koracha plural suffixes are peculiar. They resemble neither South Dravidian nor North Dravidian group of languages. One plural suffix resembles Kui language, i.e. *nga*.

- E.g. *sedenga* ('trees'), *kellunga* ('stones'),
paganga ('fruits'), *gorya:nga* ('sheep').

The rest of the suffixes are peculiar to other Dravidian languages:

- E.g. *naya - akkana:ya* ('elder sisters')
amanaya ('elder brothers')

- tassinaya* ('younger sisters')
sinna:ya ('young fellows')

ga - punvuga ('germs')

a:ya - kartaya ('black men')

valla:ya ('white men')

We may conclude that the Koracha is a peculiar Dravidian language probably emerged from a dialect of North Dravidian group of languages migrated to the South through the area of Central group of languages. It has undergone the strong influence of Tamil-Malayalam group of languages since long. Koracha-speaking people have then migrated to Karnataka and settled in a few districts surrounding Bellary District. Presently, it has strong influence of Kannada. Almost every Koracha man speaks Kannada language.

Sangamesh Saundattimath
Professor Emeritus

CONNECTION BETWEEN DRAVIDIAN AND OTHER LANGUAGES

Sri. P. Ramanathan's recent communication to Hon. Smt. D. Purandeswari, Minister of State for Higher Education and Languages, Ministry of Human Resources Development, New Delhi is given here.

The news item in *The Hindu*, Chennai dated 2nd June 2011 [reproduced later in this article] 'Polish University to set up Tamil Chair' might have received your attention. Prof. Benon Zbigniew Szalck, Chair of Heuristics (Head), Faculty of Arts, University of Szczecin, Poland has with remarkable scholarship and insight brought out in a dozen books the close similarities (in phonemics, vocabulary, grammar and syntax) between Dravidian/proto-Dravidian on the one hand and Sumerian, Egyptian, pre Indo-European languages of Europe (like Lycian, Lydian, Carian, Etruscan and Basque), Chinese, Georgian and Mayan on the other hand. In recent years, the converging findings in the related academic disciplines [Palaeo-Anthropology and Human Genetics (including Mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome studies) and Historical Linguistics including Nostratic/Eurasian studies and Mother Tongue studies] have made possible the following hypotheses, viz.:

- i. Anatomically, Modern Humans (the species to which all the 700 crores of us on the earth belong) evolved in Africa circa 1,50,000 years ago from a family or small group. Mother tongue of man is likely to have evolved by 70000 BP when AMH moved out of Africa (just a few thousands moved out) and populated all the rest of the world.
- ii. Proto-Dravidian may go back to the original peopling of the world by AMH out of Africa circa 70000 BP:

J.H. Greenberg: proto-Dravidian could be a sister of Nostratic/Eurasian Macrofamily (whose daughters are Indo-European, Ural-Altaic, Sumerian, Elamite, Japansooto) and not the daughter of Nostratic/Eurasian. Also views of S.H. Levitt, Colin P. Masica, ... thus validating the intuitive insight of Caldwell (1856) that proto-Dravidian might be the nearest to the mother tongue of man. Dravidian speakers have been autochthons of South India and India since earlier than 10000 BP and it was during the Dravidian Ascent out of India. During that period, the other language families like Indo-European, Ural-Altaic, etc. are likely to have evolved. For details, see Attachment C, a paper I am presenting at the 39th All India Conference of Dravidian Linguists at Patiala from 14th to 16th June 2011. Attachment B gives details of Szalck's monumental work on Dravidian connections with many other ancient languages.

In the light of the above, may I suggest that:

- a. The Ministry of H.R.D., Languages Department may (in cohort with the Ministry of External Affairs) encourage the early establishment of the Tamil Chair at the University of Krakow, Poland and suggest that the said Chair can fruitfully co-ordinate with Prof. Szalck's. The Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Chennai can also be involved.
- b. The Ministry of H.R.D. and Central Institute of Classical Tamil/Telugu/Kannada (and Malayalam too when the Central Government concedes the demand of Malayalam speakers) can play a pro-active role in advancing Nostratic/Mother Tongue studies by encouraging the handful of scholars now engaged in these studies in various countries - proto-Dravidian being the one language family of proven antiquity of more than 10,000 years. The other two such families - Australian Aboriginal and Pama Nyungan in Papua New Guinea have meagre material and are fast vanishing."

P. Ramanathan

POLISH UNIVERSITY TO SET UP TAMIL CHAIR

In a sign of growing interest in the study of Indian culture in European universities, the Jagiellonian University at Krakow in Poland will soon establish a Tamil Chair.

This was announced by First Secretary in the Indian Embassy in Warsaw, Vikrant Rattan, at the third Middle European Student Indology Conference (MESIC-3) here from 19th to 21st May.

Mr. Rattan said the decision follows a memorandum of understanding with the Institute of

Oriental Studies in the university. The Chair would facilitate programmes in ancient Tamil literature, culture and civilization. It would be held by an associate professor.

More European students were taking up studies in oriental languages and other languages of South India. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations had awarded 11 scholarships to students from various Polish universities, he noted. The MESIC-3 was unique in that it was organized by Indology students. It had provided a platform to students and scholars of Indian culture to discuss a broad range of topics such as Indian literature, linguistics and political, religious and social issues.

The conference was organized by students of the University of Zagreb (Croatia), Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan and the University of Wroclow.

The first MESIC conference took place in May 2009 at the University of Zagreb and the second at Poznan in 2010. The fourth one will be held at the University of Zagreb next May.

The themes elaborated at MESIC-3 were interesting. Maria Jawlowska of the University of Warsaw focussed on *Tinai*, explained as a correlation between a specific landscape and specific emotion and experience. Using a set of slides, she explained the ways in which landscape and nature were utilised by poets.

Some topics were controversial too. Agnieszka Ibpoto of Poznan caused a stir, saying India had become a 'baby factory', as the number of surrogate babies was going up. She addressed the problem of surrogate motherhood and looked at the economic and social factors that forced mothers to give birth to babies, to be taken away.

Jayaraj Manepalli, a Ph.D. scholar from the University of Vienna, sought to examine the origin of left-wing extremism in India. He said though the governments at the Centre and the States were countering it through various strategies, Maoism, as an ideology, was not countered politically. Perhaps, that was why Maoism still existed in India, despite the country's rapid growth.

The conference was co-ordinated by the Department of Indology of the University of Wroclow, headed by Professor Joanne Sachse.

The Department offers courses in Sanskrit and Pali and Ancient Indian History for students of all faculties. Since the beginning of the 21st century, it has broadened its scope by introducing studies in Modern India as well.

[Courtesy: *The Hindu*, Chennai - 2.6.2011]

MAHARSHI VEDAVYAS SAMMAN TO PROF. D.D. SHARMA

Prof. D.D. Sharma, a retired Professor and former Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Punjab University, Chandigarh has been awarded *Maharshi Vedavyas Samman* by the Sanskrit Academy of Delhi Government for 2009-2010 for his excellence and contribution in Sanskrit language and literature. Prior to this, he had been awarded Certificate of Honour by the President of India in 2001 for his proficiency and expertise in Sanskrit language. He is also a recipient of the Padmashri Award and the International Award from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Foundation, New Delhi for his excellence in the field of linguistics, culture and literature.

In the field of linguistics, he has surveyed the whole Himalayan region, right from Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan for 20 years and has brought out 14 volumes on it. For carrying out this project, he had received prestigious National Fellowships, like Jawaharlal Nehru National Fellowship, UGC Emeritus Fellowship and Indira Gandhi Memorial Fellowship. His passion for languages is amazing. He is acquainted with more than a dozen Indian and foreign languages.

Presently, he has to his credit 56 research volumes (16,000 printed pages) pertaining to various subjects and 200 research papers published in various research journals. His works on Culture and History of Uttarakhand and Himalayan people have been appreciated by scholars and critics.

REV. EUGENE NIDA, THE PROPHET OF TRANSLATION PASSED AWAY

Rev. Eugene Albert Nida (1914-2011), the renowned linguist, a great biblical scholar and a translator who made an enormous contribution to the Babel of Bibles, passed away on 25th August 2011 at his home in Brussels, Belgium. He was 96. He is known for his notion of 'functional equivalence' in translation studies and six principles of morpheme identification in morphology. He is widely considered the father of modern Bible translation and he is a linguist belonging to structural linguistics.



Nida was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, United States of America on 11th November 1914. His father was a chiropractor there. When he was five, the

family moved to California. In 1943, he married Althea Sprague. She died in 1993 at the age of 49. In 1997, he married Dr. Marma Elena Fernandez-Miranda, a translator and interpreter, and who survives him. Nida made over 200 trips to various parts of the world, visited more than 85 countries. By 1952, he had travelled to more than 30 countries, encountered more than 80 languages to recruit native speakers to help the translation of The Holy Bible into 200 languages.

Nida studied Latin in high school at California. He graduated from the University of Southern California in 1936 at Los Angeles (B.A. in Greek), earning one of the highest ratings in the University's history. In 1937, he began to teach Morphology and Syntax at the Summer Institute of Linguistics. In 1939, he obtained a Master's Degree in New Testament Greek and he received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Michigan in 1943. In the same year, Nida began his career as a linguist with the American Bible Society and he was promoted as Associate Secretary for Versions; he then worked as Executive Secretary for Translations until his retirement in the 1980-s. He was present at the founding conference of the United Bible Societies in 1946 and in the same year he published the classic work, *Morphology: The Descriptive Analysis of Words*. In 1949, he founded *The Bible Translator*, a journal featuring articles about the theory and practice of Bible translation. In 1968, he was elected President of Linguistic Society of America. In 2001, the American Bible Society honoured Nida's impact on Bible translation and scholarship by naming its new Bible translation wing as Nida Institute of Biblical Scholarship.

He was author or co-author of more than 50 books and many articles. Many of his works continue to hold a remarkable place in classical text books in university curricula around the world. He was a linguist with God's signature on his heart. He dedicated his life to translating the Bible into 200 languages around the world and introduced his theory of the science of translation in 1964. With a prophetic vision on translation, Nida once said "No major translation should last more than 50 years". While referring to the significance of the Bible for the

present day, he told the Associated Press in 1982, "While this is an age of technology, urbanization and change, the world hasn't invented a new sin in 2,000 years".

P. Sreekumar
Dravidian University

DR. PROF. V.I.S. COMMEMORATION VOLUME
Articles in CD will be accepted till 30.11.2011.

ADDITIONS TO THE ISDL LIBRARY

GIFTS

Natana Kasinathan, 2011. *The History of Palayakarars of Southern Part of Tamilnadu*. Chennai: Manivasakar Pathippagam.

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